This paper explores the relationship between the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender movement and the United States Government in Washington, District of Columbia. It makes the argument that the LGBT movement has established itself in the political spatialities found in Washington D.C. in order to create pro-equality social reform. The paper identifies a new trend in the LGBT movement whereby the movement uses networks to manoeuvre in political spaces and places to bring about political change. The data used to establish these findings in the research consist of interviews with former and current Members of the United States Congress, Senate and House senior staff and leading LGBT organisations based in Washington D.C. The analysis of the data is presented in three ways: how LGBT movement networks are situated in political institutions, how inter-organisational networks collaborate and how LGBT movement networks move in political spatialities.

INTRODUCTION

New social movements are becoming ever more engaged with the political life of the State and becoming involved with federal governments (Nicholls, 2008; Nicholls, 2009). This research project looks directly at this relationship between social movements and the federal government, through the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) movement in the United States of America. The aim of this research is to analyse how the LGBT movement utilises and establishes social movement networks in political spaces and places, in order to enable the LGBT movement to create political and social reform which brings about equality for LGBT people. There are three key objectives this research will focus on in order to fulfil this aim.

The first objective is to understand how the LGBT movement situates networks within political institutions and how they work through collective action to create social reform. This involves analysing the LGBT Equality Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives by looking at its structures, its leadership and the actions the caucus takes to introduce LGBT equality in law-making. The second objective is to discover how the LGBT movement is comprised of a wider network of organisations and activists, and how they form inter-organizational networks and coalitions to advance the movements capabilities so that they can influence the political environment to become more pro-equality. This analysis focuses on how inter-organisational relations create a sharing of resources that strengthen other organisations and allow the movement to access political spaces. The analysis will look at how organisations in the LGBT movement create networks and engage with other organisations to build up pressure on political spaces. The research also investigates how networking with other activist groups can strengthen the abilities of smaller social movement organisations. The second objective focuses on key organisations in the LGBT movement in Washington D.C., which are The Victory Fund, the Human Rights Campaign and the National Centre for Transgender Equality. The third objective is to examine how the LGBT movement manoeuvres through political spatialities so as best to achieve its goals. This involves examining the impact the LGBT Equality Caucus has on the United States Congress and how the LGBT movement has scaled up its efforts to have an LGBT presence in the United States Senate. Moreover, this analysis will examine how Washington D.C. is a city that encourages the LGBT movement organisations and activists to collaborate due to its relational and convergence characteristics. The interviews featured in this research are analysed in relation to the academic literature on social movement networks in order to answer these aims and objectives. The qualitative analysis will demonstrate how important it is for social movements like the LGBT movement to engage with political and governmental institutions in order to create social change nationally in the context of the United States.
LITERATURE REVIEW OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT AND NETWORK THEORY

Social Movements
The LGBT movement can be understood through social movement theory and more specifically network theory within that discipline. With regard to the LGBT movement and its relationship with the politics of Washington D.C., there are three key aspects of network theory that need to be understood. Firstly, how networks work internally and how they are structured; secondly, how networks form and work with inter-organisational coalitions; and finally, how networks create and manoeuvre in various spatialities. Social movement theory outlines that movements aim to create a change in wider society and between civil society and the State. In the literature, there is a difference between new social movements and old social movements. Old social movements follow the labor movement whereas new social movements take a different discourse that focuses on “quality of life; equality; individual self-realism; human rights; and democratic participation” (Hetherington, 1998, p. 33). The LGBT movement can be identified as a new social movement because its focuses primarily on the rights of the LGBT community rather than on labor issues and union activism. Network theory can be used to understand how this new social movement goes about achieving these rights and social change for the LGBT community.

Networks & Imagineers
Many geographers have engaged with social movement research through applying network theory in order to analyse and understand the dynamics of social movements and how networks manoeuvre across various spatialities. Activists in social movements can be understood across social movement literature as a network of people who are connected by interpersonal beliefs, causes or political ideologies (Routledge, Nativel, & Cumbersa, 2006). The network can be either informal or formal (e.g. an organization). They consist of relationships and collective meanings which are not just based on shared interests but also shared experiences (Schlosberg, 1999). Bosco (2001) asserts that these relationships “bind social movements and activists strategically and contribute to sustain collective action” (p. 308). The purpose of networks is to build and develop collective action to further advance the causes of that social movement. The relationships between activists are key to shaping collective identity within the network because they further unify commitment to the activists’ core goals (Diani, 2000). Networks, therefore, consist of a united group of people who share political; beliefs, identities, and ambitions, which coalesce around their actions to resolve their inequalities. Bosco’s (2001) research of Madres de la Plaza de Mayo (Argentinian mothers seeking human rights concerning their missing children) analyses these networks and explains how the unity of the network is maintained through emotional bonds which the mothers have in their shared struggle. These shared personal connections of oppression allow the individuals to create solidarities between one another and create and shape new forms of resistance (Featherstone, 2005; Featherstone, 2007). Networks are built up around relationships and common social aspirations.

Social movement networks are more than just relationship connections: they are political action groups. These action groups utilise both social and material resources to achieve their shared mission. By understanding the “socio-material” elements within the network we can recognise how they can become strong actors in space (Müller, 2012). The socio-material elements of a network represent the internal workings of the social movement. Routledge, Cumbers, and Nativel (2007) argue that the internal mechanism of social movements consists of coordination, communication, information sharing, resource mobilization and solidarity. They make the point that political action within networks depends on communication and information exchange, which becomes the source for creating an internal reality. The practical aspects of the network also function alongside the social aspects, particularly shared identities and experiences. The network is ultimately a form of mobilization that is human and material. Networks are seen to independently become an efficient way to pool resources and exchange tactics, ideas and strategies (Schlosberg, 1999). Therefore, the network uses multiple techniques to become active in its political pursuits. The human and the practical apparatus which the network uses is essential for mobilising and creating social change. Analysing the human and material aspects of the LGBT movement will provide a clearer view on the functions of the movement and how it meets its goals.

Networks are also comprised of different structures which influence how the social movement mobilises action and how the movement relates to the activists. There are two main forms of network structure: ‘hierarchical’ and ‘horizontal’. Both can have a major impact on producing political and social change. The hierarchical networks follow a verticalist approach to their operation with formal organisational structures similar to political parties and trade unions where the relations in the network are more centralised around the leadership, and strategies tend to focus on capturing both supporters and power to the cause (Routledge et al. 2007). Nicholls and Beaumont (2004) suggest that hierarchical network structures can be more effective than networks with less formal structures because they have a greater formal capacity to utilise the collective powers of activists, enhancing their capabilities to achieve their goals, which is more difficult to achieve when the network structure is more horizontal. Horizontal structures can still follow Edelman’s (2005) understandings of network structures as open, with the ability to expand and have new actors become integrated into them. This means that an open network structure can create opportunities for enlarging collective action. The type of structure the LGBT movement engages with will establish the basis from which it operates.

Horizontal network structure takes a decentralised approach to networks where there is no direct leadership, instead the focus is
on interconnection between activists, the “network strives to create zones of encounter, shared learning and solidarity” (Routledge et al., 2006). Routledge et al. (2006) state that the interconnections within a network are dependent on easily available information, which is a key component for how horizontal structures work. Moreover, there is no singular decision making in these types of networks so they rely on shared decision making processes, with the aim to create “strategic unity” and cohesion (Wolfson, 2013). This type of decision making puts a greater emphasis on what Nicholls (2008) calls ‘soft infrastructure’, meaning the bonds, ideologies, symbols and relationships the activists experience collectively have an impact on the processes of decision making. The aim of the horizontal network is to establish a system of equal shared authority and participation among activists so that there is no disparity between activists. Whether the network structure is hierarchical or horizontal each social movement needs a structure which is appropriate to the movement and to the social change it seeks to accomplish. Often networks use a mix of both hierarchal and horizontal structures to organise and maintain the network.

No matter whether social movement networks are horizontal or vertical in structure all have established leaders of some sort within the network. Routledge et al. (2007) call leaders in networks ‘imagineers’, particularly networks which are horizontal in structure. These imagineers are either a formal or informal elite which show leadership characteristics of charisma, vigour, commitment and have ability to mould the movement’s philosophies and direction. Routledge et al. (2007) say that the politics of networks are delicate and complicated and that imagineers form a level of cohesion by influencing the construction of the networks identity and set the agenda. These leaders often have to rely on their strong inter-personal relationship with other actors in the network to achieve this. Routledge (2008) states that imagineers are the driving force for the internal culture of the movement because they can delegate roles, enrol other activists and movements and can utilise resources. Routledge (2008) also explains how the way they arrange the relationship between social and material resources have an impact on the effectiveness of the action taken. Therefore, leaders within the network have a significant role and influence of power in the network and can impact the type of outcomes the movement is seeking to achieve. Moreover, imagineers can significantly influence activists and can use their position of power to engage with and mobilise the activists and members of other movements.

Emotion is one such tool they can employ to achieve this. Bosco (2007) explains how emotion can be used/used to activate members of a network towards collective action. He discusses how emotions between activists are shared and influence their collective identities, suggesting that they are an essential part of what makes people relate to one another. Bosco (2007) argues that these emotional assets can be used strategically to mobilise activists and can be used to create wider coalitions through space. These emotions and grievances are therefore central to social movements because they can establish the movement and can be a driving force for the movement’s momentum, actions and identities (Alexander, Giesen, & Mast, 2006). Leaders have significant social assets such as emotion at their disposal which they can use to move and drive the movement in a certain direction of social change.

Inter-Organisational Networks

Networks often expand to form inter-organizational networks where other organizations either within or outside of the social movement join the network or form a coalition with it. Galaskiewicz (1985) highlights three key motivations for these types of collaborations: “resource procurement and allocation, political advocacy and organizational legitimation”. This expansion of network relations can be either formal or informal, but the purpose is to expand the movement’s capabilities by sourcing multiple forms of power through various actors and they unite under common social objectives (Nicholls & Beaumont, 2004). Schlosberg (1999) discusses how the cross-fertilisation of networks and organisations can build bridges across a variety of communities and social causes, which allows for the exchange of diverse information, know-how, expertise, material resources and loyalty. Moreover, Wang and Soule (2012) highlight how important it is for social movements to be able to transfer important “diverse tactical repertoires” of knowledge, so that social movement organisations can observe and learn from one another. Diani and Bison (2004) make the point that informal networks generally engage in political action collectively as a result of shared identities. Mutual identities can be a benefit in inter-organizational relationships and dissimilar identities can be a hindrance. The key to developing a network with either other entities in the movement or with different actors is to bring them on board in a way that advances the capabilities of the network and creates a wider scope of solidarity.

A social movement which is made up of multiple organisations and various networks have power spread out in the form of a ‘web like structure’, which can create opportunities for developing inter-organisational relations particularly if the web structure is flexible (Schlosberg, 1999). Galaskiewicz (1985) points out that often many organisations have prior relations with each other before forming new coalitions. If this web of organisations and networks consolidates it can engage with the wider political opportunity structures in the landscape. Political opportunity structures can create a need for organisations to collaborate, which in turn will shape the collective strategies of the organisations as they utilise these political opportunities (Nicholls & Beaumont, 2004). However political opportunities are dependent on how open or closed a political system is (Hilson, 2002). If the political opportunity structure is open networks and organisations can place people in or close to state institutions, this has occurred in the LGBT movement in Seattle (Brown, 2008). The strategies inter-organisational networks develop collectively and the sharing resources can be the consequence of being situated in a fluctuating environment where political opportunities may arise or disappear spontaneously. Partnerships, therefore, have to adapt and develop
to meet these conditions (Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999). The flow of resources through partnerships, particularly when taking on potentially risky ventures, can be viscous, and so relations need to be dependent on ‘strong ties’ which allow for more durable, long lasting relationships (Rosenthal, Fingrutd, Ethier, Karant, & McDonald, 1985). When coalitions are formed to take on political opportunities they need to be united by bonds of trust in order for campaigns of social justice to be successful.

To create effective outcomes, inter-organisation relationship-building and governance relies on the sharing of people who are professional and are resourceful elites, who are well-placed in their field of expertise, and who are situated for alliance building (Davies, 2012). This type of networking is dynamic and has an element of risk as potential partners may be unsure about the consequences of forming a coalition and sharing resources (Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999). Therefore, the leaders in the network need to be the ones who steer the outcome of these relations. Leaders or key organisations can take on the similar position to that of ‘brokers’ who engage and bring other networks that are not necessarily associated with the movement into it, making the movement gather strength through diversity of resources and activists (Diani & McAdam, 2003). This type of networking is important particularly if the organisation has limited resources because this type of collaborative networking allows them to become more mobile, adaptable and professionally resourceful. Often these decisions are based on older alliances, meaning these alliances undergo adjustments to form new networks that share information, strategies, resources, personnel and planning (Gulati & Gargiulo, 1999). Moreover, they set a discourse whereby if new campaigns are formed these alliances and network connections can be called upon if necessary and can be adapted once again.

Network Spaces & Places

Networks that interact across places, spaces and scales do so through social relations. The social movement network itself is intrinsically spatially relational in its character given that activists themselves build connections with one another, Routledge et al. (2007) refer to these spaces as ‘zones of encounter’. Ward, Pickering, MacKinnon, and Featherstone (2010) understand relational spaces as open and in the process of becoming, through actions of actors in networks. Relational spaces and places are more fluid in their form of politics, where unified action is dependent on the relationships and connections individuals or organisations build between one another, this collective action can also create new forms of spatial politics (Davies, 2012). These political spaces can become spaces and places of contentious politics where dominant political discourses and positions of authority are challenged by these forms of collective action, which consequently produce an alternative form of politics which is counterhegemonic (Leitner, Sheppard, & Sziarto, 2008). Leither et al. (2008) also make the point that places and spaces of politics both shape and are shaped by social movement actions. They state that places and spaces where politics is carried out are layered with power and meaning which activist networks can utilise to their advantage and create new spaces of solidarity. Activists develop relations and build collective action in order to challenge the power discourses of certain spatialities. By changing the politics of that place they can create the social reform that the social movement aims to achieve.

Social movements build networks and relations across scales from the local, to the state, to the national and the international, in order to tap into the power, the scales hold by establishing new power relations or oppose existing ones (Leitner et al., 2008). Nicholls and Beaumont (2004) explain that social movements move across spatial scales so that they become more effective in achieving their goals, which they implement by making adjustments to the positionality of the network or their strategies. Nicholls and Beaumont (2004) make the suggestion that social movements are rescaling their activities to governmental levels, that strategies are not just focused on lobbying the political elites but establishing networks within the circles and administrative duties of political elites. They label this as ‘reterritorialisation’. It is a social movement strategy that involves claiming spaces through instituting new forms of socio-political order and power onto the environment and consequently reverting the dominant discourses of that space (Miller & Nicholls, 2013). This involves building support among powerful actors where they become part of the social movement. Often this means networks establishing themselves in strategic cities which have political institutions where grievances can be heard and where the pivotal branch of the network can be established and can gather tactical resources (Nicholls, 2011). Social movement networks are realising the benefits of advancing their positionality in space, to be located in places of political advantage to them.

Davies (2012) states how strategic cities have become important places for social movements to situate themselves because of the ever increasing embeddedness of state and non-state institutions. These types of cities create opportunities for social movements to establish networks in these structures given the potential value that could be gained from these institutional bodies. Academic Walter Nicholls has undertaken work on understanding social movement networks relationships with strategic cities. He states that some cities have structures of power that foster relations between a variety of social movement organisations as well as with political institutions, which can consequently benefit social movements (Nicholls, 2008). He calls this type of city a “relational incubator”. This incubator encourages relationships between multiple activist groups and institutions, whose political causes at times may overlap (Miller & Nicholls, 2013). However, the degree to which networks benefit from this relational incubator is dependent on how much they make an effort to integrate. Nicholls (2009) expands the idea of networks being situated in relational cities and spatialities, stating firstly that different groups with similar objectives can connect, and secondly that power can be resisted.
or reinforced through collective action. Places that foster relational space are important to networks in terms of how they work collectively with other actors and how they operate in strategic settings. Understanding “relational incubators” is important for analysing the LGBT movement as it establishes how the movement operates and functions in political places and spaces.

Paul Routledge (2000) expands the idea of networks functioning in relational space through his concept of “convergence space”. Convergence space is where different actors can unify their collective actions and “generate a politics of mutual solidarity” where various organisations work together in a way where the philosophy of one interest group is not predominant over the rest (Cumbers, Routledge, & Nativel, 2008). Routledge (2000) states that it is a space of “facilitation, solidarity, communication, coordination and information sharing”, a space that has strategic significance for a range of interest groups and a space in which they can develop commonalities. McFarlane (2009) states how place-based social movements have similar connections to ‘convergence space’ because they involve the “exchange of ideas, knowledge, practices, materials and resources across sites”, which he states is achieved through leaders shaping collective action. Convergence spaces do, however, develop complex linkages between the various activist nodes, which means convergence space does have an unstable element to it. This complexity is the result of the dynamics of actors working through differences, relations and compromises; these dynamics are the result of convergence space being a forum of negotiation (Routledge, 2003). Convergence space has a mixed form of ‘operational logics’ in its structure where the networks operate through a hybrid of both the horizontal and vertical structures, which influence the negotiations and how imagineers go about organising convergence space (Cumbers et al., 2008). Imagineers are the people who bring groups together and establish new campaigns in these spaces of convergence. Convergence space is the places, spaces and scales in which multiple groups negotiate their differences and similarities, and form a collective vision. Convergence space allows social movements to develop, a concept by which LGBT movement can be understood more effectively in relation to.

**The LGBT Movement**

The LGBT movement has embraced a variety of strategies throughout its history that aim to create equality for all LGBT people through court cases, political lobbying, protests and direct action (Hilson, 2002). Stone (2010) explains how the LGBT movement has evolved to become more professionalised with formal organisations. Bernstein (2002) makes the point that in the case of the Gay and Lesbian movement (that later became the LGBT movement) identity politics and its fixed associations have played a strong role in the movement. The LGBT movement was born out of the sexual revolution of the 1960’s. The 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City are seen as the hallmark of the movement and since then its causes have changed quite dramatically (Brown, 2008). The movement developed from purely focusing on equality and identity toward considering health issues, in response to the 1980’s Aids epidemic which was stigmatised as a ‘gay disease’ (Smelser, Wright, Baltes, & Langlois, 2001). Today the LGBT movement is continually changing and can be seen to have a significant role in the national politics of the U.S.A. This section will examine these political changes and specifically how the movement is situating itself in American Politics, specifically through applying network theory outlined above. The discussion below demonstrates that the LGBT movement uses networks in political spatialities to create equality for LGBT people. Network theory is the most appropriate for this analysis because it deals with the complex linkages and structures that are found in social movements. Discovering how social movement networks use political spaces to create social change is something which has not been investigated in social movement geography research before. The rest of this paper speaks to this intellectual gap.

**METHODOLOGY**

The opportunity arose for this research project to be carried out when the researcher undertook an internship working for United States Senator Tom Harkin [D-IA] from January to May of 2013. After presenting the research proposal to Senate colleagues and seeking advice and support from them the researcher was able to undertake the data collection. The data is comprised of nineteen interviews which included: former and current Members of the United States Congress (shown in the acknowledgements); Senate and House chiefs and deputy chiefs of staff; the executive director of the LGBT Equality Caucus; Senate and House congressional legislative staff; and directors in The Human Rights Campaign, The Victory Fund and the National Centre for Transgender Equality. Accessing these high-profile interviews involved using a variety of strategies, primarily relying on snowballing. Snowballing, in which “informants refer the researcher to other informants, who are contacted by the researcher and then refer her or him to yet other informants and so on”, allowed the researcher to accumulate significant amounts of data (Noy, 2008). In the preliminary stages of gathering the research data this involved writing letters directly to the openly LGBT Members of Congress and LGBT organisations asking them to interview, but unfortunately this technique yielded a low percentage of replies. The most successful way for the researcher to recruit interviewees was through developing key contacts at the U.S. Congress that found the research project interesting and who were able to introduce the researcher to senior staffers in different congressional offices and lobbyists at LGBT organisations. The GLASS (Gay Lesbian & Allies Senate Staff) caucus was particularly helpful in building these connections. The caucus is a non-partisan network of gay, lesbian and bisexual staff at the Senate that supports staff with professional development, social networking and employee welfare. Moreover, the researcher’s position of working for Senator Harkin was an advantage due to the Senator’s outstanding efforts to support the LGBT community and people with disabilities. Coming from a Senate office with such a high reputation enabled the researcher to be seen in a posi-
tive light by other congressional offices. These multiple factors enabled the researcher to ascertain interview data from a variety of highly valuable sources. These sources are the most appropriate and relevant for this research project because they include a range of key stakeholders in the national political aspect of the LGBT movement.

Semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method to collect the data, which was recorded on an audio device and then transcribed. This method was ideal because of the time constraints many of the interviewees were under, particularly the Members of Congress. Due to these time constraints the researcher needed to be alert during the interviews and well prepped so that the most useful questions were asked, as well as being flexible and encouraging interviewees to develop informative points. Semi-structured interviews have an arrangement and purpose that makes room for development, but it is also important that the interviewer is aware of power relations (Hemming, 2008). The researcher had to be aware of power relations because some of the interviewees were elected officials which meant ensuring these dynamics were an advantage to the research and not a limitation. All participants signed a letter of authorisation which assured them that their data would not be used outside of this project and would not be passed onto the press. The research was carried out ethically by not including information that is politically sensitive and ensuring that the data would not cause controversy once published. This also included contacting some participants asking their permission to include certain sensitive information in the research project. Meth and McClymont (2009) demonstrate that researchers must be respectful and trustworthy with their participants and must put in place the necessary infrastructure to do this, which this research project carried out.

In order for the research to be fully informative of the LGBT movement in the political sphere of the United States the researcher followed the latest developments and reporting on LGBT issues and participated in the movement’s activism. This formed a background participation observation whereby these activities were recorded in a field journal in order to provide a context for the interview data. This participation observation followed Laurier’s (2010) understanding of this method as having ‘no pre-set formal steps’ and instead focusing on the opportunities presented in the research field. The timing of this research was undertaken at a pivotal point in the LGBT movement during the hearing of Supreme Court cases on the Defence of Marriage Act (DOMA), which discriminated against gay married couples receiving federal benefits in the United States, and the California Proposition 8 case, involving a ban on gay marriages in California through a state constitutional amendment. This created momentum and national talk about the LGBT movement. During this time the Human Rights Campaign organised protests outside the U.S. Supreme Court, which the researcher was able to participate in. This was an informative opportunity to learn more about and experience the LGBT movement in the U.S. Moreover, it enabled the researcher to understand the context in which the research was being undertaken.

The qualitative analysis for the project consisted of coding the nineteen interviews to identify the key themes emerging in the data. The contextual information enabled a background of clarity for these themes. This data was then synthesised and analysed in relation to the academic literature on networks and social movements. This qualitative analysis was the most effective way to gain a real understanding of the use of networks in the LGBT movement; how they operate in political spatialities; and how they create social reform.

RESULTS
The analysis and discussion focuses on the three key objectives of the research. Firstly, the analysis and discussion will look at understanding how the LGBT Equality Caucus is situated and functions as a social movement network. Secondly, it will discover how key organisations in the LGBT movement gather strength from each other and develop networks in order to advance the LGBT cause. Thirdly, it will examine how the Caucus, openly gay Members of Congress and LGBT organisations move through places and spaces of politics.

The LGBT Equality Caucus Network
The LGBT Equality Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives can be identified as a network of elected Representatives who are either LGBT activists or allies, who aim to promote and support legislation that benefits the LGBT community. The caucus was founded in 2008 by former Representative Barney Frank [D-MA] and the then Representative, now Senator, Tammy Baldwin [D-WI], who were the only two openly gay Members of Congress at that time. Since then it has evolved and expanded and is seen to have both a mix of hierarchal and horizontal operational structures. At a first glance the caucus network appears to be verticalist, where a formal leadership is the central component to the on goings of the caucus and where the aim is to widen participation and increase its power capabilities (see Routledge et al., 2007). Similarly, the structure of the caucus network can be viewed as an open structure as described by Edelman (2005), so that different actors can join the network and it can expand. The LGBT Equality Caucus works as a formal hierarchical structure where the six co-chairs oversee the activities carried out by the caucus. They disseminate information about those activities and mobilise support from the vice-chairs and the other members of the caucus. The changing pace of the LGBT equality movement has created an atmosphere where the caucus leadership can use the expanding membership of the caucus to bring more support to LGBT legislation (see following quotes). The caucus’s structure supports Nicholls’ and Beaumont’s (2004) idea that hierarchical network structures are more effective for mobilising and using the collective powers of activists because the leadership of the network is the driving force behind this momentum. The caucus co-chairs can create this effect in the network, particularly when there is a piece of LGBT legislation going through the House or when LGBT is-
issues are being debated in national politics.

“We have a very very strong LGBT Equality Caucus that gets even stronger with every Congress. Last Congress we had four openly gay members, now we have six co-chairs, we have a number of straight vice-chairs and we have even more member’s. But really on the democratic side in particular these Members [of Congress] are flocking to be a member of the Equality Caucus to support and drop bills, even before us on gay issues. I think in large part a lot of people in Congress view it as the final civil rights issue of our time” (Scott Fay – Chief of Staff; Congressman David Cicilline [D-RI] 27/02/13 DD/MM/YY)

“I think it’s [LGBT Equality Caucus] going to be one of the largest caucuses in all of Congress, more people who want to join it as regular members not as co-chairs will, the co-chairs have to be openly gay, vice chairs don’t have to be openly gay but they want to support the caucus at the higher level…. if you look back five years ago that would not have been the case” (JoDee Winterhof – Chief of Staff; Congresswoman Sinema [D-AZ] 26/03/13)

The formal leadership of the LGBT Equality Caucus is the central feature that allows the decision making and functionality of the caucus to work through a hierarchy. This paper argues that the six co-chairs do not just exist for the purpose of leadership within the caucus, but that they are a network themselves of committed LGBT activists that work as a horizontal collective group to push the LGBT movement’s agenda forward. They carry out all the primary work of the caucus including sharing equal and collective responsibility for it and are viewed by people as both representing and embodying the caucus. These six Members of Congress have organised and pulled their resources together to move their goals forward, which has included recruiting an executive director. The six members work on a horizontal level sharing duties, decision making and leadership, in the same way as Routledge et al. (2006) and Wolfson (2013) describe horizontal power structures. They are able to unite through what Nicholls (2008) calls the ‘soft infrastructure’ because they are the only openly gay Members of Congress and therefore can connect to the LGBT movement directly. This horizontal leadership approach creates what Wolfson (2013) states as ‘strategic unity’, were the LGBT activist present a strong image of leadership to the rest of Congress.

The LGBT Equality Caucus has the core elements of a network which Schlosberg (1999) defines as interpersonal experiences, shared relationships and collective meanings between activists, all of which according to Bosco (2001) drive the social movement. All the caucus members unite around this need to help the LGBT community because it is regarded as the “final civil rights issue”. However, for the caucus leaders it is something much deeper and personal because they are part of the LGBT community.

“Well there’s a term that is used in politics, authentic representation, and it goes something like this; few people will care about issues as deeply or as committedly as someone who is actually of the community that is here for it, not to represent it” (Congressman Mark Takano [D-CA] 09/04/13).

“I think the biggest thing that many of us often say is that it gives you a seat at the table, so often decisions are made about people but not by the people involved and having your seat at the table ensures your voice, your unique voice is heard on issues that affect the LGBT community” (Congressman Mark Pocan [D-WI] 09/04/13).

The six co-chairs and their personal experiences which they bring to the political discussion are life stories that relate to the experiences of LGBT people and to the movement. It is what unifies these openly gay Members of Congress. It gives them a purpose in legislating for equality and it allows them to collectively form interpersonal solidarities. This follows the argument that the identities which the movement possess are the result of resistance struggles which form solidarities between activists that then help build and constitute collective action (Featherstone, 2005; Featherstone, 2007). Their interpersonal connections are then formulated into their goals which aim to use legislation to overcome injustices that the LGBT community face (see next quote). The caucus’s goals become the political purpose that the network aims to fulfill and these goals are shaped by the collective gay identities and experiences of the co-chairs. This supports Diani’s (2000) idea that shared relational identities support collective action and strengthens the activists’ commitment to their aims.

“Well our priorities are: the repeal of DOMA [Defence of Marriage Act] which I think the court will do and if they don’t I think we should do it [U.S. Supreme Court repealed DOMA on 26/06/13]. ENDA [Employment Non-Discrimination Act] to assure that you can’t be fired for being gay or Lesbian. We are working hard to assure uniting Americas families, which is an immigration provision that is included in the comprehensive immigration to protect gay and lesbian families. And then there is a lot of legislation around bullying and making sure schools are safe places for kids, so that no child, because of their sexual orientation or any other reason is bullied or feels unsafe at school. So those are kind of the four key areas.” (Congressman David Cicilline [D-RI] 17/04/13).

The six co-chairs are not just the key activists in the LGBT caucus but they are the caucus’s imagineers who use their collective qualities and skills to shape and drive the movement in the political space of the United States Congress and also as leaders of the LGBT Movement nationally. The caucus leaders have set an agenda for building a united front for LGBT equality in Congress through using their different legislative backgrounds and positions in Congress with the aim to bring more people on board (see next quotes). The imagineers have been building the caucus to become a strong force of leadership in the House by taking their roles as leaders in the LGBT community seriously and using their power in the caucus and in their roles in Congress to bring LGBT issues to the table. These LGBT leaders follow Routledge et al. (2007) and Routledge (2008) pattern of what makes network imagineers
as they have used their qualities to shape the direction of the caucus and to become a greater voice for the LGBT community. Their agenda is to make this network a stronger force for equality, which has consequently shaped the forms of action the caucus takes.

“The goal is to have it [LGBT Equality Caucus] be a real force of leadership in the House. So in the House we have the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and Congressional CAPAC Caucus [Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus] and they are considered to be real leaders on the issues that impact their members, and we want to be that for the LGBT community” (Anonymous Congressional Staffer – LGBT Equality Caucus Legislative Assistant 27/02/13)

“In addition having six members we are able to be on a broad variety of committees and so in almost any type of discussion, at least on the democratic side of the isle there is a member of the LGBT community in the room on many many different issues, and of course many issues affect the LGBT community.” (Congressman Jared Polis [D-CO] 10/04/13)

“They need to be strong responsible figures that demonstrate that they are here to represent millions of people in this country who are gay or who have family members who are gay, or friends who are gay and I think that they all take this responsibility seriously… all six of them and Tammy of course in the Senate” (Scott Fay – Chief of Staff; Congressman David Cicilline 27/02/13).

The LGBT Equality Caucus is a political action network which has its own internal workings allowing the co-chairs (and to an extent the wider membership of the caucus) to pool resources and use strategies and tactics to achieve the goals and objectives of the caucus, in the same way that Schlosberg (1999) outlines. The caucus network has to implement Müller’s (2012) mechanisms of “sociomaterial” resources that are both human and non-human. The caucus relies on non-human resources as outlined by Routledge et al. (2007), such as providing information to other Members’ offices and legislative expertise on LGBT issues which they provide for both the caucus members and the wider membership of the House. This involves making the caucus accessible to other members by being resourceful and providing them with briefs on LGBT issues, so that members become enlightened on these debates (see next quotes). The Violence Against Women’s Act demonstrated how this political action network can internally coordinate its material resources to become a political force that impacts other legislators to support their aims of social justice for the LGBT community.

“There are three primary functions; one is to help coordinate the LGBT related activities of the six co-chairs, second aspect is to do outreach and education with the general membership of the House. I think there are people who are generally supportive of LGBT issues and more people are becoming more supportive of marriage. Beyond the big ticket items like Respect for Marriage Act, repealing DOMA, Employment Non Discrimination Act and HIV Aids issues, people don’t understand a lot of the nuance of the community and the issues that impact a lot of our families and our members. So the caucus wants to do more outreach and more education with the general membership [Members of Congress] to get them to understand what the community faces on a day to day basis, what their lived experience is” (Brad Jacklin – Executive Director; LGBT Equality Caucus 10/04/13).

“So like the Violence Against Women Act that we are considering this week has an LGBT component, so we try to get involved on that bill and we make ourselves available to the other offices if they have any question about our views on that legislation” (Anonymous Congressional Staffer – LGBT Equality Caucus Legislative Assistant 27/02/13).

“I think in the Violence Against Women Act we were a constant presence in making sure the LGBT provisions stayed in it. And the fact that they [Republican majority] had to come and get Democratic [minority] votes meant we could hold those provision in the bill, and I think that was a success. So even though we are not a majority here we can still have that impact.” (Congressman Mark Pocan [D-WI] 09/04/13).

Another important factor is that the imagineers in the caucus can deploy their human resources to mobilise the network and the wider social context, so that people become engaged with the LGBT movement. For the caucus human assets (e.g. imagineers themselves) are important particularly for mobilizing people to the LGBT cause. When the caucus first started it was much smaller and it was necessity for it to be driven by human resources. Congressman Barney Frank and Congresswoman (Senator) Tammy Baldwin were able to use their different personalities and styles to build relationships with Members of Congress particularly on the democratic side, which was necessary to gain support for the LGBT cause. The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 is an example of how the caucus was able to use real emotion to engage democratic Members of Congress to vote for this bill. Congressman Barney Frank was able to share his personal experience about how he was afraid to come out and how deeply he feels for LGBT youth that are afraid today and for the people who are vulnerable to hate crime. His emotive speech allowed Members of Congress to see a different personal side to him. Also the caucus invited Judy Sheppard to speak about the death of her son Mathew Sheppard who was murdered for being gay, as well as the police chief who investigated the death. Both were able to emphasise the importance of protections for vulnerable people. Grievances and emotions which are central to social movements as Alexander et al. (2006) point out, were used by the LGBT Equality Caucus to mobilise people within and outside of the caucus to vote for this bill and to be part of the LGBT movement at this point in time. The caucus demonstrated Bosco’s (2007) idea that human resources can be used in a strategic way through activating emotion to help the movement become real for others, so that they can be mobilised for social change.

LGBT Social Movement Inter-organizational network

The LGBT Equality Caucus works with and relies on collaborating with other organizations in both a formal and informal way, which
creates a wider inter-organizational network of organizations in the LGBT movement. The Victory Fund has a very formal relationship with the caucus’s six co-chairs because these Members of Congress depend greatly on the Victory Fund for their election campaigns. The Victory Fund’s connection to the caucus is for resource procurement which Nicholls and Beaumont (2004) and Schlosberg (1999) state as increasing social movement capabilities through the exchange of material resources and knowledge, with the aim to achieve similar objectives and goals. The Victory fund aims are very similar to the caucus as they seek to have authentic representation of the LGBT community in Congress and across public life in the United States. These similar organisational identities support Diani and Bison’s (2004) suggestion that shared identities encourage collaborations. To achieve their collective goals, the Victory Fund supports LGBT people who are running for office to overcome the barriers they face, which is often running in an area where the socio-cultural atmosphere is not as understanding of queer issues (see following quote).

“There are a lot of barriers for gay or straight people to run for office. You don’t get paid a lot so you have to have a financial situation where you can afford a home here and a home in your home state. You have to have a family situation that’s appropriate and you have to not have a lot of skeletons in your closet, gay or straight. Where it matters for gay people running for office, is the district or the state that they run from. Tammy Baldwin winning in Wisconsin is huge! But not every state would lend itself at this point in time” (Tom Lopach – Chief of Staff; Senator Jon Tester [D-MT] 09/03/13).

The Victory Fund seeks to overcome these barriers by supporting candidates with election finances, training them on how to run a campaign and overcome any opposition regarding their sexual orientation (see next quotes). The Victory Fund activates their activist network to make campaign contributions to the various candidates and link campaigns up with donors, which is important because campaigns need large sums of money e.g. Congressman Takano’s campaign. In addition, the Victory Fund’s campaign support is strategically and tactfully helpful for candidates giving them the tools for a good election campaign. The six co-chairs of the caucus and Senator Baldwin were able to utilise the resources and knowledge that they needed from the Victory Fund. A network connection was formed between the candidates and the Victory Fund, which created what Wang and Soule (2012) state as a collaborative exchange of a “diverse tactical repertoire” of knowledge, ideas and resources. This inter-organisational relationship is important for the LGBT movement because it allows them to sustain their presence of having authentic representation in political spaces, particularly in the U.S. Congress. The Victory Fund has supported the LGBT Equality Caucus and the six co-chairs with Galaskiewicz’s (1985) three key reasons for collaboration: campaign finance (resource procurement), legitimate LGBT candidates (political advocacy) and more elected Equality Caucus leaders (organizational legitimation).

“The key takeaway from Victory Institute’s [branch of the Victory Fund] training is that your campaign always has to be focused on the voters, it has to be focused on the things they care about. Let’s say you are openly gay and you’re running for office in Tulsa Oklahoma, not being a hot bed of gay activism or gay rights. Imagine, let’s say the top issues in that city are crime, the environment and the schools, if those are not your issues as a candidate you will be in trouble because you’re not really speaking to the concerns of the people who will be hiring you” (Denis Dison - Senior Vice President for Programs; Victory Fund & Institute 11/04/13)

“The Victory Fund primarily activates their downer and grassroots network. So the victory fund staff takes a look at the candidate and looks at viability; are they running a good campaign, do they have support not just within the LGBT community but outside, do they have the requisite experience, do they have a good story, are they doing the things a modern campaign needs to do to win” (Tiffany Muller - Vice-President of Political Operations; Victory Fund & Institute 15/03/13)

“Fundraising was a unique challenge. For Mark’s campaign, one of the ways which being openly gay was helpful was that it connected him on a very real level with a lot of donors that we might not have otherwise been able to reach” (Richard McPike – Chief of Staff; Congressman Mark Takano [D-CA] 28/03/13)

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is another part of the LGBT movement network web in Washington D.C. which works with the LGBT Equality Caucus, and lobbies the other Members of Congress in the House, the Senate and the Obama Administration. They run a full-service lobby shop for Members of Congress including constituent letters, speeches, research, expert advice, legal work and bill-writing. However, much of their work is building up networks of coalitions between other organizations, people and social movements in order to build pressure on these political institutions. Part of what HRC does is identifying what Nicholls and Beaumont (2004) call political ‘opportunity structures’ and mobilise their networks to engage with them. This involves HRC adapting to these new opportunities as they arise in the political landscape so that they can take full advantage of them, in the same way as Gulati and Gargiulo (1999) express.

A clear example of when HRC has used multiple networks to create political pressure and build up a case for reform was through encouraging President Barak Obama and the White House Administration to support gay marriage. They saw that there was a political opportunity in the Administration through the 2012 presidential election. The President’s re-election campaign was facing a lack of enthusiasm from the LGBT community because he had not come out for gay marriage, which isolated them from the LGBT community as a key voting and fundraising block, which is a factor that could be significant in the swing states. Also the upcoming legal arguments and briefs the administration would have to make over LGBT related legal cases were an issue. HRC put significant amounts of their resources into arguing the case for coming out for gay marriage to the White House (see next quote). Moreover, they
invested in building a wider network of large businesses across the country that were signed onto supporting gay marriage politically. This network of companies that support gay marriage was another tool in which they could show how the nation stance on this issue was changing. Also HRC were able to utilise the wider network web of social movement organisations to gain more resources, particularly one organisation called Third Way who produced research on the dynamics of talking about coming out for gay marriage politically. Their research suggested that coming out for gay marriage publicly should be spoken from a position of ‘evolving’ on the issues, coming to a new understanding and talking from the perspective of being on a journey. This type of discussion means that voters who are unsure about this issue can see the individual’s process for supporting gay marriage and can appreciate their decision without necessarily agreeing with them. Using this information from Third Way and building a network of support meant they could utilise this opportunity more and engage with President Obama and the Administration encouraging them to come on board with supporting gay marriage. This action follows Brown’s (2008) analysis of social movements putting pressure on state institutions including having people and organisations situated close or within those places. This demonstrates how HRC has taken hold of an opportunity in the political landscape and has called on its network and developed new networks of support to engage with this opportunity in a strong influential way. The Obama Administration in this case can be seen to be what Hilson (2002) calls structural openness in the political system, at this point in time with regard to LGBT rights. Furthermore, HRC’s action here follows Gulati and Gargiulo (1999) ideas of social movements adapting to changing political opportunities in the political environment.

“Yes we met with the administration and we also had people who both knew him [President Barak Obama] on a personal level and fundraised for him, who were asking him to come out for gay marriage. Lots of meetings, lots of pressure, lots of messaging and lots of research. We did lots of polling, much of which we shared with the White House. At the end of the day in came down to a political call but it was inevitably an intellectual and legal issue. The timing was a political calculus but I don’t think the outcome was. I think the President wanted to do it, but they were looking for the right opportunity and sometimes when you’re looking for the right opportunity you never decide. It started to get late and they had to make the decision. They may or may not have spilled it too soon” [President Obama came out in support of gay marriage 09/05/12] (David Stacy - Government Affairs Director; Human Rights Campaign 04/04/13).

In the LGBT movement inter-organisational networks and relations have been crucial for the Transgender part of the movement. They have had to develop what Rosenthal et al. (1985) and also what Davies (2012) states as ‘strong tie’ relationships with resourceful elites who are well placed in order to be productive in creating their social reform that is specific to the transgender community. Transgender rights and equality is similar to the lesbian, bisexual and gay part of the movement, but there are a lot of distinct issues (e.g. gender identity cards) that specifically affect this smaller segment of the LGBT community and therefore they need their own organisations like the National Centre for Transgender Equality (NCTE). NCTE has seven staff and an annual budget of $600,000 and therefore cannot rely on direct lobbying of the U.S. Congress and the Administration, particularly on issues that they are not a major player (e.g. immigration reform) even tough these issues still affect transgender people (see next quotes). Therefore, NCTE has to be more strategic by being engaged with the wider LGBT social movement network and align with the more resourceful elite organisations like HRC and the LGBT Equality Caucus in order to bring Transgender issues to the table by uniting them with lesbian, gay and bisexual issues. They have to engage with their older LGBT alliances and adapt them according to the new issues and campaigns of the day. The entrepreneurial qualities NCTE utilises with how they use the resources they possess and share follows Gualati and Gargiulo (1999) and Galaskiewicz (1985) point about how social movements have to evolve from alliances in the wider social movement network. NCTE acts in a similar way to Diani and McAdam’s (2003) idea of a broker, because NCTE has to have other groups and partners include transgender issues in their work or have them become involved with NCTE’s work in order to strengthen their voice. This demonstrates how important the wider web of social movement organisations is for smaller activist groups.

“We work to amplify the message of partner organisations and our allies, so we join coalitions and if folks are working on things we will try to amplify their voice. Right now the LGBT movement really has a lot of power, it has a lot of sizzle. We have become a really important voting block and a really important campaign funding block, so everybody notices us now. So if we can make something an LGBT issue like immigration we can really bring some weight to bear on it”

“Lobbying wise, very little of what we do here is lobbying, we do some lobbying, but generally the lobbying we have to do because we have such as small budget is much smarter lobbying. We can’t pay twenty lawyers to wine and dine a Senator. So instead we find close allies who are well placed within a particular issue area and brief the heck out of them and really rely on partners in other organisations, partners who are legislators and other partners to pull a lot of the weight when we are trying to get something done” (Mara Keisling – Executive Director; National Centre for Transgender Equality 08/03/13).

The LGBT Movement’s Political Spatialities

The LGBT Equality Caucus can be seen, as Routledge et al. (2007) describe, as a ‘zone of encounter’, a space situated in a wider political context of the U.S. Congress. The caucus is a relational zone that can create new forms of counter-hegemonic spaces in the same way as Davies (2012) describes network spatialities. The caucus is relational in the way that Ward et al. (2010) define relational space as being open and in a process of ‘becoming’ through actors.
The LGBT Caucus is dependant not only on its internal relational connections but also on connections with Members of Congress outside of the caucus. The Congress itself is a relational place that is dependent on representatives joining forces with one another not just within their political party but outside of their parties, so that they can push through legislation. The caucus becomes an apparatus for the LGBT movement to reach out, particularly through the six co-chairs (see next quotes). They are able to engage with this relational aspect of congressional space to bring support from various political associations to the LGBT movement. The co-chairs take on the role of brokers, outlined by Diani and McAdam (2003) as people who bring on board others who are not necessarily associated with the movement. The LGBT caucus members use their own personal abilities to engage other Members of Congress on these issues. The caucus is therefore a counter-hegemonic spatiality which acts as a resistance to the discourses of the straight, white male and middle-class hegemonic politics, in that it offers an alternative politics of inclusiveness and equality. This follows Leitner et al. (2008) arguments that powerful places can be challenged and new spaces of solidarities formed which consequently reshape the wider spatial context, for example Congress progresses to become more pro-equality. This demonstrates how important it is for the LGBT movement to engage with political spaces in a relational way so that they can accomplish the social reform they want.

“Basically maybe one out of five hundred bills go to the House floor, 499 never get voted on. The way you get a bill voted on is by getting more cosponsors, particularly cosponsors from both parties, until you have such a number that it’s clear to any Majority Leader that a majority of the House supports it. So I would think for instance if we can get 220 to 230 cosponsors for the Student Non-Discrimination Act we can supply significant pressure to Leader Cantor [House Majority Leader Eric Cantor R-VA] to bring it to the floor of the House” (Congressman Jared Polis [D-CO] 10/04/13).

“Through the Problem Solver Caucus, a bipartisan caucus, I got a chance to meet Richard Hanna down the hallway a second term Republican from New York, and now he is going to be a sponsor on our bill to have domestic partnerships for federal employees. Something he didn’t do in the last session on the same bill. I think it’s just a matter of reaching out to people. Having that conversation has that impact” (Congressman Mark Pocan [D-WI] 09/04/13).

The presence of the LGBT movement within national political institutions can be seen to be a rescaling and ‘reterritorialisation’ of political spaces of power in order to set new power relations by establishing the movement at these higher scalar levels (Leitner et al., 2008; Nicholls & Beaumont, 2004) which challenges anti-LGBT opposition. The LGBT movement has done this successfully by creating and expanding the LGBT Equality Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives, but now they are also focusing on scaling its presence in the upper chamber the U.S. Senate. The Victory Fund invested a substantial amount of money and resources in the 2012 election of Senator Tammy Baldwin [D-WI]. They really energised their donor network and the wider LGBT community and organizations to elect the first openly gay U.S. Senator. It is important for the movement to have members of the LGBT community present at different scales of the U.S. Government, so that they can make an impact in those places. Particularly in the Senate where Senators have a lot of independence from the political party stances, which is less so the case in the House. Having the presence of an openly gay person in the U.S. Senate particularly Senator Baldwin who co-founded the LGBT Equality Caucus changes the dynamics of the Senate. Her presence puts more pressure on the Republican Senators who follow an anti-LGBT rhetoric (see Levensale quote). Also having Senator Baldwin creates an opportunity to bring support into the LGBT movement as well. The Senate is experiencing a shift in LGBT politics particularly on the Republican side (see Kolbe quote), which could be the influence of the presence of an openly gay colleague and the positive changing climate toward the LGBT rights movement. There is a steady move towards the acceptance of LGBT rights by Republican Senators and this is having an effect on the legislative environment and on law-making. The LGBT movement’s investment in gaining access to this powerful higher scale political institution could be seen to be following Miller and Nicholls (2013) understandings of social movements as movements that make ‘claims’ on space, which challenge the symbolic and political order of that environment and in this case also challenging ideologies and beliefs of political parties.

“Senators now have an openly gay colleague that they have never had before and she is so regular and normal, intelligent and friendly, she will change hearts and minds. And I think that’s the most important thing, is how she will change, one on one change her colleagues’ perceptions of gay people” (Jeffery Levensale – Deputy Chief of Staff; Senator Tammy Baldwin [D-WI] 28/03/13).

“Trying to assure equal rights for same sex couples in immigration reform legislation was a major thrust of the LGBT community when this legislation was being considered in the Senate. It’s interesting how quickly Republican thinking on this issue has evolved. One Senator quite conservative just shrugged when we raised the issue in a meeting. He said the issue is going to be gone in a few years, that the fight over equality is basically over.

That's not to say there won't be lingering problems of acceptance of equal rights for LGBT couples particularly in certain geographic regions of the country or with certain groups. But for most people associated with Congress Members and staff it is a "non-issue" now. Certainly, I didn't find anyone who thought inclusion of equal immigration rights would be a "deal breaker" for the reform legislation.” (Congressman Jim Kolbe [former Representative: R-AZ] 18/04/13).

Washington D.C. can be “conceived of as a ‘relational incubator’ because it facilitates the building of networks among diverse activist groups” (Miller & Nicholls, 2013, p.460). Washington D.C. and the LGBT movement within the city follow Walter Nich-
oll’s theories (Nicholls, 2008; Nicholls, 2009) of cities as spaces where creative collective action between organisations is formulated for advancing social movement goals or campaigns, in order to engage with State institutions. The LGBT movement has taken advantage of the relational characteristic of Washington in order to mobilize the movement. Washington can be seen as having greater relational characteristics for new social movements than other cities because it is the most politically powerful city in the world and it attracts a large number of social movement and NGO organizations. With reference to Nichols (2011) this therefore defines Washington D.C. as a ‘strategic city’. The Human Rights Campaign is a clear example of utilizing this relational incubator to form a greater powerful force of collective action over the wider social movement and political space (see next quote). By coalescing other social movements (situated in D.C. and across the USA) into the LGBT movement’s causes they are able to build up momentum and a stronger base of support. One example of this is the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, where collective support was transcended into Washington’s political spaces in order to make reform happen. They are able to do this not just because of the relational characteristics of Washington D.C. encouraging multiple groups to join forces but also because of the increasing embeddedness between the movement and the state institutions, which supports Davies (2012) understandings of the characteristics of strategic cities.

“We do lots of coalition work to support those efforts, for example on the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act we had over 300 non-profit organisations that supported passage of the legislation from religious groups to police organisation and other law enforcements; so you know the National Sheriffs Association, the National Association of Police Offices, the Unitarian Universalists, the Presbyterians and religious organisations. As well as civil rights groups like the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], or the National Disability Rights Network. So we had a very big cross-section of support. And women’s groups the American Association of University Women and the National Council of Jewish Women. So we do coalition works to bring lots of people to the table.” (David Stacy - Government Affairs Director, Human Rights Campaign 04/04/13)

Washington D.C. can be understood as being and containing spaces of ‘convergence’ for the LGBT movement and other movements, as these activist groups collaborate and create spaces of solidarity (Cumbers et al., 2008). This is a space where the LGBT movement and other movements can coordinate, exchange knowledge and support one another in their ventures, as compared with Routledge (2000). This is similar to McFarlane (2009) place-based understandings of social movements of networks that exchange resources, however the LGBT movement is more similar to convergence space because it’s not limited to just Washington D.C., but operates nationally gaining support from other activists and movements across the country. For example, HRC uses its own organisational structures to mobilise its network of 1.3 to 1.4 million activists and its steering committees in about 30 different cities, which they are able to mobilise at key strategic times. Washington D.C. acts as a hub where convergence of social movements and their participants particularly the LGBT movement can be organised and be more effective in engaging with the national political apparatus. Collective action in convergence space is highly dependent on the leaders of those organisations uniting without one ideology being predominant which involves them negotiating the dynamics of forming collective action (Routledge, 2003; Cumbers et al., 2008), this is something the LGBT movement has done well both within and outside of political spaces.

CONCLUSION

The analysis and discussion of the data has explored how the LGBT movement utilises and establishes social movement networks in political spaces and places to create pro-equality social reform. Networks like the LGBT Equality Caucus and the inter-organisational network linkages used by the Victory Fund, HRC and NCTE have clearly utilised and scaled their resources and efforts to create an LGBT movement presence in political places and spaces, through engaging with the relational and convergence qualities of those spatialities. This access and networking has increased the capabilities of the LGBT movement to have a real and profound impact on LGBT-related legislation, and has arguably advanced equality for millions of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Americans.

The LGBT Equality Caucus is the most profound example of how the LGBT movement has situated itself in a political institution of the U.S. Federal Government, through establishing a network of people organised through both hierarchical and horizontal structures. This network and its leadership are able to unify around the inequality found in the LGBT community and then transcend these issues in to political spaces by being part of the discussion and having the community’s unique voice at the table. The leadership of the caucus are particularly able to have this impact due to their interpersonal connections and bonds. Moreover, this network is able to bring together its collective forces and can implement both human and material resources to mobilise action for bringing LGBT reform into legislation. It is evident that the imagineers of the caucus (namely the six openly gay co-chairs) are the profound influence and driving force for bringing the LGBT movement to Congress. The LGBT Equality Caucus represents the importance of having an organised LGBT voice within political institutions.

The wider network of organisations and activist groups that make up the LGBT movement and the coalitions that are formed between them have had a real impact on influencing the political environment. The Victory Fund has done this effectively by using their resources to support the campaigns of openly LGBT candidates that are running for Congress. They assisted in overcoming barriers that LGBT candidates face enabling them to become elected so that there is an authentic presence of the LGBT movement in Congress. Moreover, LGBT advocacy organisations have established new networks of solidarity and have engaged...
with other social movement organisations to build pressure on political institutions. HRC has done this effectively, encouraging President Barack Obama to ‘come out’ for gay marriage. Influencing an incumbent President in this way has had a profound impact on the LGBT movement in terms of acceptance in the political environment and encouraging others to also support LGBT rights. Similarly, network inter-organisational relations have allowed the smaller voices in the LGBT community like the Transgender community to become amplified through coalitions and collaborative work. This strengthens their abilities to access political spaces and creates reform that is necessary for this segment of the community, as well as helping and strengthening the whole LGBT community. Inter-organisational networks are important for building up the movement and increasing its abilities to create equality.

In addition, the research has outlined how the LGBT movement manoeuvres in political spatialities. The LGBT Equality Caucus has situated itself as a space of ‘encounters’ whereby it can encourage other people to join the LGBT movement in Congress and can therefore act as a united front of resistance to hegemonic forms of politics that are not so pro-equality. This opposition could arguably be seen to be influenced by the Republican Party. Moreover, the LGBT movement has also been identified to be re-scaling its efforts to have a presence in the other legislative bodies of the U.S. Government, particularly the U.S. Senate. This has been achieved through the LGBT movement creating momentum and support around the election of Tammy Baldwin. Her election allows for the LGBT movement to have a greater presence in the Senate and it may be suggested that this new LGBT presence in the Senate, as well as the national change, can be seen to be influencing Republican Members. Washington D.C. is the wider context where these changes are occurring and can be understood as both a ‘relational incubator’ and a ‘convergence space’ that the LGBT movement engages with, where networks can form relations, solidarities and support one another with resources, particularly with organisations that are not directly related to the LGBT movement. These movements in political spaces give the LGBT movement significantly greater opportunities to have an impact and create social reform for LGBT people.

This research has highlighted the importance of having the LGBT movement be present in and engaged with political spaces and places and how the use of social movement networks is a vital part of influencing those spaces to create equality in the United States. The research shows the importance of having openly LGBT representatives in political spatialities in order to bring strong and real voices to political debates around equality. This has also been the case in State legislators like Wisconsin, Maryland and New York. However, it would be positive to see this trend expand, particularly to States like Arizona, where the legislator has unfortunately tried to encouraged discrimination against LGBT people. Therefore, there is an opportunity for more research on the LGBT movement and its engagements at the local State level, as well as further research at the national level. This research paper identifies how the American LGBT movement has functioned in political spaces at a pivotal point in time during the build-up of the repeal of DOMA, which achieved marriage equality. Future research on the LGBT movement at a national level should look at how the movement is evolving since its pro-equality victories and when anti-LGBT support rises or when the political landscape changes, for example a change in the U.S. President and in congressional House and Senate majors.

Social movements need to engage with the political apparatus of the State and networks are one efficient way to achieve this. There needs to be more research into how other social movements go about engaging directly in political decision making. Research should be carried out on how movements, such as the climate change environmental movement, engage with political spatialities. Understanding how such movements engage in political spaces and places is informative to how they can become empowered and potentially achieve their causes. The LGBT movement has been able to achieve reform by utilising the workings of political spaces and places, making the movement a case study for other social movements to follow.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to make a very special thank you to United States Senator Tom Harkin of the State of Iowa and his excellent staff for their support and help with my research. I would like to thank Dr Phil Jones for his support as my research advisor. I would also like to give all nineteen of my research participants a special thanks of gratitude for their involvement in the project, and I would like to particularly acknowledge the following participants: U.S. Congressman Barney Frank [D-MA], U.S. Congressman Jim Kolbe [R-AZ], U.S. Congressman Jared Polis [D-CO], U.S. Congressman David Cicilline [D-RJ], U.S. Congressman Mark Pocan [D-WI] & U.S. Congressman Mark Takano [D-CA].

REFERENCES


Diani, M. (2000). Social Movement Networks Virtual and Real. Information, Com-
communication & Society, 3(3), 386–401.


Routledge, P. (2003). Convergence space: process geographies of grassroots glo-