

Networking in the #BEAVegas

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Abstract

Networking in the #BEAVegas is a basic understanding of the Network Theory, and its properties. This theoretical framework investigates the intergroup communication of individuals within other group systems. Networking in the #BEAVegas also explores Littlejohn's methodologies of connectedness, group networks, and organizational networks along with Actor-Network Theory (ANT). However, the original elements of the Network Theory were given to the world in 1385 through the Wycliffe Bible. I applied the participant-observation inquiry, as Poster Presenter, during the 2019 Broadcast Education Association (BEA) Annual Conference in Las Vegas using the Network Theory.

Keywords: Network Theory, Group Networks, Connectedness, Organizational Networks, Broadcast Education Association, Academic Conference

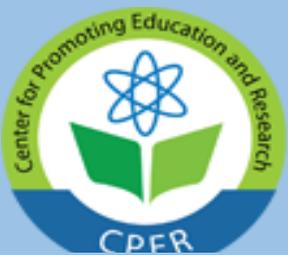
Introduction

The Broadcast Education Association (BEA) is an American academic media organization, serving students studying and pursuing a career within media. This educational institution is headquartered in Washington, D.C. with the mission of “Educating for Tomorrow’s Media”. The BEA originated in 1948, as the University Association for Professional Radio Education (UAPRE), but reorganized in 1956 as the Association for Professional Broadcasting Education (APBE), due to lack of special interests, and goals. The APBE began publishing a quarterly scholarly journal in 1956, Journal of Broadcasting, and evolved into the Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, after the APBE emerged as the Broadcast Education Association in 1974. Today, the BEA consists of student media and academic affiliates with educators fascinated with broadcasting as members. The members of this organization and their professional status are what made this union very honorable. These professionals share the common interest of media clenching unique knowledge and skills within their broadcasting careers.

Communication is the act of transmitting information from one place, person or thing to another to conveying a message. It is the technique used to express an idea, thought, or situation from one living organism to another. The methodology behind this hypothesis involves a sender, a message and a receiver to complete a communication task. Communication is the assumption that knowledge is based on principles and methods to exchange ideas, information or suggestions from one person to another person. Nevertheless, the study of how humans, groups, and organizations interact with one another is called, The Network Theory. A network is an arrangement of interconnected individuals communicating with each other regarding objective goals within a group setting. According to Littlejohn, S. W. et al., and the “network theory consists of a set of ideas to which many researchers have contributed.” (p. 313) the theory of network is constructed on *connectedness, group networks, and organizational networks* to find results through an interpersonal communication process. These methods are commonly used in everyday life, as individuals with similar interests communicate regarding typical topics, to assist one another in discovering a cause. The BEA currently hosts annual regional and national conferences for its members at various locations throughout the country. These conventions allow members and attendees to learn more about the broadcasting industry, as well as, a chance to meet other scholars with the field. The importance of analyzing the Network Theory within the BEA structure will illustrate, why this organization has been successfully executing conventions, since 1995.

Literature Review

Castells (2011) studied the network theory of power by analyzing the specific interaction of power and counter power. “Power is the relational capacity to impose an actor’s will over another actor’s will based on the structural capacity of domination embedded in the institutions of society.” (p.775) On the other hand, counter power is the activity of specific networks within the society of networks. Castells (2011) examined the social and technological aspects of four different forms of the network theory of power: Networking Power, Network Power, Networked Power, and Network-Making Power. A

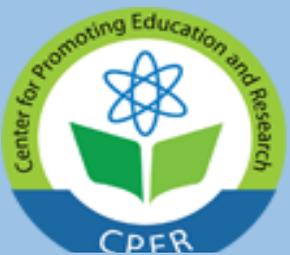


qualitative analysis was used to find results along with the Network Theory's methodologies of connectedness, group networks, and organizational networks. Castell (2011) found international multimedia networks primarily owned local communication networks, where the power of the network theory solely relies on local government laws and regulations, but the financial market controls it all. Similar to Castells' (2011) findings, power is group networks that have a specific interest, while counter power is organizational networks with subgroups in larger networks. I witnessed BEA members professionally and academically support their colleagues and attend sessions within-group networks while representation an organizational network. Although the theory of communication could be applied in any academic field, scholars in the field of media use these theories as it pertains to the laws and regulations of Broadcasting.

Cole & Littlejohn (2018) studied a conflict between the City Officials of Albuquerque, NM and the sponsors of a pornographic film festival over distasteful thoughts of moral orders. The Actor-Network Theory (ANT) was applied to detect the core value(s) of their disagreement within the two opposing networks, while the moral conflict theory explored the conflict within human interaction. Translating moral orders: Putting moral conflict theory in conversation with actor-network theory (2018) utilizes the ANT to amplify the moral conflict theory to the understanding, and roots of the two party's dispute. ANT is a subdivision of the network theory, which appeared in the Wycliffe and Bishops' Bible between 1385 and 1568 according to Stockley (n.d.). However, Cole & Littlejohn (2018) gave clarity of its secondary within the pornographic film festival by expressing, "The defining features of ANT we explore here include an argument for (1) the social as performative; (2) redefining action and agency as interconnected rather than autonomous processes; and (3) challenging traditional theories of communication that make distinctions between subject and object." It concluded as the conflict of interest was the innocent party in between the two opposing views, the guiltless network evolved into an actor of those with opposing views. Furthermore, the subsidiary of the ANT illustrates the theoretical framework of the network, where the connectedness of attendees unintentionally formed a group network that transpired into the acting communication of clashing organizational networks.

Analysis of the BEA 2019 Conference

Most professionals have social networking groups or connections about their professional, family, leisure, and academic needs. Some individuals tend to meet at a planned location and time, to confer regarding specific concerns that need to be addressed to their peers. Academic conferences are formal events regarding a specific field of work and academic programs held by a committee or organization of professional leaders. Similar to other organizations, the Broadcast Education Association has an annual conference for educators, researchers, and innovators to share thoughts on the common interests in broadcasting. The annual BEA Conference is usually held in April, co-located alongside the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) Convention Show, in Las Vegas, Nevada. Various upcoming technologies, media, and entertainment techniques are shared amongst broadcasting professionals to advance their knowledge with the industry's current standards. This annual event is held in the Westgate Hotel and Resort for the BEA Conference, while the NAB Convention occurs next door in the Las Vegas Convention Center. The exhibitors in attendance typically represent some of the world's best media technology manufacturers demonstrating their latest devices. The BEA Conference and NAB Convention are made possible for BEA and NAB members to gain insight into the upcoming broadcasting technologies and techniques used in the field of media. On February 11, 2019, an email was sent to all the current doctoral students in Regent University's School of Communication the Arts for the BEA 2019's Grand Plans and Great Expectations series. The Grand Plans and Great Expectations series is a Scholar 2 Scholar Poster Presentations, where submissions are based on one's thesis, dissertation, or other fresh research in progress, for current scholarly students. On February 21, 2019, I made my submission to the Grand Plans and Great Expectations conference call and received an acceptance letter into the conference on February 28, 2019, to present my research on April 9, 2019, from Greg Luft, the 2018-2019 BEA President. As a first-year doctoral student, I knew the BEA Conference would be a great way to network, gain insight on my dissertation, meet fellow scholars, and obtain a scholarship and employment opportunities. Therefore, I applied the participant-observation inquiry while I experience presented my primary work attending my first academic conference as freshmen doctoral student.



The Broadcast Education Association 2019's Annual Conference was held April 6-9, 2019 in Las Vegas' Westgate Hotel and Resort for their internal and affiliate members. This conference took place for four days between the hours of 8:30 am and 4:30 pm, as seven pavilions and two ballrooms conjugate on topics of broadcasting simultaneously. Scholars presented results from their research, conducted workshops, and other activities to educate fellow BEA Members in attendance. The BEA 2019 Conference held workshops equipped with teaching techniques, industry updates, research tips, and demonstrations of educational programs, as sponsors showcased their services and products to members in the main Exhibit Hall. The Exhibit Hall was occupied by BEA Sponsors, discussion lounges, and 10 television monitors with digital presentations for review. This Exhibit Hall was the center of attention, where BEA members networked with other broadcasting professionals within the association to share ideas, thoughts, and opinions on various topics with entrances to four pavilions holding scheduled scholarly discussions. The other three pavilions were located at the entrance of the conference near the BEA registration desk. However, the opposed side of the Exhibit Hall gave BEA members complimentary access to the NAB Show through the Las Vegas Convention Center's South Hall. Each panel discussion and digital presentation typically occurred for an hour with breaks between presenting sessions, similar to a school's schedule.



The Network Theory Applied to #BEAVegas

The Networking Theory exhibits the process of exchanging information or ideas to others that share a common interest. This theory has been discussed throughout history and was first published in the Wycliffe Bible of 1385, as explained by Stockley (n.d.). Commonly known as the book Jeremiah, chapter 52, verses 17 through 23 described the solider as a network breaking up into group heading to Babylon as the capital of the city was reported to be a network with smaller structures surrounding the capital building. Littlejohn, S.W. (2017) recounted a modern character of the network theory, *connectedness* is "the idea that there are relatively stable pathways of communication among individuals." (p. 314) This methodology illustrated the interest of individuals, who took heed of information when communicating about common ideas, issues or situations. People tend to connect with others to convey and perceive messages mutually to solve problems or gain progress within their lifestyles. However, *group network* is a methodology individuals apply with others that have a common interest to communicate about solving common cause within a particular time and space. On the other hand, *organizational networks* are subgroup networks within a larger network. An organizational network holds a specialty or specific interest within the larger group, which may have general interests to its members. The methodologies of *connectedness*, *group network* and *organizational networks* all comprise of The Network Theory. This theory assists individuals in developing socially and acquiring information that will lead to successful results.

Connectedness

Membership of the BEA varies according to one's involvement in the association and their professional status within broadcasting. Similar to other memberships, individuals involved in this organization are educated in the field of broadcasting with a strong desire to learn more. Individual, Institutional, Corporate Associate and Student Memberships are the four units within the BEA membership structure with an annual fee, according to one's educational or professional status. BEA members also gain a sense of *connectedness*, due to the potential contacts of other individuals outside their home networks that share similar interests in broadcasting. According to Blum, R. W. (2005), school connectedness is the feeling that students aim to



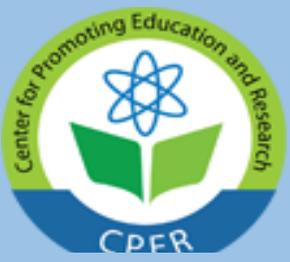
succeed together while executing projected tasks. This methodology influences the students to tackle various challenging subjects, as well as, learning about themselves within their institutional network. “Students, who experience school connectedness like school, feel that they belong, believe teachers care about them and their learning, believe that education matters have friends at school, believe that discipline is fair, and have opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities.” (Blum, R. W., 2005, p. 2) The methodology of *connectedness* within the BEA links members together with free benefits to publication subscriptions, e-newsletters, awards, grants, partnership discounts, access to the BEA membership directory, employment opportunities, and complimentary registration to the annual NAB Show. These benefits keep members connected to current industry events and procedures that will serve their professional growth. It is also a method BEA insiders used to educate themselves on up-to-date broadcasting standards.

Group Networks

Attendees of the BEA 2019 were able to network while grasping a variety of current broadcasting strategies that are or will be applied in the future. The floor plan of the conference allowed members to communicate with others upon entering and exiting paneled discussions in the Exhibit Hall or registration area. Discussions, workshops, and programs were coordinated for members to efficiently attend meetings according to their interest in the topic. Attendees were given the daily schedule of panel discussions and workshops, as members were able to have round table discussions on issues, attending Scholar2Scholar Poster Presentations, and visit sponsored vendors in the Exhibit Hall. The members of these discussions and poster presentations exhibited their findings within the allotted time, in groups or by pavilions, to explore historic, ethnic, and other communication topics as it relates to broadcasting. Exploring Small Group Discussion Networks (2017) observed members of *group networks* use “exchanges of resources or information between members are predicted to occur reciprocally in either a direct or indirect way. Direct reciprocity refers to when two actors send a signal, resource, or information to each other (e.g. A gives to B, and B gives back to A) while indirect reciprocity refers to when member’s giving a signal/resource/information to another is not directly reciprocated by the recipient, but indirectly by the other member in the network. (e.g. A gives to B, and C gives to A).” After each paneled discussion, there were questions and answers sessions, where members were able to acquire material from the topic conferred. Masterminds causally conversed at roundtables and lounges throughout the conference on a variety of vigorous topics. This allowed members to hold intellectual conversations as their understandings were challenged with the ability to reciprocate and broaden their horizons. The Scholar2Scholar Poster Presentations were visible on big-screen monitors, where researchers proudly discussed their methodologies and secured scholarly feedback for factual results. These sessions throughout the conference gave members a chance to perceive advanced knowledge and meet colleagues in the broadcasting industry.

Organizational Networks

The Broadcast Education Association has countless sponsors, affiliates and institutional members that participate within the association. These sponsored organizations tend to advertise, educate, and recruit within the BEA to gain tremendous presence within the broadcasting field to complement their products and services offered. The BEA 2019 corporate sponsors were located in the Exhibit Hall and professionally engaged with members throughout the conference from reputable organizations, such as Firstcom Music, ABC owned television stations, Blackmagic Design, Digital Video Group, Inc. and many more. The Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media (JOBEM), Journal of Radio & Audio Media (JRAM), Journal of Media Education (JoME), Taylor & Francis and the NAB are supporting affiliates connected to the BEA. The JOBEM, JRAM, JoME, and Taylor & Francis release scheduled peer-reviewed publications (free to BEA members) that are very useful to scholars for research or informational knowledge at a discounted rate. Also, attendees of the BEA Conference could gain access to the NAB Show, as they are co-located in Las Vegas every April. On the other hand, many academic institutions offer programs in Broadcasting, but some are very credible members of the BEA. Some institutional members are very reputable in the field of Broadcasting with the ability to teach their students the most up-to-date strategies from institutions like Loyola University of Maryland, Ohio University, Regent University, Colorado State University, the University of Central Florida and many more. Whitbred, R., Fonti, F., Steglich, C., & Contractor, N. (2011) found that *organizational networks* exist in organizations, where employees feel friendships could evolve through a common interest in activities.



Although members attended the BEA 2019 Conference to engage in activities as one, it is believed that attendees were on-site to see their professional and academic colleagues present their research. They supported each others' presentations, discussions and networked together, as well as, attend activities of their interests. It seems as some organizations supported their affiliated institutions together in panels due to their connectedness and aligned design of broadcasting. Provided that members of the BEA would meet annually in Las Vegas to present their work with colleagues, they may also have BEA Clubs on-campus within their organizational networks. It is very noticeable in conferences when branded groups members are representing a particular firm or school attends a paneled discussion together to support and learn new material. This would lead to the reciprocation of firms supporting each other within their organizational networks.

Conclusion

The #BEAVegas was a total success. The methodology of *connectedness* manifested, as hundreds of media professionals attended and participated in the Broadcast Education Association 2019 Conference. Although the number of footprints in BEA 19 was unknown, the National Association of Broadcasters proudly announced the "preliminary registered attendance of 91, 460 for the 2019 NAB Show" (Cumming, A. M.) However, to improve their methodology of connectedness, I would suggest another regional conference other than the "On-Location" Conference. As a first time attendee, I found the BEA 2019 Annual Convention very valuable due to the knowledge perceived from colleagues, scholars, and educators that I met while attending. My primary focus was to exhibit my Lifestyle Trends dissertation in-progress, during the Grand Plans and Great Expectations series, for the Scholar2Scholar Poster Presentations to gain feedback and advice on my research. I also surveyed other Scholar2Scholar Poster Presenters within my *group network* to perceive how my colleagues crafted their studies. As the BEA booth dawned, I was encouraged by Dr. Peter B. Orlik's vivid personality to review the newly *Peter B. Orlik Award*, other scholarship opportunities, and the application process. In my *organizational network*, I witnessed Regent University's Dr. Stephen Perry's 2nd Place victory in the *2019 History Division Business Meeting*, while Dr. Flora Khoo was proudly recognized for the *2019 Kenneth Harwood Outstanding Dissertation Award*. The Network Theory was applied to a Broadcast Education Association National Conference to illustrate how members network within this organization. This work is publishable due to the lack of explanation of the Network Theory, as well as, an academic conference. Overall, I met a lot of scholars, learned a fair amount of information relating to broadcasting, and explored new technologies within the NAB Show. It was a pleasure to be a part of the 2019 conference, and I will be looking forward to next year's show.

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