

# Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY



**Adele Bubnys**



**Zhen Chen**



**May Dobosiewicz**



**Bennett Ferris**

## Graduating Class 2019

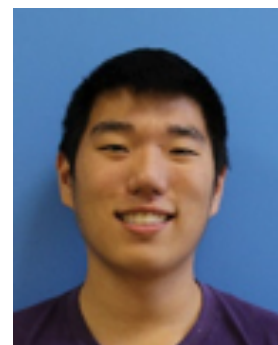
SARAH BAKER

On June 13, 2019, The Rockefeller University will add thirty new alumni to its community, each with a freshly obtained Ph.D. The road to a Ph.D. is not an easy one and requires a combination of hard work, resilience, creativity, motivation, and probably some luck. Some

of the graduating class have moved on to new jobs or postdocs elsewhere, whereas others are continuing their work at Rockefeller. This month, the *Natural Selections* editorial board honors them for their determination and accomplishments. Congrats to our new doctors!



**Yetiş Gültekin**



**Doowon Huh**

*"RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars, Season 2, Episode 1, 52:10"*

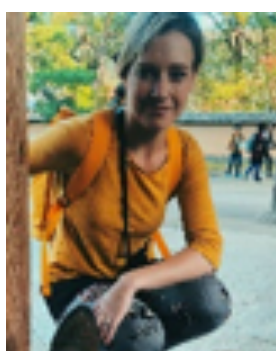
- Robert Heler



**Robert Heler**



**Dylan Kwart**



**Annie Handler**

"Intimately tied to my time at Rockefeller are my greatest accomplishments, my deepest disappointments, and my fondest friendships—it's been a ride I feel fortunate to have taken."

- Annie Handler

"I knew I would get to indulge in creative and exciting science during my time here, but I'm equally grateful for the time I had to enjoy so much of what NYC has to offer from brunch to Broadway and new best friends."

- Melissa Jarmel



**Melissa Jarmel**



**Sofia Landi**



**Samantha Larsen**



**In Hae Lee**

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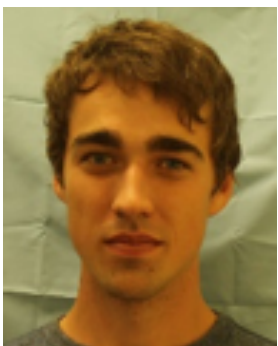
**Molly Liu**



**Meghan Lockard**



**Alejandro Lopez-Cruz**



**Iain Martyn**



**Jon McGinn**



**Maria Vicky Moya**



**Melissa Pamula**



**Joan Pulupa**



**Kimberly Rickman**



**Daniel Rosen**



**Matthew Takata**



**Kouki Touhara**

"Rockefeller is the best!"

- Kouki Touhara



**Sean Woodward**

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## Camera Shy Doctors

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**Keith A. Hayton**

**Mirjam Hunziker**

"I didn't realize how strong people's feelings could be about free cookies."

-Anonymous Graduate

# Gender Harassment in Science: Instances of Everyday Harm

EMMA GARST

*\*Identifying details have been changed to protect privacy.*

When I met her, Laura\* was the sort of postdoc who exuded professorial confidence. She was charismatic, a good writer and speaker, and an excellent experimentalist. Our professor sang her praises. Why shouldn't he? She was talented and motivated.

Some lab members started joking that our professor was "clearly in love with her." The joke spread; it was an easy way to release tension in a very competitive work environment. I thought Laura was laughing along with everyone else, but when this ribbing continued for a couple of months, Laura turned to me in frustration and asked, "Can't I just be good at my job?"

In 2018, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) released a study on sexual harassment in the academic sciences entitled "[Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#)." The report reveals the shocking extent of gender-based harassment in the academic workplace.

Between 20-50% of female students in science, engineering, and medicine report experiencing sexual harassment. This number jumps to over fifty percent for women at the faculty level. The report further breaks down high-risk populations—women of color and LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to experience harassment than white, heterosexual women.

In total this means that, excluding the military, women in academia are harassed at higher levels than in any other sector of society.

Harassment is not just unwanted sexual attention or sexual assault; it can be a culture of belittling comments or raunchy jokes. The most prevalent but most misunderstood form of sexual harassment is gender harassment. Gender harassment is described as "verbal and nonverbal behaviors that convey hostility, objectification, exclusion, or second-class status about members of one gender." When I spoke with Kate Clancy, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Illinois and co-author of the 2018 NASEM report, she had a more snappy way of putting it: "we call [gender harassment] the put-downs of sexual harassment, whereas unwanted sexual advances and sexual coercion are the come-ons."



Photo Courtesy of Mohamed Hassan

These put-downs are all around us—they're insidious and difficult to articulate because they are so thoroughly normalized in our culture. The women who experience gender harassment and choose to speak up about it are labeled as "sensitive" and over-reactive. But gender harassment is sexual harassment. It is, in fact, the *primary* form of sexual harassment.

The NASEM report found that women are leaving science due to sexual harassment, and that jokes can be just as harmful to a woman's career as more violent forms of harassment. The negative effects of gender harassment extend beyond the subject to witnesses, labs, and entire institutions. As the National Academies' report states, "the net result of sexual harassment is therefore a loss of talent, which can be costly to organizations and to science."

But why is gender harassment so damaging? "For most people [an unwanted sexual advance] is a rare event. I think for a lot of folks it's easier to externalize it and say, wow, this guy is just...trying to date me or trying to make me feel bad," says Clancy. "Whereas put downs are really easy to internalize because one, we don't recognize them as harassment

and two, they often end up making you feel like the problem is you."

Gender harassment can be even more difficult to spot as a bystander. This was the case with Laura's harassment—I absolutely laughed along with the group. Despite going to a women's college, despite considering myself a "Good Feminist," I didn't even see what I was contributing to until Laura told me. I hadn't considered the implications of the "joke"—that she hadn't earned her praise, that she had been singled out as a favorite not because of her skill but because our principal investigator might be attracted to her.

In a way, Laura's harassment was textbook—the harassment was coming from her peers (80% of gender harassment does). It was not a one-off joke, but instead lasted for a period of months (which, again, is common). And she didn't feel there was a way to address the harassment, either through direct confrontation or an institutional route.

So what is it about academia that makes it so toxic for women and damaging to their careers?

One major factor is a culture of male

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dominance. This is easiest to understand in fields such as engineering and physics, where men vastly outnumber women. However in the biomedical sciences, where women have been earning more Ph.D.s than men for many years, the concept is more nuanced. Male domination in these fields refers to the fact that men generally hold higher positions than women, and that the field has historically been male.

Academia is also hierarchical. Institutions with a strong hierarchical power structure are more likely to foster sexual harassment. This is especially true when power is concentrated in a few individuals (for example, “superstar” professors), and those who report feel that revealing harassment will have lasting effects on their careers. The nature of our system causes students to rely heavily on the full-throated endorsement of their mentors—which leaves them little to no recourse if they wish to report inappropriate behavior.

The truth is academic science is highly competitive. People can be cruel to each other in all sorts of ways, due to professional jealousy, ambition, or just general stress. Everyone has an anecdote about being humiliated at lab meeting, or getting back an eviscerating review on a paper. Everyone has experienced some incivilities (officially defined as, “low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target”).

Part of this is the broader culture of academia. “We tend to equate treating people like crap with being rigorous researchers,” Clancy points out. However, these incivilities are not evenly distributed; “There’s ample research that now shows, even though incivilities don’t seem to be gendered, they are actually quite gendered and racialized....The folks that experience them most are typically women of color followed by white women, then men of color and white men,” Clancy says. Given that women and people of color also have their gender or race routinely used against them, it’s no wonder academia has a climate problem.

In the end, organizational climate is by far the best predictor of sexual harassment. Harassment flourishes where people who report it are perceived to take on risk, where there are no sanctions against perpetrators, and where reporters’ experiences are not taken seriously by their peers or institutions.

Sure, individuals harass. But that is a learned behavior that grows out of a culture of perceived ambivalence. Frequently an institution’s priority is “symbolic compliance,” which focuses on protecting the institution

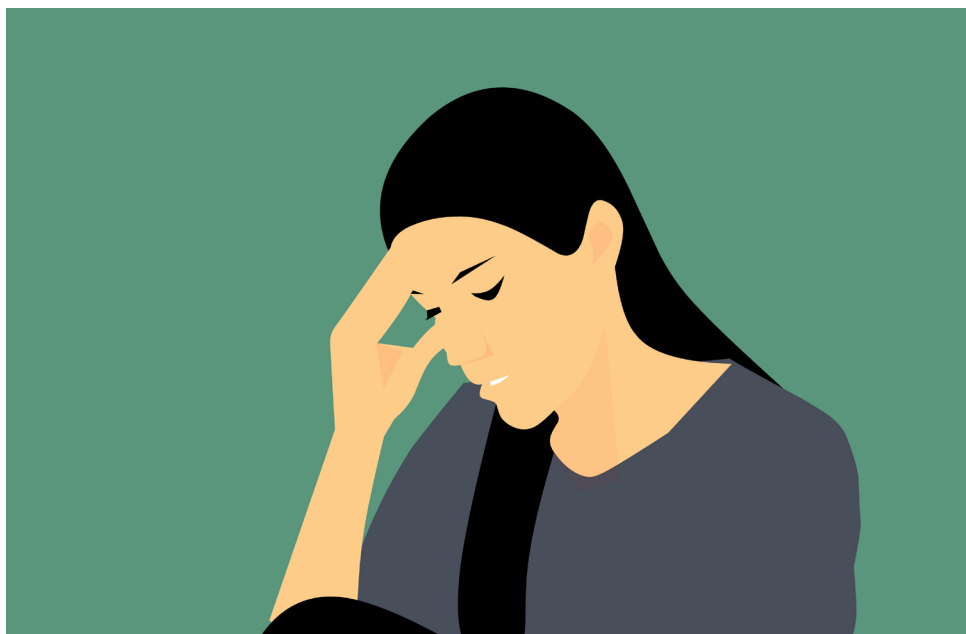


Photo Courtesy of Mohamed Hassan

and avoiding liability, instead of ensuring the safety of its employees.

Any institution serious about the success of the women it hires must take decisive action to stamp out the toxic culture that dominates the scientific workplace. Without a concerted effort to reform the workplace, gender equality will always be a fantasy for the academic sciences.

It’s the accumulation of harassment over many years that causes lasting damage to women in science. I truly think that every one of Laura’s experimental successes was, at some point or another, reduced to “because he’s in love with you.” In a job that contains so much day-to-day failure, how horrible is it to take away the successes as well?

When Laura and I talked recently, she brought up one of the earliest, most formative experiences of her scientific career. She was

a technician, straight out of college, and had gone to her professor to propose some experiments.

“Woah, watch out,” he said. “Girl scientist on the loose.”

Of course this affected the way she presents herself. Of course this caused her to think about how she is perceived by the scientific community. It was a joke. And it stuck with her.

In the end I moved on from the lab where I met Laura. She moved on too—out of science entirely.

I am a graduate student now. Recently, I received a small bit of positive feedback from someone I consider to be a mentor. Elated, I flounced into lab and showed the first person I ran into.

My labmate read it, and laughed, “he should have just asked for your number.”

# Pets of Tri-I

POOJA VISWANATHAN

For this issue, *Natural Selections* interviews **Fifi**, the young cat who lives with first year graduate students here at The Rockefeller University, Sarah Cai, Lindsey Lopes, and Kathryn Eckart. Fifi is extremely sweet and playful and I enjoyed our meeting. Please contact me if you have sweet, little nonhumans living with you. I'd love to meet them.

**Pooja Viswanathan: How old are you? In human years?**

**Fifi:** I turn one on June 14th! That makes me a teenager in human years, which my moms say makes sense because of my sometimes naughty behavior.

**PV: Is there a story behind your name?**

**F:** The shelter that I was adopted from named me Fifi and the name stuck!

**PV: What is your first memory?**

**F:** I don't remember a lot from when I was a baby, but the people at the shelter said that I was found as a stray in NYC when I was six weeks old, and some nice person brought me to the shelter.

**PV: Who are your moms? When did you first meet them?**

**F:** My moms are Sarah Cai, Lindsey Lopes, and Kathryn Eckart. They adopted me last October. I met them while I was hanging out with a bunch of my kitten friends at the shelter, and it was love at first sight.

**PV: How do they belong to the Tri-I community?**

**F:** They are all first year graduate students at The Rockefeller University. Sarah just joined Titia de Lange's lab, Kathryn is in Jeremy Rock's lab, and Lindsey is still rotating.

**PV: Where do you live?**

**F:** I live in Faculty House. I don't really know what that means, but I like to look out the window at all the cars on the FDR and York Avenue.

**PV: If you could live anywhere else in the world, where would you live?**

**F:** Hmm, I'm a city cat, but I definitely wish that I could go outside! Maybe somewhere with a big yard and lots of birds to look at.

**PV: What are your favorite foods?**

**F:** I love snacks. Some of my favorites are cat treats, chicken, and black beans...but I'll



definitely try anything if you leave your plate unattended! Except veggies. I don't like veggies.

**PV: What is your favorite weekend activity?**

**F:** What are weekends? Is that when the humans are home more? I like to hang out in my moms' rooms and knock over things on their desks, dressers, or any flat surface. I also like to nap in the sun.

**PV: Besides your moms, who is your favorite human in the Tri-I community?**

**F:** I like pretty much everyone that I meet, especially if they give me snacks!

**PV: Do you have a funny story to share with us?**

**F:** Sometimes Lindsey dog-sits and one time I decided that I wanted to try out some dog food, so I jumped onto the bookshelf where the dog's food was and knocked over the whole bag. I made a hole in the bag with my teeth so I could eat the food...dog food is yummy!

**PV: Is there some way we can see more pictures of you on the interwebs?**

**F:** Yes! Check out my Instagram @fifi\_the\_kitten.jpg



**PV: If you could have any human ability, what would it be?**

**F:** I would *love* it if I had opposable thumbs because then I could get into all the treat jars! My moms had to stop leaving treats out in plastic bags because I would chew through the plastic to get more treats when they weren't looking.



# The 73rd Annual Tony Awards

MELISSA JARMEL

The 73rd annual Tony Awards will broadcast live on June 9th at 8 p.m. ET on CBS. James Corden is returning to host the show, so I expect the opening number this year will be as smart and delightful as his last. The full list of Tony nominations can be found here, but I wanted to highlight some of the new shows appearing on Broadway this year.

Aaron Sorkin wrote a play based on Harper Lee's novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* that is currently being performed at the Shubert Theatre. This classic American story explores race and class in the South in the 1930s. If you've been a fan of Sorkin's snappy dialogue and skillful rhetoric, you'd be remiss to skip out on this production even though it did not receive a Tony nomination for Best Play. This was a strong year for new plays on Broadway so it's possible that a strange split vote resulted in this oversight, or rumor has it that it might have been an intentional snub due to the lawsuits that the production has been involved with that led to the shut-down of some community theatre productions. However, this production still accrued nine deserved nominations in other categories.

My favorite to win Best Play this year is *The Ferryman*, which transferred to the Jacobs Theatre from London last year. Jez Butterworth's epic drama centers around the fictional Carney family in Northern Ireland. While exploring the often-complicated dynamics of family, Butterworth also weaves a compelling narrative about how the past traumas of a country can strangle a family's progress for decades to come. It's worth brushing up on 20th century Irish history before seeing this play to catch the meaning of references to historical events the characters discuss, but the interpersonal dynamics at play are also absorbing enough outside of the context of history. I didn't check my watch once during this 3 hour 15 minute production (though there is an intermission).

I would also highly recommend Heidi Schreck's *What the Constitution Means to Me*, which was a finalist for this year's Pulitzer Prize for Drama. This play was inspired by her experiences as a teenager giving speeches about the U.S. Constitution for scholarship money. Heidi Schreck also stars in this play that explores how her understanding of the Constitution has evolved over time and the impact the Constitution has had on women's bodies in America.

Schreck does not shy away from talking about the specific traumas women in America have experienced as a result of past and current legislation, so a trigger warning is necessary.

*Hadestown* is the favorite to win Best Musical this year, but this is the only new musical nominated that I have yet to see so I don't have a personal recommendation. However, I've heard great things about this musical adaptation of a folk opera concept album by Anaïs Mitchell that reimagines the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Ticket prices have recently soared for this show upon receiving positive reviews and Tony nominations, but they do offer a general rush and digital lottery.

All of the other nominees for Best Musical offer nostalgia or feel-good vibes, which may be reflective of what Broadway-goers need from art in today's climate. *Ain't Too Proud—The Life and Times of the Temptations* is primarily a jukebox musical that will have Temptations fans dancing in their seats, but the book is also deftly written to brilliantly convey the group dynamics at play during Motown's heyday. *Beetlejuice* genuinely surprised and delighted me as someone who was not a fan of the movie. It's very self-aware with a stunning set design, catchy music, and energetic acting from start to finish. I'd go see it again. I also still recommend seeing *The Prom*. But I hesitate to recommend *Tootsie*, a new musical comedy based on the movie from 1982. While I was laughing throughout this high-energy show with well-placed one-liners and brilliant acting, there was a part of me that was cringing and has cringed more as I've had time to process what I watched. For those not familiar with the story-line, a white, cis male who has a hard time finding work disguises himself as a female to get a job and drama ensues. The play seemingly acknowledges the problematic nature of this storyline throughout the show, but the tone in which the character presses on and faces minimal consequences lands a bit deaf. I guess I just don't understand why we need another story right now about a white, cis male who pushes others around in order to get what he wants to only later justify it all in a self-congratulatory learning lesson for something everyone else has known for a while. But there were a lot of good jokes? Anyway, I think all of these productions will put on a good show for the Tony Awards so tune in on June 9th!

## Natural Expressions

### Music

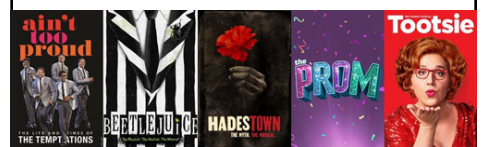
Santa Maria Pecoraro Di Vittorio of the Rice Laboratory at Rockefeller will be performing as a violist with the Chamber Orchestra of New York directed by Salvatore Di Vittorio at three events this month:

On June 6th at 7:30 p.m., the orchestra will perform Mozart's *Flute Concerto No. 2, Il Sogno del Cielo*, and Mozart's *Symphony No. 40* in Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall. The evening will include the work of two Resplighi Prize winners—flutist Tommaso Benciolini and composer Andrea Montepaone. Tickets and more information can be found on the [Carnegie Hall Web site](#), with tickets from \$40-50 (\$30 for students with ID) or 25% off with the discount code CNY29834.

On June 7th at 7:30 p.m., you can hear Santa Maria Pecoraro Di Vittorio and the orchestra perform works by Vaughan Williams at the Adelphi University Performing Arts Center in Garden City, Long Island. In addition to Williams' *Eighth Symphony* and *Piano Concerto*, the orchestra will play John Barry's "We Have All the Time in the World," which James Bond fans will recognize from the movie *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. Tickets are \$35 (\$15 for students with ID) and can be purchased [online](#).

On June 27th at the Cary Hall at DiMenna Center for Classical Music, the Chamber Orchestra of New York will host a special event "Respighi's Ancient Airs and Di Vittorio's Venus," celebrating the orchestra's recent recordings of two albums for Naxos Records. The night will begin with an open rehearsal, followed by a performance that will include the work of Ottorino Respighi. The evening's concert will be recorded and be followed post-concert reception with the performers, co-sponsored in part by Marchesi Antinori Wines and Antico Noe Panini of Florence. Tickets are \$50 (21+) and can be purchased [here](#).

Email Megan E. Kelley at [mkelley@rockefeller.edu](mailto:mkelley@rockefeller.edu) to submit your art/music/performance/sporting/other event for next month's "Natural Expressions" and follow @NatSelections on Twitter for more events.



Nathaniel Rogers, The Film Experience





## ***Life on a Roll Blue Lagoon***

ELODIE PAUWELS

<https://elodiephoto.wordpress.com/>

Turquoise blue waters! How could you not fall for this lagoon and surrounding islands near Kissamos in Crete, Greece? To enjoy the warm transparent waters and light sand of Balos Lagoon, you need to earn it: be prepared to reach the spot by boat or by foot, and cope with the absence of shade. Then you can spend hours drooling over countless shades of blue.

