



## **Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings**

*Charles Kadushin*

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Despite the swift spread of social network concepts and their applications and the rising use of network analysis in social science, there is no book that provides a thorough general introduction for the serious reader.

Understanding Social Networks fills that gap by explaining the big ideas that underlie the social network phenomenon.

Written for those interested in this fast moving area but who are not mathematically inclined, it covers fundamental concepts, then discusses networks and their core themes in increasing order of complexity. Kadushin demystifies the concepts, theories, and findings developed by network experts. He selects material that serves as basic building blocks and examples of best practices that will allow the reader to understand and evaluate new developments as they emerge.

Understanding Social Networks will be useful to social scientists who encounter social network research in their reading, students new to the network field, as well as managers, marketers, and others who constantly encounter social networks in their work.

## **Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings Details**

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Charles Kadushin**

## **From Reader Review Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings for online ebook**

### **Libby Hemphill says**

Useful intro text for upper-level undergrad class on social network analysis

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### **Michael Burnam-Fink says**

Kadushin synthesizes an entire career of sociological research into a textbook that'd be useful for upper division undergraduates or early-stage graduate students. He lays out the mathematical underpinnings and long history of social network analysis in a way that provides rigorous background for the popularized work of Putnam (Bowling Alone) and Gladwell (The Tipping Point).

Where Kadushin excels is in critically thinking about real networks from a sociological and psychological standpoint. Real social networks are never as randomized as mathematical models assume. Their sorting by self-similarity, influence, and small-world rules means that they are inherently unequal, and tend to benefit centrally placed leaders and extremely charismatic people who bridge dense worlds over the average person. Kadushin's skepticism is a necessary antidote to naive optimism about the power of networks and vague notions of social capital to serve as an unalloyed good. A final chapter on ethics distills the lessons of a career about how social network research is especially risky in compromising people.

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### **Nicco Tan says**

#### **Great primer for social network researchers**

Its a good start specially when doing lit reviews. It gives researchers ideas where to begin and what areas need to be explored further.

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### **Khaliqnawaz says**

social networking definition and its types

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### **Q Crain says**

This book gave me the feeling that I got a great overview of the current state of "Social Network Theory". This is the first book I chose in my "study" of this topic so I really have no basis for whether or not it actually is a good overview.

It led me from small to large social network structures and a bit of the theory.

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### **Heather says**

Mr. Kadushin presents a comprehensive look at social networks through scientific research in the field.

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### **Margaret Heller says**

It took me a long time to get through this, but it was well worth the time. This is a very readable and very rigorous tour through the field of social network analysis. It covers the basic concepts, history of the field, statistics, and ethical issues surrounding the study of social networks. One very helpful aspect is that Kadushin (who has been doing this forever) takes a close look at the work popularized by Malcolm Gladwell and Robert Putnam and shows how their work holds up mathematically and theoretically.

If you are not a social scientist and thinking about doing any work with social network analysis and want to know what you are actually doing (I am looking at you, librarians), this is the book for you. The chapter on ethics is very important though! Just because data is publicly available doesn't mean you should use it in the weird way you want to.

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### **Sammy Lee says**

When I was a lad we understood that it was exasperatingly difficult to control the communities we lived in. If I had a shilling for every time a group of young scamps cornered me outside the sleeping quarters and fell upon me with bags of soap, why I'd be landed gentry! But one comes through it.

These youths today complain about the bullying here at Goodreading, but I believe it's a tempest of the proverbial tosspot. Social networks can be a bit rough, but no soap, thank goodness!

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### **Fabio Costa says**

Excellent introduction to Social Networks Theory for non-mathematician/engineer/IT expert. This book reveals the core of SN Theory in a palatable fashion.

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### **Manuel Medina says**

Just finished. This book offers a nice insight on social networks from a sociologist point of view. I find that the first chapters are very interesting and will keep you going on and on. However, the chapters that follow are not as fun to read since Kadushin uses a little more mathematical formulas which I had trouble understanding. Finally, the last part of the book might seem a little redundant. I think this a great book to start understanding social networks from a social science point of view.

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## Willis says

I've gotten interested in network analysis and was looking for an introduction to the topic. This book is not really the best for that. It is written by an academic expert in the field and is very dense, packed with a ton of information. Its conclusions are backed up by research in the area. This makes it less accessible to someone just starting out in the area, you need some background in the area of social networks and network analysis to really get the most benefit from the book.

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## Blyden says

I got and read this book with the prospect that it might be a good book for introducing undergraduate students to the study of social networks. As such, I compare it with John Scott's *Social Network Analysis* and Degenne and Forse's *Introducing Social Networks* which each fill a similar niche.

I am very pleased with the first four chapters of this Kadushin book. The Introduction is good and Chapters 2-4 each present an overview of different sets of basic network concepts in easy-to-read, interesting ways, largely devoid of mathematical details. The only criticisms I offer about these first chapters are: (1) that the author leaves the concept of social capital for much later in the book, which I believe would be best recognized as a central concept in understanding social network fairly early in the reading, (2) the author deals with the issue of relational content mainly in terms of a theory of social roles, and (3) at the end of the third chapter and beginning of the fourth chapter Kadushin brings in the distinction between emic (of meaning to the "natives") and etic (of meaning to the researchers) analysis in a way that I feel conflates with the distinction between formal (i.e. named, institutionalized categories) and informal understandings of social relations. These are all minor issues, and overall I feel that the student reading these chapters will quickly pick up breadth of social network concepts and get a strong foundation in the topic.

Things fall apart for my reading of this book in Chapter 5, in which Kadushin sets out to offer a theory of psychological motivations for social relations. There is again the unmentioned elephant of social capital when Kadushin talks about "getting things done". A bigger problem is that Kadushin's psychology of networks boils down to the idea that people are motivated by a combination of three factors: being effective (i.e. getting things done), security, and attaining "status" (i.e. deference, prestige). I just don't see that as a meaningful understanding of motivation. An even bigger question is why anyone would seek to explain the motivation of social networks as such in the first place. A social network is merely social relations understood as a collective set, and social relations consist of social actions between some set of persons, with the implication of some continuance over time. The motivations behind social networks then must be some subset, and possibly the equivalent set as, the motivations behind social actions generally and insofar as we find ourselves in an environment of other people there need not be any particular motive to form a relationship.

Browsing through the subsequent chapters I see that while there is a lot of good content in them, they generally build further on this flawed psychological foundation, and because of that I have decided against using this book as a text to introduce students to the concepts of social network analysis.

