

# GenHET Newsletter

Issue 4

December 2020

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We are happy to see this year finally end, and we are looking forward to a new, less challenging one! Still, we need to say a proper goodbye to 2020. For the last issue of the year we wanted to reflect on the events and highlights that marked us, but damn! It is a difficult task! It was an unprecedented year. And finding the words to describe it all in a few pages feels impossible. From our own experience, interactions with our colleagues and students, and from working on this newsletter, three words stand out:

DISTANCE - ZOOM - INEQUALITY

and work, work, work! We hope that during the holiday season you had time to rest, to pause, and to assess. From our brief reflection, there were plenty of difficult moments, and stress was abundant. Even though we are supposed to be all in this mess together, we should clearly not fail to recognise that covid related problems affect differently various social classes, countries, women and men, people of various age, race, and background. We hope we all collected pockets of strength, solidarity, and compassion to move forward together in 2021.



It is difficult to forecast and predict our prospects for 2021. We still have many uncertainties and challenges ahead of us due to the current circumstances. At GenHET we are committed to foster our community, to provide support, and to connect our members. We look forward to keeping you informed, to provide a forum for discussions, and to share your views and opinions within the network.

All of our best wishes for 2021!

*Alejandra C. & Elli P.  
Editors of GenHET Newsletter*

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## Keep in touch with GenHET

If you have news or other information you would like to share via the newsletter, contact us at [GenHET.Admin@cern.ch](mailto:GenHET.Admin@cern.ch). Visit us at our website [genhet.web.cern.ch](http://genhet.web.cern.ch) where you can find out more about our activities and initiatives.

Via GenHET website

Make sure you subscribe to our network [here](#).

Via Social Media

Follow us on Twitter! We are [@GenHET\\_](#)

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## Corona Times

As we are still living through the Covid-19 crisis, in this section we are collecting experiences, your reactions to the pandemic, and related news. If you would like to contribute, contact us by [e-mail](#) or via [twitter](#).

One of the main motivations behind this newsletter was to have a medium to communicate and share under the bizarre circumstances that unfolded this year. We have collected articles, news, and studies that cover aspects of it. We have reached out to our readers and shared your experiences as work and personal life blur in new ways. We thank all of you that accepted our request and contributed to this section; we truly appreciate that you shared a piece of your life with us!

In the times of Corona, one aspect we can celebrate is the role of science. Our defense against a raging pandemic is the triumph of scientific collaboration and effort. This should be a reminder to everyone in our society that knowledge can lead to hope, opportunities and empowerment. We hope this endures in future years to come!

[NY Times section on Covid-19 vaccines.](#)

[The Guardian section on Vaccines and Immunization](#)

[Nature news: Border closures and Covid spread](#)

[Nature news: Big Covid research papers of 2020](#)

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## Collecting experiences from the GenHET working group

We asked the members of the GenHET working group to share with us their reflections. In particular, we asked them to write, in the format of a short sentence, the events, emotions, and experiences that encapsulated their year. They are presented based on three broad categories: work, life, and family. And although these short snapshots of 2020 will not do justice to everyone's experience, we hope that by sharing with you we can all find some solace together.

### *Work: good, bad & worse*

- I talk to my people regularly through Zoom (at least once a week).
- I appreciate the Zoom.
- Thanks to Zoom, I was able to participate in many conferences this year.
- Young PhD students with limited budgets can now participate in important international workshops & conferences and present their research.
- I really appreciate the meetings of the departments via Zoom: shorter and better organised.
- Colleagues lost (Covid and indirectly related to Covid).
- Severe mental health issues amongst colleagues, and students.
- My colleague and I arrived just in time to prevent the suicide of one of our Masters students.
- Feeling powerless and ineffective at giving support to students.
- Burdened by the emotional service implicitly expected from me.
- Massive budget cuts to universities and the stress of having to deliver this news without firing staff.
- Financial pressures.
- Work pressures and 14 hour days with no breaks.
- I organized my time much better working from home, I could work without losing concentration and without interruptions for much longer.
- Skype talks with students and collaborators were frequent and very helpful, and I really don't think things were delayed on that front, quite the opposite.
- I enjoyed teaching online, and I think the students also found some benefits from that.
- Actually, I like working from home.
- Lost my concentration often.

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## *Life: adjust & appreciate*

- I can organise myself better.
- I spend more time on my hobbies.
- Impacts of suffering from long Covid (neurological damage).
- I discovered the importance of the garden.
- I go for power walks every day. A 45 minute walk through the nearby forest is very relaxing and helpful.
- I could manage to do sports every day!
- Established a daily routine of yoga and meditation; I feel more healthy.
- Cooking skills improved.
- I read and followed the news too much!

## *Family & Friends: superpowers*

- Family bereavements (directly due to Covid, and indirectly).
- Suicide of a family friend, an anaesthetist suffering from PTSD.
- Severe mental health issues of my teenage daughter.
- Childcare and homeschooling pressures for months while working 14 hour days as department chair.
- Weekly calls with my parents, hoping to build the reassurance that they will be OK, that I will be OK.
- I appreciate the time I spend with my husband.
- I'm glad I don't live alone.
- I appreciated a lot being there for my kids, helping them with their homework, and sharing much more with them.
- I miss my family.
- I miss hugging and touching people.

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## **GenHET review corner:** *“The association between early career informal mentorship in academic collaborations and junior author performance”*

By Prof. Marika Taylor, University of Southampton.

In November 2020 Nature Communications published an article claiming that young scientists fare better with male mentors than with female mentors. The article *“The association between early career informal mentorship in academic collaborations and junior author performance”* ([full article here](#)) was written by three authors from computer science and computational social science departments at NYU in Abu Dhabi.

The article immediately generated considerable commentary on social media, as well as complaints to the journal. The main criticisms concerned the methodology and the implicit assumptions made by the authors. The authors defined mentorship via senior researchers collaborating with junior researchers on research articles, while the success of the “mentorship” relationship was measured by the subsequent scientific impact of the young researcher i.e. citations of later papers. Clearly co-authorship does not necessarily correlate with mentorship while citations are a very simplistic measure of the success of mentoring.

Worryingly these concerns about methodology had already been raised by peer reviewers but Nature Communications nonetheless accepted the article. Following the complaints made by the scientific community, the article was retracted and [Nature published an editorial](#) explaining their decision.

The Nature editorial explains that the paper was originally published because the journal considered mentorship in academia to be an important but understudied topic. The authors of this article tried to quantify mentorship and its impact through network analysis of large datasets (publication data). While the idea of quantifying mentorship effects is very appealing, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect that the impact of counselling, guidance and advice can be measured by a few numbers.

Mentoring is consistently identified as one of the most important tools in retaining minority groups in science and it is important to carry out robust research on what makes a mentoring relationship effective. Future studies of mentorship may well use mixed methods approaches i.e. the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. For example, one might use network methods to identify potential mentoring pairs (as these authors did) and then interview some of these pairs to explore whether these were indeed mentoring relationships, what the mentoring entailed and how successful it was in achieving its objectives.

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## Academic Job Market

A few job opportunities at different academic levels. If you would like to advertise a position via the network, just email us at [GenHET.Admin@cern.ch](mailto:GenHET.Admin@cern.ch).

**SISSA for Women in Physics:** The Physics Area at the "Scuola Internazionale Superiore di Studi Avanzati" (SISSA) in Trieste, Italy, invites expressions of interest for a faculty position from outstanding female candidates with a strong research record in any of the fields covered by the Area (Astrophysics and Cosmology, Astroparticle Physics, Condensed Matter Physics, Statistical Physics, Statistical Physics of Biological Systems, Theoretical Particle Physics). The appointment procedure will be activated at the assistant professor, tenure-track, level.

Deadline January 9, 2021

Apply via Academic Jobs Online [here](#)

**6-year position at Wuerzburg University:** The Chair for Theoretical Physics III (Professors Johanna Erdmenger and Haye Hinrichsen and Dr René Meyer) at the Department of Physics and Astronomy of Würzburg University invites applications for the position of a **Scientist (m/f/x) in Theoretical Physics** for research in the area of gauge/gravity duality and its relations to black hole physics, quantum information theory and quantum dynamics and/or its applications in condensed matter physics and particle physics. The position is for an initial period of three years and can be extended once for an additional period of up to three years.

Deadline January 4, 2021

Apply via Academic Jobs Online [here](#)

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## News & Announcements

Some interesting articles, news, and other information recommended by members of GenHET

### Covid-19 impact survey

Working Group on Equal Opportunities ([AKC](#)) survey results online: "Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Work-Life Balance" has reached 1500+ participants world-wide can be found [here](#).

### Conferences

[Third Conference of Nordic Network for Diversity in Physics](#), on January 29, 2021.

Keynote speaker: Angela Saini on Racism in Science and Society.

### Related Networks and Working Groups

[Gender in Physics at Weizmann Institute of Physics](#)

[Equal Opportunities at SwissMAP](#)

[Change Now: Calls to Action from Black Scientists at Fermilab](#)

[LGBT+ Physicists](#)

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## HET Seminars and Conferences Online

Stay connected to your research community via online seminar series.

[Physics in the time of Coronavirus, Google calendar](#)

[CERN-TH Virtual Activities](#)

[Nordic Remote HET Seminars](#)

[HoloTube Seminars on Applied AdS/CFT](#)

[Theory Web Seminars](#)

[ResearchSeminars.org](#)

[Inspire Seminars](#)

[BSM Pandemic](#)

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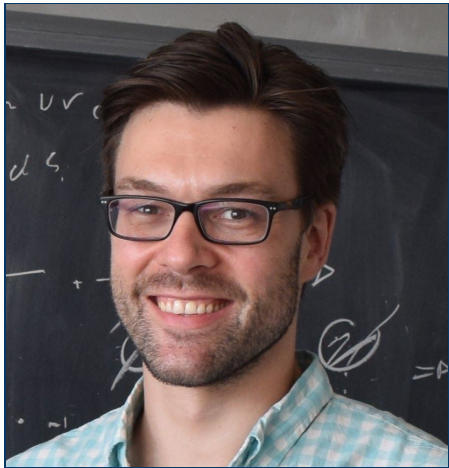
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## Meet the GenHET working group:

### Dr. David Curtin, Assistant Professor, University of Toronto

Every issue of the newsletter will include a short profile of one of our working group members.



I grew up in various cities in Germany and Australia before moving to the United States to start my PhD at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. Both of my parents were musicians, so naturally I wanted nothing to do with that when I was a kid (something I regret today and am trying to make up for), and I was attracted to physics from a very early age, via the awesome gateway drug of astronomy. I was lucky that my parents were very supportive, and from their point of view, physics seemed like a very secure and stable career choice, so they were pleased that I'd have to suffer absolutely none of the professional insecurity and frequent geographical dislocation that defines many an artist's career. (Their feelings may have changed as reality eventually set in.) After finishing my PhD under the supervision of Csaba Csaki working on weak-scale model-building and collider physics, I moved to New York for a postdoc at Stony Brook and then to Washington D.C. for my second postdoc at the University of Maryland. At the beginning of 2018, I arrived at the University of Toronto to start my faculty position and build my own group, which today includes several grad students and postdocs. I work mostly in phenomenology, particularly solutions to the hierarchy problem, the nature of Dark Matter, the electroweak phase transition and baryogenesis, collider physics, and hidden sectors. More recently I've gotten very interested in pursuing connections between high energy physics and astrophysics/cosmology. I also helped create the MATHUSLA experimental collaboration that aims to build a dedicated long-lived particle detector at CERN for the HL-LHC.

I joined the GenHET working group because I'm a passionate feminist and it's important for men to help do the work of furthering the cause of gender equality, especially in a field where the situation is as unbalanced as high energy theory. I've also been lucky to have many female colleagues, collaborators, and close friends (most of all my partner Dr. Laura Poloni) who have been kind enough to lend me their perspective and help me understand the issues they have to face in academia and in general, as well as the nature of my own privilege. My focus in the working group is trying to gather data on gender representation in HET (though efforts have been delayed by COVID, as have many things), which is an important tool in holding groups and institutions accountable for increasing diversity.