THE ROLE OF A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION'S NARRATIVES IN FOSTERING SOCIAL CAPITAL:

A case-study of HeSeta

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Social capital theory highlights the value of social networks in encouraging cooperation and facilitating change. However, research within this field rarely undertakes a communicative approach to social capital, which ignores the importance of communication in supporting understanding and connections in social interactions. The narrative paradigm is one facet of communication theory but it has considerable pertinence to this research because stories both define and connect us. When narratives are experienced they provide common purpose and action. Nonprofit organizations are another crucial element to understanding the interconnection between social capital and narratives because they provide a space for individuals to build a sense of belonging and solidarity. The primary objective of this paper is to analyze how a nonprofit organization’s narratives foster social capital.

This research was a case study of the nonprofit organization HeSeta based in Helsinki, Finland. The data was collected through several in-person interviews, HeSeta’s website, HeSeta’s official Facebook page, and public organizational documents.

The results indicate that narratives foster social capital by establishing reasons to connect and interact, creating basic responsibilities to one another and encouraging action together. The creation of shared goals, values, obligations, expectations, and identification helps to build norms of trust, honesty, reciprocity, which establish and sustain a social network and its narratives. The study encourages the development of more critical formations of organizational narratives in nonprofit organizations’ communication to their stakeholders and community, which prioritizes social capital, to help encourage greater interaction and collective action.

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1. Introduction

Social interactions and networks are integral to understanding the human experience, to appreciating what it means to be human. Humans are social animals and evolutionarily wired to be natural co-collaborators (Lieberman, 2013). History has shown the intersubjective nature of human ideology is a continuously evolving phenomenon and bound to our connections to one another (Harari, 2011). It gave rise to religion, science, and capitalism, for example. However, for the past several decades, there is growing anxiety over the alleged demise of communities' social cohesion, i.e. the willingness to cooperate, which could have detrimental effects on those communities potentially leading to greater health and social problems and a decrease in governmental efficacy (Putnam, 2000; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2010; Lowry, 2017). There are many purposed culprits for this phenomenon. Rising economic inequalities is one but the promotion and spread of (Western) individualism is another (related) culprit.

The emergence of neoliberal ideology has amplified the prominence of the individual in society, while the values of community, social networks, and collective action are relegated to secondary roles. The responsibilities and influence of "individual heroes" are often exaggerated to downplay the impact of "collective effort" (Putnam, 2000). The dominant (economic) narrative today is that individuals and other actors (such as governments and private businesses) are motivated, either primarily or entirely, by survival and self-interest, but O'Neill (2001) alleges this narrow focus on motivations is both simplistic and denies the capabilities for action that both agents and agencies possess. "Survival of the fittest" is the ubiquitous (and elitist) mantra of the twentieth century and is synonymous with Charles Darwin but it was not a phrase coined by the man himself (Boorman and Levitt, 1974). In actuality, the phrase negates Darwin's assertion that mammals' greatest instinct is sympathy (or rather empathy) making it "the *sine qua non*e of evolution" for mankind (Keltner, 2009). Our ability as humans to "step into" or comprehend another's feelings is what has allowed us to survive, to connect, and to build imagined orders.

Collective action allows people to have greater agency in effecting change by rearticulating the current and prevailing shared imaginations or narratives. However, both imagining collectively and ensuring its actualization together are highly difficult endeavors. There is a dominant status-quo that is resistant to change, which "grips" to the historically-contingent and precarious nature of social practices and values through their partial fixation (Glynos, 2001). In other words, the norms, values, and practices of a given community are socially constructed and not based on objective, a priori foundations. This (tenuous) power, in Foucauldian terms, begets resistance. However, "complex organizations", such as political parties, ideological movements and/or religious cults, are needed to enact widespread change (Harari, 2011). Individuals by themselves may be inspirations or even sparks that start a revolution but it takes a movement of many to truly challenge the status quo.

Nonprofit organizations (NPOs) are important entities to examine to comprehend this phenomenon, the importance of human interconnection and collective action, because as Frumkin (2002) avers, NPOs help individuals "find connections to one another and build a sense of community and solidarity that leads to greater enthusiasm for community life" (29). Not only are nonprofits growing globally as major employers and significant contributors to a nation's GDP (Salamon et al., 2013) but they are also considered as fundamental to the creation of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Lewis, 2005). Social capital is constituted in social networks of cooperation and collaboration (within a community) and created when "the relations among persons change in ways that facilitate action" (Coleman, 1990, 304). The "change" is related to the quality of the relationship, which is "lubricated" by norms of trust, honesty, and reciprocity (Putnam, 2000). Social capital is the "catalyst" for political participation and collective effort (Frumkin, 2002).

This is a bold claim and begs the question, "How do organizations enable, ignite, and provide conduits for social capital within a community" (Lewis, 2005, 246)? What channels or vehicles bring people together to interact, work, and advocate for a given action or change? Language and communication are central to these questions because they are social practices that enable and support understanding between individuals and actors. They are foundational to the construction of an individual's (and/or a network's) social world. Communication is a chief dimension of nonprofit organizing because it helps to establish, sustain and transform an organization (Koschmann, 2012; Schoeneborn and Vásquez, 2017). Therefore, "a communicative approach to social capital recognizes that it is not just social ties but social ties filled with communicative practices that encourage and foster civic participation" (Rojas et al., 2011, 691). The communicative practices within social ties also have purpose, meaning, and value and not just the social ties in themselves.

There are multiple traditions of communication theory and several that could correlate with the notion of humanity's interconnectedness. For instance, a phenomenological stance understands "communication as the experience of otherness" and values it, or dialogue, as a skill to encourage deeper understanding and respect for others as people and not as things (Craig, 1999, 138). Whereas a sociocultural stance better understands how intersubjectivity is produced by social processes by appreciating "communication as the (re)production of social order" (ibid., 144). It is clear that communication can be understood in a multitude of ways. Nevertheless, this research paper will focus solely on one discipline to gain a deeper and more in-depth understanding of how an organization's communicative practices can give rise to social capital.

Throughout the centuries, much importance has been placed on human's ability to reason logically. The aesthetic, literary side of communication, i.e. folklore, myths, poetry, etcetera, is often seen as subordinate. However, Fisher (1984) argues that human beings are natural "storytellers" and it is our stories, our narratives that "give order to human experience" and "induce others to dwell in them to establish ways of living in common, in communities in which there is sanction for the story that constitutes one's life" (6). Fisher does not insist that this is the only legitimate way to appreciate human communication nor should it supplant other theories. It is simply another story for human's search for meaning and identity. This research paper chooses to explore communication from Fisher's narrative paradigm because the "narrative impulse" (Fisher, 1984) is a natural process of socialization seen across time, culture and class and is one of the first structures or skills of communication (particularly personal narratives) acquired by young children (Langellier, 1989). The stories we tell of the past, of who lives now and who will be in the future constitutes our very existence (and possible future actions) and consequently what we believe and the stories we create are established in a shared imagination reinforced by trust, honesty, reciprocity.

Ultimately, this research paper attempts to translate social capital theory into communication theory within the narrative paradigm as there is little to no research devoted to comprehending the specific dynamic of nonprofit organizations, social capital, and narratives nor analysis of their interconnectedness (Lewis, 2005; Koschmann, 2012). The primary aim of this thesis is to analyze how a nonprofit organization's narrative(s) try to build connections and encourage individuals to interact and work together. Thus, the main research question is:

RQ: How does a nonprofit organization's narrative(s) foster social capital?

This research question explores the mechanics of creating narratives (interactively) to promote social capital and subsequently facilitate action. This descriptive work, therefore, also examines the "role of organizations in communicatively generating social capital" (Lewis, 2005, 249). A case study of a nonprofit organization in Finland was conducted to answer the research question. HeSeta was the chosen nonprofit. Given that HeSeta is a human rights organization dedicated to ensuring the rights and the well-being of sexual minorities, this study also covers a gap of research/knowledge in regard to social capital and sexual minorities but also in terms of a nonprofit's role in fostering social capital for sexual minorities.

The section that follows (chapter 2), which comprises the research's literature review, will consist of six separate but interconnected parts. First, focus will be placed on outlining what a nonprofit organization is and why it is relevant to study "communicative explanations *of* nonprofits" (Koschmann, 2012, 139). The next element will explore the complex, multidimensional concept of social capital with the proceeding segment highlighting the importance of trust, honesty, and reciprocity in fostering and maintaining social capital. The fourth part will further outline the narrative paradigm and its role in establishing social capital. The fifth section will explore what makes a “good” story (i.e. coherence and fidelity). The final section will briefly emphasize the prevalence of studying an organization within Finland.

Chapter 3 will justify (further) HeSeta as the preferred organization for this particular research, critically assess the methods used for data collection, rationalize the chosen method of analysis, and underline the research’s ethical considerations. Chapter 4 encompasses the data results and highlights the narratives unique to HeSeta. The final chapter will discuss how HeSeta’s narratives (potentially) foster social capital and how this new knowledge is useful for other nonprofits in developing social capital.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Nonprofit Organizations

The civil society sector, otherwise known as the third sector, the nongovernmental sector, or the nonprofit sector, is a growing phenomenon worldwide (Lewis, 2005). This sector encompasses (international) nongovernmental organizations ((I) NGOs), human rights organizations (HROs), charities, and other private foundations. For simplicity, this paper onwards will refer to these particular organizations solely as "nonprofit" organizations (NPOs). These organizations are constituted within civil society, which is defined as a "space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks—formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology—that fill this space" (Walzer, 1995, 7). This is the space where individuals interact and connect by exchanging knowledge, learning from one another, organizing, voicing opinions as well as forming shared understandings and goals. These social relationships are fortified through patterns of trust, reciprocity, and cooperation (Christoforous and Davis, 2014).

The organizations within the third sector are typically defined by their dedication to a specific social cause (outside the formal apparatus of the state) and do not seek to make a profit from their service or work. They are also characterized by their self-governance and voluntary membership (Lewis, 2005). This establishes them as distinctive from private and public (governmental) entities (Salamon, 1994). They have also emerged as dominant players in the promotion and education of human rights issues (Welch, 2001; Davis et al., 2012). NPOs are primarily considered "moral" duty-bearers, as Ljungman (2004) asserts, meaning they have no "legal" obligation to safeguarding and ensuring the rights of people. Nevertheless, their avowed missions and practices ultimately entail a responsibility or duty to the public. Often many NPOs operate in weak and/or unjust states with the aim of contributing to justice by strengthening and reinforcing the state's institutions (O'Neill, 2001). They attempt to secure justice in areas often left unnoticed or neglected within a (weak or unjust) state.

Underlining the distinctiveness of civil society organizations does not negate the potential for overlap among the three sectors. Figure 1 (Quarter and Mook, 2010) below demonstrates how the three sectors interconnect in the formation of a social economy, which serves society as a whole, by incorporating both economic and social values within all the sectors. This overlap can also have problematic implications, given that some commercial and social welfare logics are arguably antithetical to one another.

Figure 1. Social Economy: An interactive approach. Reprinted from “An Interactive View of the Social Economy,” by J. Quarter and L. Mook, 2010, *Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research*, *1*(1), p. 11. Copyright 2010 by Canadian Journal of Nonprofit and Social Economy Research.

Civil society organizations, despite their lack of profit, are still bound to common economic and ethical standards but they face unique challenges. As NPOs expand, there is increased pressure from stakeholders, in particular donors and funders, to demonstrate accountability and efficiency (Carnochan et al., 2014). This helps to legitimize NPOs by ensuring the organizations’ behavior reflects their communication (Gill and Wells, 2014). However, NPOs are notorious for the difficulties in measuring their performance and impact. This is largely in part due to widely varying social missions and goals among the diverse organizations as well as the complexity in choosing appropriate indicators for assessing social outcomes (Polonsky et al., 2016). The financial elements of an organization are typically deemed the most easily quantifiable but, in the case of NPOs, they are not indicative of an organization's true "success" in creating social change. Particularly, the activities linked to long-term impacts, the elements most difficult to measure directly and accurately, highlight their social value and legitimize their position.

With the ensuing debate over the need for NPOs to become more "business-like" (Lewis, 2005), a plethora of research has focused around the "economic theorizing" of the nonprofit sector (Koschmann, 2012). A market orientation is regarded as beneficial to the performance of NPOs (Polonsky et al., 2016; Hong and Cho, 2012; Shoham et al., 2006). However, these theories do not tell much about the "lived experiences" of NPOs (and their relevant stakeholders) nor the "processes" of organizing (Koschmann, 2012). Understanding nonprofits primarily as legal or financial entities limits the communicative perspective of NPOs to "communication *in* nonprofits" rather than widening the scope to also include the "communicative explanations *of* nonprofits" (ibid., 139). This research attempts to gain a more phenomenological understanding of NPOs, which appreciates the social, interactive, relational, and meaningful experiences that shape the social reality of nonprofits and their stakeholders. This is an area of focus presently neglected.

Lewis (2005) has also encouraged studying nonprofits from a similar communicative perspective as Koschmann (2012). He highlights four central areas that he believes have been largely overlooked in regard to NPOs and communication research: (1) social capital; (2) mission, effectiveness, and accountability; (3) governance and decision making; and (4) volunteer relationships. This research intends to focus on the element of social capital as there still appears to be little substantial research, despite its popularity, related to social capital and understanding "how organizations are integral to building social capital", particularly through their communicative practices (ibid., 246). There is extensive research around social capital amongst (organizational) sociologists and political scientists, but Lewis (2005) believes organizational communication scholars should now be a part of the "conversation" as well.

2.2. Social Capital

The concept of social capital has evolved over several decades resulting in both complementary and contradictory definitions, which garners little to no consensus on how to conceptualize and operationalize it (Lee and Sohn, 2016). It is a popular theory in scholarly research but the broadness of and the confusion over its meaning has also limited its application in organizational analysis (Schneider, 2009). Thus, it is vital to examine the term's differing definitions and complexities to ascertain a more nuanced understanding of social capital.

There are three principal scholars of social capital theory connected to nonprofit organizational research: Robert Putman (2000), James Coleman (1988), and Pierre Bourdieu (1986). Coleman and Bourdieu both understand social capital as the resources or benefits (actual or potential) derived from social networks, which create value for the individuals or groups connected to them (Lee and Sohn, 2016). Social capital is "productive" and primarily defined by its "function" (Coleman, 1988). For Coleman, these resources are in essence neutral but their normative value and benefit to society depends considerably on their use by the connected individuals or actors (Foley and Edwards, 1997). Bourdieu (1986) avers the instrumental (and predominantly negative) quality of these resources help to produce society's inequalities.

Putnam understands social capital in a slightly different light than Coleman and Bourdieu. He describes it as the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness within social networks. Social capital is not only conceived as a "private good" but also as a "public good" (Putnam, 2000, 20). A high level of social capital within a community is argued to foster greater civic engagement and improve communal health and safety (ibid.). This research will rely heavily on (but not without critique of) Putnam's use of the term, given its more positive connotation but also because it places greater focus on the human's interconnectedness within societies and groups rather than on the intentional use of resources within interconnected societal networks. It is crucial to acknowledge, that this is also a common theme among communication researchers. Lee and Sohn (2016) have recently mapped the concept of social capital amongst communication scholars and found that the term is heavily favored as the "cohesion of a community" rather than as a "function" of social networks. They insist that the latter standpoint needs greater consideration. However, Putnam's perspective of social capital is better suited for this research because it recognizes the potential for social capital to mobilize and facilitate collective action. Moreover, it also highlights the importance of reciprocity within social capital, which can, in economic terms, be seen as a "suboptimal investment" because it does not (appear to) directly benefit the primary person(s) needed to carry out the required effort (Coleman, 1988). Greater focus will be placed on the non-economic elements to understand persons as more than economic citizens.

Describing social resources as a form of "capital" can place a decidedly economic slant to the meaning of social capital. Thus, considerable focus is often placed on the economics of its function, e.g. how it helps an individual secure a job, but social capital encompasses both the economic and non-economic benefits and achievements created by trust and cooperation within social networks (Davis, 2014) and unlike other forms of capital it is distinctly bound to the relations between varying persons and/or actors (Coleman, 1988). Individuals cannot produce social capital completely by themselves. In the traditional view of economic theory, cooperation and trust are usually peripheral, secondary elements often trumped by the highly valued concepts of competition and individual interest. Social capital scholars try to reconcile this discrepancy and elevate the value of social capital. Coleman (1988) argues an individual is more than just a "wholly self-interested" actor in a rational action paradigm and the trustworthiness that allows networks to function effectively is regularly taken for granted.

Putnam's formative research elevated the status of social capital in the realm of public policy (Lee, 2010). In his influential work, *Bowling Alone*, Putnam (2000) illustrated that civic engagement and social capital have exhibited a steady deterioration over the last several decades (specifically within American communities) regardless of race, gender, class, education, and age, etcetera. His immense collection of data highlighted that fewer Americans today are voting, attending church, joining unions, volunteering, working on community developments, donating money to charity, or socializing with family, friends and/or neighbors. On the global scale, the

OCED (2017) has found, trust in governments is waning. This increasing isolationism is argued to greatly affect the competence of a nation's governance by diminishing civic engagement and overall social trust. Potential explanations for this phenomenon, asserted by Putnam (2000), are linked principally to generational changes but also in large part to television increasingly privatizing individuals' leisure time, suburbanization encouraging longer commutes and suburban sprawl as well as growing anxieties over time and money.

Despite their differences, all definitions of social capital contain three vital elements: networks, trust, and (shared) norms and culture (Schneider, 2009). At the core of social capital theory is understanding that "social networks have value" for individuals and society (Putnam, 2000, 19). Essentially, the ontological premise of most, if not all, societies or communities is that every existence is co-existence (Nancy, 2001). Even the individual who claims to stand-alone is still defined by his separateness to others. This interconnection within a community and/or society builds a basic structure of responsibility to each other. Similarly, NPOs "cannot exist as independent entities" and require cooperative social networks both within and outside themselves (Smith, 2003, 45).

There are various dimensions and forms of social capital but they are generally divided into two distinctive categories: *bonds* and *bridges* (Putnam, 2000). Bonding social capital is formed by tight-knit and exclusively shared common identities, whereas bridging social capital is more inclusive as it embraces individuals across diverse social cleavages. Bonding is better for understanding specific elements of reciprocity and the mobilization of solidarity. Bridging highlights the generation of "broader" (inclusive) identities and information diffusion (ibid.). A third element that Putnam does not define but is later supplemented by other social capital scholars is called *linking* social capital, which is more vertical in nature because it takes into consideration differing power relations (Schneider, 2009). Bridging social capital is considered by Putnam (2000) to be the most beneficial to society because it connects differing bonds or social cleavages and acts as the "connective tissue" of a community and/or society (Davis, 2014). It is greater than "weak ties", fleeting or isolated connections, as defined by Granovetter (1973) because trust is built slowly over a long period of time making it more robust (Schneider, 2009). Bridging social capital allows for diverse individuals and groups to coexist in society. It is also considered more difficult to develop and sustain.

However, these distinctions between categories or forms of social capital, particularly bonding and bridging, are arguably an oversimplification of social relationships, given that "social ties can be varied, and each individual carries a variety of identities, any of which can be called upon to characterize a relationship" (Ramos-Pinto, 2006, 61). Identity is multifaceted and fluid. It is also "context-sensitive" (Weller, 2010). In other words, how an individual defines oneself can change depending on the specific group he or she is interacting with at a particular time or space but also in relation to the interactions within a given group that challenge differing values. It is evident that meaning and identity arise from an individual's social interactions, connections, and practices within a community. These identities, values, and emotions also contribute considerably to the creation and sustainability of a network (Weller, 2010).

Research by Davis (2014) makes a point to link social identity theory with social capital theory. Social identity theory illustrates how an individual's membership within a particular group shapes the individual's behavior because it is shown that connected groups of individuals ultimately attempt to coordinate their efforts to some degree (ibid.). Individuals are no longer solely defined by their self-interests when they become a part of a group. A certain amount of responsibility is formed between the connected individuals. These responsibilities, commitments, and/or duties within social networks define not only the relationship but also the individual. "To divest oneself of such commitments would be", as Miller (1988) asserts, "to change one's identity" (650).

The choice of choosing between groups allows an individual to self-identify. Within psychology's social identity theory, there are two key ways to self-identify or "self-categorize" one's self in social group terms: relationally and categorically (Davis, 2014). Relational social identities are defined by their "functional" relationship to certain individuals (e.g. division of labor), whereas categorical social identities are connections established by a common characteristic or cause even if the individuals have not met. Davis (2014) links bridging social capital to relational social identity because it is an identity generally based on rules and efficiency. Bonding social capital is linked to categorical social identity because they are both defined by solidarity and collective action. There is, however, a crucial difference between social identity theory and Putnam's (2000) categories of social capital, which is, within categorical social identity, people are grouped not by size and close proximity but rather by their homogeneity of likeness that can often be impersonal (ibid.). Further research has demonstrated that social capital is not exclusively limited to locality (Zontini, 2010). Therefore, the different identities that a person takes on not only establish trust but may also generate conflicts when individuals try to manage many different interests in their different relational settings or face-to-face encounters. This is important to consider when examining how an NPO attempts to build shared norms and culture amongst diverse individuals.

Voluntary associations (including NPOs) are generally seen as crucial to building social capital. Since the mid-eighteenth century, when Alexis de Tocqueville produced his instrumental work, *Democracy in America*, it is argued that American democracy is reliant on its "extensive network of voluntary associations" (Smith, 2003, 37), which fuels civic engagement and cultivates social capital. Nevertheless, not all associations are created equal. Differences in organizational characteristics can produce very different results. Eastis (1998) avers, "Those who champion the role of voluntary associations in civil society, if they do not acknowledge the complexity of social capital itself and or organizational types, seem to suggest that organizations either produce social capital or they do not" (76). The story of social capital formation is not so simple. It requires a consideration of the different forms and activities of voluntary organizations.

Putnam (2000) criticizes newer more professionalized and nationalized organizations, which he labels as "tertiary organizations," and instead venerates the personal, face-to-face interactions of local chapters (which are still a part of a larger organization). In opposition, Minkoff (1997) avers primary focus on face-to-face interactions belittles the value of organizations, particularly national social movements, that bond (distant) individuals deemed as minorities or ostracized members of a community, which can often be "life-saving" to those individuals connected to them. She asserts there is value in these symbolic affiliations because they help to create solidarity and collective action through the mobilization of isolated individuals, the increased visibility and promotion of new ideas and abstract models of identity, and the formation of "activist" identities, which helps to encourage greater political engagement. Given these two considerations, it is important to question how an NPO enables and provides different channels for social capital and collective action within a local community and potentially beyond it.

Critics of Putnam's work argue that social capital is not declining or eroding but merely transforming in today's digital age (OECD, 2000). Throughout history, humans have shown a consistent propensity towards "moral panic" and the subsequent vilification of new forms of communication (Chalaby, 2000; Valenzuela et al., 2009). Given that the internet was at its infancy when Putnam (2000) published *Bowling Alone*, he acknowledged the internet's potential but was ultimately highly skeptical of its ultimate benefit, hypothesizing that "social capital may turn out to be a *prerequisite for*, rather than a *consequence of*, effective computer-mediated communication" (177). However, several studies over the last couple decades have shown that the internet, social media and other computer-mediated forms of communication, typically have positive associations (of varying levels) with an individual's social capital (and its development) despite a lack of face-to-face, social interactions (Ellison et al., 2007; Valenzuela et al., 2009; Hofer and Aubert, 2013; Hooghe and Oser, 2015; Phua et al., 2017), though it is often contingent on the specific use of a given technology and not the technology itself. Indicators of social capital that center on traditional activities, which privileges in-person interactions, such as family dinners, card playing and bowling, focuses on a "world we have lost" and too readily dismisses other (particularly internet-mediated) avenues of communication narrowing the understanding of social capital development (Hooghe and Oser, 2015, 1188).

With the advent of the Internet 30 years ago computer-mediated forms of communication, which includes webpages and social networking sites (SNSs), have become increasingly and persistently ubiquitous (Madrigal, 2019). NPOs are often seen as "early adopters of new technology" because of their promise to not only lower costs but to also allow for an increase in their services

(Greenberg and MacAulay, 2009, 65). An NPO's web presence delivers vital information to its stakeholders and the wider public but it often operates under a "broadcast paradigm", whereby information is instrumentally disseminated rather than enabling dialogical forms of communication and interaction (ibid.). Studies have shown NPOs have not been able to develop websites as strategic spaces for interactive, dialogic communication (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012).

With the introduction of SNSs, there was a renewed hope in the potential for greater democratization of online communication by enabling organizations in the civil society sector to "stimulate" or generate conversations across diverse groups of individuals at a rapid pace without having to circumnavigate the traditional media gatekeepers (Bail, 2016). Research by Lovejoy and Saxton (2012), however, highlighted that social media use is still primarily geared toward one-way information exchange but they questioned whether this was "a reflection of unfulfilled potential or the reality of a "hierarchy" of organizational communication functions [Information-Community-Action]" (349). This "hierarchy" or "ladder" is established as follows: the information an organization provides defines the organization, its message(s) (which attracts its followers), communities are then built through online conversations and feedback related to the information provided, and finally these social networks can now be mobilized through action-oriented messages. Hence, the level of dialogic communication encouraged by HeSeta's online presence is important to assess but the text the organization provides is also highly valuable in understanding how it gives rise to social capital. In spite of the criticisms of computer-mediated forms of communication, both websites and social media are still crucial means of communication for nonprofit organizations and their capability to foster social capital. Hence, they will both be critical avenues of communication to examine within this research project.

Social capital theory is a fluid and multidimensional conception, which can make the study and measurement of social capital fairly complex. The proceeding section will divulge more deeply into Putnam's concept of social capital as the norms of reciprocity, honesty, and trust, which comprise a social network (Putnam, 2000). These three elements are crucial to the analysis of how an NPO attempts to foster social capital.

2.3. Trust, Honesty, and Reciprocity

There are three crucial "lubricants" for social networks that Putnam (2000) outlines: reciprocity, honesty, and trust. The first element, reciprocity, is the act of mutual exchange characterized by "short-term altruism and long-term self-interest" (Taylor, 1982, 28). This typically follows the "golden rule": treat others how you wish to be treated. The second element of social capital, honesty, is fostered by dense social networks and the importance of reputations. The final element, (social) trust, not to be confused with trust in government or other social institutions, is a general faith in people. The last two elements "lubricate the inevitable frictions of social life" (Putnam, 2000, 135) but essentially, all of these elements are intertwined and difficult to definitively separate. Therefore, this research will not attempt to outline definitive markers for each element independently but rather will likely encompass two or all simultaneously.

Trust is intangible. It is an abstract feeling or belief connected to specific individuals and contexts. Confidence (or faith) is placed in an individual's (or actor's) integrity and/or ability. This makes trust a crucial element in social networks. As Díez-Vial and Montoro-Sánchez (2014) stress, "trust and friendship play a key role in the willingness of the network actors to share knowledge by reducing the risk of opportunism" (285). Trust within a relationship implies a belief that an individual's promise is reliable and promises made will be met (Inkpen and Tsang, 2005). When people join a group or (self-)identity with others, Davis (2014) argues, this allows for trust and cooperation to foster because individual interests are superseded by social interests. To reiterate again, when individuals are shown to trust and cooperate they are no longer exclusively defined by their own self-interests (ibid.). Schneider (2009) contends social capital (italics used for emphasis) "are relationships based in patterns of *reciprocal, enforceable trust* that enable people and institutions to gain access to resources like social services, volunteers, or funding" (644). A connection can only be considered to have social capital if trust exists. Its existence allows individuals to work together on common issues (Putnam, 2000). Therefore, it is crucial to examine how an NPO values trust and actively tries to build and sustain it among the organization's local and wider community.

Honesty is a mark of integrity or authenticity. It is typically displayed through an individual's actions, though it is not always observable. An NPO's "honest" actions are typically seen in its transparency and accountability. It requires considerable faith from others to believe in the sincerity or genuineness of an individual's or actor's words and (unobservable) actions. Trust and honesty are arguably two sides of the same coin. Honesty is a determinant of trustworthiness or trustworthy behavior (Thielmann and Hilbig, 2015). Honest people are typically seen as worthy of trust. An individual (for the most part) does not trust a person believed to be dishonest.

Trust and honesty, consequently, are also closely linked to the notion of truth but in a post-modern age (philosophically speaking), which encouraged the rejection of a priori foundations for rationalities, ideologies or any other meaning-making processes within a particular society (or another given context), truth is no longer considered to be so fixed or static. This will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter relevant to communication theory. Ultimately, an NPO's strategies to demonstrate and/or foster honesty are also essential to assess.

The reciprocal or quid pro quo nature of social capital is also closely tied to trust and honesty. The dictionary definition of reciprocity defines it as a mutual exchange. However, it does not necessarily mean all networks will always contribute equally. Research by Díez-Vial and Montoro-Sánchez (2014) highlighted that organizations with similar human capital are less likely to exchange knowledge, instead "in a trusting and shared culture environment it could be that firms try to help each other by trying to transfer knowledge to those with slightly lower levels of human capital that might need it" (286). The organizations with similar cultures and values rather than similar resources engaged in knowledge exchange. It is arguable that shared norms and culture (which is particularly observed in homogeneous communities) encourage greater reciprocal patterns of behavior. Putnam (2007) discovered in a later study that an increase in a community's diversity (specifically American communities) correlated with a decrease in the amount of social capital it acquired (in the short run). However, Putnam did not present this study as a justification to reject diversity but rather as a challenge for "modern diversifying societies" today (and in the future) "to create a new, broader sense of 'we'," with more encompassing identities, norms, and values (ibid., 139). As stated previously, identities help create and maintain networks but identities can also be fluid and multifaceted. Thus, in this research, it is crucial to examine an NPO's definition of membership and of community.

Putman (2000) emphasizes *social* trust but Ramos-Pinto (2006) underscores the difficulties in integrating a macro level expression of trust, trustworthiness, and norms with its individual-level conception without "a strong theory of how these interact at the same level of analysis" (55). There is considerable debate over whether trust is an "*a priori* moral predisposition" to social capital or if social capital is a manifestation of it (ibid., 54). Longitudinal studies have found little evidence of a causal relationship between social trust and the joining of voluntary associations nor the effect of joining an organization and the increase of trust (Claibourn and Martin, 2000). Eastis (1998) argues that people who join a given organization have already "self-selected" based on the individual's trust of the organization's espoused narrative or image. Determining the distinction is a study for another paper. Saxton and Benson (2005) assert, "most scholars are interested in both sides of the equation – they consider not only a community's web of societal networks but also the norms, expectations, and benefits that derive from it" (19). Therefore, an understanding of trust and norms will focus primarily on the meso- or group level to understand how a group's cooperative behavior encourages connection and collective action. The study is focused on the trust and norms (and values) within and between the NPO and its stakeholders and not how it shapes society at large on a national (or global) level.

2.4. Narrative Paradigm

A central argument of this research, as Gill and Wells (2014) attest, is that "NPOs are inherently communicative" (28). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the communication dimension of these organizations and understand that "nonprofit", "is a socially constructed concept that is reinforced (or not) through continued patterns of communication" (Koschmann, 2012, 141). Communication is an important element of this research because communication and language are foundational to the construction of an individual's (and a network's) social world.

Communication processes within organizations highlight norms and values that cannot be understood outside the organizational context (Eastis, 1998). Multiple traditions of communication theory exist as well as various iterations of communication's value in different domains. There is an entire field of study dedicated to understanding the "communicative constitution of organizations" (CCO), which argues organizations are established, maintained and transformed by communication (Schoeneborn and Vásquez, 2017). Nevertheless, this research paper incorporates a narrative paradigm to analyze the importance of stories and identities, connectedness, and relationships between nonprofits and their community.

"People are storytelling animals" (Griffin, 2009, 298). This is the essence of human existence according to Walter Fisher, the man credited with introducing the narrative paradigm to communication theory. Fisher offered a new conceptual framework or paradigm shift from a rational world view to a *narrative* one, whereby "good reasons" are more about telling compelling stories than constructing airtight arguments (Griffin, 2009). He believes humans are narrative individuals who "experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends" (Fisher, 1987, 24). Stories are usually thought of as plays, novels, movies or TV series but Fisher regards *all* types of communication as stories, except for jokes and greetings (or other phatic communication). "The world is a set of stories," Griffin (2009) states, "from which we choose, and thus constantly re-create, our lives" (302). Humans are active creators of their personal and world stories (their identities), which can evolve over time, through different experiences and from connections to other (relatable) narratives. Fittingly, on several occasions throughout Putnam's work, *Bowling Alone*, he referred to his research of social capital as a *story*, as his narrative for understanding the perceived decline in social interactions and trust in American society. Moreover, understanding communication as the "production" of meaning and not just the "expression" of it allows for insight into *how* certain elements arise rather than simply indicating their existence (Koschmann, 2012). Thus, allowing for the study of how an NPO's narrative(s) give rise to "participation, identification, commitment, and ultimately social capital" (Lewis, 2005, 248).

Fisher observed the narrative and the rational world paradigms as binary elements. However, McGee and Nelson (1985) criticize this distinction or the "false dichotomy" between narrativity and rationality. They insist the human desire for rationality is simply another story we tell ourselves. For science merely rooted out an older reasoning or "faith" (i.e. religion) to instead "preach abstracted empiricism", which produces more logical and complex stories as definite truths (ibid., 141). However, the idea of "truth" is not disregarded in the narrative paradigm but is rather seen as situational and subjective. Modern philosophers of political science understood that modernity saw to the devaluation of traditional values, such as God, morality, nature, reason, and progress. "No less ambiguous than the voice of God, history's "meanings" have yielded as many messages as there are messengers, to as many different authorities as there have been "last words"" (Farrell, 1985, 110). In the current volatile political climate, particularly in the United States, this present-day, post-truth, "alternative facts" reality is argued to be highly detrimental to the notion of truth as well as to the sanity of the American people because "being American means we can believe anything we want; that our beliefs are equal or superior to anyone else's; experts be damned" (Andersen, 2017, 79). This may be the reality in some cases (and not just in the U.S.) but no communication is value-free and "stories can be told with different presumptions of villainy and senses of falseness" (McGee and Nelson, 1985, 141). Logic and rationality are still important components of a story and not to be recklessly discarded. Understanding an individual's or an actor's truth, their values, and identities helps to better understand them, the world view(s) they subscribe to and their subsequent actions.

Fisher (1987) defines narration as "symbolic actions – words and/or deeds – that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create or interpret them" (58). Values, feelings, and identities are fundamental to the stories created and maintained. In the narrative paradigm, judgment of a story is not merely the role of "experts" but instead a democratized, two-way process. Anyone has the ability to judge a "good" story and assess its merits because "all [individuals and actors] are full participants in the making of messages, whether they are agents (authors) or audience members (co-authors)" (Fisher, 1985, 86). Narratives are ultimately never "wholly personal" because we are exposed and connected to a world shaped by narratives already "out there"

(Andrews et al., 2004). Thus, they are both intra- as well as interpersonal. Moreover, narrations are not simply about the words or phrases used but rather the stories, the values, the identities that are created from the language, which engenders reasonable and (ideally) humane action (Fisher, 1985). Ultimately, “meaning isn’t inherent in events; it’s attached at the workbench of the mind” (Griffin, 2009, 300). Therefore, our narratives, our identities, our networks, greatly define our existence. This research will try to understand how an NPO’s use of narrative(s) builds connections, identities, and values that help to foster social capital. The proceeding section discusses what makes a “good” story.

2.5. Fidelity and Coherence

As hinted earlier, not all stories are made equal. There are two important questions to consider: How well does a story “hang together” and how “probable” is it? (Griffin, 2009). Answers to these questions are set within boundaries of reason and logic defined by history, culture, biography, and characters. Fisher (1984) emphasizes two elements imperative to the creation of a “good” story: fidelity and coherence. These elements measure a story’s truthfulness and humanity. Fidelity and coherence are closely linked to the social capital components of honesty, trust, and reciprocity as outlined below.

Coherence refers to the connections between different elements in a story, which helps the story “make sense.” Fisher’s narrative paradigm does not negate or replace logic, but rather it is considered a factor that affects narrative coherence. “Stories hang together,” Griffin (2009) states, “when we’re convinced that the narrator hasn’t left out important details, fudged the facts, or ignored other plausible interpretations” (303). The audience has to be able to trust the story’s coherence, its logical interconnection. Thus, consistency is important. Are the characters acting reliably and honestly? Are they deemed trustworthy? Suspicion generally arises when characters or actors within a story behave “uncharacteristically”, which is relative to the values and norms of the audience. It is crucial that stories connect to their listeners.

Fidelity refers to a story's connection to reality and is closely linked to the observer's prior values and understanding. Does the story "ring true"? Does it strike a chord or evoke an emotional response in the listener? Does it make connections to the audience's own life? Does it relate to what people already "know to be true"? (Fisher, 1987, 64). This connection builds trust between the storytellers and their audience.

A reproach of Fisher's description of fidelity is that it "describes a role for rhetoric that is more concerned with adjusting ideas to people, than people to ideas" which leaves very little room for narratives to challenge or expand upon people's view of themselves and their societies (Kirkwood, 1992, 31). However, narratives do not have to be entirely limited to the confines of the audience's moral imagination. As Kirkwood (1992) avers, narratives can also present their auditors with "possibilities," which demonstrate how "they are freer and more capable than previously imagined and inviting them to decide how they will exercise their newly realized freedom" (32). It expands upon the notion of human capacity for action and change. These stories, however, must also be established within people's grasp. Thus, it is important to examine how a nonprofit's narrative(s) connect to its community's prior realities and experiences as well as attempts to encourage further action.

Stories with fidelity (and possibility), therefore, have the potential to greatly influence their audience. As Griffin (2009) rationalizes, "when we buy into a story, we buy into the type character we should be" (304). Consequently, narration is fundamentally "suggestion and identification" (Fisher, 1984, 15). Fisher (1985) argues a "good" story should guide future actions because "when we judge a story to have fidelity, we are not merely affirming shared values. We are ultimately opening ourselves up to the possibility that those values will influence our beliefs and actions" (Griffin, 2009, 304). Consequently, a "good" story, which has coherence, fidelity and "good reasons," is a formidable means of persuasion (Fisher, 1985). This persuasion is vital for nonprofits to foster participation, identification, and commitment.

Fisher (1987) also believes in an "ideal" audience: "a permanent public, an actual community existing over time, that believes in the values of truth, the good, beauty, health, wisdom, courage, temperance, justice, harmony, order, communion, friendship, and oneness with the Cosmos – as variously as those values may be defined or practiced in "real" life" (187-188). He appeals to the better part of humanity. Critics attack his optimism. Warnick (1987) stresses how Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (in its time) "struck a chord in an alienated, disunited, and despairing people" (176) and achieved both coherence and fidelity, thereby contradicting the belief that people have a natural tendency to prefer "the true and just" (Fisher, 1984, 9). Fisher insists Warnick confuses "effective" discourse with the "good" discourse people tend to prefer, such as underdog stories or the triumph of good versus evil (Griffin, 2009). A "good" story is the "reaffirmation of the human spirit," which does not demean or deny the identity of persons (Fisher, 1984, 16).

It is also argued that Fisher pays little attention to "the oppressive power of stories that promote the status quo" particularly within the mainstream media (Griffin, 2009, 305). This second critique could be seen as an extension to the narrative paradigm theory rather than a rejection of it. Narratives do not only represent and embody the agents who communicate them but also the audiences that listen to and accept them. The audience is not passive elements in this communicative form but rather, as highlighted above, co-creators. Narration is a reciprocal communication. This underscores the intersubjective nature of humanity. Intersubjectivity understands humans as social creatures conceptualized by their social ties. It is important to note that intersubjectivity goes beyond subjectivity with the creation of mutually constitutive conceptions that form collective beliefs, rules and social practices (Schmidt, 2017). The stories we choose to listen, to write, or to share define our existence but also establish (and are simultaneously constituted in) our social ties and networks.

Understanding the interconnection between coherence, fidelity, and possibility will help to illuminate the role narratives play in establishing connections and encouraging collective action because the interconnectedness among individuals within a given community or society builds a basic structure of responsibility to each other. Common narratives build a common purpose or goal that mobilizes solidarity and encourages action. It is also evident that for stories to have coherence and fidelity they must also demonstrate trust, honesty, and reciprocity. An NPO's message or narrative will not motivate individuals to come together and build communities if their stories lack a commitment to the norms of social capital.

On a final note, it is important to highlight (and critique) the parallels between an NPO's use of social capital and symbolic capital in its narrative communication. Symbolic capital is typically acquired by an individual or (collective) actor(s) and acts as a form of "credit" or "credence", which aims to generate trust in the individual or organization and create an image of legitimacy (Gill and Wells, 2014). NPO legitimacy, Gill and Wells (2014) aver, is not just about the behaviors of an organization but is also a rhetorical construction that utilizes symbolic capital to create appropriate "messages that "ring true" to a donor/volunteer base" (27). They demonstrate how legitimacy is constructed as an identity, which reflects the beliefs and practices of their donors and volunteers. This is to ensure the nonprofit organizations' survival in a global neoliberalistic society. This is also deeply problematic because the desire to satisfy the wants and needs of their donors/volunteers potentially risks superseding the needs as well as "dehumanizing" the individuals and communities they claim to serve and support (Dempsey, 2007, 2012; Lewis, 2005) and can reinforce old colonial relations (in a postcolonial environment), which are historically "deeply gendered, classed and raced" (Dempsey, 2009, 331). These are grave concerns and it is crucial to critically examine how the narratives an NPO presents speaks to all of its stakeholders, to its whole community. However, the narratives, the missions/goals that an NPO creates and maintains are not purely for selfish, economic reasons, they are also important for motivating and establishing common purpose and subsequent action (Berlan, 2017).

2.6. Finland

The work conducted by Putnam (2000) is based primarily (if not exclusively) within the United States of America, therefore it is important to emphasize the value in researching a civil society organization within Finland. Typically, the United States claims the (self-)congratulatory title as "the nation of joiners", however, studies have shown that the U.S. is not entirely unique in this aspect of voluntary associations, except for religious involvement, which challenges the common "American exceptionalism" thesis advanced by many scholars (Putnam, 2000; Curtis et al., 2001). Several countries, particularly social democratic nations (i.e. Nordic countries), match or even surpass American volunteerism and member associations.

Social democratic nations overall have the highest total in association memberships, contradicting the claim that big government negatively affects civic engagement and social capital (Putnam, 2000). In a study conducted by Curtis et al. (2001), Finland ranked just below the United States in terms of total memberships and total working association memberships. When the study excluded religious and union memberships from the total working association membership count (without controls), Finland ranked (slightly) higher than the United States. According to the Finnish Patent and Registration Office, as of January 2019, there are 106,176 registered associations within Finland (PRH, 2019). Earlier surveys have shown a considerably high percentage of generalized trust (approximately 77%) among Finnish people (Iisakka, 2006). In the Leisure Survey conducted in 2002, over half of the Finnish population (52%) indicated that they actively participated in some form of association, club, society or group (Hanifi, 2006). Evidently, there is pertinence and relevancy to carrying out research on social capital and communication within Finland because of the prevalence of trust, voluntary associations and the relatively high potential for social capital formation.

3. Research Methodology

This was a small-scale study carried out in cooperation with the non-governmental organization, HeSeta. It is a regional member organization based in Helsinki (He) and is connected to its national counterpart, Seta, which stands for *seksuaalinen tasavertaisuus* in Finnish. In English, it translates approximately to “sexual equality”. Seta is the primary advocacy organization representing sexual minorities in Finland, which was founded in 1974. HeSeta was established later in 1991 and primarily covers the Helsinki-Uusimaa region. Both organizations actively advocate for equality, well-being, visibility, involvement, and agency for all individuals regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression.

The proceeding sections will concisely illustrate the social phenomena connected to HeSeta, justify HeSeta as the preferred organization for this particular research, critically assess the methods used for data collection, explain the chosen method of analysis, operationalize social capital and the narrative paradigm as well as highlight the research’s ethical considerations.

3.1. HeSeta

The narrative (and judgment) of homosexuality has evolved over the centuries. Sexual activity between individuals of the same biological sex has been documented throughout human history and until recently, it is argued, without the label of “homosexuality” (Drushel, 2018). In his seminal work, *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978) asserts the Victorian era saw to the creation of the term “homosexuality”, which was no longer simply deemed a sexual act but was transformed into a pathologized identity that required classification and regulation by the medical profession, typically psychiatrists. 19th century study of sexuality became concerned with identifying what is “normal” (e.g. heterosexuality) and what is “deviant” (e.g. homosexuality). This shift in thought highlights the contingent nature of anti-homosexual discourse gripping to arguments and narratives around the safeguarding of “tradition” that is considered a priori. Queer narratives play an important political role in “broadcasting” the “voices” and lived experiences of sexual minorities that have historically and systemically been excluded from mainstream society (Bradford and Clark, 2011). Activism and social reform advocating for sexual minority rights in the decades following the Stonewall uprising in 1969 has propelled the queer community into the mainstream and offered greater potential for the accumulation of social capital within it (Drushel, 2018). However, full equality is still far from being achieved globally.

Finland is often toted as the archetype of the progressive, liberal nation. However, homosexuality was only decriminalized in 1971 and was removed from the list of registered illnesses in 1981. The "promotion" of homosexuality was still prohibited until there was a revision of the Criminal Code in 1999, which also equalized the age of consent for homosexual sex as for heterosexual sex. Registered partnerships were only permitted in 2002. As of March 1st, 2017, after a citizens' initiative and various subsequent referendums, gay marriage was legalized in Finland (Oikeusministeriö, 2013; Yle, 2017). Despite these milestones, studies show young people under the umbrella of "the rainbow youth", or "sateenkaarinuoret" in Finnish, are still subject to discrimination (to varying degrees) that negatively impacts their well-being, have significantly reported more problems related to mental health than their normative, heterosexual counterparts and also face a lack of support from care professionals who often ignore issues related to gender and sexual orientation and their impact on mental health and substance abuse (Alanko, 2014; Taavetti et al., 2015; Hästbacka and Sirén, 2017). Providing safe environments for young people to be open and talk with other youth is seen as vital to the well-being of young persons who challenge the norms of gender and sexuality, though these spaces (both virtual and physical) frequented by young individuals are not typically positively disposed to sexual and gender minorities (Alanko, 2014).

Through HeSeta's numerous community activities, such as Helsinki Pride, "Pride Up Your Friday" nights, KVV: "Kahden Vähemmistön Väki" ("Two Minority People") meetings, and "TOGETHER" events, etcetera, the organization is establishing avenues of communication, which attempt to support, enable, and empower marginalized individuals in both the local and wider community. HeSeta also makes a concerted effort to support persons who identify as a sexual minority and who are also seeking asylum in Finland (or individuals with a refugee background), because the interlocking forms of two social stratifications place these particular individuals at an increased risk of isolation and vulnerability (Gentile and Salerno, 2019). HeSeta is an advocacy organization, which challenges and attempts to change the present, dominant (and global) societal norms by building connections and bringing together individuals to interact and exercise their voice. It is evident that HeSeta has a valuable (and justifiable) role to play in supporting sexual minorities, particularly young individuals, within the Uusimaa region (and arguably beyond).

HeSeta is an optimal case for this research for three prominent reasons. Firstly, in this NPO social capital has a strong role to play because HeSeta's mission is to improve the well-being of and to connect (often isolated) sexual minorities. Social capital is both an instrument for fulfilling their mission and goals as well as an end in itself. Through the promotion of connection, togetherness, and empowerment among an ostracized minority, an organization can attempt to create experiences of belonging, trust, honesty (e.g. "coming out" stories), dignity, and reciprocity. Secondly, not only does HeSeta fit the deciding feature of "a social-capital-creating formal organization", defined by Putnam (2000), i.e. a local chapter of a larger organization where members meet face-to-face, but it also reaches beyond its locality. HeSeta may be based in its local community but is not solely limited by it. It has the privilege of being both a local, grassroots organization but also an advocacy association that bonds distant, isolated minorities nationally (and potentially transnationally) through solidarity, visibility and the promotion of new ideas and abstract models of identity (Minkoff, 1997). The organization embodies the modern adage, "think globally, act locally" (within a social context). Therefore, both HeSeta's communication (and related actions) locally and beyond are of considerable value to this research. Finally, through extensive exploration, it was found that research connecting sexual minorities and NPOs as it pertains to social capital is quite rare and thus pertinent to examine.

HeSeta's use of shared language and terms are also a crucial element of this research because it is an important cognitive dimension of social capital (Nahapiet and Ghosal, 1998). The acronym used by the HeSeta to signify sexual minorities is one example. LGBTIQ* stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer. The asterisk is used to denote the reality of greater sexual diversity within society. In Finnish, the acronym is typically written as HLBTIQ but HeSeta's uses a slightly different acronym, LHBTIQ*, which coincides more closely with the English one. This is relevant because it connects HeSeta community members to the wider, global, and political context. The use of the asterisk or, in some cases, a plus sign also signifies diversity and inclusivity. The original acronym created in the '90s to represent individuals who identify as a sexual minority, LGBT (i.e. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender), has expanded to add an extra 8 characters, LGBTQQIP2SAA (LGBT + Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Pansexual, Two-Spirit, Asexual, and Ally), attempting to be more inclusive of all individuals within the queer community (D'Souza, 2016). Some individuals/groups, however, call for the rejection of labels altogether (Szklarski, 2016). Language is powerful and it is political. The language/terms promoted and shared by an organization and its community are important elements to study. For simplicity and consistency, this paper onwards will use to the terms sexual minority to indicate persons whose sexual identity, orientation, practices or gender expression differ from the majority of their surrounding society. The use of the word queer will only be used (sparingly) in connection to the notions of community and/or narrative.

3.2. Qualitative Case Study

Given the nature of the research, focusing on how an NPO's narrative(s) foster social capital, this is principally a qualitative study for several reasons. Firstly, the operationalized elements of social capital, i.e. trust, honesty, and reciprocity, and the narrative paradigm, i.e. fidelity and coherence, are difficult to quantify comprehensively using numbers alone. Secondly, the narratives, the stories we create are both subjective and intersubjective and, therefore, context specific. Thirdly, the present study attempts to grasp the social, interactive, and relational experiences, which construct an NPO and its social network's reality. This requires a "thick description" of the verbal and/or textual data collected to comprehend the embedded social constructions (Geertz, 1973). Ultimately, this research "strives to understand the social world from the point of view of the actors/subjects," which Masue et al. (2013) highlight as a fundamental principle of qualitative research and allows for a deeper understanding of complex social processes (212).

Qualitative research encompasses a diverse set of practices across a multitude of disciplines (Seale et al., 2004). A case study method is the preferred methodological approach for this research because it allows for an in-depth study of a complex social phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 2013). It should be noted that case studies are not synonymous with qualitative research but typically defined by their singularity or by their comprehensive investigation of social phenomena in everyday situations and tangible conceptions (Simmons, 2009). However, the methods for data collection were exclusively qualitative in this illustrative, single-case study.

Common criticisms of the case study method are its lack of systematic (scientific) procedures, its failure to be generalized and the presence of bias within the research findings but bias towards verification is a phenomenon present in all forms of research, including scientific experiments (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Yin (2013) contends these problems "may have been more frequently encountered and less frequently overcome" (14) regarding the case study method but Flyvbjerg (2006) argues this fallacious mischaracterization ignores the reality of this method's "greater bias towards falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification" (237). It is crucial that case study researchers reflect upon their partiality and potential distortion of the research findings but this is a necessary requirement for all researchers regardless of method. In terms of generalization, Flyvbjerg (2006) regards formal generalizations as an "overrated… main source of scientific progress" (particularly when deemed as the only valid way to accumulate scientific knowledge), because it negates the value of other studies to add to collective knowledge within a specific field or society or potentially create a path to scientific innovation (226). Therefore, the chosen research method should be pertinent to the study's research problem and circumstances. As highlighted above, a qualitative case-study was ultimately deemed the appropriate choice.

3.3. Data Collection

There are multiple vehicles or channels of communication, e.g. face-to-face interactions, print publications, videos, websites, and social media. Each of these communicative channels has a certain prevalence for the organization in the creation, development, and continuation of its narrative(s) and the fostering of social capital. Given the limited amount of time and manpower, this research focused only on HeSeta's communication from their organizational website, a single social media platform, several in-person interviews, and a couple key organizational documents, such as the main strategy policy and action plan.

As indicated earlier in the literary review, webpages primarily provide one-way communication. However, they play a part in spreading and creating an organization's narrative(s) that is open and targets (potentially) everyone. Analysis of the website focused only on the official, HeSeta.fi webpage, and not on Helsinkipride.fi (which is also operated by HeSeta). Explorations of an organization's website can follow multiple avenues of study, particularly around its usability and marketability, such as overall traffic (amount of "clicks" and engagement), layout and design, navigability, optimization, etcetera. These can be important features for an NPO to examine but for this research, the focus was primarily on the text and images HeSeta provides on its site, which establishes and sustains its narrative(s)/message(s).

Given social media's potential to promote greater two-way (or even multi-way) communication and community building, it is important to assess HeSeta's responses to comments and questions (or even possibly their lack of response) and its attempts to encourage collaborative, interactive discussions with its followers (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). Preliminary examination of HeSeta's social media indicated little evidence of reciprocal communication. Followers showed interest primarily through "Likes" and "Hearts" as well as the occasional sharing of HeSeta's posts. Comments or discussions on posts were virtually nonexistent. This is potentially a consequence of HeSeta's considerably small following on social media platforms (e.g. 3,896 followers on Facebook, 1,834 on Instagram and 1,312 on Twitter).

Initially, HeSeta's official Facebook page was the preferred social networking site to examine in-depth because it appeared to have the largest following. However, through further research it was found that HeSeta has several other Facebook pages: Together – HeSeta, Viittova Sateenkaari – HeSeta, and Helsinki Pride Week (among others). HeSeta is the chief organizer of Helsinki Pride and it has created a separate website (which the official page redirects to when the Helsinki Pride page title is clicked on) as well as separate Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts specifically for this event (with 20,176; 8,247 and 3,860 followers respectively). It is evident that Helsinki Pride has the most followers by a considerable amount and demonstrations greater reciprocal communication (possibly due to its larger following). However, analysis focused primarily on HeSeta's official page not only for its more official, and broader messages but also because nearly all of the messages (approximately 70%) on the Helsinki Pride Week Facebook page were posted in an almost identical fashion (maybe the photo was altered) on the official HeSeta page as well. Nevertheless, the Helsinki Pride Week page was still examined because it attracts a (seemingly) wider and more communicative audience, which offers a greater chance for HeSeta to respond and interact with its (online) community.

As it would have been impractical to analyze all the communication provided on HeSeta's Facebook pages, this research focused only on the communication provided this year during a three-month period (between January and March). Given the diversity of HeSeta's audience, it would be too limiting to choose only one specific activity or event to understand and gauge HeSeta's narrative(s), particularly the messages that promote a common or public purpose. Thus, it is important to examine a wide range of communication from their social media.

The key organizational documents chosen for this research, i.e. HeSeta's strategy plan for 2018-2022 and its action plan for 2019, were easily accessible on the organization's official website. These particular documents are important because they reflect the missions/goals of an organization and indicate how they wish to implement them. Thus, analysis of these documents focused on any vital actions and understandings encouraged by HeSeta's missions/goals that would foster social capital, such as, campaigns, events, objectives, etcetera.

Given that almost the entirety of HeSeta's computer-mediated communication and organizational documents are in Finnish, outside help was solicited in translating the information provided only in Finnish. Poor translations can be an inadequate source of data, potentially riddled with invalidity and bias. Google Translate is not a sufficient tool to grasp the "true" and intended meaning behind the organization's website and social media communication. However, a translator is also not completely without his/her biases of the language(s) being translated (Wilss, 1990). As a researcher with limited Finnish skills, this is seemingly an unavoidable consequence of conducting research on a Finnish nonprofit organization. However, face-to-face interviews with HeSeta staff and volunteers, conducted in English, helped to fortify the translations of HeSeta's online and print communications.

Interviews (comprising a total number of 6 participants) were included also to help expand upon the computer-mediated content collected. Given the small size of the chosen organization and the number of interviewees available to participate, it was not possible to adequately answer the research question utilizing only interviews as originally planned. They could not tell the whole story alone but interviews are excellent sources of supplementary data for this research by helping to "bring to life" the other elements collected. Semi-structured interviews, utilizing open-ended questions, are an important means of data collection because they can provide a wealth of knowledge when executed with care and thoughtfulness (Brinkmann, 2014). The interviews were recorded with the participant's permission and led individually. The interviews were designed to not exceed 45 minutes in length as this is a reasonable amount of time to ask of participants and to ascertain the needed data. Overall, the interview times were varied, ranging from half an hour to an hour and 30 minutes in total. The interviews took place primarily at HeSeta's headquarters but in one special case, the interview was conducted at a café chosen by the interviewee. Both places were for the convenience and comfort of the participants.

Nearly all the members of HeSeta's staff were interviewed (5 in total). Only one individual was unable to be interviewed due to conflicting schedules. There was a plan to conduct at least 4-5 interviews with volunteers of HeSeta but unfortunately, only one volunteer was able to take part in an interview. HeSeta had tried several times to reach out to other volunteers. An informational sheet was provided with material about the research but due to unknown factors (possibly time or even a lack of interest), no one else participated in this research. This obviously affected the original research question and required it to be altered slightly. Without more volunteers it was not possible to gain an understanding of how the organization constructs shared values and identities with its volunteers, as well as an illustration of how the organization's communication shapes volunteers' understanding and feelings towards the organization and its members (and wider community) in terms of trust, honesty, and reciprocity. However, the one volunteer interview will still be used in the analysis as a descriptive and supplementary element but it will not be used to make any generalizations of HeSeta and its volunteers.

Conducting effective interviews requires careful consideration. Conservational, face-to-face interactions are a "primordial" nature of associated human life, which can create a false sense of ease and simplicity in carrying out interviews for research purposes (Brinkmann, 2014). There should be a clear analytic focus that connects to the research aim. Therefore, careful wording of the interview questions was a central element to consider. The interview questions are provided below in appendix A of this dissertation. The interview questions for this research reflected both the holistic and intra- and interpersonal issues regarding trust, honesty, and reciprocity and their relation to an organization's communication. There were different sets of questions prepared for the staff and volunteers to gain a more nuanced understanding. The semi-structured nature of the interview also allowed for the questions to "mutate" or shift depending on the specific person being interviewed (Rapley, 2004). Thus, allowing the questions to provide a clear framework and guideline but without being too constricting.

Since English was not the native language of the participants, it was also another reason to consider word choice carefully. For any interviews, regardless of the language used, it is important not to use scholarly terms and syntax. More simple and direct language helps to put interviewees at ease and be more engaged with the topic of discussion. The level of English fluency was high among all the participants but the interviewees were given considerable time to formulate their answers without interruption or interjection. On several occasions, the interviewees remarked that the questions asked of them were "difficult" and required some thought. Providing the interviewees time (together with open-ended and thoughtful questions) endeavored to move the interviews "beyond surface talk to rich discussion of thoughts and feelings" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, 80). This is not to say that the interviews always accomplished this goal but there certainly was considerable effort towards it. Given that the initial interviews (alongside their online content) provided ample data, more interaction and follow-up interviews with the participants were not deemed necessary. Only one follow-up email was sent to get a picture of the back wall in HeSeta's main meeting, which prominently displays their three mains values or codes of conduct (discussed in length in the data analysis section).

One final note, it was learnt during the interviews that HeSeta will be overhauling their online website and even changing their name to Helsinki Pride Community. This came as a complete shock but ultimately in the end enriched the interviews. Thankfully, flexibility in the interview framework and questions could accommodate this new and pertinent information. However, HeSeta stated this change over would most likely occur at the beginning of April if all goes to plan. Given that plans can often go awry, even with the best intentions, this research could not wait for the new material to be published when analyzing their website and other online content. The master's thesis deadline in May could not be flexible to this change. This makes the data from the website fairly outdated (and potentially obsolete) within the next couple of months because not only will there (potentially) be new text that can alter their messages but they have presently neglected their current website knowing a new one will be in its place soon. Though these elements complicated matters, the current text was not insignificant or valueless. From the interviews, it was ascertained that they have not completely abandoned the old narratives as they are "kind of the same" but instead strengthened some (if not all of them).

All of these points of data collection highlighted above will help to strengthen the data analysis and results of the research. However, it must be acknowledged that the data collection was not fully optimal in the end. Some challenges were faced, such as the small number of available interviewees, challenges in language translations, and outdated online communication. These are acknowledged and will inform the results, however, there was still sufficient data acquired to analyze and formulate conclusions.

3.4. Narrative Analysis

Narratives are central to this research. All organizations, individuals, and/or actors tell a story through their communication and these stories connect them to others because “stories revise people’s sense of self,” but they also “situate people in groups” (Frank, 2012, 33). Narratives transfer or pass along culturally shared values, which not only allows individuals to position themselves in relation to these shared elements but also engages them, as a consequence, in “their own formation process as a person” (Bamber, 2012, 103). This is significant because it means stories cannot be completely personal or detached from their cultural/societal context. “We humans are able to express ourselves only because so many stories already exist for us to adapt, and these stories shape whatever sense we have of ourselves” (Frank, 2012, 36). These connections (through narratives) then have the potential to build and establish social capital.

As the research focus is assessing how HeSeta’s narrative(s) give rise (potentially) to social capital, the most logical choice of data analysis would be to examine it narratively. However, it is still imperative to outline and justify narrative analysis as the chosen method for analyzing the data collected. Narrative analysis is complex and multifaceted because there is not one “robust shared definition” of “narrative” because they are lived experiences, which produces different expressions of it (Andrews et al., 2004). There is also debate about what constitutes a story and/or narrative. This can be analyzed extensively but for the sake of space, this paper takes the stance proposed by Fisher (1985) that all types of communication, not just plays, novels, movies or TV series, can be regarded as stories and/or narratives. All the information HeSeta provides, be it face-to-face or online, helps to constitute its narrative(s).

This research handles “stories as “data” and uses “analysis to arrive at themes that hold across stories or on delineating types of stories and/or storylines” (Bochner and Riggs, 2014, 204). This approach is similar to grounded theory in the sense that analysis work requires inductive reasoning, whereby themes are established from “the ground of the stories upward” (ibid.). As recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1994), themes were not predetermined but established from the data, predominately through the quotes from the semi-structured interviews and text found online, in an attempt to avoid preconceived concepts. This paper does not make a distinction between “analysis of a narrative” and a “narrative analysis”, which can often at times be confusing (Bochner and Riggs, 2014). The thesis will produce a social science report rather than its own story-like structure.

The data analysis will cross-reference the different data sets by making parallels between the literature review, the organization’s online content and the participants’ responses from the interviews. This is to help strengthen the results. Qualitative analysis requires a “thick” and comprehensive portrayal of the data gathered to reliably grasp and interpret the complex nature of social interactions (Geertz, 1973). Ultimately, this research is not a challenge of the narratives HeSeta has chosen to pass along but instead primarily an examination of their potential to support connection among its community.

It is vital to confront a “troubling fact” about narrative inquiry, which Bochner and Riggs (2014) aver is “what a story means to an analyst may be quite different from what a story means to the storyteller” (205). This is both an ethical and interpersonal dilemma. Story analysts are predominately interested in what they can “get out” or “take away” from a story and privilege their (the analysts’) standpoint to advance a certain theory whilst concomitantly sacrificing what makes a story a story “at the altar of methodological rigor” (ibid.). “Narratives invite evaluations of “goodness” and “character,” evoking reflections, evaluations, and reactions,” which establishes co-construct in their meanings (ibid.). Attempts to understand, to analyze the narratives undoubtedly reshape them (too varying degrees). We are all co-authors in the stories we connect and interact with on a daily basis. However, too much re-shaping can establish an entirely new narrative. Thus, this requires researchers to be mindful in how they re-tell a story. Moreover, privileging the story analyst negates the authority of the storyteller. Frank (2012) avers it is more important “to witness” and gather narratives, which make the dominant voice the storyteller rather than the analyst (36). This allows for less partiality on behalf of the analyst and less potential distortion of narratives and subsequent research findings.

3.5. Operationalizing Social Capital and Narrative Paradigm

To be able to measure, or more appropriately, analyze how an NPO can foster social capital through its communication, its narratives it is important to connect and operationalize the social capital elements of trust, honesty, and reciprocity with the narrative paradigm components of coherence and fidelity. This is not an easy task for two reasons. The first is that there is little consensus on the best measurements or indicators for social capital because of its multidimensional nature (Weiler and Hinz, 2018). Depending on one's definition of social capital, its conceptualization either takes an individualistic approach, i.e. examining the resources utilized by an individual, or a collective approach, i.e. assessing the ability of organizations, actors, or groups, etcetera, to foster collective action (Villalonga-Olives and Kawachi, 2015). The second reason is that the close interrelation between trust, honesty, and reciprocity makes it difficult to distinctly separate or determine their causal relationship. Does reciprocity establish trust or does trust create reciprocity? Does trust create honesty or is it the reverse? These chicken and egg questions are used to merely highlight the complexity of this issue. Answering them concretely necessities an entirely new research paper. Despite these difficulties, this paper will still attempt to decide on and justify appropriate measurements and/or indicators for the present research.

Nahapiet and Ghosal (1998) identify three dimensions of social capital measurement: structural, cognitive, and relational. Structural elements focus on network ties that provide access to resources, network configuration for information transmission, and appropriable organization, meaning the transferability of social capital from one setting to another (ibid.). Concrete operationalizations of this dimension (found in the field of sociology) are typically seen in surveys of network size, levels of activity/interaction, frequency of contact, or in the degree of responses to social media posts, etcetera (Weiler and Hinz, 2018). The second dimension, the cognitive element, centers on the shared goals and values between actors. This is constituted in shared language/codes and shared narratives. In sociology research, the cognitive dimension, as defined by Nahapiet and Ghosal (1998) has not been utilized in any research related to social capital (Weiler and Hinz, 2018). It is primarily seen in business-related disciplines, through surveys of expertise and shared visions (ibid.). The relational measurement studies the levels and quality of trust, norms, obligations and expectations, and identification. The cognitive and relational dimensions of social capital measurement are of particular importance for this research because they concentrate on people's feelings, beliefs, attitudes, norms, and values, which are all vital to the endurance of a social network (Weller, 2010). They are also significant to the creation of narratives because the "self" (i.e. my-self, your-self and even our-selves) is constituted in the telling of stories by trying to make sense of who we are, of how we become and where we are going (Bochner and Briggs, 2014). This focus does not disregard the prevalence of the structural dimension but rather the intent is to understand social capital as a collective approach as well rather than chiefly individualistic.

The subjectivity of these elements, feelings, and values, etcetera, does not make them less valuable for this research but their intangibility can be difficult to measure. Therefore, this study will operationalize the elements of social capital and the narrative paradigm in an NPO's attempts to appeal to and/or construct shared values, norms, identities, obligations, and expectations. Fidelity will be found in the connection to common, universal (human) values. Coherence, the need to "make sense," will be seen in the NPO's logical presentation of their narratives to demonstrate honesty and trustworthiness. An organization is an actor. Therefore, it is also crucial to look at an organization's actions as part of the story as well and not merely just their words.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

As with any study, the potential ethical issues must be considered. The ethical issue regarding the re-presentation of a story and negating the authority of the storyteller was discussed above briefly within the section of narrative analysis. It is important to remember to question reflectively: "Whose story is it anyway?" (Bochner and Riggs, 2014, 213). The interviews conducted narratively should be cooperative and mutually explorative. The re-telling of a story must demonstrate conscientious interpretation. No research can truly be free of personal biases and fully objective but that does not mean interpretations can be made haphazardly and without careful and vigilant reflection. Data saturation, i.e. when no new information or themes can be ascertained, can help to limit the negative effects of personal biases in qualitative research by ensuring the data is sufficient and reliable (Guest et al., 2006). From the interviews conducted, specifically among the staff, it was clear that the final employee interview or further interviews with board members were unnecessary because there was clear repetition in their stories from the five employee interviews already obtained and in the cross-referencing of other data sources. Moreover, even though the questions were of a personal, subjective nature, they "(and in most purposive samples/subsamples for that matter) share common experiences, these experiences comprise truths" (Guest et al., 2006, 75).

Anonymity is also a crucial ethical issue. A basic tenet of conducting interviews is anonymity. Therefore, all interviewees remain anonymous in this research. All "telling" information will be removed from the data provided in this paper. The posts collected from private individuals online will also be used anonymously, however, there is another ethical dilemma connected to this matter. The utilization of public posts from private individuals can be a convoluted minefield. The information provided by HeSeta online is explicitly intended for public use. The comments made by private individuals, however, are not as simply categorized as such. Is it defensible for researchers to collect and release public online data simply because it is already made public? Zimmer (2010) asserts there are inherent privacy issues and challenges when using online data for research, particularly research on social networking sites, and they do not have easy solutions. Therefore, this research will endeavor to only directly quote HeSeta's posts and refer to private individuals comments indirectly. This to be respectful of their privacy and mindful that they have not consented to be a part of this research.

4. Data Analysis

Stories are inquiries because in their telling humans ascribe meaning to life and existence (Bochner and Briggs, 2014). The data analysis consists of parallels made between the literature review, the participants' responses from the interviews, and HeSeta's online content. To reiterate, this research is not a measure of how well the organization is doing in terms of fostering social capital within their community but rather how they attempt to foster it through their narrative(s) by analyzing the creation of shared goals and values (cognitive dimension) and the constitution of norms, obligations and expectations, and identification (relational dimension) to build trust, honesty, reciprocity within a familiar, reliable, and coherent (narrative) framework. This research does not aspire to find causal relationships. Nonetheless, wider connections and conclusions will still be (tentatively) purposed in the closing segment of the dissertation.

As with identity, stories are multifaceted. Neither individuals nor actors can be solely defined by one story. It is misleading and a misrepresentation of their complexity. Therefore, the data analysis will highlight a couple of the dominant narratives advocated by HeSeta across the several channels of communication analyzed. The narratives are first grounded in the staff's own words and supported by their online content and other (organizational) documents. This is an attempt to make the storytellers the principal speakers. The stories/narratives "witnessed" are as follows (Frank, 2012): (1) HeSeta is a community, which is demarcated in a multitude of ways, such as supportive, diverse, and inclusive; (2) HeSeta is a safe space because of its professionalism, expertise, and effectiveness; and (3) HeSeta is an independent organization.

Names (and any "telling" information) of the interviewees are omitted from the analysis to ensure anonymity. Quotes from the website, Facebook, and other documents are only approximate translations taken from the original Finnish unless HeSeta provided an English translation themselves.

4.1. HeSeta is a community

All the staff members interviewed, excluding one, had prior connections to HeSeta before joining as an employee, either through previous professional work collaborations, volunteering and/or interning. The one excluded staff member had prior history with Seta before joining HeSeta. The volunteer interviewed used to attend the open group activity she now leads, which makes her both “happy and proud” because she believes the meetings are as important to others as they were important for her (Interview 4). All expressed a desire to give back to the community that had already helped them in some way. This reciprocal relationship arguably establishes a strong community (and high levels of social capital) within the organization itself.

However, HeSeta aspires to be more than simply a self-contained organization. This is plainly evident in the upcoming name change to “Helsinki Pride Community” or “Helsinki Pride -yhteisö” in Finnish. The organization hopes that, as one staff member stated, “the new name allows us to rephrase what people can expect from us” (Interview 3). It will provide a clearer message of the organization’s aspiration to “bring people together,” which will help facilitate action and promote greater equality for all in the wider society (ibid.). This notion of community is also a crucial element of HeSeta’s organizational strategy and online content. The first value (of three) outlined in the HeSeta’s strategy policy for 2018-2022, which guides the organization’s actions, is “yhteisöllisyys.” It translates roughly to community spirit or communality. As stated on their website, their activities are largely based on volunteering and on shared values that are created together. These values are equality, safety, and community. On their official Facebook page, HeSeta continuously reminds and updates the public about new and ongoing activities, which are generally open to all individuals and not just paying members of HeSeta. A few activities, such as individual meetings and Together groups, are closed for reasons of safety and confidentiality.

Community is supported in HeSeta’s activities by three rules or codes of conduct: equality, safety, and confidentiality (yhdenvertaisuus, turvallisuus, and luottamuksellisuus in Finnish). These organizational values are also HeSeta’s communication values as indicated in their 2019 action plan. They are placed prominently on the back wall of HeSeta’s main meeting room. The staff members indicated that before each activity these values are reiterated and reinforced to ensure they are acknowledged and agreed upon by the group. These formalities of establishing and sustaining a set of overarching values are important to supporting a sense of community, particularly among diverse individuals, and promoting reciprocity by ensuring everyone is treated fairly and according to the same rules. HeSeta has also taken more formal and concrete steps, as indicated by one staff member, to ensure commitments are met. The recent volunteer recruits, who help with the organization’s activities, made written agreements with HeSeta to commit to the organization for at least one year. Shared values create a basic cognitive sense of responsibility to one another in the community but formal contracts could potentially add more concrete weight to an individual’s responsibility. Therefore, it was important that HeSeta inquired about the volunteers’ current life situations and (actual) availability to make sure not to “push people to do things that they really can’t do” (Interview 5).

Within this narrative of HeSeta’s communality are several smaller narratives about community that make it (potentially) more approachable and inviting to (diverse) others. Traditionally, communities define who is “in” and who is “out.” HeSeta’s design is less about exclusivity. The community is defined as supportive, diverse, and inclusive. As one staff member stated, the desire is to be “united” by “good energy” because “Nazi people they’re also united” but by a common hatred of others. This is community is based on a recognition of everyone’s humanity because “if [you] unite the good in people, you’re going to create a better world” (Interview 6). This correlates strongly with Fisher’s conception of a “good” story because it is a positive affirmation of the human condition (Fisher, 1984).

4.1.1. The community is supportive – “You are not alone”

One of the main messages of HeSeta is, as one employee avers, “if you’re in lack of a community, everyone’s welcome” (Interview 5). HeSeta wants to let people know they are not alone and hope to “provide this feeling that we’re there for you and sort of that we care about what’s happening with the LGBT community” (Interview 2). The organization is there to support and empower individuals, particularly those who feel they are isolated and alone. And everyone is welcome as they are, meaning “we’re here to support” so you can, “just be who you are, in a way how you want it” (Interview 6). A person’s identity or personal expression is not denied by joining HeSeta. These feelings of being supported and connected are of particular importance because:

> “a lot of clients also say that being in the groups and finding out there are other people who have similar experiences – of course everybody’s experience is unique – but finding out that there are other people who have been struggling with something that they have been struggling with and that they’re not the only person in the world who feels a certain way about certain things that in itself have given them a lot of courage” (Interview 1).

This message clearly resonated with the volunteer who stated, when she first connected with HeSeta as a group member, “It was really important for me to understand I’m not alone” (Interview 4). This support for one another based on common values and experiences has the potential to breed greater levels of reciprocity and honesty by empowering individuals to open up about their lived (and potentially shared) experiences.

However, this connection and support are there when an individual is ready for it. Many of the interviewees stated it can be quite difficult for individuals to first make the decision to come to HeSeta’s open activities because it’s like “a stamp in the head,” meaning “there’s a reason why you attended these events” and they may be “outing” themselves (in a way), which can be quite intimidating (Interview 2). For some, the “threshold is extremely high” to overcome (ibid.). HeSeta also knows individuals can also be struggling with many different elements (financial, physical, mental, etcetera) in life and its wish is “to make people know that they’re still welcome. And this thing [group, event, and/or activity] will be here, and they are welcome. And they can join when they are able. This thing is not going away or disappearing” (Interview 1). Just knowing that there is a group out there for someone or, “just the fact that they know that they would have had somewhere to go that day that can in itself be already a healing thing and an empowering thing, even though they wouldn’t be able to come there” (ibid.). There is a high degree of compassion and understanding in the obligations and expectations of being part of the HeSeta community because it is a community that often faces difficult and discriminatory encounters in normal, everyday life. Trust is not forced but built slowly over time.

Identification (with HeSeta) is also not linked purely to accepting a minority identity. The community is "supporting each person who comes here from their own point of view, and from their own wishes" (Interview 1). No one is forced to accept a label. If there is an overarching identity as part of HeSeta, it is as an empowered and active member of society who "know what their rights are" rather than merely a vulnerable minority within society (Interview 1). They are often vulnerable members of society but they do not have to be solely defined by their social stratification. The community they create is meant to help elevate (or equalize) their status. As it clearly states on HeSeta's website, in the section entitled "toimintaa" (or action/activity in English), "in all the community activities focus is on existing resources, which are strengthened through a positive, supportive, solution-oriented atmosphere and action". HeSeta emphasizes constructive action towards a certain goal and as they are human they are not without natural resources to enact change. The individuals have agency and an even greater amount of it when they use it collectively, constructively and positively. People are stronger together. It is apt that the theme for Pride this year is "liike" or movement in English. The right to equality is a movement. It is a movement connected globally. It is an action taken together.

HeSeta, like most nonprofits, often lacks resources, particularly financial ones. They also require support (from many different avenues). Therefore, the community is not just supportive of individuals but it also supportive of HeSeta. There was a lengthy exchange between HeSeta and a private individual on their Helsinki Pride Week Facebook page, with the individual heavily criticizing HeSeta's post about promoting businesses that will support Helsinki Pride this year. The person argued that these connections to businesses have "strings attached," which dilute the original message of Pride and (potentially) makes it merely a "carnival". HeSeta's response was understanding and open to discussion (at a later date and in-person) but the organization highlighted the practical need for funding to be able to ensure the safety (and enjoyment) of all the participants of Helsinki Pride. Two other private individuals came to the defense of HeSeta. The message is that HeSeta staff cannot do it all alone (nor should they). One staff member avers:

> “I feel a lot of support. I feel a power because basically we have a lot of work and all volunteers do it for free… it feels really good and it feels like you immediately understand that it’s like your people and you can trust them” (Interview 6).

This support for one another can build a greater sense of trust, an understanding that there are people looking out for you and who care. This trust can foster more action together, which can facilitate HeSeta’s mission, stated on their website, to “reduce the loneliness of lgbtiq* people, support inclusion and strengthen overall well-being.” It requires a strong, supportive community. This does not mean an individual cannot be critical of HeSeta but it should be constructive and based on norms of reciprocity and a willingness to explore, discuss, and cooperate together.

4.1.2. The community is diverse

The organization and its community are supportive of diversity because diversity is the essence of the organization. The “LGBTIQ plus, plus, plus” community has never been nor will it ever be a homogenous group of individuals (Interview 1). People’s individuality does not need to separate them from the group but rather it is what makes them a part of it. As one staff member avers, “diversity is very diverse… And that’s the way it should be” (ibid.). The community is defined by a high degree of reciprocity by treating other fellow humans the same way you would wish to be treated (with respect, fairness, and dignity).

> “For some people it might be very empowering to have their own word for their identity but for many people they just identify as diverse and they might not want to or might not be able to put it into words their identity,” and, “it’s important that we keep it sort of open enough and diverse enough” (ibid.).

Respecting an individual's privacy and choice of expression is essential to forming a safe and functioning community. This is why it is important to have shared norms and expectations of behavior. The overarching set of values can bring heterogeneous people together.

The volunteer proudly stated, "I am part of the rainbow family" (Interview 4). "There are many little groups inside the rainbow flag" but there is a sort of understanding between them and "when I see somebody with the rainbow flag somewhere in the city I every time smile because I know the other person is of the same group. I'm quite proud of it" (ibid.). This statement gives some credence to the notion that people can "bond" categorically even if they have never met (Davis, 2014). Moreover, being a part of this diverse community has helped the volunteer become more "openminded" because greater information and experiences with different sexual and gender minorities allowed for it (Interview 4). Messages on social media do not shy away from this diversity but instead embrace and celebrate it as clearly seen in posts, such as, "Hyvää moninaisten naisten päivää!" ("Happy diverse women's day" in English) on March 8th, 2019; or in the promotion of Season film festival (and the film Carmen and Lola) because it encourages discussions around gender, identity, and the plurality of voices/narratives.

Diversity is also embraced in the creation of specialized sexual minorities groups and events. These groups, activities and/or events support opportunities for individuals to formulate bonding social capital with individuals who they might perceive as sharing more similar gender expressions, identities and/or experiences. However, it is important to note that even within these specialized groups there will not (and cannot) be complete homogeneity.

4.1.3. The community is inclusive

Having a diverse community requires greater inclusivity to accommodate and bring together heterogeneous individuals (even within supposed homogenous groups). Therefore, HeSeta "is not some place that would be, for example, just for gay people but this is truly for all the people who are diverse when it comes to sexuality or gender" (Interview 1). HeSeta offers several different peer-to-peer activities, events, and groups. HeSeta in its strategy policy insists strengthening the “peer-to-peer community activities, rainbow-themed youth work, and Together groups” is an important strategy to build communality because it provides opportunities for “inclusion, networking, and empowerment”. These diverse groups are promoted heavily on social media and their webpage.

The community envisioned by HeSeta is not merely for official, paying members or “people who physically come here to our [HeSeta’s] place” (Interview 1). “It’s not only about the actors in the organization that are now there and what they want, but it’s kind of like a lot of people who are not actively involved,” especially those who need support and information (Interview 3). As highlighted above, individuals may be struggling financially or afraid to openly identify themselves as a sexual minority. HeSeta’s wish is that people understand that “that every person who feels that they are in the community in any way, they are the community” (Interview 1). Facebook posts often remind all individuals are welcome not just those identified as “members.”

The previous statement/quote also means that the community is not exclusively for people who identify as a sexual minority. Many of the staff also hope the community will understand, especially with the name change and the new online materials, that “everybody who stands behind our values and mission” can and are a part of the community (Interview 3). This includes (straight or cisgender) allies who stand for HeSeta’s goals and values. As one employee insisted, “Many say, “can I be a member even if I’m not LGBT?” And it’s funny because people are donating to Amnesty, even though they don’t feel that they’re victims of human trafficking” (ibid.).

However, only donating to a cause does not mean an individual is part of and included in the community. HeSeta’s aspiration to make the community inclusive to all (including allies) is not always made clear in their online communication. It is still very much geared towards individuals who identify as a sexual minority, which is entirely understandable. The organization is founded on the mission to empower sexual minorities often excluded and discriminated against within the mainstream. A space is needed for them to come together and have greater power in numbers. However, the ultimate goal is to be included in the wider society and not to sequester themselves to a separate community. This is why the name change has the potential to be even more inclusive without overshadowing its principal purpose. It is designed to be “more inclusive in a way and more positive and more empowering than Seta” (Interview 3). Pride is typically synonymous with the queer community but everyone can be proud of being themselves and be proud for supporting, advocating, and promoting equality for all. The connection to shared values and goals that encompass a wider community (which goes beyond narrow, traditional identities) supports greater formation of bridging social capital.

The Helsinki Pride, organized by HeSeta, is a great example of an event that can connect individuals across different lines because, as it is described in HeSeta’s 2019 action plan, “Pride is not just a party, it is also a caring and courageous act.” One staff member avowed, a self-proclaimed controversial statement, that Helsinki Pride “it’s also for straight people and I think right now it’s their turn to go with pride” because it is not only about visibility but it is also about action and society changing and becoming more accepting (interview 6). Pride can be the great equalizer of diverse individuals who share common values of equality and justice. Last year it brought 100,000 people together to celebrate sexual diversity. The question is: can there be more activities like it, maybe not on the same scale, throughout the year? It is clear that resources are an issue (as it is for many nonprofits) and priorities must be made.

The community is also not limited to one’s nationality. It is for those individuals who are also “outside of Finland.” (Interview 3) HeSeta tries to connect to a wider, more global queer community. This is evident in the Helsinki Pride theme of 2019, movement, which celebrates and honors the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising and attempts to link the HeSeta community to a common, shared (queer) history of action and responsibility. They also highlight in their action plan that they are an internationally recognized and active actor under the umbrella of several organizations, which include ILGA-Europe (European region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association), IGLYO (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Organisation), TGEU (Transgender Europe), EPOA (European Pride Organisers Association) and of course Seta.

It is important to note, that one staff member asserted that HeSeta does not create a shared identity. It was simply important to "get something about what we do that's good for you" (Interview 5). However, this idea is still connected to shared goals and values. Ultimately, the community is there for "everyone who is ready to join" and advance its goals (Interview 6).

4.2. HeSeta is a safe space

HeSeta is also presented as an approachable organization because it is dedicated to providing a safe space for all. On the website, under the activities section (or "toimintaa" in Finnish), HeSeta maintains that at the meetings individuals are not obligated to participate in any activity that makes them feel uncomfortable. Equality, safety, and confidentiality are the principal rules of conduct in all the group activities, which are (as mentioned previously) displayed promptly on HeSeta's main meeting room wall and discussed before each meeting. Equality is defined as "the right to define or not to define oneself and the right to equality." Safety is "caring and taking responsibility for yourself and others." Confidentiality is "the right for confidential and respectful encounter." These elements create a sense of responsibility for all involved, not just oneself. The community is diverse and to be inclusive it must be respectful towards differences and intersectional experiences and identities. This is important because "there's a lot of people who belong to minorities, and still can be discriminatory to other people" (Interview 3). One employee hopes to provide more "clear frames" that "communicate about diversity" and "intersectionality" (i.e. recognition of interconnecting experiences and identities of social stratification) within the community. How HeSeta is able to create a safer space is connected to its professionalism, expertise, and effectiveness.

4.2.1. Professionalism

A certain level of professionalism and care is expected of this organization because there are "high expectations that this [HeSeta] is a place where they [sexual minorities] are not discriminated" (Interview 3). As many of the staff members are trained as social workers there is “basic professional ethics” centered around trust, confidentially, and safety (Interview 1). One staff member insists that for HeSeta, or any nonprofit organization for that matter, to build trust, “first we [HeSeta] have to be worthy of trust and be trustworthy, and then we [HeSeta] can communicate that trustworthiness.” (ibid.). It is not just in the words but also in the actions of the organization because “it gains trust that we do the good work, and everybody can see it” (Interview 5). HeSeta asserts that creating practical community rules that all have to commit to before anyone can be part of a group is paramount to building trust and honesty and ensuring everyone’s safety. Being transparent in communication, such as providing yearly reports and strategy statements online and talking about professional ethics in one-to-one client meetings, is also vital to an organization “being worthy of trust” (Interview 1).

The staff consider themselves as “professionals, sort of pioneers of this field” within Finland (Interview 2). As one individual stated, “there is a professional framework to every activity we do”, which helps HeSeta to stand apart from other organizations (Interview 3). This ability to pioneer and forge new ways ahead is believed to allow the organization to support the most vulnerable members of society. In HeSeta’s 2019 action plan, the organization asserts that professionalism guarantees stronger community activities because the knowledge and skills of their “highly educated” employees enable them to provide appropriate information on and expert understanding of the diversity of gender and sexual orientation and expression. This facet of the “safety” narrative demonstrates fidelity by connecting to the common value that people in positions of authority have a great responsibility to those they serve and support and if they fail or are seen as dishonest there can be a considerable breakdown in trust. However, messages of professionalism (expertise, authority, etcetera) also have the potential to foster a more symbolic sense of legitimacy in an organization’s activities (i.e. symbolic capital) if they are bolstered by words alone and targeted predominantly to the NPO’s donors, funders and/or volunteers (Gill and Wells, 2014). To HeSeta’s credit, the organization helps to mitigate this potentiality by having strong connections to their local community/target groups and placing greater importance on community building and the self-empowerment of sexual minorities.

4.2.2. Expertise

Expertise was a common word used by the staff (in the interviews) as it is the second value outlined in HeSeta's strategy policy. The organization is not just "using some vague, pretty slogans" to build trust (Interview 1). The information and support provided by HeSeta are bolstered by their professional training, skills and "the facts" (ibid.). However, these "facts" are not based solely on abstract studies but also in experiences with people. As one staff asserted, "We base our – what is asiantuntijuus? – expertise in many parts of having actual connection to people" (Interview 3). The strategy policy stresses that HeSeta's expertise relies heavily on strong community work, which will be developed by "quickly and boldly grasping the themes from the community." The activities and events offered by HeSeta are developed in accordance with the specific needs identified within the community. The staff indicated that they "gather feedback regularly" and adjust the group activities accordingly (Interview 2). This mutual construction of activities can promote a greater sense of community involvement for all individuals involved.

HeSeta's expertise is also linked closely to the staff's ability to address the well-being and psychoeducational needs of its community, particularly among the most vulnerable. For example, in HeSeta's 2019 action plan they place considerable emphasis on supporting the psychosocial (as well as legal) needs of asylum seekers and refugees belonging to sexual and gender minorities because perceived discrimination and persecution, trauma experiences and/or shame related to one's own identity or preferences make it challenging for people to feel safe, access their rights and navigate the asylum process successfully. This ability is what HeSeta believes allows it to stand out as an organization but it does not mean it can be done all alone. Each staff member (and volunteer) "have different kinds of expertise," which they can exchange and share between each other but also between other actors and organizations (Interview 1). As the organization is still "sort of pioneering everything" that it organizes, it is important to build connections to other experts, knowledgeable actors and likeminded individuals, so the organization can grow and build upon their knowledge to develop superior support for their community (Interview 3). This focus of knowledge sharing is important because it can promote more effective group activities and social capital formation between different organizations.

4.2.3. Effectiveness

Effectiveness or (vaikuttavuus in Finnish) is the third (and final) value identified in HeSeta's strategy policy. As it is in the expertise component, there is considerable importance placed on sharing knowledge and skills and working cooperatively with other authorities, organizations, and experts to foster greater effectiveness. Volunteers and other partners/actors are crucial to an organization's success because they help support and expand HeSeta's operations, especially when financial resources are limited. Moreover, several of the staff in the interviews asserted that the activities that generally attract or encourage the most participation are when "visitors" come (Interview 2) or when people are "able to get new information" (Interview 1) on topics relevant to the community, for example, civil rights and sex education. Multiple posts on their official and Helsinki Pride Week Facebook pages support community building by highlighting other events organized and blogs/articles written by different actors and organizations who share similar values of justice and diversity. With greater connection to others, there can be increased awareness around issues affecting sexual minorities and how to combat them to ensure greater safety, well-being, inclusion, and equality for all. Effective actions can garner greater trust in an actor's ability to ensure promises (such as safety and confidentiality) are upheld, especially when there are other strong actors helping to support the organization.

The focus of effectiveness is not solely linked to the narrative of a safe space. In regard to their communication, all of the staff indicated a need to be more effective in their communication. One staff member averred that effective communication is to "bring out the experiences that people can understand, even though they're not the same… but it's something that most people can relate to when we talk about discrimination, or loneliness or such" (Interview 3). It tries to connect to people's common humanity. Providing a sort of "call to action" afterwards to help people understand how they can move forward with the new information provided is also seen as crucial to effective communication (ibid.). Explaining the "why" of an action/activity and not just the "what" of it also helps to highlight the importance of the organization's work more effectively. The majority of the content on HeSeta's social media merely outlines what HeSeta does instead of telling why they do it or what they can do with this new information moving forward. Understanding the why of one's actions adds a certain moral weight to them. Ultimately, HeSeta's hopes the changes will transform their communication to be more effective.

4.3. HeSeta is an independent organization

This specific narrative is not as widely circulated or overtly asserted as the others in HeSeta's communication channels but it is still an important one to discuss because not only was it a strong motivation for the upcoming name change but it could also have the potential to affect the development of social capital. Most of the staff hope the new changes will get rid of the common "mental image that we [HeSeta] would just be something that's under Seta and not something independent with our own mission and our own strategy and all of that" (Interview 1). The new changes will ensure clients and community members will be sent to the right place and HeSeta will gain the recognition it deserves (in the minds of people and the media) in the organization and planning of Helsinki Pride.

For HeSeta, it is vital to have a "visible and distinctive profile," as outlined in their strategy plan, to improve the organization's operations. Increasing the organization's visibility and recognition allows for increased membership and funding, which is vital since HeSeta does not receive any funding from Seta. In addition, as Helsinki Pride Week expands and attracts more and more people it is important that HeSeta receives the proper credit because Pride is "a huge visibility" for HeSeta (Interview 3). It is a crucial part of HeSeta's "käyntikortti" (or business card in English), which helps the organization highlight the validity and importance of their work to funders (ibid.).

With this new found independence, however, HeSeta does not wish to sever all ties because there is undeniable value in being connected to Seta because "it's a good brand… it's seen as the number one in LGBT issues" (Interview 3). Several staff members indicated that there has been some "hateful" criticism of the name change among "active" people in the community asserting that HeSeta is "destroying" or diminishing the value of Seta's legacy and history (Interview 2). There is also expected to be some criticism with the organization's new logo, which does not use the rainbow colors. Rainbows are synonymous with the queer community and it is a major identifier for people who identify as a sexual minority. This was evident in the volunteer's interview. This could potentially be perceived as another (unnecessary) withdrawal from the rich history of sexual minority advocacy.

At present, there is little communication of the name change on their official Facebook page. Only one post is made about the upcoming name on the official Facebook page and the occasional reference to the new name on the Helsinki Pride Week Facebook page and the Helsinki Pride webpage/blog. This is partly because the website and other material are still under construction. However, the upcoming changes may come as a surprise to the community, especially the less "active" ones, with unwanted repercussions. The older supporters' identities could be potentially be challenged with the new changes. This change also risks the identity of HeSeta and its present levels of trust.

Nevertheless, this is all speculation at present. HeSeta has faith that the upcoming changes will be mostly positive and any negative effects will only be in the short term. Ultimately, knowing the impact of these changes requires more time as well as further research with a different set of data to analyze. Creating a new conception undoubtedly has the potential to upset the old guard but if it is successful it can foster a new, possibly larger and more inclusive community. It is a delicate balance to create.

5. Conclusion

Social capital theory highlights the value of social networks in encouraging cooperation and facilitating change. A communicative approach to social capital highlights the significance of communication in supporting understanding and connections in social interactions. The narrative paradigm is one facet of communication theory but it has considerable pertinence because stories both define and connect us. When narratives are "experienced, they are constitutive of people, community, and the world" (Fisher, 1989, 56). Narratives foster social capital by establishing reasons to connect and interact, creating basic responsibilities to one another and encouraging action together. Normative influences also largely underscore the creation of social capital (Mathwick et al., 2008). Shared norms, values, obligations, expectations, and identification are fundamental to creating and sustaining both narratives and networks because they help to shape and coordinate individuals' behavior and identities (Davis, 2014). These connections can give rise to trust, honesty, and reciprocity when individuals are not solely defined by their self-interests and become part of a group, network and/or community.

HeSeta's narrative that the organization is a community is a crucial message because it permeates all of its goals, strategies, and actions. Fostering communality can help to create a sense of belonging and when individuals are connected they no longer feel they are alone. This is particularly important for individuals who are marginalized in mainstream society. HeSeta's conception of community is not purely symbolic because the organization offers multiple activities that encourage face-to-face interactions and implement practical elements to ensure feelings of safety and togetherness are created for its community members in the many diverse activities, groups, and events they organize. An emphasis on diversity and inclusivity ensures a wider net is cast but, as HeSeta acknowledges, can also cause tension because there is "always somebody who feels that they're left out" when HeSeta has a specific or targeted focus in its advocacy work (Interview 3). Nevertheless, it can also establish a larger sense of "we," as the volunteer indicated, creating a new normalcy and more open-mindedness. It is a fine line to walk and requires careful consideration of the messages created.

As Eastis (1998) insists, a voluntary association or an NPO in itself does not automatically guarantee social capital will be produced. The complexities of social capital and organizational types must be considered. This dissertation argues narratives are vital to consider as well. Making "community" a principal value is of considerable relevance to other NPOs because the narrative(s) an organization prioritizes not only defines the organization itself but also its subsequent actions. It is arguable that to ensure social capital is fostered there must be a commitment to community building with concrete actions to support it. This assertion is not a normative judgment of HeSeta's particular definition of community as the correct or most appropriate definition but rather highlights the value of prioritizing social connections if an organization hopes to foster social capital.

Elements of HeSeta's safety narrative, such as the three codes of conduct and greater connections and knowledge sharing with other actors and organizations, have clear potential to develop social capital but some elements pertaining to professionalism, expertise, and effectiveness arguably have the potential to be a form of symbolic capital rather than social capital for the organization because it situates and identifies HeSeta as an authority on issues regarding sexual minorities above others making it more appealing to donors/funders. As stated previously, HeSeta helps to mitigate this potentiality by not only having strong connections to their local community and target groups but also by placing greater emphasis on community building and the self-empowerment of sexual minorities through community events, such as Helsinki Pride and group activities. However, more national or international NPOs (with less tangible connections to their target groups) might need to take greater care in discerning how their narratives foster a "rhetorical endeavor" of authority and superiority, which creates messages that primarily or only "ring true" to their volunteers and donors (Gill and Wells, 2014). Constructing an image of legitimacy to promote fundraising, as Fernández-Abellí (2016) avers, could potentially disenfranchise and even "dehumanize" the individuals the organization wishes to help by primarily labeling them as "a vulnerable other which must be saved" (372) and in turn reinforces (historical) hierarchical and unequal structures (Dempsey, 2009). All NPOs could benefit from evaluating how their communication, their messages potentially foster symbolic capital (over social capital), which could negatively impact their target group and subsequently their mission and goals. It is important to question: Which stakeholders are NPOs primarily speaking to in their communication? Which voices from the community are highlighted or elevated in the NPOs' stories/messages? What type of actions (e.g. donating, purchasing merchandise, calling for volunteers, etcetera) do the organizations predominantly advocate?

As a grassroots organization with experiences, activities and group events rooted in their local community, Putnam (2000) would aver HeSeta has greater potential to cultivate social capital than nationally (and internationally) mobilized organizations. HeSeta's (actual, tangible) connections to the community make it appear more approachable than a national organization such as Seta, which focuses largely on (national) political activism. As one employee noted, "there's a lot of people who don't feel that Seta is an organization that would be accessible or that would be close to people" (Interview 3). However, HeSeta's desire to be more visibly independent of Seta could affect their ability to foster social capital with its existing members because it makes a clear visual break from the Seta namesake and the rainbow imagery of the (global) queer community. This bold move has the potential to backfire because it is a big change that affects the whole community. It would be beneficial for the organization, and the staff agreed, to communicate more clearly why HeSeta has made this decision to appease existing members whilst simultaneously attracting new ones. All NPOs face risks when making considerable changes that affect their identity and connection to existing community members. This is a decision not to be made lightly but it is also not a decision that is necessarily always a negative. It depends on the context and the reasons behind it.

Through engagement with social capital theory and the narrative paradigm, this research hopes to encourage organizations to appreciate how their messages affect their ability to connect people. Just like social networks, narratives have value and weight in social interactions. These connections are important because they are needed to encourage further action together and the goal for most nonprofits is not to sustain the status quo but to enact change.

5.1. Contributions

A theoretical contribution of this study is that it adds to the (little) phenomenological research around NPOs, communication, and social capital (Lewis, 2005). This dissertation also takes a unique and pertinent stance by connecting social capital theory, particularly Putnam (2000), to the narrative paradigm (Fisher, 1984) in its investigation of how an NPO's narratives foster social capital. In addition, because of the chosen case study, this research also adds to the lack of knowledge pertaining to social capital, sexual minorities, and NPOs. The reach of this study also hopes to extend beyond academia by supporting the development of more critical and mindful formations of organizational narratives in NPOs' communication to their stakeholders and community to help encourage greater interaction and collective action. It encourages NPOs to prioritize social capital in its communication and actions if the organization hopes to foster it.

5.2. Limitations

The research was carried out with great care but the conditions were not always optimal. There were several limitations pertaining to this research. As mentioned previously, the limited number of available interviewees, scheduling conflicts, challenges in language translations, and the outdated website affected the quality of the data collection, altered the original research question and the dissertation's direction as well as limited the study's final conclusions. This research is only a first step in appreciating how communicative practices give rise to social capital.

There is a strong basis for HeSeta's narratives potential to give rise to social capital but this research does not provide sufficient evidence to determine how much it creates or if its potential is greater than other NPOs. It is also understood that nonprofit organizations encompass a wide range of fields, social missions, and organizational types. Elements that work for HeSeta's development of social capital may not be so easily transferable to another very different NPO. Ultimately, this research is descriptive rather than prescriptive in how narratives can foster social capital. More research would need to be carried out to determine which messages resonate more with community members and in turn fosters greater social capital. More research is also needed to gain a deeper understanding of the wider complexities of social capital (even its negative qualities) and the role of communication (in its many forms) in its development.

5.3. Future Research

As this was a beginning attempt at translating social capital theory into communication theory it is important to briefly discuss further avenues of research. An obvious focus would be to examine how different messages resonate with the community members and highlight which ones connect the most to determine if it correlates to more tangible outcomes, such as collective action and/or increased membership. However, it would also be highly interesting to examine how an organization's changes to its name, logo and online content affect the development of social capital. How does the organization's name change and rebranding affect the levels of trust? Are the effects in the short term or long term? It would also be interesting to further examine how the shared values promoted by an NPO are perceived and accepted by all its community members? Do the stakeholders feel they contribute to the community's shared norms and values? How does this perception affect feelings of belonging and togetherness?

There is also potential in assessing the abilities of different communication vehicles in developing social capital. Does face-to-face interaction play a greater role in fostering social capital than activity online, such as websites or social networking, as Putnam (2000) avers, or computer-mediated communication gaining greater relevancy in today's day and age? It would be interesting to further examine Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) three classifications of social media communication, i.e. information, communication, and action, in connection with social capital theory to examine the researcher's hypothesis that organizational communication functions as a "ladder." Moreover, the primary focus of this research was on external communication but, as many of the HeSeta staff indicated, the flow and ease of internal communication is vital to the effectiveness and functioning of an organization. How does greater and more effective internal communication affect the creation of social capital within an organization and beyond it?

As the research was limited by its scope and time scale, more research is needed to expand upon and support the tentative conclusions made within this dissertation but this does not negate its value. Ultimately, this dissertation does not provide definite solutions to the complex topics and issues presented above but rather an alternative pathway to examining and understanding the importance of social networks, community, identity, and collective action.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Questions for Staff

1. When did you join HeSeta? Why did you join this organization?
2. What is HeSeta's main communication channel? What are the other channels?
3. What is HeSeta's social media policy? How does the organization moderate internet-mediated communication? Do you have a policy for replying to comments/messages?
4. What is the main message (or messages) of the organization?
5. In your opinion, how well does the organization convey these messages/narratives?
6. How do these messages motivate you?
7. How do you feel it resonates with others, particularly your members and volunteers?
8. What makes HeSeta's communication trustworthy?
9. Who is a part of the HeSeta community?
10. What are the main forums or events staff and members meet each other face-to-face?
11. What are the main forums or events members meet each other face-to-face?
12. How important are these face-to-face interactions in relation to other kinds of communication?
13. Have you had any problems in attendance to different events arranged by HeSeta? Examples? Why?
14. Does HeSeta promote a shared culture/identity for its members?
15. Do members share a part in creating HeSeta's narrative? Its culture?
16. Which activities encourage the most participation? Why do you think that is the case?
17. Do you know what kinds of interactions your members appreciate? Have they suggested something?

18. How does HeSeta's activities encourage individuals to interact together and exercise voice? How does the organization's communication strategies help to achieving this?

19. In your opinion, how important is it for HeSeta to build trust with its members, volunteers, etc.?

20. How well do you feel your organization communicates this trust?

21. What are the organization's strategies to increase trust among individuals?

Questions for Volunteers

1. When did you start volunteering for HeSeta?

2. How often do you volunteer?

3. What do you do as a volunteer?

4. Who do you interact with mostly?

5. Has your participation increased or decreased in the time you have been a member? Why?

6. Do you follow HeSeta on social media? Do you feel it is a place you can connect and communication with others?

7. Why are you volunteering for this organization?

8. What is the main benefit of joining this organization?

9. What does being a member of HeSeta mean to you?

10. Is HeSeta apart of your identity?

11. Would you say you trust HeSeta? Why?

12. Have you had any doubts related to the trustworthiness of HeSeta's activities? If yes, in what sense?

13. When you volunteer and help HeSeta (or other members of the organization) do you believe this helps you down the line?

14. Do you feel you have a voice in this organization?

15. Does HeSeta create a shared culture or identity for its members?

16. Do you have any other identities that comes into conflict with your identity to HeSeta?

17. How do you deal or cope with this conflict? Does HeSeta help in anyway?

18. Has being with the organization influenced your views or actions in any way?

19. Do you feel you are more political engaged while/after working with HeSeta?