

Gender Equity in the Brazilian Physics Community at Present Day

Elisa Maria Baggio Saitovitch¹, Marcia Cristina Barbosa^{2, a)}, Renata Zukanovich Funchal³, Suani Tavares Rubim de Pinho⁴, Ademir Eugênio de Santana⁵

¹*Centro Brasileiro de Pesquisas Físicas, Rua Xavier Sigaud, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil*

²*Instituto de Física, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil*

³*Instituto de Física, Universidade de São Paulo, Cidade Universitária, São Paulo, SP, Brazil*

⁴*Instituto de Física, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador, BA, Brazil*

⁵*Instituto de Física, Centro Internacional de Física da Matéria Condensada, Universidade de Brasília, Brasília, DF, Brazil*

^{a)}marcia.barbosa@ufrgs.br

Abstract. We present an overview of the actual advances and difficulties in gender equity in the Brazilian physics community in present days.

Women in Brazil are underrepresented in the field of science and in particular in physics. One example of this unbalance is that at the Brazilian Academy of Science women in the field of physics and astronomy corresponds to 6% of participants, only; while within the researchers at the top of their career women correspond to 5%. Acknowledging that this unbalanced participation of women in science leads to a less democratic and diverse environment for the development of scientific activities, recently the government and scientific societies have engaged into new programs to improve this situation. Many of these initiatives have been proposed after a seminal step by the Brazilian Physical Society creating, in 2003, the Commission for Relations and Gender (CRG-BPS). Recognizing the importance of such steps and considering that a long way separates the current situation from gender equity, in the last years, the CRG-BPS has been carrying out a number of new activities, based in the following framework: (a) women are underrepresented in physics area in science; (b) this fact reflects an androgenic behavior founded on social structures. These pillars have paved three main roads of actions to CRG-BPS [1,2]: (i) political, (ii) scientific, and (iii) social analysis. In order to support political and social analysis, we raised data about women in physics from Brazilian Government Agencies and from BPS. We have, preliminarily, analyzed some of these data from a qualitative and quantitative methodological perspective and some results are presented in the following. In terms of scientific actions, the CRG-SBF considers that its work has to be along of a permanent search for qualification of women in the area of physics. In this sense, the Commission made efforts to provide support for women taking into account specific aspects. For instance, due to CRG-BPS movements, the CNPq has extended the research fellowship period of a woman researcher for one more year, in the case of pregnancy.

For the social analysis, and for the political and scientific aspects together, we have proposed and organized the Brazilian Conference for Women in Physics. The first Conference was held in Rio de Janeiro, Aug/2013, during a weekend with participation of 75 women (professors and students) and representatives of Government Agencies (CNPq, CAPES). Regarding the data we have raised about women in physics, a preliminary analysis shows an astonishing situation [3-8]: in the highest level of qualification in physics, a great discrepancy in gender remains unbalanced in favor of men, for at least one decade, without any tendency for change. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of female physicists with fellowships from the Brazilian Grant Agencies at all levels of the academic career. This shows that as academic progress is made, the percentage of women decreases. In Figure 2 the percentage of male and female researchers are shown for a period of ten years illustrating that the low percentage of female professionals has not changed over this time.

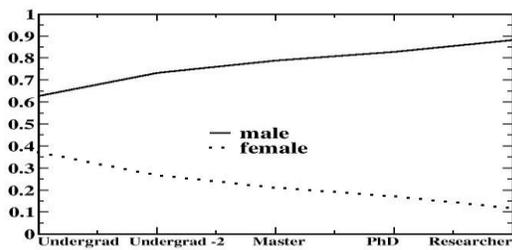


FIGURE 1. Percentage of male (solid) and female (dotted) at each academic level in 2012 [source:CNPq][9, 10]

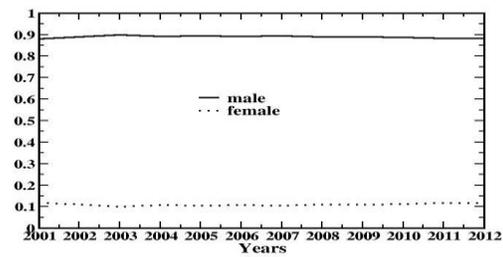


FIGURE 2. Percentage of male (solid) and female (dotted) researchers over the years [source: CNPq] [9,10].

In short, despite all advances and works carried out by the CRG-BPS the situation of gender inequity in physics is far from a desirable level; and in some cases, it has been unchangeable for a time scale more than one decade [3,4]. This has pushed the discussion inside the CRG in two directions: (a) keeping on along the lines of actions in progress right now and (b) analyzing the creation of new ways for addressing the problem of gender equity and the participation of women in science. These aspects are supposed to be discussed and matured in the II Brazilian Conference for Women in Physics, that the CRG-SBF is organizing for 2015.

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