Chapter 6

Families in the Mirror and Women on the Edge:
Educating for Sustainability About Family and Gender Dynamics Through Comic Strips and Sociology

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ABSTRACT

This chapter highlights the power of comics in the field of higher education with a focus on teaching for diversity and inclusion, particularly United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Examples are drawn upon pedagogical exercises explored in the university classroom. In the context of a course aimed at sociology undergraduate students, Argentinian Maitena Burundarena's (b. 1962, Buenos Aires) work is used to explore diverse contemporary family issues and the related ever-changing gender roles. At the end, humor is used to provoke strangeness with a relatively close behavior, thus applying the sociological principle of "turning the familiar strange" and, consequently, achieving reflexivity regarding the topics under analysis.

INTRODUCTION

We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice. – John Berger (Ways of Seeing, 1972)

This chapter explores the power of comics and humor in the university classroom, with a focus on teaching for diversity and inclusion, particularly United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York in September 2015, "provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future" (United Nations, 2022a). The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whose enunciation is now part of the international lexicon of countries, were established upon the founding idea that ending poverty and other deprivations existing in both developed and developing countries must go together with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth, all while tackling climate change and working to preserve the sustainability of oceans and forests.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Specifically, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015, p. 18) expects this goal to:

- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
- Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
- Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
- Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
- Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws
- Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women
- Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Using inputs from more than 50 international and regional organizations, the Report of the UN Economic and Social Council "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals", published at the beginning of 2022, provides a global overview of the current situation of the Sustainable Development Goals. As the world was entering the third year of the COVID-19 crisis, the Report of the Secretary-General stated that "the catastrophic effects on people's lives and livelihoods and on global efforts to realize the Sustainable Development Goals is now beyond dispute" (United Nations, 2022b, p. 2), and "years, or even decades, of development progress have been halted or reversed." (United Nations, 2022b, p. 2). Regarding the Goal 5, the report is peremptory about the distance from the goals set by the 2030 agenda: "The world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030 and has been pushed further off track by the socioeconomic fallout of the pandemic. Women and girls remain disproportionately affected,

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