

Findings of the Fordham Que(e)ry: Report to the Fordham University Community

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Purpose Statement:

The ultimate aim of this report (and one of the aims of the study it is based on) is to provide the Fordham community with data it can use when striving to make our university community not only safer, but more inclusive and welcoming of sexual and gender minority students. To that end, the author will remain available to work with any and all individuals and offices interested in doing so.

Statement in Support of the Que(e)ry LGBTQ Student Experience Survey:

As the elected representation for the student body of Fordham University's Rose Hill campus, we offer our full support for the existence and objectives of the Que(e)ry, a survey and research project that seeks to understand the experiences of Fordham students as sexual and/or gender minorities. The information the Que(e)ry has spent the last 10 months gathering complements initiatives USG has been pursuing for the past several years. We anticipate that the Que(e)ry will provide USG with valuable information on how to better address the issues that LGBTQ students face on our campus. We look forward to analyzing the Que(e)ry's findings and to working with students, faculty, and administrators to promote policies, programs, and attitudes that will improve the inclusivity of our community.

This statement was passed unanimously by the United Student Government at Rose Hill on April 5th, 2013.

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Executive Summary:

Background and Motivations:

- The Que(e)ry aims to understand the effects of many campus climate variables for sexual and gender minority students. Our focus is on instances of hostility, harassment, and discrimination, although our evidence and conclusions extend beyond this.
- Substantial research finds that negative campus climate factors place sexual and gender minorities at increased risk for physical and psychological health problems, alcohol and other drug use, and leaving school; while impeding academic success, involvement with co-curricular activities, and future career and vocational development. Further, these results are not limited to only sexual and gender minorities: they translate to other students through bystander stress.

Methodology:

- Our anonymous survey uses cutting edge technology and well established and vetted techniques for analyzing LGBTQ populations and campus climate. Numerous measures were taken to ensure validity of our results. All recruitment and participant interaction was approved by the IRB.
- It is impossible to make statistical generalizations about sexual and gender minority populations because their size and demographics are unknown. However, our results speak confidently to the experiences of students who participated and provide many important, actionable insights.

Population:

- 351 students responded to the survey, and the responses of 183 students who self-identified as a sexual or gender minority are analyzed in this study. This represents more than 70% of the estimated number of sexual and gender minority students enrolled in FCRH and GSAS, 35% of such FCLC students, and 28% of such Law students. Heterosexual, cisgender students were not recruited for the study, yet more than 150 participated.

Findings:

- Sexual and gender minority student experience at Fordham is vastly diverse on every topic the study addresses. For every pattern, there are exceptions. We chose to present those patterns which we find most concerning and informational. While different students had different mixes of positive and negative experiences at Fordham, these seemingly contradictory accounts do not take away from each other, but rather emphasize the diversity of student experience. The only thing shared by all 183 sexual and gender minority participants is that, unlike the heterosexual cisgender students, none of them insisted “everything is fine.”
- Students' outness at Fordham indicates a prevalence of fear and discomfort, and that these feelings vary depending on who a student is interacting with. We also find that students are frequently without any family support and come from hostile high school environments. Therefore, it is particularly important that Fordham be a welcoming and supportive community.
- A large portion of students report feeling unsafe, uncomfortable, or unwelcome in residence halls, and these concerns impact housing decisions.

- Students generally feel safe and comfortable in student clubs, but only because they avoid clubs they worry will not welcome them.
- The vast majority of student athletes experienced discrimination or harassment.
- Students are likely to frequently experience ambient hostility in homophobic language and jokes. This language has an accumulative effect over time that can severely impact them. Members of the community are encouraged to be more careful with their own language, and to more vocally object to the offensive language of others.
- Verbal harassment and even threats of physical violence are not uncommon, but they are rarely reported to authorities and seldom discussed. This leaves the issue largely hidden, provides no recourse, and leaves the affected students without support.
- Compelling evidence of physical violence based on sexual or gender identity is presented. Students again tend not to discuss it with friends or family or report it to authorities. We conclude that reporting systems need to change so that students have more faith and comfort in them.
- Many students indicate that the offices and individuals they have reported incidents to were “not at all” responsive and respectful to their needs as a sexual or gender minority. Further, fears that the university will not take their report seriously, or that their response will be ineffective if they do, are major factors preventing students from reporting.
- Students who experience harassment and discrimination based on their sexual or gender identity report that they seriously consider transferring, their academic work suffers, they regret coming out at Fordham, and an alarming number of students struggle with internalized homophobia, blaming themselves for the treatment of others or believing their negative remarks.
- Many students also reported having very positive experiences at Fordham.

Student Voices for Change

- Students come to Fordham for many reasons, and often do not think about the campus climate. Some believe the campus climate will be negative, but attend anyway because it is the best option available to them. It cannot be assumed that students who are not respected and supported by campus culture are free to attend other institutions.
- Additional student suggestions for improvement that were not already detailed in the report are presented by topic, including academics, visibility, and core programming.

Throughout the document there are recommendations which are set aside in **bold** font. These recommendations are contextualized by the findings around them, and they are too numerous to list here. Readers are encouraged to go through the entire document.

Key Terms:

Ally	An ally is someone who actively supports sexual and gender minorities. “Ally” is usually a term for a straight, cisgender person, but many sexual and gender minorities also identify with the term. Allies are generally active in their support, rather than just being “people who do not discriminate.”
Campus Climate	The general conditions experienced and perceived by sexual and gender minority students. The literature uses a number of measures, but there is no single number or metric. The following categories are often measured: official policies, incidents of discrimination, visibility of sexual and gender minorities, frequency of microaggressions, sense of welcome and inclusion felt by sexual and gender minorities.
Cisgender	A cisgender person is someone whose gender identity conforms with the sex that they were assigned at birth (e.g., a self-identified woman who was assigned female when she was born).
Heteronormative	Anything that assumes or asserts the 'naturalness' or universality of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships. Examples include: forms assuming someone has a mother and father, housing policies that segregate men and women, asking a woman whether she has a “husband” or “boyfriend” without first knowing whether she identifies as heterosexual.
Homophobia	Fear of or hostility toward sexual minorities. This term is used throughout the report because it is commonly used in related work and popular discourse, although less well-known words like “homonegativity” more accurately describe the concept, since it is not always rooted in or manifest as fear.
Homophobia, Internalized	When people who identify as sexual minorities take on and believe the negative sentiments about them that are prevalent in our culture. Examples include blaming themselves for harassment and having negative self-image because of their sexuality. Sometimes described as self-loathing or self-hatred. Internalized homophobia has been studied extensively by psychologists since the 1980's, who have found that it results in negative physical and psychological health consequences.
Privilege	In the context of this report, if someone is described as having or demonstrating privilege, it means that they are able to think or do something that others are not able to think or do. For instance, most heterosexual people have the privilege not to care about issues of discrimination based on sexual orientation because they are not directly affected, although some chose to be concerned so anyway.
LGBTQQ	An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning. When this report uses only one “Q,” it stands for “queer.” When this acronym appears with letters omitted (e.g. “LGB”), it is because the study or data being discussed is limited to only the identities represented by the remaining letters.
Sexual and Gender Minorities	This term is used throughout the Que(e)ry in order to refer to students who self-identify as anything other than cisgender and heterosexual/straight.
They (singular)	Throughout this report, most third-person singular pronouns are printed as

“they,” “them,” “their,” and “themselves” in order to increase respondent anonymity, textually de-emphasize gender, and respect those students who do not identify with a binary gender identity. When the gender of the person is directly relevant to the content being discussed or when it is evident in the response being quoted, gendered pronouns (e.g. “he,” “she”) are used.

Trans*

The asterisk (*) operates as a wildcard; there are many identities within the trans* umbrella, including people who identify as transgender and transsexual, transmasculine and transfeminine. Generally, if a person identifies as trans*, or as having a trans* history, the sex they were assigned at birth does not match their gender or sex identity. Some, but not all, trans* people get diagnosed with the highly controversial “Gender Identity Disorder.”

Queer

A word used by some sexual and gender minorities to identify their sexual and/or gender identity. Various used to imply a political statement resisting identity categories, when someone does not feel that they fit into any other category, or to group diverse sexual and gender minorities under a single term. Queer theory and queer studies are established academic disciplines. While a number of students expressed outrage that the use of the word “queer” had been restricted by Student Affairs (see also: “Student Voices for Change”), several other students expressed distaste for the word, and did not want others to use it when identifying them. None complained about other students using the word to self-identify, however.

Background and Motivations:

Aims:

We investigate student perceptions of incidents of discrimination and hostility toward sexual and gender minorities in order to understand their effects. A critical question when designing the study was “how many people witness and hear about such incidents, and what effect does this experience have on them?” In some sense, we aim to map the spread and impact of information among sexual and gender minority students. This study does not aim to measure the rates of incidents of discrimination or hostility that occur at Fordham; such a study would need to ask about when and how frequently these events happen and attempt to identify and document specific cases. Instead, we ask whether students have had certain experiences, and if they have, we then ask how those experiences affected them.

In seeking out this information and asking related questions, this work has also become a significant study of campus climate for students, gauging not only how students feel at Fordham, but also the causes, implications, and diversity of their perceptions of the university.

We aim both to contribute to this small and growing field of academic research and also to provide data to members of the Fordham community so that they may make more informed decisions about how to make Fordham a safer, more welcoming place. We provide not only suggestions for improvement, but validation of some existing programs.

Significance, Causes for Concern, Related Work:

There is a small but growing body of research about the experiences of sexual and gender minority students at colleges and universities. Some of their key findings are presented briefly here.

The college campus climate for sexual and gender minorities has numerous and serious health implications, including:

- **Psychological and physical health:** “Our novel findings underlining the role of self-acceptance and disclosure have on positive health and well-being of sexual minorities have important implications. Internationally, societies must endeavor to facilitate self-acceptance among [lesbians, gays, and bisexuals] by promoting tolerance, progressing policy, and dispelling stigma. This may no longer be an issue of popular debate but of public health” (Juster, et al. 2013). These findings are confirmed by (Silverschanz et al. 2007).
- **Alcohol and other drug use and abuse:** Violence, safety, and stress variables are more likely for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students, and they are significantly correlated with increased alcohol and other drug use (Reed et al. 2010). They were more likely to experience “incivility,” and those who did were 1.5 times more likely to have problematic drinking, nearly 3 times more likely to use drugs, and 2 times more likely to have problematic drug use: thus even subtle discrimination and harassment are serious problems (Woodford et al. 2012). Further, sexual minorities tend to use alcohol and other drugs for the same reasons as heterosexual, cisgender people do: as a coping mechanism for stress. LGB students are not inherently addicts, and as campus climate improves, their substance use tends to decrease (Manning et al. 2012; Juster, et al. 2013). Increased substance use can be stimulated by the presence of a “hidden curriculum” of campus norms, policies, and structures that don't reflect all populations and, thus, may feel exclusive to many students” (Manning et al. 2012; Longerbeam, 2007).

Campus climate also has serious implications for academic and career success:

- **Leaving school:** 23% of LGBTQ student athletes have considered leaving their university because of harassment (Rankin and Merson, 2012). LGBTQ students in general are more likely to consider leaving their institution (Rankin et al. 2010). Student populations and groups with good retention rates tend to be well involved and indoctrinated into campus culture (Kuh, 2001). In the 1990's, many studies showed that more than 1 in 3 LGB college students dropped out of school due to harassment (Sanlo, 2005).
- **Academic Success:** supportive, affirming inclusion in campus culture is critical to academic success (Kuh, 2001). Among LGB student athletes, lower levels of academic success were correlated with lower perceptions of campus climate and respect (Rankin and Merson, 2012; Silverschanz et al. 2007).
- **Students cannot focus on academics and co-curricular activities** when they are worried about an unsupportive environment. “For sexual minority students, however, dilemmas related to sexual identity and sexual identity development often take precedence to the exclusion of all other developmental tasks” (Sanly, 2005). LGBTQ student athletes reported being more influenced by campus climate than women, people of color, and all other subgroups (Rankin and Merson, 2012).
- **Students do not take advantage of career and other resources** when campus climate makes them feel unwelcome and excluded. Tomlinson and Fassinger find that “campus climate accounted for significant variance in two measures of vocational development” (2003). This demonstrates both that negative campus climate has effects beyond graduation and that negative campus climate impacts students' access to seemingly unrelated resources, such as Career Services.

Trans* college students are often poorly understood, even by LGBT studies, but work focusing on trans* individuals indicates they are at higher risk for many of the problems LGB individuals face:

- Trans* students report significantly worse campus climate and educational outcomes than LGB and straight, cisgender students do. Specifically, they report facing more frequent harassment and discrimination, and having a lower sense of belonging (Dugan, 2012).

All students, not just sexual and gender minorities, suffer.

- Silverschanz et al. examined the effects of heterosexist language and harassment on university campuses and found that those who experienced it had the lowest overall well-being in terms of both health and academic success, but their results were not limited to sexual minority students (2007). They write, “an institutional environment in which anti-LGB remarks and jokes are present may have negative implications for the whole campus community, regardless of sex or sexual orientation ... the harms of heterosexist victimization ... may have troublesome influence far beyond harm to any direct targets.” The negative effect on other members of the community was attributed to “bystander stress,” where heterosexual students are stressed by heterosexism.

Timeline, Support:

Study planning and design began in June 2012. The FCRH Undergraduate Research Grants Committee awarded Jeff Lockhart \$1,500 for materials and stipend to support the study on November 10th, 2012. The Institutional Review Board approved our new project protocol on November 12th, 2012. The FordhamQueery.org website and participant recruitment efforts began on November 25th, 2012. The United Student Government at Rose Hill voted to support and advertise the Que(e)ry on December 6th, 2012. Data presented in this report represent only responses received before March 1st, 2013, although the study remains open for new responses.

Methodology:

All of our questions and recruitment methods have been approved by Fordham's Institutional Review Board. All participant comments in this report have been reprinted exactly, except where indicated by ellipses (...) or square brackets ([]).

Survey:

To collect data, we administered an anonymous, online survey with 157 questions. All questions were optional, and some questions were only presented to students who indicated that they had had specific experiences. The survey contained a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions. Survey questions and wording were adapted from the studies in the bibliography (for example, the choice not to separate questions about sexual and gender discrimination is based on Green's finding that the targets of discrimination often did not know whether it was their gender expression or sexuality that motivated the discrimination (2012)) and inspired by concerns specific to Fordham students. Researchers conducted a focus group to better understand and be more inclusive of student concerns while initially drafting the survey. The survey went through numerous drafts and was reviewed by faculty in Sociology, Psychology, Women's Studies, Philosophy, and Theology. Before the survey was finalized, it was shared with a test group of individuals of diverse sexual and gender identities, ages, geographic locations, socioeconomic backgrounds, and political affiliations to ensure that the questions would be widely understandable and inoffensive.

The survey instrument is not provided in this document because the survey is still open. However, the survey instrument is available to interested parties upon request to the author. Before taking the survey, students had to agree to a letter of consent that can be found here: <http://fordhamqueery.org/letter.html>

All participation in the online survey was anonymous, and no personally identifying information or digital traces were collected. However, we were also able to ensure that no one was able to submit multiple responses and that all responses came from people with valid Fordham email addresses. For details on measures taken to preserve participant anonymity and the algorithms that make this possible, visit <http://fordhamqueery.org/privacy.html> or contact the author. The anonymity of responses was intended to make students feel more comfortable discussing the sensitive issues that we are studying, and the fact that many of our participants indicated that they are not “out” about their sexual or gender identity indicates that this was a success.

Recruitment:

Students were recruited to participate in the study several ways:

- Fliers were posted around the Rose Hill and Lincoln Center campuses.
- Researchers reached out to their contacts and networks to spread the word.
- Researchers gave brief presentations to classes (with the permission of the faculty member teaching the class).
- The Fordham College Rose Hill Dean's Office emailed the link to the study website to all FCRH students, along with a brief note that it was optional, anonymous, and confidential.
- Social media, including Facebook and Twitter, were used to spread the link to the study website. Various groups including United Student Government at Rose Hill and the Graduate School of

- Arts and Sciences posted the link to their social media as well.
- Participants were asked to recruit their friends and peers to take the study (the “Snowball Method” (Green, 2012)).
- The study was featured in campus news outlets, including an article in *The Ram*, two interviews on Fordham Nightly News, and a mention in *The Observer*.
- An advertisement for the study was placed on the campus iTV system, which is located in a number of public places around all campuses.

Generalizability, Extrapolation:

We use techniques for analyzing nonprobability sample populations that have been thoroughly vetted in the literature for LGBT studies and sociology and psychology more generally (Meyer and Wilson, 2009). Our data represent the real, lived experiences and conditions of nearly 200 sexual and gender minority students at Fordham University. While “34% of our study population” cannot be extended to mean “34% of all sexual and gender minority Fordham students,” it remains a meaningful indication of campus climate and student experience to say “at least 61 people had this experience.” *Moreover, for many of the issues we address, it should be clear that even one student's response is important.* Each instance of discrimination, violence, injury to physical or mental health, academic impediment, and institutional transfer is serious (Green, 2012). That seriousness can be appreciated alongside the myriad positive experiences represented in the study, and alongside the unknown experiences of those who did not participate, without detracting from it.

It is not possible to generalize the results of this study to the entire Fordham student population or to broader populations. All statistical techniques and methods for doing so require having reliable data on the demographics of the population being generalized to, so that the sample population's demographics can be mapped to those of the general population. However, it is impossible to know how many students self-identify as sexual or gender minorities, and what their demographics are. This makes sexual and gender minorities a “hidden” or “hard-to-access” population (Green, 2012). Additionally, our recruitment methods resulted in nonprobability sampling because they relied heavily on the networks of the researchers and participants to publicize the study (Green, 2012). This means that our participants are not a random subsample of the total population. Similarly, we assume a self-selection bias is at play for all voluntary studies of sexual or gender identity, since many people are uncomfortable with these issues and avoid them (Rankin et al. 2010).

Population:

Demographics:

351 students responded to the survey, of whom 183 identified as at least one of the following qualifying identities: lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, queer, questioning, transgender, or genderqueer. There were eight write-in answers for sexual identity: five “pansexual” and one each of “grey-asexual,” “Whore,” and “kinky.” There were three write-in answers for gender identity: “Androgyne,” “Femme,” and “female assigned at birth (FAAB).” All of the participants who had write-in identities also selected at least one of the qualifying identities, and therefore decisions about who to include in the study were trivial. All analysis is based on only the 183 individuals within the target population.

Note that since participants were able to list multiple identities, the percentages do not sum to 100. Since the questions were not mandatory, they do not all have the same number of total answers.

Table 1. Sexual Identity Distribution

Sexual Identity	Participants	Percentage
Gay	74	41%
Bisexual	64	35%
Queer	40	22%
Questioning	25	14%
Lesbian	23	13%
LGBTQ Ally	19	10%
Asexual	7	4%
Straight	6	3%
Pansexual	5	3%

Table 2. Gender Identity Distribution

Gender Identity	Participants	Percentage
Male	99	54%
Female	79	43%
Genderqueer	15	8%
Transgender	4	2%

Table 3. Respondents' Primary Campus

Campus	Participants	Percentage
Rose Hill	132	72%
Lincoln Center	50	27%
Westchester	1	1%

Table 4. Respondents' Schools¹

School	Participants	Percent of Participants	Percent of School
FCRH	101	56%	2.8%
FCLC	24	13%	1.4%
GSAS	24	13%	2.9%
Law	19	11%	1.1%
GSB	8	4%	0.4%
Social Work	4	2%	0.3%
GSE	2	1%	0.2%

Table 5. Respondents' Time at Fordham

Year at Fordham	Percent of Respondents
1 st	24%
2 nd	28%
3 rd	22%
4 th	23%
5-10 th	4%

¹ Throughout the report, where numbers differ significantly between schools, they are noted. Otherwise, the numbers for each school should be considered commensurate.

Prevalence of LGBQ Students:

At universities with high research activity such as Fordham, one national study found that 4.6% of resident students self-identified as LGB, and across all institutions 4.2% did, although 29% of students did not report their sexual orientation (Inkelas et al. 2008; Longerbeam et al. 2007). In a national study of college athletes, 5% identified as LGBQ (Rankin and Merson, 2012). Reed et al. found that 4.3% of randomly sampled college students self-identified as LGB (2010). Some studies, however, place LGB individuals at as much as 10% of the general U.S. population (Sanlo, 2005). A comprehensive literature review finds that about 3.5% of U.S. adults identify as LGB, while 11% acknowledge same sex attraction and 8.2% report same-sex sexual contact at some point in their lifetime (Gates, 2011). This supports the college student studies that consistently find about 4% of students identifying as sexual or gender minorities, especially when we factor in the increased likelihood that younger people in the U.S. will be “out” compared with those who were raised in earlier, less socially progressive times (Gates, 2011).

Thus, we loosely estimate that about 4% of Fordham students are likely to self-identify as sexual or gender minorities.

High Response Rate:

For two colleges, Fordham College Rose Hill (FCRH) and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS), our response rate is over 70% of the number of students we would expect to self-identify as LGBQ. For two other colleges, our response rates are still very high; 35% at Fordham College Lincoln Center (FCLC) and 28% at the School of Law. It is also worth noting that Gabelli School of Business (GSB) students share many classrooms, facilities, clubs, residence halls, and other spaces with FCRH students, so our results may be a more meaningful indication of their experience than the low response rate would suggest.

The number of trans* identified students in this study (4) is small, but this is unsurprising considering even many national college studies of LGBTQ individuals have single-digit response rates for trans* students (Rankin and Merson, 2012; Dugan et al. 2012; Gates 2011). Therefore, while our results do represent the experiences and needs of those trans* identified students who responded, extra caution should be taken against generalizing from them. People looking to evaluate and improve campus climate for trans* students should research these issues specifically (Dugan et al. 2012).

Findings:

Overwhelming Diversity of Experience:

Overall, the claims and descriptions made in this report should not be construed to apply to every sexual or gender minority student. For every pattern, we found exceptions. In this report, we choose to highlight some patterns and experiences that we believe are important for the community to recognize and respond to; the result is by no means an exhaustive catalog of our findings or student experiences.

The clearest finding of this research is that sexual and gender minorities have a wide variety of diversity in their experiences and viewpoints. On almost everything we asked about there were multiple student perspectives, sometimes in conflict with each other. For example, there were many students who, when describing language that made them feel uncomfortable or unsafe wrote, “It’s funny because I don’t find the ‘F’ word [‘fag’] offensive. I’m more concerned with the stereotypes surrounding my sexual minority status.” But in response to the same question, many other students responded with the opposite sentiment: “the worst thing that anyone can say is fag, or faggot. I have heard this slur used many times around campus and people simply do not see what is carried with that word. That it implies that anyone who is gay is worth no more than to be used as fuel in a fire. Usage of language like this carries a very real and hurtful connotation.” Similar diversity exists in students’ perceptions of every other issue this report touches on.

There was one factor shared by all sexual and gender minority participants, however, and it becomes most apparent when they are compared with the cisgender, heterosexual respondents.² While many cisgender, heterosexual students asserted that sexual and gender minorities faced no harassment or discrimination, no sexual or gender minority students made similar assertions. For instance, one sexual minority respondent remarked that they personally had only good experiences: “I’ve never felt unsafe. The majority of my friends are straight men, many of whom are undergraduates, who have always been very open, accepting, and non-threatening.” But numerous cisgender, straight respondents made comments such as these: “It’s fine.” “Things are as they should be.” and “Why [would I get involved]? It’s a total non-issue ... I think it’s absurd that you need to send out this survey in year 2012.” The difference is dramatic: cisgender, straight students are the only students who responded with dismissive remarks. Even sexual and gender minority students who had only positive things to say never went out of their way to insist that everything was fine, or that discrimination and hostility were “non-issues.” And while most of the straight, cisgender respondents did not do so either, a surprising number did, demonstrating their privilege. Worthington et al. found that dominant groups tended to think campus climate for minorities was better than minority students did (2008). One sexual minority student gave a dramatic example: “when asking why the ‘Safe Zone’ program (nationally-known college LGBT awareness program) wasn’t used at Fordham, the reply was ‘because there is no such thing as an unsafe zone at Fordham’. I don’t think some cisgender folks understand that to tell someone else that they ‘should’ feel safe is insulting.”

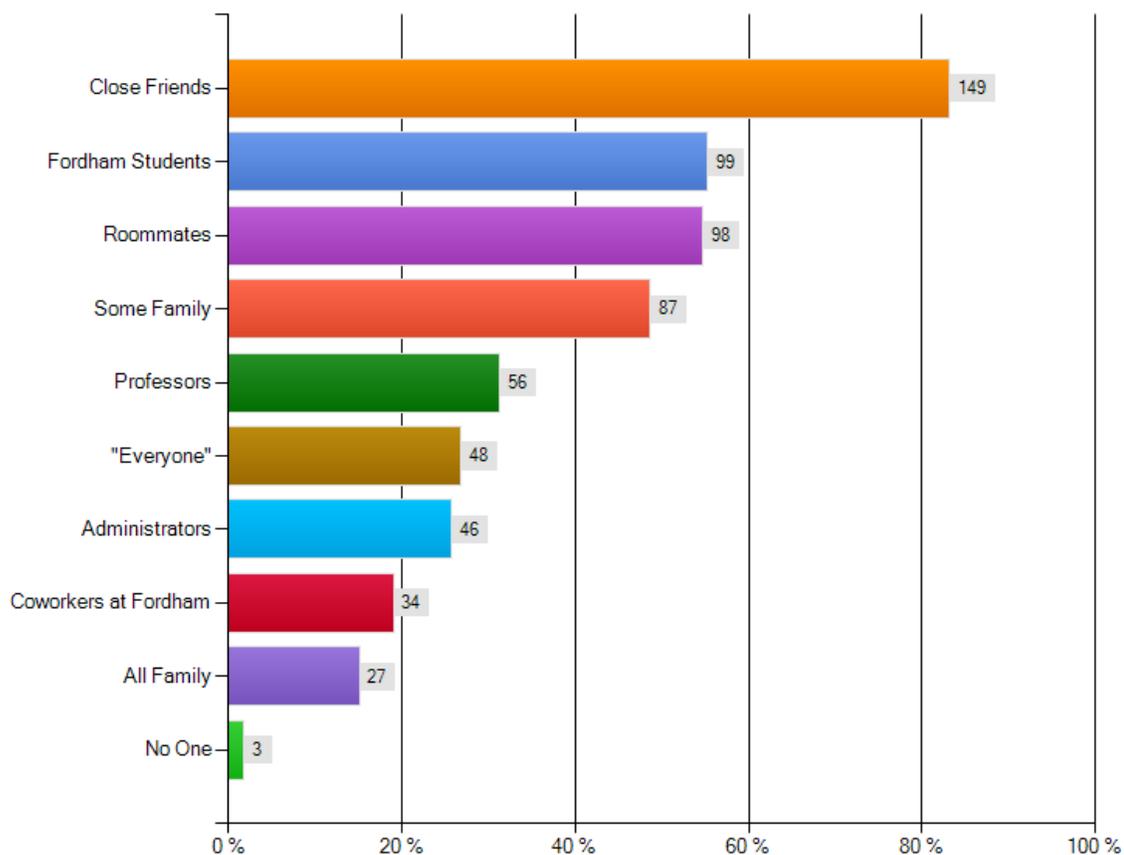
Recommendation: Because of the diversity of sexual and gender minority student experience, it is very important not to generalize about all student experiences based on the experiences and remarks of a few students. Moreover, whenever a cisgender, straight person argues that “everything is fine” for sexual and gender minorities, they should be challenged: this report finds otherwise and not even those for whom everything is fine claim that the same is true for everyone.

² Although we did not recruit these participants and our letter of consent said that only sexual and gender minorities were eligible for the study, we did look at their data briefly out of curiosity. For all other analysis their data has been excluded.

Outness and Comfort:

Coming out (disclosing one's sexual or gender identity to others) is a “revolving door.” One comes out multiple times: we know many people, and we meet many more over time. While coming out is a complicated and continuing process, it is fair to say that when sexual and gender minorities feel unwelcome and especially when they feel unsafe, they are less likely to come out (Rankin et al. 2010). Thus 'outness' in different spaces can serve as one indicator of students' comfort in those spaces. Research indicates that when people come out in welcoming environments there are substantial physical and psychological health benefits over those who feel that it is best not to come out (Juster et al. 2013). We asked for participants to indicate who they were out to from a list of common relationships. The results are presented in Chart 1.

Chart 1. “Outness” of Respondents (n=179)³



These results are concerning. While only 3 participants are not out to anyone, more than 16% of those we asked at Fordham (22% GSAS and Law, 15% of FCRH, 8% FCLC, and 15% nationally) are not out to their close friends, and almost half (all schools⁴) are not out to their roommates or Fordham students (Rankin et al. 2010). Remarks like these are not uncommon: “my roommates who I am not out to ...

3 The “Everyone” option provided unexpected results: many of those who indicated they were out to everyone also checked other boxes on this list. However, they often did not check all of the boxes, opting instead to check only some. This shows that even among those students who say they are out to everyone, some are not out to everyone on this list. It would be inaccurate, then, to add those students in the “everyone” group to the number of students in the other groups.

4 From here on, when there is too little data to comment on a school specifically, these numbers are be omitted.

don't realize what they are saying and I know they don't know they are hurting my feelings, but I don't want to confront them about it because I don't want to out myself to them because I can't deal with their questions and curiosity that is borderline invasive.” “My roommate went on a rampage about not standing for any of this 'gay and lesbian bullshit' on her campus. As a result, she does NOT know that I am bisexual.” In a chilling remark, one student wrote that they were out to “Certain friends who can tolerate that information.”

Half of participants at Fordham (and 46% nationally) are not out to any of their family (Rankin et al. 2010). Families that do not know about their student's sexual or gender identity cannot offer direct support, but it should not be forgotten that even when they do know, some families are not supportive. With so many students having no family support, Fordham is an even more important source of support and community for sexual and gender minority students. Students are also overwhelmingly likely to come from a hostile high school environment. Even in New York, which is known for its liberal culture and where many Fordham students are raised, over 90% of LGBT high school students hear homophobic remarks regularly, and most have experienced verbal harassment, with over 25% reporting each physical harassment by students and verbal harassment by staff (GLSEN, 2013). Therefore, Fordham may well be the first ever chance many students have to be in a supportive community.

Recommendation: The fact that most respondents are out to some people but not everyone highlights the importance of not “outing” people – revealing their sexual or gender identity without their permission. This can be an extremely uncomfortable and hostile experience because of the strong emotions and often justified fears and concerns that cause people to hide their sexual or gender identity. Outing someone is also a betrayal of the trust it took for them to come out to the person who outed them.

One student reported: “Another incident relayed to me by a student was that they were outed in front of the class by a professor. They subsequently filed a complaint with OCR⁵ to no avail.” We believe reports like this need to be taken seriously (see the section “Handling of Reports”).

We also asked students, “At Fordham, do you change or limit how you act or look because you worry about how others will respond?” This measures “outness” by evaluating students' sense of safety. While 35 students responded “never,” 23 responded “frequently” or “always,” and 45 responded “sometimes.” A further 39 students said the occasion was “rare.” The results are in Table 6.

We further asked, “Where do you feel uncomfortable or unsafe expressing your sexual/gender identity?” Those results are in Chart 2.

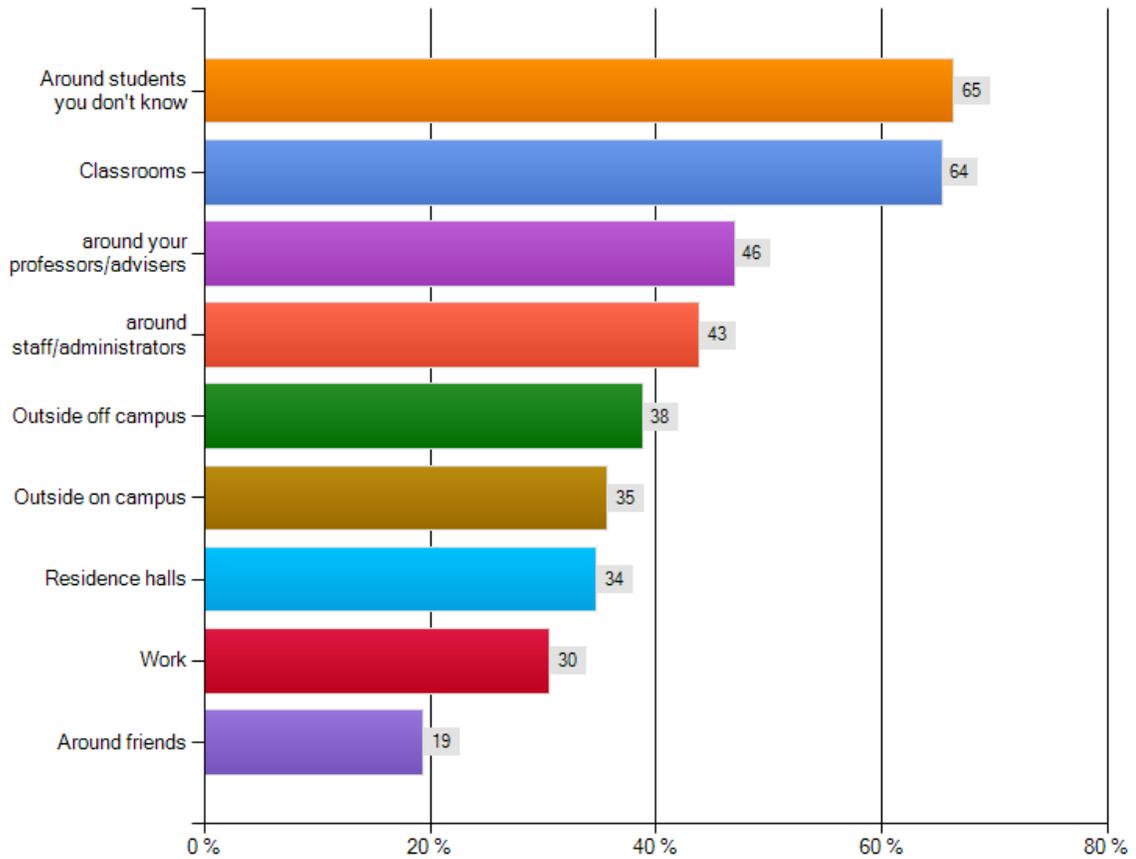
The fact that 19 (30% of FCRH, 9% FCLC and GSAS, 0% Law) students reported feeling unsafe or uncomfortable even around their friends and 34 (48% of FCRH, 40% GSB, 17% FCLC, 9% GSAS) reported the same feelings in residence halls highlights the importance of awareness among the student body. Students remarked that they often find themselves in situations where they experience offensive or hostile language, but that often they do not object. For many, “It is too exhausting to confront every single person who uses homophobic language on campus.” But for a significant number of others, the language makes them afraid to voice their objections, so instead they often laugh along or smile.

5 OCR often stands for “Office for Civil Rights,” where people file discrimination claims at some universities. The relevant office at Fordham is the Director of Institutional Equity and Compliance, Anastasia Coleman, who was recently hired.

Table 6: How Often Students Alter their Appearance or Actions to Feel Safe

	FCRH	FCLC	GSB	GSAS	Law	Response Totals
Never	14.1% (11)	26.3% (5)	0.0% (0)	26.7% (4)	50.0% (9)	21.2% (29)
Rarely	24.4% (19)	31.6% (6)	57.1% (4)	40.0% (6)	22.2% (4)	28.5% (39)
Sometimes	38.5% (30)	26.3% (5)	42.9% (3)	20.0% (3)	22.2% (4)	32.8% (45)
Frequently	19.2% (15)	15.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	6.7% (1)	5.6% (1)	14.6% (20)
Always	3.8% (3)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	6.7% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.9% (4)
answered question	78	19	7	15	18	137

Chart 2. Where Students Feel Uncomfortable or Unsafe (n=98)



Recommendation: Members of the Fordham community should always assume that there are sexual and gender minority students listening. Although they may not object, and may even seem supportive, disparaging jokes and remarks about sexual and gender minorities can have a serious impact on these students.

While the discomfort in classrooms is probably related to students' discomfort around other students that they do not know, faculty should still be concerned by these results. Classrooms and “around professors” are the second and third most threatening environments for sexual and gender minority students (classrooms: 83% Law, 80% GSB, 70% FCRH, 55% GSAS, 41% FCLC). The pattern of classroom comfort in different schools holds for professors as well, except with GSAS students, who despite being among the most comfortable in classrooms, were by far the least comfortable around professors. We attribute this to the fact that many GSAS students teach classes, thus leading to the upsetting conclusion that much of the discomfort in classrooms is a result of discomfort with faculty (since the only classrooms 'without' another person as faculty are rated better than most classrooms with one). There were at least 5 instances where students reported that faculty made remarks that made them feel uncomfortable, unsafe, or unwelcome, and many students find it “Borderline degrading - when speakers (TAs, vendors, etc...) continually assume the heterosexuality of their audience.” In one instance, a student felt personally attacked by a professor:

“I currently have a philosophy professor who relies pretty heavily on outdated gender roles and ideas about sexuality for examples during class. A few weeks ago it was brought up to him and he gave an apology, but has gone on to be extremely facetious when expressing examples that are less offensive. Today, for example, he told a story involving a businessman, paused at one point, and exaggeratedly said 'oh, I'm sorry, businessWOMAN.' The class laughed and I felt very uncomfortable.”

In another instance, a student had his identity denied in class: “A professor repeatedly and publicly referring to me by the wrong pronoun, despite the fact that she has only known me as a trans male. The same professor used my old name (which she has never used) while addressing me in the comments section on blackboard for my final paper.” One student remarked that, after an incident in class, “I ceased to hear what anyone in the classroom was saying. All at once I felt angry, embarrassed, sad, invisible and under a microscope.” This sentiment is echoed by other students and was even published in an April 2012 op-ed for *the paper*, a Rose Hill student publication. Students called for training to address these issues: “Make a mandatory training for all professors. It's crucial that professors are aware of sexual diversity and know how to include minorities have more engaging conversations in classrooms that involve sexuality, gender, queer theory, etc.”

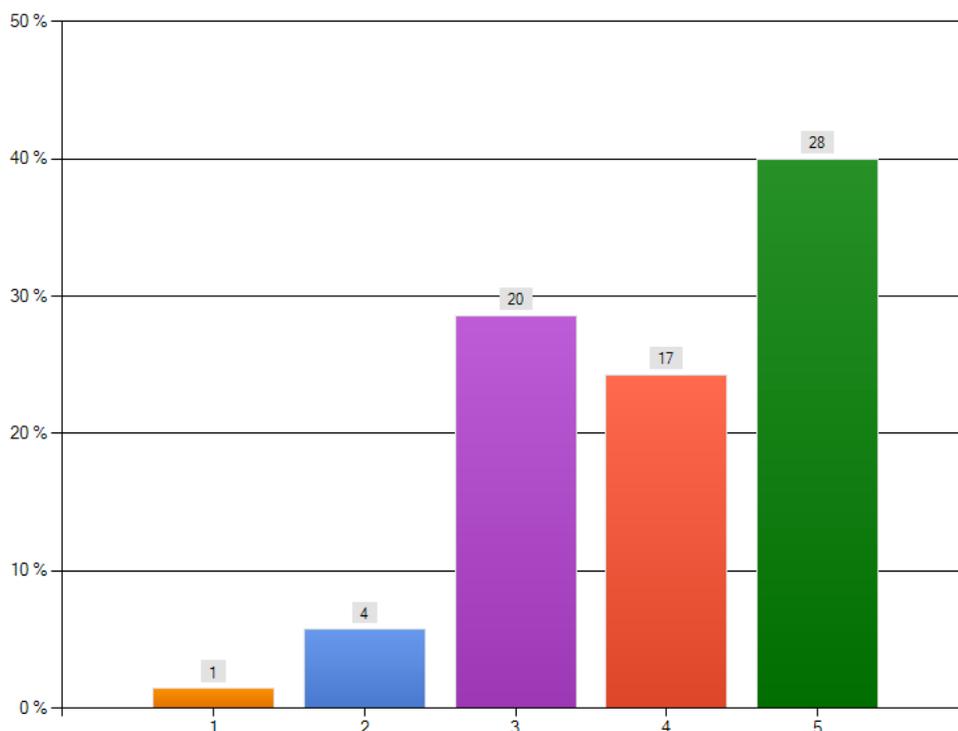
Recommendation: Faculty and staff sensitivity training should be instituted university-wide (beyond the optional and difficult to schedule around LGBT and Ally Network of Support). Faculty should make serious efforts to ensure that they and their classrooms are safe, welcoming environments. Use of inclusive language (e.g., “partner” instead of “wife,” “humankind” in place of “mankind,” “people” instead of “men”) can signal to students that an environment is safe, and responses to disparaging remarks by students defending sexual and gender minorities are essential both for making students feel welcome and for their access to education.

Residential Communities:

While information about the climate in residence halls is presented throughout this document in relevant areas, a number of questions focused specifically on them. Their results are presented here.

99 participants have lived in university housing, and 34 of those indicated that they feel unsafe or uncomfortable expressing their sexual or gender identity in residence halls. This feeling is bolstered by “People who say they are uncomfortable having a non-straight roommate.” Seven (27% of FCLC, 11% of FCRH, none from other schools) said they personally experienced discrimination or hostility from roommates, and 8 (14% of GSB, 9% of FCRH and FCLC) said they experienced discrimination or hostility from other people in their hall. No one indicated that they experienced discrimination from an RA, and we applaud this finding; RA training on this topic is effective and could serve as a model for other training. One student did remark “I’ve heard RAs use language like ‘gay’ and ‘fag’ as insults.” 61 students (80% overall) indicated that they never experienced discrimination in residence halls.

Chart 3. “How accepting and welcoming was your hall to your sexual and gender identity? (1 = hostile, 5 = totally accepting)” (n=70)



Students are affected by residential life even before they come to campus. While 68 students indicated that getting a room assignment matching their gender identity was “no effort” or “easy,” one listed it as “difficult,” and for six it was “impossible.” These students make up a very large portion of the trans* and genderqueer population of the study. One student cited successful coed housing policies at other institutions: “fordham’s housing policies are behind the times regarding co-ed housing which is found at many other schools, such as NYU and Vassar. these programs are particularly helpful and popular for LGBTQ students, and allow them to feel more comfortable and safe in University housing.”

For 27 participants (19%), concerns about their sexual or gender identity factored into their decision about living in university housing. Generally, most worried whether their roommates would be

accepting. These concerns are not limited to first year students. One student whose roommates are studying abroad next semester wrote “Although my roommates have been great so far I don't know what will happen in the spring and I really am concerned.” An alarming number of students showed signs of internalizing homophobia, suggesting that if their roommates were hostile toward their sexual or gender identity, it might somehow be their own fault. “[I] don't want my sexuality to interfere with my relationship or interactions with my suitemates,” “I was concerned that I would make my roommates uncomfortable if they found out they were living with a gay person,” “I was so worried that I was being unfair and tricking her into living with someone that she potentially could be uncomfortable sharing a room with.” Our concerns about internalized homophobia are discussed further in the section on “Impacts of Discrimination, Hostility.” It is important to note here, however, that even the anticipated possibility of hostility can be enough to trigger these effects.

We also found that a number of students felt the need to remain closeted, even if they did not internalize homophobic sentiments. “I felt uncomfortable [living with strangers] so I pretended to be heterosexual. The next year, when I was living with my friends, I decided that I could safely come out to them,” “[when choosing rooms] I was afraid if I lived in a quad or triple, the chances of some one finding out about my sexuality and being uncomfortable around me would increase.”

One student suggested another solution to these anxieties: “I think having the option to maybe disclose your sexual orientation in the housing application and if you do select something other than heterosexual you can opt to have a roommate who does the same might make the situation better.”

Recommendation: Make a policy of zero tolerance for roommate harassment and discrimination widely known (and enforced) among both current *and potential* residents. Such a policy should reinforce both the idea that sexual and gender minority students are not to blame for harassment and the idea that they will be protected from it.

Recommendation: Develop and make available alternative housing options that respect the gender identity of trans* and genderqueer students, possibly through the increased availability of singles (with private bathrooms) to trans* and gender nonconforming students or through the introduction of a gender-neutral housing option students could opt-into that allowed them to live with people of any gender.

Recommendation: Use “LGBTQ Friendly” as an option for assigning roommates. Such a policy would not require students to come out on roommate questionnaires, and would not require Residential Life to reveal a student's responses to other students. However, it would allow students to indicate that they would like to live with other students who are LGBTQ friendly. Such a measure would reduce both fears of roommate harassment and actual instances of harassment. It would also send a strong message of inclusion to students applying for housing.

Students also pointed out that existing policies are discriminatory and offensive: “The rule against a member of the opposite sex sleeping over in the dorm is insulting to people of other sexual identities.”

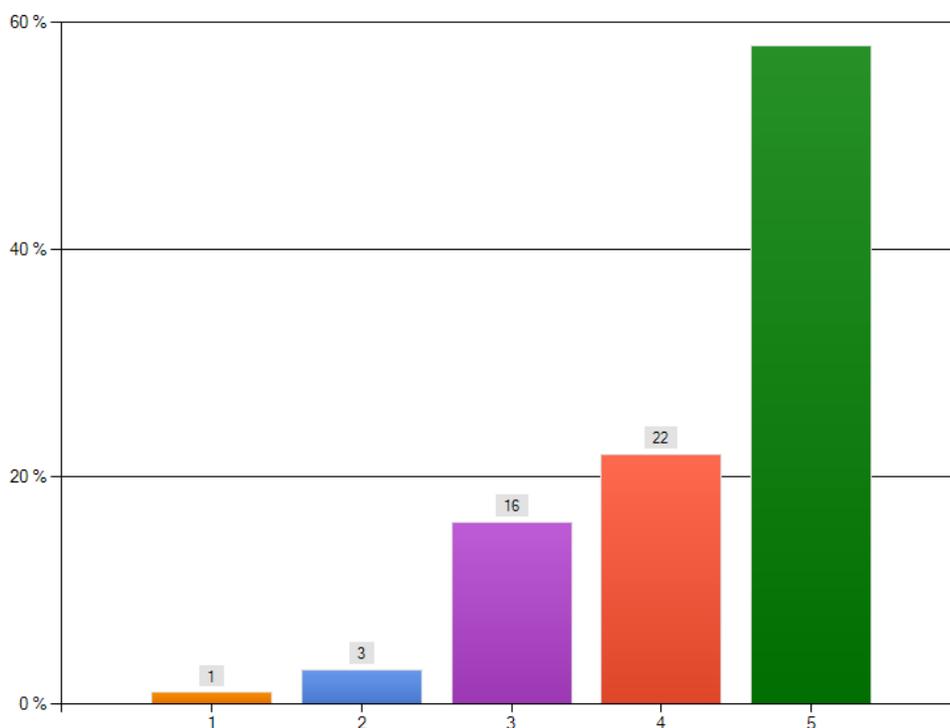
Recommendation: Update heteronormative university policies, especially housing policies, to acknowledge the existence of sexual and gender minority students and treat them equally with other students. Heteronormative policies such as the guest policy and the requirement that roommates be of the same legal sex are both discriminatory and alienating because they erase the existence of sexual and gender minorities.

Student Clubs and Organizations:

112 students indicated that they had been involved with student clubs and organizations. 23 (17%) indicated that concerns about their sexual or gender identity were a factor in their decision about whether to participate. Students expressed an array of feelings about “conservative” clubs and organizations. One wrote that they “have avoided any religious or right-winged groups on campus because of my sexual orientation.” But another found they did not want to give up involvement in these groups, despite feeling uncomfortable with their views on sexuality: “I am involved in Campus Ministry and the pro-life club. While these organizations have the kindest and most compassionate people I have ever befriended in my life, I’m kind of afraid of outing myself to some of these people out of fear of losing these support groups.”

Six students reported experiencing discrimination or hostility from club or group members and one reported experiencing it from club or organization leaders. Four participants reported experiencing discrimination or hostility from OSL&CD staff. 89 reported that they did not experience discrimination or hostility based on their sexual or gender identity from anyone involved with student clubs and organizations.

Chart 4. “How accepting and welcoming were student clubs and organizations to your sexual and gender identity? (1 = hostile, 5 = totally accepting)” (n=100)



67 (48%) responded that they had been involved with PRIDE, Rainbow, or OUTLaws. Many had positive things to say about these clubs: “I am questioning my sexual identity and joining Rainbow Alliance gave me an especially safe space to discuss sexuality and be open about my sexuality.” “I joined OUTLaws specifically because of my concerns about sexual/gender identity; I hoped participating would advance the cause of equality.” “I wanted to feel accepted and the opening night mixer was absolutely amazing.” “PRIDE is a safe and welcoming community.”

Some students chose not to join LGBT⁶ clubs because they were not interested or were too busy. Several expressed concerns that getting involved with one of these clubs would out them as sexual or gender minorities, and they were not ready for that. One student argued that LGBT clubs should have more members: “The problem is not only that LGBT students might hear threatening comments, the long-term effect of that is that they are alienated from each other and therefore can't support each other. The ally program intends well, but has no visibility.”

As with every other aspect of the university, some students also described negative experiences with these clubs: some students argued that PRIDE was too conservative, “the group is not as vocal as it could be.” A few students remarked that they “didn't feel gay enough” to join Rainbow Alliance. The only criticism of OUTLaws came from bisexual students, a few of whom felt their identities were not valued the same as lesbian and gay identities. It is worth noting that the same sentiments were expressed by many bisexual students about lesbian, gay, and straight students in general. Bisexual students report more than any other sexual minority that their sexual identity is deligitimized, disparaged, and exploited for entertainment, even by other sexual and gender minority students. Reasons for this are explored thoroughly in related literature, but this study does not examine the causes in depth.

Recommendation: LGBT student clubs in particular, and members of the Fordham community in general, should continue their efforts to be as respectful as possible of people who understand their own sexual or gender identity differently. This is not to say that negative or harmful remarks about others should be tolerated, however, as such remarks can and do have harmful effects.

Many students complaints could be resolved if there were more clubs and organizations for sexual and gender minorities, so that they could focus on different issues and no one group would be expected to satisfy everyone's needs and interests. Many students recognized this: “have more groups specifically for people in the queer community that deal with different things not just one space on each campus,” “have LGBT groups with different functions.” “[Create] more events and clubs, perhaps also focusing on bisexuals.” “a LGBTQ sexuality and spirituality ministry is sadly missing from Fordham. I am very committed to my faith and it's something that I and many other LGBTQ students would gain a lot from!”

Many graduate students also complained that there are no graduate student groups (aside from the OUTLaws in the School of Law) for sexual and gender minority students: “I would like to see promotion of LGBT events or clubs for graduate students.” “involve Graduate students in Undergrad organizations... a lot can be learned from the mixing of groups.”

Recommendation: More LGBTQ clubs should be created, each with different aims, so that one club per campus is not required to fulfill the many, often conflicting, needs and desires of students for myriad things, including sociality, politics, and faith. A diversity of specialized LGBTQ organizations would mirror many other institutions. (Some universities have a dozen or more such groups, each representing different interests (Ghaziani, 2011).)

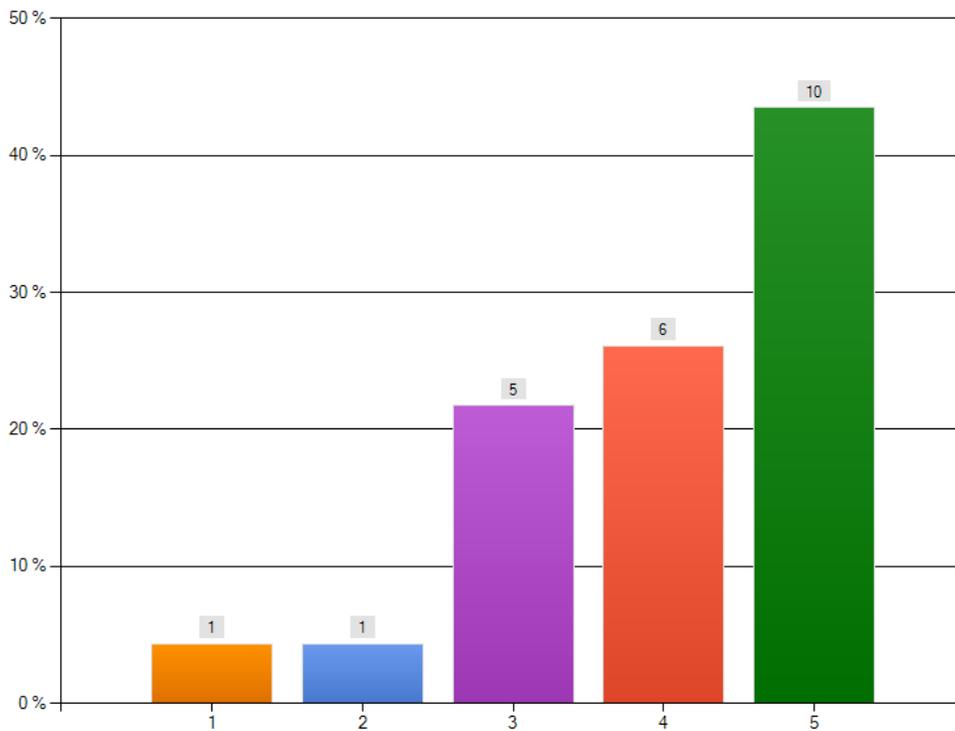
6 Fordham policies prevent clubs and student organizations from using the word “queer” in their names or constitutions.

Athletics:

24 participants indicated that they have been involved with University Athletics. 11 indicated that concerns about their sexual or gender identity played into their decision about whether to become involved with athletics at Fordham. Of those, five (31%) indicated that they expected to experience hostility related to their sexual or gender identity. Although one student offered that “The sport I played was generally really accepting, and from what I've seen it is at Fordham too,” others noted that “It can be very intimidating to be a male LGBT student athlete. It seems that there aren't many athletes that are LGBT, nor any support groups specifically for LGBTQ athletes.” “I chose not to try to be coxain for the Crew Novice Squad because I did not want to deal with possible discrimination.”

When asked whether they personally experienced discrimination or hostility, 19 (79%) indicated that they experienced no discrimination or hostility in athletics. Five responded that they experienced it from teammates, while a further two indicated that it came from coaches and athletic staff. One described their experience a reason they quit: “One of the reasons I quit the [athletic] teams was the severe homophobia of the boys team that made me feel uncomfortable and unsafe. My coach was witness to episodes when they would accuse each other of being gay and calling each other "fags" and my coach never said anything to them.” Another wrote, “my friend said their aren't any fags on his [football] team because they can't play.”

Chart 5. “How accepting and welcoming was athletics to your sexual and gender identity? (1 = hostile, 5 = totally accepting)” (n=23)



Those looking to better understand the conditions LGBTQ college athletes face should see Rankin and Merson, 2012, for an extensive report. Their findings detail frequent and significant discrimination and harassment of student athletes resulting in a number of negative outcomes, including decreased athletic and academic performance, psychological health risks, leaving teams, and transferring schools.

Recommendation: Athletic staff and coaches, as well as student athletes, should play an active role in condemning harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and in making this known to prospective athletes.

Perceptions of Discrimination, Hostility, and Violence:

In this section we asked participants about a variety of experiences they may have had. Four types of experiences were asked about, in order of increasing severity: hearing remarks about sexual or gender identity that make them feel unsafe, unwelcome, or uncomfortable; being the target of verbal attacks based on sexual or gender identity; being the target of threats of physical violence based on sexual or gender identity; and being the target of actual physical violence based on sexual or gender identity. For each of the last three experiences, participants were asked separately about whether they have heard about the experience happening, been first-hand witness to the experience, or been the target of the experience. Each time a participant indicated that they had had one of these experiences, follow-up questions were asked to determine the effects of the experience and general context.

Although physical violence and threats of violence are clearly very concerning, research overwhelmingly shows that even hearing disparaging remarks or hearing about verbal harassment can have the negative effects outlined in the section “Significance, Causes for Concern, Related Work” (Wolford et al. 2012; Juster et al. 2013; Silverschanz et al. 2007; Reed et al. 2010; Manning et al. 2012; Rankin et al. 2010; Rankin and Merson, 2012; Kuh, 2001).

Disparaging Remarks:

91 students (a majority of FCLC, FCRH, GSB, and a significant minority of Law and GSAS) reported hearing remarks that made them feel “unsafe, unwelcome, or uncomfortable” that were not particularly targeted at anyone. Students variously described these remarks as using slurs such as “fag” and “dyke,” expressing (both positive and negative) stereotypes about sexual or gender minorities, excluding them by assuming everyone is or should be gender normative and heterosexual, or disparaging religious and political statements about the worth and rights of LGBTQ people.

The most common frequency students heard these remarks was “5+” times. 28 participants (31% of those answering this question) said that they never talked about it with anyone, and most other students only talked about some of the incidents. Participants indicated that approximately 11% of the time, the person making disparaging remarks was someone other than a student. 29 reported being affected by the remarks for only a few minutes, while 27 report that they are still affected (34% and 31% of respondents, respectively). One student commented that “Each individual incident only affected me for hours, but over time, the accumulative affect has made me question myself, my own identity, and how I present myself to the world.”

Students rarely report these remarks, confront the individual who made them, or talk about them with others. Thus the impact of this kind of hostility goes largely undocumented, and students deal with them largely in isolation from each other.

Recommendation: Faculty and staff, as well as students, should be more conscious of the remarks they make while at Fordham. It is important to recognize that, while not all sexual and gender minority students are made to feel unsafe or unwelcome by the same kinds of remarks (e.g., some do not mind certain stereotypes or words), these remarks do have negative effects on a number of students.

Several students described very positive outcomes to these situations, when others came to their defense: “It actually made me quite happy. I was really amazed at how many people, even people that I don't know, came to stand up for me. It really showed me that society is changing and American youth, at least, is starting to accept homosexuality and value those who do identify as LGBT as they would any other student.”

Recommendation: In these cases, and in cases of verbal harassment, students and other bystanders should speak out in defense of sexual and gender minorities.

Harassment:

75 people (half of undergraduates and one in five graduate students) report having heard about remarks directed at a person because of their perceived sexual or gender identity that made them feel “unsafe, uncomfortable, or unwelcome”; and 77% of those have heard about such remarks multiple times; with a quarter reporting that they have heard them five or more times. 40 people (34% FCRH, 24% FCLC, 21% GSAS, 5% Law) said they witnessed such a verbal attack; and of those *only one reported it*. Witnesses often cited worries about escalating the confrontation as a reason to remain silent. Many also worried that if the harassment were reported, it would not receive a response.

Harassment was not always face-to-face; one student recalls, “someone wrote that I 'heart being a rugmuncher' on a sign on my door followed the next day with 'I heart girls' on my white board.”

25 people (22% FCRH, 14% FCLC, 11% GSAS, 5% Law) said they have been the target of verbal harassment, and 41% of them have been targeted five or more times. 19 (86%) never report the harassment, although 10 (48%) report that they are still affected by it. One common reason students did not report being harassed was that they were afraid of outing themselves: “I did not want to reveal my actual identity.” Another student wrote, “they were drunk so I didn't take it seriously. Either that or I was afraid it could turn physical.” For another, “[even now,]It makes me queasy to think about. I felt very objectified and disrespected.”

It should also be noted that these results are limited by underreporting. One student who had been the target of frequent verbal harassment approached researchers in person and volunteered that they left those experiences out of their responses to the survey because it was too unpleasant for them to think about. This may be the case for other students who have been targeted for harassment as well, given the extremely low rates of reporting and discussion about harassment.

Threats of Violence:

When asked to describe threats of violence based on sexual or gender identity, a small but meaningful number of students mentioned threats of sexual violence in comments like these: “I can fix that,” “I'll fuck you straight,” “Being threatened with corrective rape by people who think they can 'fix' your gender/sexuality.” The remainder of comments described either physically menacing gestures or verbal threats of assault. Most students struggled with defining it, and many thought the exercise was so obvious it was silly.

49 students (49% FCRH, 30% FCLC, 18% GSAS, 5% Law) have heard about students receiving threats of violence for their sexual or gender identity. 14 (32%) of them have only heard about one instance, while 13 (30%) have heard about five or more. One such student remarked that because of these incidents, “I live in a state of fear. Sexuality is a personal thing and I feel vulnerable on issues related to it. I see on Facebook, in the media and in passing conversations at Fordham how people take advantage of others sexual identity.” 41% of those who heard about these threats said that they are still affected by them.

16 students (19% FCRH, 14% GSB, 5% FCLC) say they have witnessed threats of physical violence, and 85% of those who witnessed these threats never reported them.

Seven people (8% FCRH, 5% FCLC) indicated that they have been the target of threats of physical violence, and while three of them were only threatened once, two were threatened five or more times.

None of these students reported the threats to officials or authority figures. One student recounted her experience:

“I have been threaten physically by males at off campus bars on more than one occasion. I have been told, 'Just because you're a girl doesn't mean you don't look like a dude and I will beat the shit out of you.' To say the least, [I] would not be able to compete in any physical encounter with a grown man. I was afraid.”

Another student said that when they were threatened, “I had a sort of nervous breakdown. My muscles collapsed, I couldn't breathe, I had a constant urge to hide, was in practical hysterics.” Others had a somewhat more mild response: “I felt isolated and unwelcome.”

Recommendation: Always report threats of physical violence. Reporting a threat provides the opportunity for an intervention to prevent actual violence in the future. (See “Handling of Reports” for recommendations that will make these reports more effective and help students feel more comfortable reporting.)

Physical Violence:

Students again generally described assault when describing physical violence based on someone's gender or sexual identity. A few described battery, sexual assault, or rape.

12 students (16% FCLC, 10% FCRH, 6% GSAS) have heard about physical violence occurring to students at Fordham based on their perceived or actual sexual or gender identity. Seven of them have only heard about one instance, and the most instances any respondent has heard about is three. Two never discussed the instances with anyone, and only one person reported the violence to authorities. Three students said the incidents they heard about were in residence halls, two said that they were elsewhere on campus, and seven said that they were in off campus bars or restaurants. More than half of these students say that they are still affected: “I felt angry, unsafe and worried about the physical safety of LGBTQ members of the Fordham community,” “It made me feel bad for him, because I act a little bit more masculine and would not be perceived as a stereotypical gay man, while he was more flamboyant. He was really upset and he felt scared to go out. It was quite a sad and defeating experience,” “I was angry and annoyed at the University's response. I was also saddened by the idea that a Fordham student would do that.”

One respondent described an exceptionally horrifying incident of sexual violence, which we have chosen not to recount here, to respect and protect the survivor. The response, like all responses, was anonymous, and it lacked sufficient detail to report the crime.

Two students (both FCRH), reported witnessing physical violence, and one of them witnessed three separate instances of it. The students did not always talk about the violence they witnessed with others, and only one of the four cases was reported to authorities. The violence happened variously in a residence hall, on campus generally, and at an off campus bar.

One student (from FCRH) responded to the study that they were the target of physical violence based on their sexual or gender identity. This student said that they had been attacked four separate times, in residence halls and on campus generally, that they did not always talk about it with anyone else, and that they never reported it to authorities.

Like the harassment results, these results are known to be limited by underreporting. One student approached a researcher in person and told them that they left their physical assault out of the survey

because, after being knocked unconscious and left bleeding, they did not remember the incident (even though their injuries and friends told them the story the next day). The low rates at which students report and talk about these instances is cause to believe that there may be other such cases not recorded in this study.

Recommendation: The university must provide more accessible resources to students who are targeted by or witness violence or threats of violence based on sexual or gender identity. While the recently implemented online hate crime and bias related incident reporting system is a step in that direction, it is clear that students overwhelmingly do not report these incidents. Every effort should be made to make students aware of and comfortable with reporting and support mechanisms.

Recommendation: The university must respond forcefully and publicly to these incidents. Student remarks indicate that they are very often dissatisfied with the university's responses, or that they do not report in the first place because they expect an unsatisfactory or inadequate response. Insensitive or weak responses by the university are a betrayal of the trust that students place in the university by reporting these incidents.

University Context of Discrimination, Hostility, and Violence:

Overall, one of the most concerning findings of this section is that while many students say they are heavily affected by degrading remarks, verbal harassment and violence, it is rare for them to report these instances and uncommon that they talk about these experiences with friends or family, who could serve as a support network. We believe that this silence contributes to the sense of isolation and negative impacts of hostility and discrimination by leaving students with the impression that their experiences are unique and that they have no support. This finding is reinforced by a number of students who shared that they had overwhelmingly positive experiences those few times that other people in the Fordham community were vocal about supporting them and condemning harassment. Thus, the campus-wide conversation about and visibility for these issues that this report hopes to begin is critical for improving campus climate.

Recommendation: People should not assume that the rates of discrimination, harassment, and violence reported to authorities or the rates of such incidents they hear about socially are accurate. Our findings show that the majority of such incidents are never reported to authorities, and they are not frequently discussed with friends and family either. Thus, official reports and anecdotal evidence will indicate lower rates for harassment, discrimination, and violence than actually occur.

Many students said that they blamed Fordham, its administration, or the community in general for these instances: “[I blame the] admin, and staff and the general community., ignoring something will not solve it,” “Students are not given sufficient diversity training when they get to campus.” “the university also has a responsibility to react to incidents and also to create a culture in which discrimination based on sexual or gender identity is not acceptable.” “The ignorance of students here is to blame. The people who have educated them is responsible. That includes parents, teachers, and professors and administrators at Fordham.” “the students themselves are responsible for their acts, but the university should be held responsible for providing more information about WHY such acts are wrong and WHAT constitutes hate speech or gender based violence” “many LGBTQ community members feel the administration can't or won't protect them. Fordham contributes to some of this aggression in the way they address these incidents and approach gender minorities in general.”

On March 2nd, 2012, Fr. Joseph McShane, S.J., President of the University, sent out a university wide statement that said, in part, “the University community has suffered a string of hateful incidents on campus, the third and most recent of which was today.” He continued that he knew members of the university community “will do everything in their power to stop these incidents and start repairing the trust damaged by them.” A week earlier on February 27th, Jeffrey Gray, Senior Vice President of Student Affairs, sent out a statement to all students describing “the two incidents” of hateful graffiti that had occurred. While we applaud the strong condemnation of bigotry and hate expressed in these statements, our results indicate that there are far more than three isolated incidents of hateful harassment or even just graffiti at Fordham.

Recommendation: The university must acknowledge the existence and prevalence of bias related incidents. Evidence from our limited sample of students indicates that violence, sexual violence, and threats of violence based on sexual or gender identity are not unknown at Fordham, and that harassment of and degrading comments about sexual and gender minorities are frequent. The university's response to the trio of widely known hateful vandalism incidents in Spring 2012 treated them as if they were exceptional, when in fact many students experience hateful vandalism and worse. Such statements can inadvertently make students who experience harassment and violence feel as though their experiences are being denied or invalidated.

Handling of Reports:

Each time a participant indicated that they reported an incident of harassment or discrimination or violence, we asked them “Who was involved in incident response that you personally interacted with? For each one, were they responsive to your needs and respectful of your sexual and gender identity?” The results are combined in Table 7.

Table 7. Respectfulness of Incident Responders (n=14)⁷

Reported to:	Not at All	A Little	Somewhat	Mostly	Completely	Total
An RA/RD	2	0	2	4	3	11
Other Res Life Staff	2	1	1	3	2	9
Other Student Affairs Staff	3	0	3	1	0	7
Counseling	4	0	1	0	3	8
Mission and Ministry	2	1	1	1	1	6
FUEMS	3	1	1	0	0	5
Security	3	3	1	0	0	7
Human Resources	3	0	1	0	0	4
Department chair or director	2	0	2	0	0	4
NYPD/ other local authority	3	0	1	0	0	4

Although there are only a few responses (many students did not report incidents, those who did usually only reported to one or two people, and many students skipped this question), the general trend is that students feel that the people they report incidents to are “Not at All” responsive to their needs and respectful of their sexual and gender identity, with several positive exceptions for Residential Life and Counseling and Psychological Services.

One student provided this account:

It was at Lincoln Center and a male student was making very loud comments in the courtyard. Something to the effect that it wasn't a bad thing that many young gay people had been committing suicide. His friends were laughing. I reported to security - who were sitting in the doorway and could hear the whole thing - but they told me that this student had 'free speech rights' to make the comments he was making. I reported it again to the people at the main desk at the entrance. ... No one took an official report. ... It made me feel unsafe and frustrated. It didn't seem like anyone in authority was willing to do anything about it. ... Fordham restricts speech and behavior in other cases, why not in cases of hate speech?

Another student, discussing ongoing verbal harassment in their residence hall, offered: “I wanted the harassment to end, but at other times I didn't feel like the repercussions would be worth the effort. Tolerating the abuse seemed better than finding a solution against it.”

When asked why they did not report harassment they experienced or witnessed, one of the most common answers was that they did not think reporting it would produce a response, or if they thought it might, they did not think the response would be effective. Many students called for these reports to be taken more seriously: “Take all incidents of bias seriously. They are criminal and treat them as such,”

⁷ Participants, on average, provided feedback for less than half of the resources on this list; these data are not the result of a few participants giving every resource a bad review.

“The administration should take complaints about offensive behavior toward LGBT students more seriously.”

Recommendation: Always take reports of discrimination, harassment, and unsafe environments seriously. Not only are these very serious issues for sexual and gender minorities, but being taken seriously by the people they report to is a major concern for many. Those who do not think their reports will be taken seriously often do not report things, and those who do report and feel like they have not been taken seriously and respected often walk away harmed a second time. Even if it is not possible to give the student the exact response they want, it is important to take seriously and respect their concerns.

Recommendation: Reports must receive serious followup with all parties in order to prevent abuse from escalating. A university that demonstrates constant and unwavering commitment to taking all reports seriously fosters a community where members learn that harassment, discrimination, and violence are neither welcome nor tolerated.

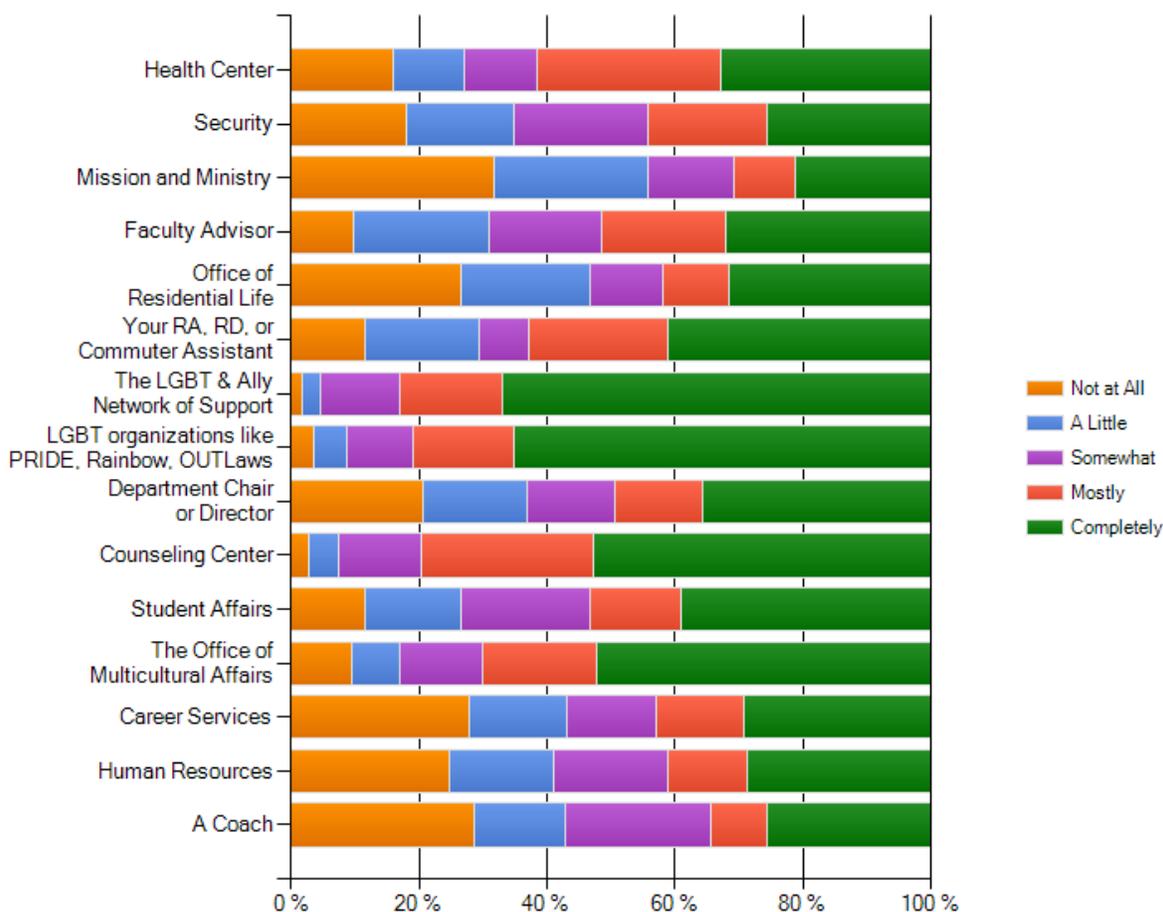
To get a better understanding of students' willingness to utilize campus resources, we asked “How safe, comfortable, and respected do you feel reaching out to these campus resources for things related to your sexual or gender identity?” The results are shown in Chart 6 as the percentage of students who felt each way about a particular resource. The larger the red and green portions of a bar on the right, the more students who felt “mostly” or “completely” comfortable with a given resource. Likewise, the larger the blue and orange portions on the left, the more students who felt “a little” or “not at all” comfortable with the resource.

While we recommend that all members of the Fordham community continually seek to improve their friendliness to sexual and gender minority students, the results in Chart 6 emphasize that a number of offices have more room to improve than others.

Also note that these results are generally much more positive than the results in Table 7. Thus we conclude that students who have reported incidents to these offices tend to have worse experiences with them than students generally expect to have before they report. This is disheartening, and suggests that some of the good reputation offices have in Chart 6 is not merited by their actual treatment of students, as presented in Table 7.

Recommendation: Simple gestures such as using gender neutral and inclusive language (e.g., “partner” instead of “boyfriend”) as well as visual demonstrations of support, such as rainbow flags, safe space stickers, and Network of Support certificates are often effective ways of demonstrating friendliness and welcoming, students say. Of course, these symbols are no substitute for actual friendliness, and a bad experience can severely impact not only a student's relationship with that official, but the whole office's reputation (as several students' comments about Student Affairs and Safety and Security demonstrate, bad experiences have a severe impact on students' perceptions of an office). Along these lines, apologizing for mistakes or upsetting students can go a long way toward repairing a reputation and relationship.

Chart 6. Student's Comfort Reaching Out to Various Campus Resources (n=135)⁸



⁸ The students who answered that each resource was “not applicable” to them are not shown in this chart. Thus, the responses here represent only those students who thought the office/person on the left might be relevant to their sexual or gender identity.

Although many of the options in this question are offices within Student Affairs, we included Student Affairs as a separate option because some students indicated that they had feelings about “Student Affairs” in general, rather than one of the specific offices within it. Similarly, although the Network of Support is run by the Office of Multicultural Affairs, students expressed feelings about the two separately, and so they are represented separately here.

It is also worth noting that the Network of Support received a 2013 Jesuit Association for Student Personnel Administrators' award for “Outstanding Commitment to Diversity and Social Justice,” and that it is the best ranked resource at Fordham. Nevertheless, the Network of Support was criticized by a number of students for omitting queer identities, being insensitive with trans* topics, being difficult for faculty and staff to schedule around work, and for being unable to reach those people who choose not to be involved.

Impacts of Discrimination, Hostility:

Students seriously consider transferring. When asked “Have you ever considered transferring or leaving Fordham because of these experiences?” 14 respondents (25% Social Work, 21% FCRH, 20% law, 0% for all other schools) said “yes.” Elsewhere in the study, students commented: “Fordham is frustrating. I love being here more than anything. But when my sexuality is let out to dry by administrators and select fellow students, it makes me wonder whether I made the right choice in coming here and in choosing to stay.” One student “decided moving off campus would be an alright compromise for the rest of undergrad,” while several others did not consider transferring because they “think this is not unique to Fordham.” Students' comments make it clear that even hearing about harassment, especially frequently, is sometimes enough to cause them to consider leaving Fordham.

Even before the question was asked, a number of students volunteered that they had considered transferring in their comments: “[disparaging remarks that were not directed at anyone in particular] Made me want to transfer rooms and even out the university,” “a student had transferred from RH to LC, said that the word ‘faggot’ was used around his residence hall liberally,” “I have been at risk of having friends transfer because they felt uncomfortable with other students' attitudes.”

Students' academics suffer. 12 of 79 students (40% GSB, 25% Social Work, 19% FCRH, none in other schools) responded that their experiences impacted their academic work or focus. These comments are representative: “my concentration is killed all of the time, like everyday.” “It limits what I feel like I can express in my essays or say in my classes to contribute to discussion if it may be considered too out of the norm.” “Well of course. How could they not. This is a Jesuit University after all. I still remember that shitty feeling I would get after leaving my intro Theology class freshmen year. Some teachers just don't have the perspective, you know?” Several students shared this sentiment about theology courses. Again, some volunteered this information even before we asked: “My GPA for my freshmen semester suffered [because of homophobic remarks].”

A number of students point out that their academics are not affected because they hide their sexual or gender identity to protect themselves. “[I have] been able to avoid having it become a topic that might impact my school work or focus. In short, I've gotten good at keeping it on the down-low.” “I sometimes don't speak up in class when I find something offensive said in the literature, by a student, or by a professor because it might out me or label me as “that gay/feminist girl” and then the professor or students target me for any issues surrounding the gay or women's movements.” “I know it is probably a bad idea to talk to people about my identity, because of the risk of prejudice or exclusion. While many students would probably be accepting of LGBTQ individuals, I feel it is more appropriate to keep these things to myself considering the nature of the general school population.”

Interestingly, these issues have also inspired some students (the author of this report included) academically. Students wrote: “being an LGBT individual has positively affected my academic work in ways I never thought it could,” “I've actually researched and written a lot about the LGBT community as well as lesbians in a few of my classes. I took a positive spin and when the occasion arose ... I chose to learn more about ‘my people.’ (Who I never encounter at Rose Hill.)” “I generally just [use?] my academics as an outlet to escape from some of the other stresses.”

Students Regret Coming Out. Throughout the survey, often in response to the frequent question “How did this effect you?” students indicated with an alarming frequency that they regretted or second-guessed their decision to be out, either in general or to a specific person. Example comments include: “I have been fairly dissatisfied with being able to identify openly and freely at Fordham and it's made

me second guess a decision to identify openly,” “I have sometimes regretted my decisions about coming to Fordham. I oftentimes feel that--while I've never experienced violence or hate speech first hand--Fordham's culture is somewhat homophobic, which I feel is fostered by the school's Catholic affiliation.” For more on this, see the section “Outness and Comfort.”

Students Struggle with Negative Self Image. Even in conversations where disparaging remarks are made generally and not targeted at anyone in particular, a number of students report that they internalize these sentiments. Students responded that “Each individual incident only affected me for hours, but over time, the accumulative affect has made me question myself, my own identity, and how I present myself to the world,” and “I don't think you can put a time on these feelings - those feelings shape who you are for life.” A student who had been the target of verbal harassment wrote that “It made me lose a lot of confidence and delay coming out to my friends and myself significantly.” Several students also state that they “feel ashamed of myself” when they are targeted for harassment. Other examples include: “This negative belief about bisexuality I think stunted my acceptance of myself,” “When I haven't said anything, mostly they've made me feel shy and silenced, and then I start to feel like it's my fault for not sticking up for myself or others. When I have said something, I feel as though people are making fun of me or thinking I am too sensitive,” While the majority of respondents did not show any signs of internalizing negative ideas about their sexual or gender identity, the the frequency with which others did is cause for concern. Research (and common sense) shows that internalizing negative sentiments about one's sexual or gender identity causes psychological and physical health problems (Juster et al. 2013). One student demonstrated alcohol use as an effect of and coping mechanism for this internalization: “I was momentarily stunned and then proceeded to get shitfaced off of the girly drink that I got called a faggot for buying. To be honest I was practically asking for it.”

Students Have Positive Experiences, Too:

This report focuses largely on those areas we found most concerning and most important for the Fordham community to address. As a result, most of the content is necessarily about negative experiences. However, during the course of this study, researchers also found many positive experiences and read many truly heartwarming comments. A very brief selection of these comments is presented here.

“I feel remarkably accepted by the people I do know at Fordham. My professors have been particularly great. There are difficult people everywhere.”

“I wanted to feel accepted and the opening night mixer was absolutely amazing.”

My expectations for Fordham “were exceeded, I actually feel very accepted and loved here.”

“Yes [my positive expectations were met]. More-so in the student community than the general administration.”

“Yes [my positive expectations were met], organizations and fliers representing all sorts of sexual identities are in plain sight and these topics are addressed in the curriculum.”

“I’ve never felt unsafe. The majority of my friends are straight men, many of whom are undergraduates, who have always been very open, accepting, and non-threatening.”

“The law school seems to be extremely welcome and accepting of sexual minorities. I was able to make friends and didn’t for a second feel like I needed to hide who I am.”

“I LOVE being a part of the LGBT community, living on campus, and attending Fordham! In fact, I moved here so that I could be safer while attending school. I experienced tons of homophobia where I was living before,... I’d like to thank Fordham and all its administrators, faculty, and staff for making this LGBT identified student feel safe!!”

“My major is physics and there should be an award given to the faculty and staff that work in Freeman. They are the most welcoming and accepting people I have found on campus.”

“I participated in [a study abroad] program my first summer, and I was the only participant to travel on the program with a partner, and we are a same-sex couple. He was welcomed into our group of students and included in all social events. Program faculty went out of their way to support us and accommodate us, even when we had housing difficulties. Made me love Fordham even more.”

Student Voices for Change:

A final three qualitative questions concluded the study, asking overall how students perceived Fordham, before and after coming to the institution, and what they believe Fordham can do to improve. Many of their voices are represented in this section.

Before Students Arrive:

Sexual and gender minority students expressed a range of expectations they had for Fordham before they arrived. 48 (31%) expressed positive expectations for the university community's treatment of sexual and gender minorities. Several students referenced the school's location as a major factor in their positive expectations: "Being as the school is in New York City, I expected more students who were openly gay, lesbian or bisexual and also more who were openly displaying affection to significant others." Others cited their positive experiences with "the typically open-minded Jesuit community," "I thought Fordham, being a Jesuit university, would be more on the vanguard with progressive approaches to student services. For example, Georgetown has an entire office dedicated to LGBT student services." A few also cited Fordham's focus on academic excellence as a reason they expected an open, welcoming community: "I expected an open-minded, professional learning environment."

24 (15%) had negative expectations for Fordham's campus climate. Many of these focused on Fordham's religious affiliation: "I'm expecting a Catholic school to have a more conservative view of sexual and gender minorities." Others indicated that they also thought that "as Fordham is a Jesuit school," it would have a "difficult" environment. Most did not offer reasons, but simply described hostile environments: "I expected a hostile environment or a tacit 'don't ask/don't tell' situation."

The majority of the remaining respondents said that they "didn't consider it much," although several offered that in retrospect, they "should have." The students who did not consider the environment for sexual and gender minorities, and especially those who expected a hostile environment but chose to attend Fordham anyway, highlight the fact that there are many factors in a student's choice of college, and that considerations such as financial aid, location, ranking, and academic programs often take precedence over social and personal concerns.

Recommendation: All students should be welcomed and supported by the university and the Fordham community; it is unfair and unreasonable to assume that all students who want supportive and welcoming communities will simply "go elsewhere." Moreover, it is important to remember that academic excellence and other institutional values have no gender identity or sexual orientation, and that promising students with many diverse identities will be attracted and admitted to Fordham.

After Students Arrive:

29 students (60% of those with positive expectations) responded that their positive expectations for Fordham were met or exceeded. A further 16 say that they were surprised to find a positive environment. Some of their comments are in the section dedicated to positive experiences. Several students attributed their positive experience at Fordham in part to this study: “The environment was actually better than I thought. I did not expect things like this survey to exist.” Even though Student Affairs declined involvement with this study and refused (on policy grounds) to distribute it to students or the LGBT and Ally Network of Support, one participant misattributed our independent student research to the university administration: “I am not sure what if anything the university has done to improve the situation for LGBTQ students. This survey is a good start.” This is evidence that when members of the university community make an effort to listen to the experiences of and improve conditions for sexual and gender minorities, these efforts themselves have a positive effect on campus climate, even before their outcomes are completed.

9 (38% of those with negative expectations) said that their negative expectations were met or exceeded, and a further 18 (38% of those with positive experiences) say they were surprised to have an overall negative experience. Those who were discontent with the campus climate at Fordham frequently cited the things already addressed in our findings. Several of their more general remarks are reprinted here:

“I have heard that Fordham advises LGBT students at RH to transfer to LC. This suggests to me that Fordham is not concerned with the comfort level of its LGBT students.”

“The administration is not supportive enough and the student culture is not the most tolerant.”

One student who had high hopes found only “sort of like the bare minimum of civility.”

“There are more than a few students who have expressed their discomfort with non-heterosexual people.”

“I think that if I was less gender conforming, my life would be a nightmare. I'm fortunate enough to be a certain way that I can present myself openly without people being hostile to my stated orientation.”

“overhearing a homophobic and misogynistic conversation trivializing lesbianism and bisexuality made me feel pretty awful about the state of the student body. students are very uninformed about the spectrum of gender and sex identity and it makes for a community lacking in solidarity and compassion.”

“it is disappointing to attend a jesuit university that is supposed to be known for its solidarity and christian attitude about accepting people, and to find that many students are very prejudiced or simply misled/uninformed about gender issues.”

Student Suggestions for Improvement:

Throughout this document we have provided a number of recommendations based on our findings. The student suggestions here are meant to supplement but not to replace those recommendations, and to further highlight issues that concern sexual and gender minority students which were not specifically addressed elsewhere.

Academics and Curriculum:

Many participants called for increased presence of LGBTQ issues in the curriculum. One wanted to expand the core to include “mandatory classes on oppression that includes lgbt topics.” This could be implemented for undergraduates by counting classes on gender and sexual diversity toward the pluralism requirement. Others suggested this education should be included more broadly in all classes, with one GSAS student presenting their own class as an example: “When I teach the undergrads I always discuss gender and sexual identity as part of their instruction in their history courses. I think the faculty can go a long way in helping students feel that Fordham is a safe space and to open dialogues within their classrooms and within their discipline about gender and sexual identity.”

Perceived Student Affairs Censorship:

Many students commented that they felt Student Affairs was restricting important content, and that these restrictions had negative effects on the campus climate, in addition to being inherently offensive in the first place: “Fully liberate the use of the word Queer in Student Affairs as well as all departments, and use it/inform about it in programming such as the LGBT & Ally Network of Support (which has no programming on Queer identities outside L, G, B, and T).”⁹ “Let PRIDE use the word Queer, provide funding to Vagina Monologues, ... provide safe sex education and birth control, condoms, and dental dams, invite more gender and sexual minorities to campus to speak.” “Do not stifle club, group, and organization attempts to provide services and open discussion about queer issues. Go beyond that - encourage them. Acknowledge the issues of rampant homophobia on our campus and frankly discuss what can be done to change the culture that has bred this contempt.”

Exposure and Publicity:

Many of the participants argued that sexual and gender minorities and issues needed more exposure and publicity on campus. Regarding clubs, one wrote, “While the resources do exist I think that they need to reach out more to new students. Especially to students that are not very self-confident and very afraid to come out. ... Instead of solely hosting events it would be great if these organizations would make it know and provide the ability to discretely contact them.”

Other students argued that visibility needed to be campus wide: “make it more known to visiting students that the school is accepting to everyone.”

“Visibility. There is no other way. ... Undergrad is a great time [to come out] not only because it's at a critical age, but it's a time when there's a huge structural shift in people's lives. Closeted gays are worried that their worlds will collapse if they come out. They're often afraid that they'll lose everything. And inevitably they've internalized a lot of homophobia and directed it toward themselves. They need to see that there is structure and integration and community out there, and that they don't have to live their lives in a single room on campus devoted to diversity. Making it appear to be a big deal is the best

9 In late 2012 student groups won the right to use the word “queer” in their programming and posters. Previously, the word “queer” had been cited as a reason for denying events and advertisements by student clubs. At the time of this report, students are still forbidden from using “queer” in their club names or constitutions, however.

way to show that it is not a big deal. The smaller the safe space, the bigger deal it becomes. It's also important for a life of service. You can't serve others when you're living under a bushel basket in fear of your neighbor. I'm glad a Jesuit institution is taking this seriously!”

“There needs to be more visibility. Other colleges celebrate different sexual identities. I am Catholic and I understand the argument that a Catholic institution doesn't support gay sex, but that has nothing to do with really celebrating the LGBTQ community. I do not feel that my identity is celebrated here. I do not feel represented. If anything, I am slightly bothered by the dean's messages to us that they are looking forward to another good year because nothing noteworthy changes with administrators.”

Others commented that they wanted more visibility from and among the faculty: “If faculty and staff are silent on this matter, unfortunately, I fall into a default opinion that they will judge me. Fordham needs to be loud about acceptance.” “It would be nice to know if there was a queer presence in the faculty; I would feel more comfortable knowing there was someone to go to outside of the student body.” “hire professors and administrators that are gender and sexual minorities.”

Community Education, Core Programming:

Many students argued that Fordham had an obligation to provide more community education surrounding these issues: “a mandatory part of orientation could include a diversity seminar, with some time devoted to sexual and gender diversity, would help to encourage students to reexamine their position regarding the treatment of LGBTQ people.”¹⁰

“fordham should implement a short program or mandatory workshop for freshmen that provides information about why homophobia, racism, misogyny, and any other form of prejudice are unacceptable in the fordham community.... in a school that emphasizes solidarity, it is important to help all students to understand how prejudice affects our community in a negative way. many students come from homes or schools where these issues are never discussed, so it is necessary to make clear the policy of the university on hate speech and prejudicial acts.”

“The problem is not only that LGBT students might hear threatening comments, the long-term effect of that is that they are alienated from each other and therefore can't support each other. The ally program intends well, but has no visibility. At my undergrad institution, which was also Catholic, the training for the Ally program was required of all freshman living in the dorms. 100% of students were treated as potential allies. Those that weren't were the exception, not the other way around. The small self-selected underground program now feels very 1987. There was lots of energy at the training, but then we all got swallowed up as soon as the couple dozen of us walked back out on campus - never to see each other again.”

Other students agreed: “at the very least, the LGBT training should be mandatory for all faculty, staff and administrators. When such things are optional, they tend to be attended only by those who have an interest in the area and not by those who need enlightening.”

Another student called for year-round programming: “it would be useful to have speakers that speak to the LGBTQ groups about their legal rights but also help facilitate interaction with the larger NYC

¹⁰ Such a program does not exist at Fordham.

LGBTQ community particularly with internships.”

And some students critiqued the existing community education efforts:

“There seems to be an overwhelming amount of focus on pathologizing queer identities and the need for support services (counseling, support groups, etc.). While there is a place for these services, a more balanced perspective on the positive aspects of queer culture would be great. Most of us are doing just fine; I think we just want to feel like our lives and choices are affirmed.”

Recommendation: These student suggestions should all be taken very seriously, as they are clearly areas that students look to when determining campus climate. Although our study did not focus on the effects of these specific suggestions, it is clear that they are motivated by the same desires to make Fordham a safer and more welcoming place, and that students would feel Fordham was safer and more welcoming if these suggestions were implemented. This would have a positive effect on campus climate, like our numerous other recommendations. The significance of campus climate is outlined in “Background and Motivations” on pages 8 and 9.

Conclusions:

We gather and present data from very large portions of the sexual and gender minority student population at Fordham University; for some schools our response rate was greater than 70%. The Fordham Que(e)ry results demonstrate, first and foremost, the vast diversity of experiences and opinions that sexual and gender minority students at Fordham have, but they also demonstrate disturbing trends of hostility, discrimination, and even violence, along with a set of negative health, academic, and social outcomes. There is no way to statistically generalize the experiences of these students, but our research is grounded in established sociological research methods for LGBTQ populations and samples a very large portion of sexual and gender minority students at Fordham. We can use their experiences to build a better picture of the Fordham University community.

Because of the number of dramatically negative effects that result from poor campus climate for sexual and gender minorities (including physical and psychological health risks, alcohol and other drug use risks, risks to academic performance and student retention, among others), we focus extensively on areas where campus climate can be improved. Each of these risks identified in other studies was also validated by student responses to the Que(e)ry. We find that for many Fordham undergraduates, the university is likely to be the first opportunity they have to be a part of a supportive and welcoming community for their sexual or gender identity.

Alarming numbers of students told us stories of their harassment and victimization, and these stories took place everywhere at Fordham, including classrooms and residence halls, cafeterias and local bars, offices and green spaces. Students were very likely to hear and be affected by (especially over time with repeated instances) 'casual' homophobic comments, and these comments did not always come from other students. Students were also likely to experience verbal harassment for their sexual or gender identities. A number of threats of physical violence and actual instances of assault were also recorded. Startlingly, these incidents were rarely discussed and almost never reported.

Throughout the report, we present many recommendations as the evidence makes them obvious. These recommendations are grounded not only in our findings but also extensively in related literature, and they are already implemented at a number of other universities. Generally, our recommendations relate to taking the concerns of sexual and gender minorities more seriously, providing more resources for them, and improving awareness and confidence in existing resources. We find that existing resources are both underutilized (often because of correctable shortcomings) and insufficient (often because they do not address all of the factors impacting and concerning sexual and gender minority students). There is also emphasis on the need for improvement and mandatory awareness programming among the faculty, staff, and students.

We hope that this document will be the beginning of a renewed and vigorous university-wide conversation about how to improve our community for sexual and gender minority students. Our findings are relevant to every member of the university community, at every level and every campus. We hope that the data from this report inspires new community outreach and provides support to effective and necessary existing programs and services.

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