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“Social Networks in Social Science Research: Theory and Practice”

Final paper guide

As the final paper for the course “Social Networks in Social Science Research: Theory and Practice”, you are expected to write an extended research proposal.

Your proposal should focus on a **topic** related to social networks in social science research (either theoretically or methodologically). This could be one of the topics we will be discussing throughout the course, or the topic of your own interest.

Your proposal must follow the **structure** provided in this guide on page 2. Specifics of each proposal may vary depending on the topic and the methodology of the project, but the key elements must be included.

You are encouraged to continuously work on your paper throughout the course duration. This is not a task to be left to the last minute. See “Recommended timeline” on page 2.

I will be available during **consultation hours** to discuss your progress, provide feedback, and guide you through any challenges you might face. Consultations must be scheduled in advance in person or via e-mail (anna.sokolova@uni-mannheim.de).

My Role and Support

- Topic formulation: I can assist you in refining your specific paper topic according to your academic interests and the scope of this course.
- Feasibility assessment: I can evaluate the practicality of your proposed research, considering factors like data (collection) availability, methodological soundness, and relevance to the field.
- Literature navigation: I can provide you guidance in finding and understanding relevant academic literature.
- Methodological consultations: I can offer insights into various research methods appropriate for social network analysis and help you in selecting the most suitable approach for your topic.
- Future project support: Should you decide to undertake and publish your research project beyond this course, I am willing to provide further assistance where feasible.

Your Responsibilities

- Active engagement: Proactively approach me for consultations in a timely manner.
- Preparation for meetings: Come to meetings with specific questions or topics you need assistance with. Your preparation is key to productive discussions.
- Literature review: Diligently search for and engage with relevant literature. This will form the backbone of your research proposal.
- Academic acknowledgements: Be meticulous with your references. Proper citation and acknowledgment of sources are essential in academic research.

Course paper structure: Extended Research Proposal

1. Introduction
 - a) Research Question / Goal.
 - b) Societal justification: Why is this social phenomenon important / widespread?
 - c) Scientific novelty: What are the gaps / contradictions in existing research?
2. Theoretical Framework
 - a) Overview of existing concepts/theories: How have this question been studied before?
 - b) Hypotheses (optional): What are your specific expectations / hypotheses?
3. Data
 - a) Data description: Dataset name, n of observations, timeframe, main variables, etc.
or
 - b) Data collection plan: Why would you need to collect own data? Where, how, and when you will collect your data? Which characteristics will you record?
4. Methodology: planned analytical strategy.
 - a) Method of analysis: Why is it the best fit for the data / research question?
 - b) Main dependent, independent, and control variables (optional).
 - c) Descriptive analysis of the main variables (optional).
5. Conclusion
 - a) Potential limitations: methodological, ethical, etc.
 - b) Planned scientific contribution.
 - c) Planned societal contribution.
6. References

Note:

- The extended proposal must be no longer than 6 pages (including references) with font size 12 and 1,5 line spacing.
- Try to use the most recent literature. Ideally, at least 80% of your sources should be no older than 10 years old, and at least 50% – no older than 5 years old.

Recommended timeline:

