Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings

Charles Kadushin
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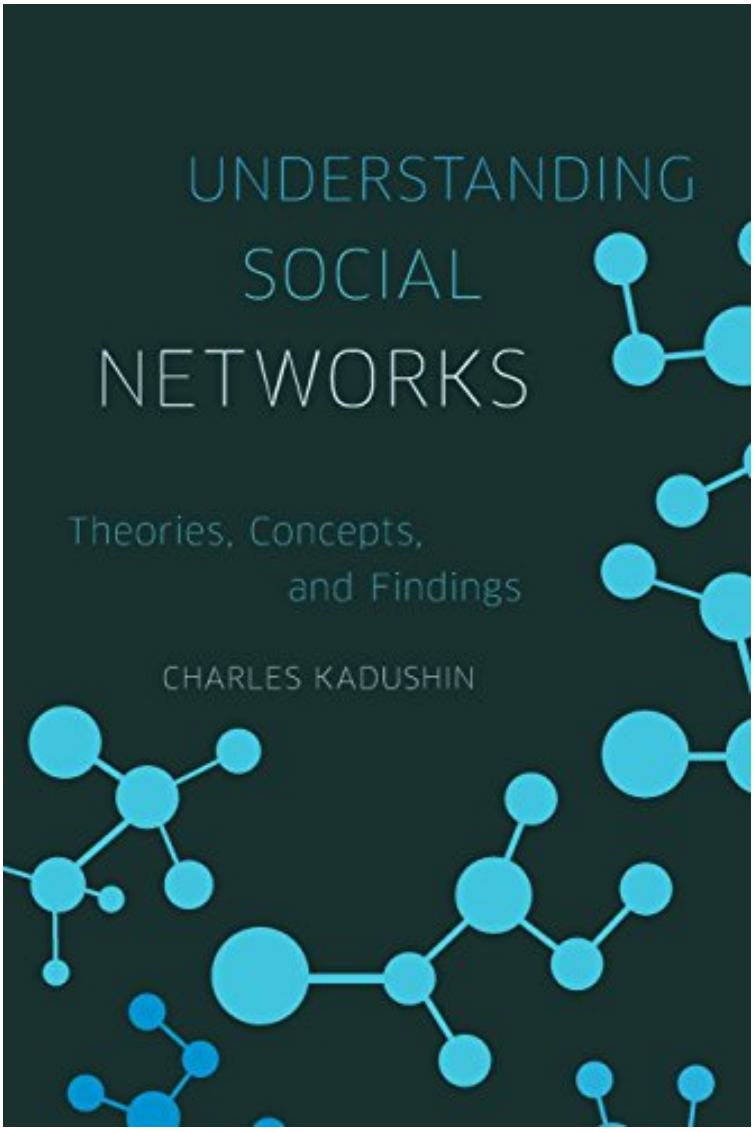

#105371 in Books Kadushin Charles 2011-12-05 2011-12-05Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 6.10 x .70 x 9.20l, .75 #File Name: 0195379470264 pagesUnderstanding Social Networks | File size: 20.Mb

Charles Kadushin : Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings:

42 of 43 people found the following review helpful. An invaluable lesson from a renowned scholarBy grandstarAs a Ph.D. student specializing in social network analysis (SNA) and, thus, having read several SNA books, I would like to strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in this area. Caution: this is not a book about SNA software or

tools; instead, it is about the basic concepts, their underlying social or pscyhological theories, and limitations, which reflect the most recent advancements in this field. Although some sections of the book (e.g., about psychological motivations of social networking) might be a little difficult to follow for students who are not familiar with the topic, the overall contents of the book are easy to read and understand. In particular, what I like most about this book is that the author offers a section of network resarch ethics (which is rare in other books) and, in each chapter, plenty of research directions needed to be explored. At the end of the book, the author presents ten master ideas in the social network study (e.g., homophily, social capital, etc.) as a 12-page-long summary of his book, which, as for me, seems to be the most succint, comprehensive summary about key concepts and findings of SNA up to now.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Network Science for the Social ScientistBy Tom Briggs (twbriggs)I was looking for social science applications of network science, and Kadushins highly accessible book fit the bill nicely.Kadushin, emeritus Professor of Sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center, has been engaged in social science research on network topics since the mid 1960s and has example after example of not only his own work with networks in social science, but also citations of all of the other social scientists Id expect to see: Ron Burt, Ed Laumann, Stanley Milgram, Stephen Borgatti, Daniel Brass, and Barry Wellman, to name only a few.Kadushin takes a decided and purposefully social approach to social networks, noting in his introduction that although network science can be applied to power grids, for example, understanding social networks really requires examining them as if people mattered. Kadushin proceeds to explore both the psychological and sociological theories underpinning networks as well as the social consequences of networks and their structures.The first few chapters provide an overview of network concepts, moving from individual network members (Chapter 2) through entire social networks and their subcomponents and network properties (Chapter 3) and finally network segmentation (Chapter 4).Chapter 5 explores the psychological foundations of social networks and the book continues through successive levels, next examining small groups and leaders (Chapter 6), then entire organizations (Chapter 7), small-world networks and community structures (Chapter 8), followed by network processes like influence and diffusion (Chapter 9). Chapter 10 explores social capital as a function of networks and network position and Chapter 11 gives much-needed attention to ethical dilemmas in social network research. Finally, Chapter 12 reviews ten master ideas of social networks.I found Kadushins book extremely helpful in pointing to citations of social network analysis applied to social science. For any social scientist interested in social networks, Id strongly recommend starting with Understanding Social Networks (with Borgatti, Everett, and Johnsons Analyzing Social Networks as a second choice). I will also note that while Kadushin focuses on social science, he does not shy away from covering the work of physicists and others on networks, though he avoids mathematics in his explanations (but references the appropriate papers).Likewise, for the general reader, I cant think of a better book that explains social networks and their applications to social science and social ideas than what Kadushin offers here. An additional strength of the book is Kadushins enjoyable writing style and clear and concise recap at the end of each chapter in which he informs the reader where we are now.Kadushins Understanding Social Networks: Theories, Concepts, and Findings is probably the most enjoyable book on social networks Ive read and has been particularly helpful in identifying particular applications of network science in the social sciences.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Theoretically Grounded, Rigorous, but Highly ReadableBy J. Richard JohnsonAs indicated by my rating, I found Understanding Social Networks to be an excellently written and useful book. I will provide an overview of its approach, and offer a couple of concrete examples of matters treated by its author that were of special interest to me. By so doing, I hope to give prospective readers at least a taste of the quality and style of this book.Understanding Social Networks begins by with the introduction of basic network ideas, adding complexity as it goes. Kadushin artfully weaves in the most important findings of small group theory as he develops his presentation, and supplies clear and fascinating examples to illustrate the concepts. A reader who is comfortable with high school algebra will find the math in this book to be pretty easy: Kadushin avoids dealing with theorems, algorithms, and computations. This is as it should be. What this book clarifies is the object of social networking theory. A student who is interested in learning about social network theory is better advised to start with a book such as this one; the math can be learned later. Besides, there are other books, some quite good, which focus on the math.My first serious encounter with network theory took place back in the late 1980s. I was actually studying operations research at that time, and needed to know graph theory, the mathematical basis of networking theory. In the process, I stumbled into some materials concerning structural balance, a social networking concept. On my first encounter with this material, I flippantly (and naively) concluded that, if one had the data to build a graph and then to determine whether it was balanced, one would already know everything of value that the graph-theoretic model could contain. After reading Kadushins book, I abandoned this view. Network analysis can uncover things that are very hard (or impossible) to see with the naked eye, as it were. It has proved to be especially useful in marketing and other research, especially in this, the age of Facebook and Google. And of course, anthropologists and epidemiologists have long found network analysis to be essential in studies of the diffusion of cultural elements and diseases, respectively. (Kadushin addresses these topics in Chapter 9.)Understanding Social Networks made me look at familiar things in new and stimulating ways. For example, when I worked as a management consultant I always sought out the informal leaders in an organization. Network analysis reveals the ubiquity of such informal leaders as a matter of fact. That is to

say, when I found informal leaders in every organization I have ever encountered, it wasnt just luck. Formal organizations do notand could notget their work done if the formal network, represented by an organizational chart, wasnt supplemented by the informal networks which inevitably arise in any organization. Informal networks always have informal leaders, so they are inevitable, too. Kadushin, drawing on a comprehensive body of social theory and research (check out his bibliography), provides a convincing explanation, based on basic human drives, as to why this is so. Though there are methodological challenges to carrying it out, network analysis can identify these leaders, who are often invisible to upper management and outside observers.Just as important as identifying natural or informal leaders is the characterization of what makes them leaders. Summarizing research done on that topic, Kadushin concludes that effective leaders, whether informal or formally appointed, are more likely to initiate interactions with people of lower status in their hierarchies than are other high-status members. Let me clarify: High status members of groups tend to receive more interactions from others than they reciprocate or initiate themselves. They are less likely to reciprocate interactions with lower-status members of their groups. But those who become leaders (as opposed to "bosses" and "snobs") follow a different pattern. They initiate interactions with lower-status members, and are more likely to respond to interactions initiated by them. These patterns show up in network models and in the centrality scores of the unheralded leaders that exist in every organization. Effective formal leaders follow the same patterns. Thus, network analysis provides a way to model the importance of relationship structure to leadership effectiveness. If you want to be an effective leader, you will avoid snubbing even the humblest people in your domain. Of course, this would not in itself constitute a guide to leadership. But much contemporary work on leadership puts high emphasis on relationship building, and the evidence presented by Kadushin strongly supports this.The examples I have just shared only scratch the surface of this useful and thought-provoking book. I should add that he manages to accomplish this pleasant combination of theory and technique in just over 200 pages. That in itself should make the book a first choice for those who want to explore social networking theory.

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.

.com Images from Understanding Social Networks [With marketing] personal contact is most effective, if one can find a way to start a snowball rolling. Marketers call this 'viral marketing.' [In this image] researchers tracked recommendations for a Japanese graphic novel and illustrated the spread in a dense network. (Kadushin, 9)