

# APPLYING SOCIAL NETWORK THEORY AND ANALYSIS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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This paper outlines how researchers may use social network theory and analysis in struggles for social justice. First it defines societal social justice and then it examines American and Canadian societies, which, according to this definition, are demonstrated to be unjust. It then considers both societies in light of insight from social network theory and analysis, and explores unjust societal networks of power and imbalances in social capital. Then follows a brief reflection on the limitations and strengths of social network scholarship. With examples, the paper then highlights three strategies for applying social network theory and analysis to address social injustice: (1) mapping social structures; (2) creating, building, and managing social networks; and (3) building social capital. The latter two strategies accord with empowerment theory, which undergirds my research with the peace movement in Minnesota, offered in conclusion as an example of applied social justice research.

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## INTRODUCTION

Social network theory and analysis can provide helpful insights and strategies to applied researchers struggling for social justice. Analyzing social networks allows researchers to understand the social structure underlying patterns of social injustice as well as efforts to resist social injustice. This paper begins with a definition of social justice, and provides examples of societal injustice in the United States and Canada. Having demonstrated that these two societies exhibit injustice, this paper then briefly describes social networks and considers the social structures underlying systems of

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