

# **What Is Personal Is Political... Right From Day One: Unveiling Gender Inequalities in Group Work**

**Igor Ahedo-Gurrutxaga**  
**University of the Basque Country**

**Iraide Alvarez-Muguruza**  
**University of the Basque Country**

**Cata Gómez-Etxegoien**  
**University of the Basque Country**

*Teaching Sociology and Political Science enables us to address gender inequalities as part of the curriculum in disciplines that analyze inequalities and power relations and as a transverse competence to be used in the classroom, turning students into protagonists in the recognition and management of discrimination. In this article, we show how the first day of class can be an ideal moment, within the framework of a subject based on the methodology of project-based learning (PBL), to make the theoretical foundations of the gender perspective visible to students through their own experience. Here we present some techniques that reveal how gender norms are the cause of the unequal distribution of roles which assigns women to the private and reproductive space in the classroom. Based on the hypothesis that group work can prove to be a blind spot from the gender perspective, we take advantage of the potential of the cooperative learning methodology to stimulate critical thinking in students, by providing them with new tools to identify the public nature of gender inequalities.*

*Keywords: gender, cooperative learning, political science, group work, learning*

## **INTRODUCTION: EQUALITY AT THE CENTER OF METHOD AND CONTENT**

One of the challenges of higher education is to guarantee students' equality in acquiring skills. 50 years after the publication of Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) "Reproduction in education, society and culture," it is still pertinent to address the emergence of class, race, and gender inequalities in and through the classroom.

Incorporating a gender perspective in teaching is a professional obligation (McCabe, 2013; Blee, 1986; Hartung, 1991) and an opportunity for students to display their sociological imagination (Mills 1959; Sargent & Corse, 2012). This allows them to use their experiences to examine the conceptual depth of ideas such as social construction, socialization, roles, and symbolic capital; in short, the relationship between structure and agency (Berkowitz et al., 2010; Kleiman et al., 2006; Adkins, 2018; Smith, 2017). In this strategy, a good start can be key (Higgins 1999). Studies show how the first hours of teaching determine

motivation to learn (Jafar, 2021): if emotions are essential for deep learning (Immoridino & Damasio, 2015), they are running high on presentation day (Dorn, 2014).

The disruptive nature of a first session, in addition to motivating and focusing the subject thematically, can also help define the learning climate (Higgins, 1999) as well as the core elements that will guide the course (Brouillette & Turner, 2010). It is a good idea to start studies by showing that inequality matters in teaching (Edwards, 2010), particularly in a system based on cooperative learning: students face this type of teaching with a mixture of expectation and uncertainty (Blumenfield et al., 1991; Monson, 2019). If, in addition to encouraging and enticing the students, we want the first day to show the importance of collaborative work, it makes sense to do this by laying the foundations for it to be based on equality.

The experience we describe was carried out in the presentation of the subject *Fundamentals of Political Analysis* in the first year of the university degree in Sociology and Political Science at the University of the Basque Country. This text has three aims. Firstly, to showcase the presentation of an introductory sociology course based on cooperative learning in which active, original dynamics for the methodology and content presentation are used to make inequalities visible in the classroom. Secondly, to contextualize the foundations of inequality that this experience shows using the results of qualitative research carried out with 4th-year students in this degree. After drawing attention to a possible blind spot that causes inequality in the classroom, to begin to outline how the keys to cooperative learning (Kagan, 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 2009) can be harnessed to turn students into protagonists (Longmore et al., 1996, Michaelsen et al., 2014), not only of their learning but also of the management of inequalities that underlie group work. Ultimately, this teaching approach aims to show students a central element in sociological analysis: the need to overcome individualized approaches (interpreted as private) to phenomena that require sociological views (and which require public and political responses for their solution). Indeed, what happens in the classroom after an innocent cooperative dynamic illustrates the maxim that what is personal is political.

## **GENDER MATTERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Making inequality evident using the everyday life of the classroom allows us to address an aspect that is difficult to apprehend easily in introductory courses; the understanding of social structures as structured and structuring realities. In our case, we do it on the day of the presentation by showing the consequences of group work of differentiated socialization which defines gender roles to direct women to the private, reproductive and emotional sphere, reserving the public, productive and rational space for men (Millet, 1971; Martínez-Palacios, 2017, Martínez-Palacios et al., 2016). Political theory and feminist sociology show that this system is articulated through an exclusion-inclusion logic with a triple opposition that differentiates the rational from the emotional, the public from the private, and the products from the reproductive. Each of these three pairs is organized in a binary system of social valorization and gender adjudication, which configures the masculine as a normative reference.

There are more and more studies in higher education that show the weight of gender biases in the learning process (Hall & Sandler, 1982; Fassinger, 1995; Canada & Pringle, 1995; Hirschy & Wilson, 2002; Moss-Racusin et al., 2012; Amurio et al., 2022). This relevance is also becoming evident in political science (Atchinson 2017; Ahedo et al., 2022a) and public administration studies (Rauhaus & Suchuchs, 2019; Diaz Kope, et al., 2019; D'Agostino et al., 2019). We know that gender biases affect the tasks carried out by public administration lecturers (Rauhaus & Suchuchs, 2019), the type of research methodologies preferred by doctoral students in public administration (Diaz Kope, et al., 2019) negotiation styles displayed by Master's students (D'Agostino et al., 2019) or classroom exercises such as role plays in International Relations (Coughlin, 2013, Engel et al., 2019). These unequal behavior patterns are present in the use of time during their course, (Quadlin, 2016), students' self-image (Lopez, 2014), their willingness to contribute to debates (Engel et al., 2019), security and assertiveness and even self-evaluation (Gonzalez et al., 2019), leadership patterns (Pascale & Ohlson, 2020), and even the sanction of girls who appear assertive and confident (Coughlin, 2013).

Moreover, if it matters in the classroom, it also matters in group work (Ahedo et al., 2022a; Ahedo et al., 2022b). Being able to address these inequalities in group work requires knowing the qualitative

mechanisms that underlie this inequality, as only then can we examine it properly. However, an approach that seeks to find qualitative patterns to explain very subtle, invisible unequal interactions in “peer groups” runs up against a problem: the power relations and clear asymmetries that occur between teachers and students. Therefore, following the essence of educational action research (Noffke & Somekh, 2009), the authors of this text have embarked on a project that seeks to incorporate the gender perspective into teaching, maximizing the potential of our positions; on the one hand, a teacher concerned about equality but with certain privileges (a man in a stable professional situation), on the other, two women in a situation of absence of privilege (young women without job stability: a doctoral and a master researcher). Specifically, the subordinate position of this co-author becomes a research privilege for carrying out action-research dynamics (in which there is no difference between subject and research object) based on leading protected discussion groups that confirm, with stark crudeness, that gender is important in the classroom.

As we have shown in other papers (Ahedo et al., 2022a; Ahedo et al., 2022b; Amurrio et al., 2022), the testimonies of the female students clearly show that as a consequence of the gender norms that affect female students, they work harder, yet are perceived as doing less. Below we present some excerpts from the 5 discussion groups held between 2020 and 2021 with students in the 4th year of the Sociology and Political Science Degree (N=20). First, we will see how the unequal distribution of tasks takes place and what consequences it has in the evaluation. Later, we will see how gender matters in the participation content, as well as in how what is worked on in private is presented publicly to the teachers, and consequently, how it is valued.

“I feel (and it’s not just me) that throughout my life I have taken on the role of holding the group together because the natural thing is to get the work done. On the other hand, classmates (men) send work at the last moment, but you have put in many hours and you have been worrying and I think this is a pattern that repeats itself.”

“That’s what happened to us with the guys in class; we girls had to organize the work ourselves, we prepared it for them: ‘you have to do this and this’. And yet, they (the boys) were not able to do it. But even with us preparing the work: ‘you have to do this and this’, explaining it to them... even then they didn’t do it.”

“As it is group work, you end up doing the part of the work that should be done by your classmate or correcting almost everything, and you end up doing the work of four people.”

As we can see, the testimonies of the female students show that they take on reproductive roles in group work management that overload them with responsibilities. However, socialization that inhibits the control of the public space causes great tension in oral presentations, which has negative effects on their grades.

Two last quotes that tell us about the consequences:

“I felt anxious and short of breath. I had a feeling of tightness in the chest, being very rigid, hunched over, and looking down. Looking at my notes a thousand times, and not being able to listen to others. I couldn’t concentrate: it was like the final judgment. I couldn’t keep my hands still at all, I squeezed my lips shut. When it finished it was like a hormonal release, when you release all kinds of toxins.”

“Nervous, red, my legs are shaking, tight chest, tremors. After the presentation, I felt guilty for not having done my best or being as good as my classmates. Subconsciously I was apologizing. I felt powerless, I tried to occupy as little space as possible”; “I felt inferior. When it comes to presenting with them. I knew that they had prepared it in 10 minutes and it was going to come out naturally as if they had been researching the subject for a month, a year. And I prepared it non-stop and again and again I would try to speak as naturally as possible and I kept getting stuck or getting nervous, even when I knew the topic well.”

Knowing the patterns of behavior, if we manage to make the inequalities visible from the first day in the introductory courses, in addition to warning of the situation seen in the fourth year, we can exemplify how behind sociological phenomena such as the “glass ceiling” or the “sticky floor”, which will be mentioned throughout the course, lies the same logic: what is shown by the fourth-year students and what happens in the first-year experiment. In all cases, the storyline is a system of sex-gender domination that facilitates male productivity and public visibility while obviating and undervaluing reproductive work, mostly female. Placing the gaze on inequality from day one can make it clear that gender norms such as discretion, rigidity, and perfectionism explain both the “glass ceiling” and the difficulty in class to speak in public somatized in the form of bodily stress and lack of enjoyment. Framing inequality from the beginning of the course can show that female *habitus* based on gender norms such as empathy, discipline, and dedication not only cement the “sticky ground” that prevents women from taking off in their professional careers but also cause work overload in group work and reinforcement of reproductive and private roles in class. However, there was resistance on the part of the students to see these realities as discriminatory (Freixas & Fuentes Guerra, 1997), attributing them to personal traits such as shyness or lack of organization. Gender blindness, an “inability to perceive inequality or discriminatory practices” (García-Pérez, 2011, p. 386), is real, and according to the Political Science corpus, it works because the point of view is private and, therefore, the problem is not recognized as public (Ahedo, 2022a). However, given that the public recognition of discrimination is precisely the epicenter of our discipline, a path can be forged in the formal curriculum of this subject to attack the blind spot in gender perspective detected in group work dynamics. The strategy is to shed light on it, and put it in the hands of the students.

## **THE COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK: THE MAGIC OF THE CINDERELLA STORY**

In *Fundamentals of Political Analysis*, according to Caminal (1996) and Vallès (2000), politics is defined as a mechanism for the public management of structural inequalities. At the beginning of the presentation day for the course subject, the story of Cinderella (Ahedo, 2022a) is used as a metaphor for the transition from private consideration to the public interpretation of inequalities as a motor for political ideas, and reflects on some of the elements that underlie the story (among them, the notions of “orphanhood”, “mopping floors”, “access to the prince” or “magic”). Using this example, the aim is to demonstrate that the origin of Cinderella’s subordination is not bad luck but a specific pattern of structural, hidden, and naturalized power relations. It is understood that orphanhood is about social isolation; scrubbing floors represent a situation of vulnerability; access to the prince is a political solution. This allows us to show the students that the magic of the Cinderella story rests on the political consideration of a matter previously interpreted as private. Consequently, we explain that awareness of the public nature of discrimination emerges when “the Cinderellas” realize that “they are not alone” (Cohen & Arato, 2006) and that they can unite through politicization processes that lay out demands for political change (Ahedo, 2022a).

From this perspective, we point out that power relations reach their maximum expression when they are interpreted privately, making them invisible, concluding that the most effective power is that which is unseen (Millet, 1970) and is assumed to be “normal” (Allen, 1999). These forms of normalization are exemplified in the uncritical assumption of roles based on gender norms that are internalized and fed by language. Following the example, to explain the public essence of the political, we reflect on the underlying meaning of concepts such as “domestic violence” (interpreted as an individual matter limited to private life) and “gender violence” (considered a problem for society). The transition to the public domain that characterizes the processes of politicization can be seen in the example of the sentence against La Manada (a case of gang rape at the San Fermín festival in Pamplona which shocked Spanish public opinion and sparked the largest feminist demonstration in history) as a wake-up call to explain the cycle of feminist protests in Spain (Varela, 2019). This transition, likewise, is exemplified in the Me Too movement, showing how the key to the movement is to demonstrate that the attacks experienced individually by many women are part of a structural problem, which generates social mobilization and consequently creates demands that the political system must process in the form of laws, but only if it is analyzed politically.

Once these contents had been presented, it would be expected that the students would be able to uncover discrimination in the classroom. However, questionnaires carried out before implementing our strategy (in 2017 and 2018) showed that a majority of first-year students considered that they were not affected by discrimination in their university lives. In contrast, the fourth-year students identified it, both in the questionnaires and in the aforementioned discussion groups. This shows that gender blindness fades after four years of discriminatory experience. For this reason, it is necessary to reveal inequalities as soon as possible, and the best way is in a practical form.

## **GENDER AS A TOOL**

Transcending the private view of gender inequalities in sociology and political science classrooms is a pedagogical opportunity. It fits in with the discipline since it allows the first year students to overcome an individualistic view of present reality (Bulanda & Frye, 2020; Pedersen, 2010), and work on themes such as socialization, the social construction of reality, sanction, regulations, and roles from a point of view of gender. It allows students to assimilate transversal competencies, especially to assume the weight of the structural and to deploy their sociological imagination (Kleimann et al., 2006; Berkowitz, 2010). Among many others, journals like the *Journal of Political Science Education*, *Teaching Public Administration* or *Teaching Sociology* show examples of success in the approach to the structural, sociological, and political imagination using a gender perspective: asking students to paint their nails can help boys to embody the close relationship between masculinity and heterosexuality (Edwards, 2010); receiving sanctions designed in terms of gender in a simulated game using Monopoly allows them to experience inequality and the edges of intersectionality (Smith, 2017); answering a test with statements about inequality makes it possible to identify schools and theoretical approaches about gender, as well as to deactivate certain prejudices about feminism (McCabe, 2013).

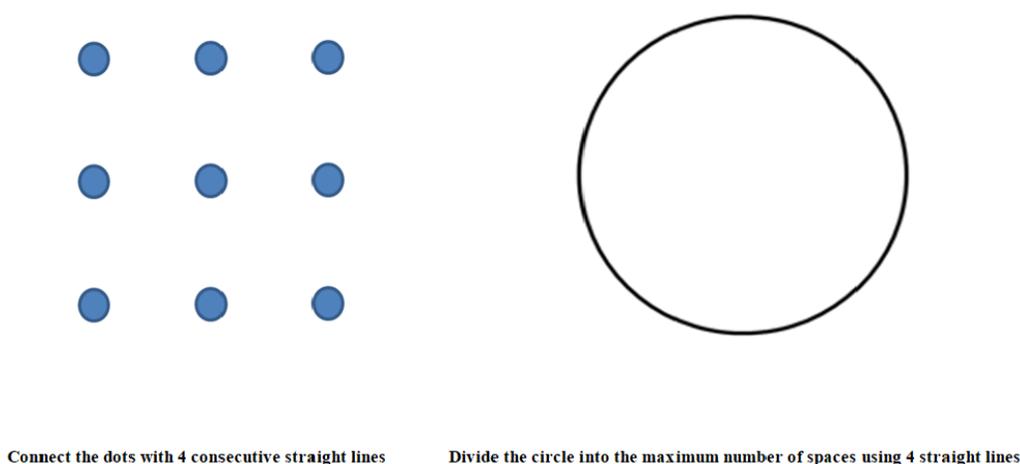
Experimentation and the autonomous search for answers using a practical approach are not only possible in the topic addressed, but can also be enhanced using this method: the experience that we present is part of a subject that is approached through Project-based Learning, which is a method that is beginning to show good results in sociology (Monson, 2017). Moreover, this first session can serve as an inspiration for any other introductory sociology course based on other methodologies that seek self-direction of learning (Loyens et al., 2008) thanks to the proactive role of students in problem-solving (Almulla, 2019) through the autonomous search for novel and collaborative solutions (McDuff, 2012; Prince & Felder, 2006). For 10 weeks, groups (four to six people) self-organized by the students (so that some might not be mixed) must explain a conflictive social phenomenon using three reports: in the first, they identify six structural variables; in the second, the object of study is analyzed from the perspective of identity using a theoretical framework created from bibliographical references compiled by them; in the third, they transfer the information obtained autonomously and presented by the course teacher. At the same time, they must present three individual papers on problems whose theoretical approaches have previously been addressed in the classroom (Ahedo, 2022b).

## **THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS: INEQUALITY IN PRACTICE**

The importance of the first day of the class lies not only in the fact that it frames the subject by introducing key concepts to work on (Winston, 2007; Brouillette & Turner, 1992), but it also determines the climate of the rest of the course (Dorn, 2014), as a consequence of the “halo” effect analyzed by Khaneman (2011), which is important in a method with very good results, but which displays intensive work dynamics. The success rate of the subject during the last 5 years is 95 percent class attendance is 90 percent and the evaluation of the students in official surveys is 9.6 even though 60 percent consider that they work harder in this subject than in other parts of the degree. The average number of people who at the beginning of the course consider the subject “interesting or very interesting” is 40 percent and this rises to 85 percent at the end of the semester (Ahedo, 2022b). Therefore, one week before the start, an email is sent to the students informing them of the importance of attending the presentation. It is anticipated that the

subject is based on an innovative teaching method (consolidated and with very good feedback in the preceding years) that places the spotlight on the students. They are warned that the session will be very dynamic as they will encounter the methodologies that will be used throughout the semester. In this way, a high “anchor” (Khaneman, 2011) of expectations is created, which the students like because they see that they are being taken into consideration (Higgins, 1999). On that day, the activity unfolds with intensity and emotions carry an important weight: the learning of the rest of the course is at stake (Immordino & Damasio, 2007). After the teacher’s presentation, in which they focus on professional aspects, but also on hobbies (the crime novels the teacher confesses to being addicted to will be used, they are told, to explain the features of modernity and its faith in reason using Sherlock Holmes, and postmodernity and the crisis of utopias using Chandler), these two enigmas are presented (Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1  
FIRST DAY OF CLASS PUZZLES**

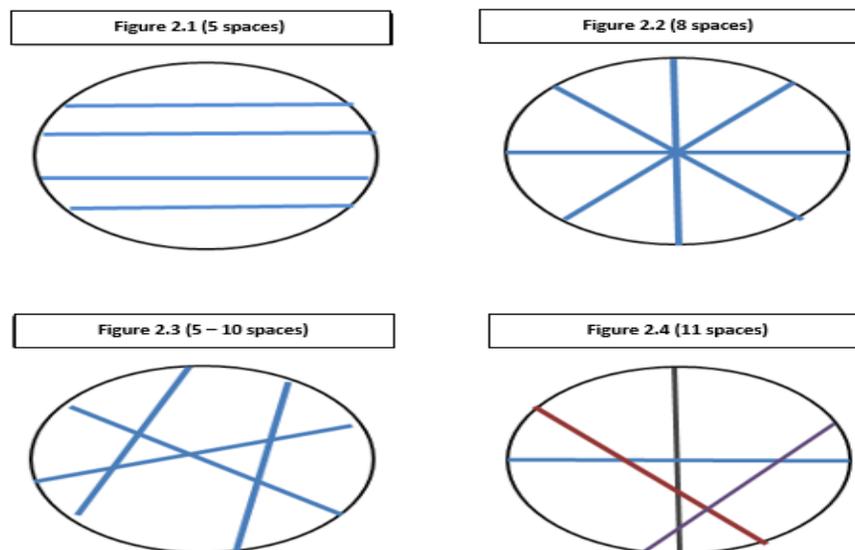


After a few minutes of individual work in which nobody solves the first of the exercises (as will happen to the reader unless they know the answer previously), they are told to wait till the end of the class (and the article) to find out the answer. With their attention refocused, they go to the second exercise and they are asked to raise their hands according to the number of spaces obtained (Figure 2).

When someone says that they have managed to get 11 spaces, they are asked how they did it. Usually, it was by chance, so the group is asked to look for an explanation of the result. Guiding their reflections, a rule is identified: each line drawn crosses the previous ones. At this point, they are congratulated for having found the essence of a theory: discovering hidden patterns in a phenomenon using regularities. This question allows us to show that the essence of the subject is to learn to theorize through collaboration: the cooperative learning method aims to enable them to find patterns that they can apply to the analysis of social phenomena. They are told that this will be the task they have throughout the course. Thus, the subjects of the course are presented, based on the analysis of structures, agency, and consciousness. Before the break, we return to the drawing of the second exercise to explain the logic of cooperative work and the argument structure of the project to be presented. By showing the different ways of drawing the lines, we point out that working in a group means cooperating so that the result is not an unbalanced aggregate. The greatest richness and complexity when it comes to seeing the “parts” of reality are achieved with cooperative work in which all eyes meet (2.4), compared to uncoordinated approaches (2.1) or those that only do it using personal (2.2) or random (2.3) leadership. In the same way, beyond the way of working, we explain what the structure and content of the report should be like. The drawings help to exemplify bad project presentations: image 2.1 is that of a task in which each person has done their part of it without thinking about the others; 2.2 is that of a task in which the unity is just superficial; 2.3 reflects a disastrous

task. All three show a lack of collaboration and coordination in the articulation of a report in which the variables that each person researches must be articulated in the narrative (2.4). To make it clear what we are not looking for, they are told that it is easy to know that we are looking at model 2.1. when there is no relationship between the variables presented; at 2.2, when, even though there seems to be a relationship, no one in the group has detected plagiarism or the appearance of the first person singular in a text signed by five people; at 2.3 when not even the unification of the typeface has been thought of. We warn them that they will not be able to improve their grade after the feedback in any of these cases.

**FIGURE 2  
SOLUTION TO THE SECOND PUZZLE**



45 minutes after the start, the rhythm changes; the students are asked to go outside the classroom, into the campus gardens, which generates excitement and surprise. They are reminded that whoever wants to know the answer to the first of the riddles must wait until the end of the class (and the article). They are told to spread out in rows with seemingly random questions. Based on the response, they are organized into groups by hair color (blond or brown), their favorite soccer team (Athletic de Bilbao or Real Madrid), type of previous studies (public or private), mother tongue (Basque or Spanish) and, finally, gender (masculine, feminine or non-binary). At this point, groups of three people are chosen from each row to create mixed groups. The surplus (and non-binary) student is recruited as an ally. While most students go to the classroom, the second group is told that the idea is to detect behavior patterns based on gender without the rest knowing it. They are given guidelines on what can happen and they are asked to fill in a form that measures participation quantitatively and qualitatively in terms of gender.

Meanwhile, the students in the classroom are organized into mixed groups (Ahedo et al., 2022b). A timer is projected onto a screen and when it starts, the students, in groups of six, are asked to brainstorm six words related to politics in six minutes. In response to this ‘Phillips 666’ technique, some groups react by negotiating the result and running out of time, while others summarize their ideas and finish quicker and each talk about other things in the remaining time. After the six minutes, they are asked to make a definition of politics that includes these words. It can be seen that the students who have negotiated and cooperated are relieved and pleased because they had based their choice of words on certain criteria, while those who chose the words without coordination (proposing one each, for example) or without criteria, are surprised and frustrated. The more organized students know that they will be able to make a good definition; for the others, it will be difficult for theirs to make sense. Before they begin to create the definition, we take the

opportunity to return to exercise two (and we show image 2.4 again) to remind them that cooperative work is not a summary of individual tasks (2.1) nor random chaos (2.3); it is suggested that if only one person (2.2) has participated in any group, they should do the definition alone. After the students have been given some time to draft their definitions, a third dynamic is introduced; those who worked cooperatively will be “rewarded” and those who did not will be “punished”. The definitions are collected and then handed out to a different group: they are asked to prepare to defend their definition and criticize the other group. They are warned that this will be the first and last time they will be allowed to unleash their “killer instincts” in the classroom. This aspect makes it possible to mention in passing that the key to the subject will always be respect and an open attitude to learning and collaboration, that bad manners will not be tolerated, and that the objective of a debate in this class will never be to convince and always to learn. After this preparation, the students carry out a 15-minute debate, with the intervention of group representatives. In the meantime, the observers measure the quantitative and qualitative participation in terms of gender: the time spent expressing ideas in each dynamic and if the students reflect stereotypes previously specified beforehand, and in what way. The four experiences carried out between 2018 and 2022 reflect the same pattern (Ahedo et al., 2022a): a greater weight in the participation of female students in the Phillips 666, and of male students in the creation of the definition. For the debates, the men account for 90 percent of the time spent. Before presenting the results to the observers, each group is asked to raise their hands if they wrote the words on the Phillips 666, if they have written the words after discussing it, and if they have written it out to pass it on to other groups. Systematically, the number of women is overwhelmingly greater in all experiences. At this point, the students are asked to identify what is happening, and whether a pattern can be seen (drawing 2.4 is shown). When there is no reply, the students are asked to name the girls’ work. In two of the years observed, the word the group agreed on to define the girls’ role is that of *secretary*. By using this strategy, we have made inequality visible in the classroom. Based on this experience, a key part of the subject is better understood: the need to understand structures as realities both structured by an action (practices such as those carried out here: speaking, taking up a pen) and structuring of this action (productive or reproductive roles; public or private). After presenting the binary triad on which the system is based, they are asked to carry out an exercise for the following week identifying the patriarchal structures shown in education using this binary logic. We pretend that the class is ending, the teacher exhausted, starting a farewell in which they are encouraged to be an active part in the subject and are reminded of what they have learned in two hours: the keys to working in groups and doing tasks; the essence of a theory; and their experience. They are congratulated for having understood and experienced the sex-gender system. Finally, they are advised to take everything into account in group work. Then there are voices... “Professor, we have not solved the first puzzle”.

## EVALUATION OF EXPERIENCE AND CONTROL MECHANISMS

The accumulated result of this experience indicates that the impact on students is high. Anonymous feedback by the students confirms the validity of the exercises for working on the sociological imagination, specifying structural logic, or capturing their attention for the course subject: “I like to have concepts and theory introduced through activities, as you learn more and it is better since it is practical”; “Doing it this way helps students show interest in the subject since they are not theoretical approaches but rather a dynamic class that allows concepts to be internalized”; “The activity allows us to approach sociological analysis using gender, and capture the importance of socialization, structures, roles”; “Doing these activities makes the method incredible”. In any case, doubts or arguments also emerge. This is a male student’s comment: “I think it is necessary for a degree like sociology, but judging by the comments and conversations that I have had with other boys in class, it is an issue that makes us uncomfortable. It is not our fault if we live in a patriarchal system, and we feel guilty”.

Precisely these types of comments serve to reinforce the collaborative potential of cooperative work. One way to avoid guilt is to be a protagonist in the management of these inequalities. We believe that Project Based Learning enables this. Due to its complexity compared to the traditional model, the scaffolding design must be meticulous (Markham, 2003): it must not only contemplate curricular activities,

but also self-organization mechanisms. As a result, organizational tools based on commitment and self-evaluation are provided: in our subject, at the beginning of the project, the groups draw up a group agreement that must be signed and accompanied by a photo that makes unity visible. It is seen as a pact that defines individual commitments; it distributes roles and mechanisms for the rotation of tasks, guaranteeing shared leadership; it makes explicit their abilities and difficulties, as well as their personal and group commitments; it identifies potential conflict factors and mechanisms for management and even for expulsion or sanction; and it reflects which indicators of cooperative work will be analyzed in their self-assessment, which is equivalent to 10 percent of the course grade. The choice of these indicators is carried out through a test in which they have previously been asked to assess 16 procedural aspects of group work (such as agreeing on everything before starting; respecting opinions; organizing the tasks). The results obtained over three years (2019 to 2021) reflect a higher systematic assessment of the girls in every one of the items. Each year, the results are returned to the class identifying the variables in which gender is most evident, and each person is asked about gender bias. They are reminded of what happened on the first day and the group is asked to choose what they see as most relevant to give their classmates a grade. In mixed groups, it is suggested that they consider gender bias in the assessment of cooperative work variables, and they are reminded that it is up to them to correct it.

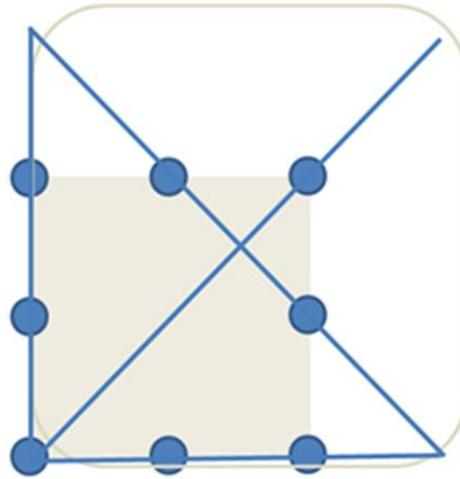
## **CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE LINES OF WORK**

In this text, we have described an approach for the first day of a subject in the first year of the sociology and political science degree based on cooperative work. We have uncovered hidden inequalities thanks to the testimonies of fourth-year students. We have seen how these patterns fit with the patterns identified by feminist sociology: gender norms reinforce the role of girls in invisible, reproductive dynamics while maximizing the male tendency to assume public, productive roles. We have presented a tool that makes this logic visible to students with the excuse of exemplifying what cooperative work consists of on the day of the presentation, and we have pointed out that it is possible to get the students to manage them after revealing these inequalities. We have done it using a first day that they will never forget and it has drawn them to group work.

This reminds us that we have not solved an enigma (Figure 3) that is not solved until we stop seeing something that does not exist: a square. Ending the class with the resolution of this enigma allows us to end by establishing a key to the sociological and political imagination: the importance of transcending the apparent.

We conclude the class and this text by pointing out that if inequalities are analyzed using the apparent framework (in the image a square, in the example a private consideration of behavior, seeing not speaking as “shyness” or taking notes as “being organized”) the solution will never be found. On the contrary, if what is apparent is broken and we look outside the margins, if the sociological and political gaze is deployed, it becomes evident that the answer is always beyond the individual and must be seen in a public way. We end the class and this text by pointing out that if the personal is political, it is even more so in teaching, where to be egalitarian it must provide collective solutions to problems previously considered private.

**FIGURE 3**  
**SOLUTION TO THE SECOND PUZZLE**



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