Topics for Bachelor or Master theses in Sociology

By choosing one of the following topics or a closely related topic, students may benefit from a better fit with substantive and methodological knowledge currently available or developed by myself and colleagues. If you are interested in any of the topics, please attend my colloquium to discuss it. All of the topics should be taken as rough suggestions and will need further narrowing down depending on the student’s interest. In most cases bachelor theses will consist of a detailed review and discussion of available literature. Only in exceptional cases when students are already familiar with a secondary data set, the thesis may also contain descriptive statistical analyses. Master theses should include some empirical statistical analysis. BA- and MA-theses can be written either in German or English. Students are encouraged to write their thesis in English and not to worry about minor language issues – the thesis will be marked on content and substantive arguments. For English theses, the page requirement is reduced.

Supervision by Dr. Laia Sanchez Guerrero (in English):

   a. Which are the mechanisms by which upper classes reproduce their privileged social position? How do these mechanisms differ between countries?
   b. Elite educational institutions and their role in social reproduction:
      i. Boarding schools.
      ii. Universities.

2. Sociology of Education.
   a. How does family background affect the chances of children in education?
   b. Which is the role of ethnicity determining individual’s opportunities in education? How does it differ between countries and social backgrounds?
   c. Which are the main policies/programmes (either in developed and underdeveloped countries) developed to address the achievement gap by:
      i. Ethnicity.
      ii. Gender.
      iii. Social origins.
3. Early childhood development.
   a. How does deprivation from 0 to 5 years old affect children’s development?
   b. Which are the main mechanisms that foster middle- and upper-class children’s
cognitive abilities in early childhood?
   c. Unequal childhoods around the globe: main policy challenges and solutions for
childhood development in (under)developed countries.

4. Is it nurture or is it nature?
   a. Sex and Gender differences in individuals’ capabilities. How much is genetic,
how much is learned?
   b. Ethnic Inequalities in capabilities: the role of stereotypes and environmental
boundaries to the full potential development among ethnicities.
   c. The role of genetics and childrearing practices in the emergence of gaps between
social groups.

Supervision by Prof. Dr. Pia Schober (in English or German):

1. Adapting to important life course events and subjective wellbeing
   a. How do people reallocate their time and emotional investments after important
family events, such as first childbirth or divorce/separation?
   b. How does the adaptation process differ between groups with different
educational and income resources?

2. Gender, parenthood and couple relationships
   a. How do communication styles, conflict resolution and bargaining practices in
couples change at important life course events or over the course of
relationships?
   b. How do communication and conflict resolution relate to the gender division of
employment and household labour in couples?
   c. Social and ethnic differences in perceived relationship quality, communication
styles and conflict resolution practices in couples

3. Socialisation, parenting, and formation of gender identities of youth:
   a. How do social networks and peers influence changes in gender and family
beliefs and choices during adolescence?
   b. How do social or ethnic compositions of education institutions influence gender
beliefs, aspirations and choices?
   c. How does socially deviant behaviour (e.g. cheating, truancy, crime) of youth
relate to their gender identity and parenting in families?

4. Digital media use, predictors and consequences among youth
   a. How does digital media use vary across social groups by gender, parental
education or ethnicity?
   b. Choose a specific form of digital media use and review the literature on its
consequences for young people’s wellbeing