

# BEING BLACK AT DUKE:

## Partnering with Black Students to Learn about their Campus Experiences

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*Duke University Libraries (DUL) conducted discussion groups and Photovoice research with Black undergraduate and graduate students at Duke University in fall 2019. Assessment & User Experience (AUX) staff also analyzed the 2,800 student responses to the Libraries' 2020 student satisfaction survey in light of what we learned from the 2019 discussion groups.*

*We sought to understand students' experiences in the Libraries and on campus to improve how all students interact with library services, facilities, and materials. We did not limit our discussions to library services and spaces, as it was important to explore Black students' experience and use of the Libraries holistically. What follows is our set of research questions, the study methodology, and an overview of what library staff heard from discussion group participants and survey respondents.*

## INTRODUCTION

How can the Duke Libraries better support the needs of Black students—both U.S. citizens and international students—at Duke? During the 2019-20 academic year, a team of library staff conducted qualitative research with Black students in order to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are the Duke Libraries viewed as an inclusive space by Black students?
2. To what extent is the university viewed as an inclusive space by Black students?
3. To what extent do students experience microaggressions or bias because of their race in the library, on campus, in Durham, or in North Carolina?
4. What changes can the Duke Libraries make to ensure Black students feel supported and included? How can the library improve spaces, services, and programs to ensure Black students feel supported and included?
5. What changes can the university make to ensure Black students feel supported and included? How can the university improve spaces, services, and programs to ensure Black students feel supported and included?

6. What campus and community services, spaces, and programs do Black students use and find helpful?
7. What library services, spaces, instruction sessions, and programs do Black students use and find helpful?
8. What campus and library services, spaces, and programs help Black students feel welcome or supported?

## METHODOLOGY

We began this work by reviewing research on university and academic libraries' support of Black students and found that while work has been done to understand the experiences of Black students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) and on college campuses, little has been done specific to their experience in academic libraries. We also reached out to key stakeholders from units supporting Black students to better understand what support and services existed at Duke for this population and if any research had been done at Duke to understand the Black student experience.<sup>1</sup>

Our study methodology included traditional focus groups and Photovoice sessions. Photovoice is a community-based, participatory research method to gather qualitative data that originated in global health research. Its creators describe it as a "process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique."<sup>2</sup> The team developed seven prompts that we provided to students two weeks before their scheduled discussion session. Each student took 5-10 photos in response to one or more of the seven prompts and submitted the photos with captions. This was followed by a 90-minute group discussion where the moderator projected the anonymized photos and captions for each prompt, and the students discussed each set of images and captions. See Appendices 1 and 2 for discussion group and Photovoice session scripts.

We recruited student participants by obtaining a random sample from the Duke Institutional Research Office and by posting messages to student group listservs and newsletters. See Appendix 3 for recruitment emails. Students were offered a \$10 gift card to participate in a focus group, and a \$25 gift card (undergraduates) or \$35 gift card (graduate students) to participate in the more time-intensive Photovoice sessions.

Our research and discussions with colleagues indicated that in order to have honest discussions without racial power imbalances, sessions should not include White people as moderators or note takers. We recruited Black graduate students as paid moderators by asking administrative assistants in the Sociology, Cultural Anthropology, and Psychology & Neuroscience departments to post a request to their graduate student listservs. The research team hired two graduate students. Both had experience leading discussion groups, and one had experience leading Photovoice sessions. A graduate student assistant employed by the library took notes at the sessions. While not Black, the graduate student assistant is a woman of color and a Duke student peer to study participants. Additionally, she is familiar with the library and so was able to answer library-specific questions and ask necessary follow-up questions to identify which library spaces or services students were discussing as needed. This was helpful both for the notes and for the moderators themselves, who did not have deep knowledge about Duke Libraries.

In fall 2019, we led five sessions with a total of 32 students, including one undergraduate Photovoice and one undergraduate discussion group and two graduate Photovoice and one graduate discussion group. Sessions were recorded with participant consent, and a research team member created full transcripts of the five recordings. Two parallel tracks of analysis were performed:

1. Graduate student moderator Pamela Zabala conducted an independent analysis of the transcripts and Photovoice submissions. Zabala wrote a report of findings<sup>3</sup> as they pertained to the team's eight research questions from a *non-library perspective*.
2. The research team independently coded the five transcripts and used the affinity mapping technique<sup>4</sup> to identify themes from all five sessions from a *library perspective*. Then, taking both the affinity mapping work and Zabala's report into account, the group developed and prioritized recommendations for Duke Libraries and developed a report of findings and recommendations.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, Duke Libraries conducted its biennial student satisfaction survey in early 2020, and 2,800 students responded.<sup>6</sup> The Libraries had access to respondent demographics, including race, and relevant survey findings were incorporated into the team's analysis of discussion group findings.

## FINDINGS

Findings include sections on what it is like to be Black at Duke, participants' experiences with systemic injustice in the curriculum, and how campus and library spaces and services help students feel supported.

### *What Does it Mean to be Black at Duke?*

“It’s like I have to prove something to somebody: I’m here for the same reason that you are.”

Students described the contradiction and contrast of seeing oneself almost universally absent—from the scholarship assigned in class and portraits on the walls, to the faces of faculty reflected from the front of class rooms—while simultaneously representing the entire race to others. This is the reality that many experience at Duke, an elite PWI.

Participants discussed being treated as invisible. One undergraduate male shared that even on campus “people usually avoid me with eye contact, crossing to the other side of the street.” It takes a toll on Black students not to see their backgrounds and experiences represented in the Duke faculty. Currently, Duke’s faculty is significantly less diverse than the study body. Many Black students know the exact number of Black faculty and administrators in their academic programs, and the numbers matter. At the same time, literature shows that Black students “perform better and reach higher educational outcomes if the faculty includes more role models and mentors of similar race.”<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, Black students are often unable to fade into a crowd and are forced to be perennially conscious of their race identity in a way that White students at Duke, at PWIs, and in the United States in general, are not. One graduate student said:

“I feel like I have to speak for everyone...Black people in America don’t have the privilege of individuality.”

White students and instructors sometimes treat Black students as monoliths, expecting their views and actions to exemplify those of all Black people. Students discussed pressure “to uphold a good image and to go the extra mile...to actively disprove stereotypes.”

The validity of Black students’ presence at Duke is challenged both by fellow students and by Durham community members. Black students are hyper-aware that most Black people on campus are staff, not students, and some discussed unease wondering if people mistake them for staff as well.

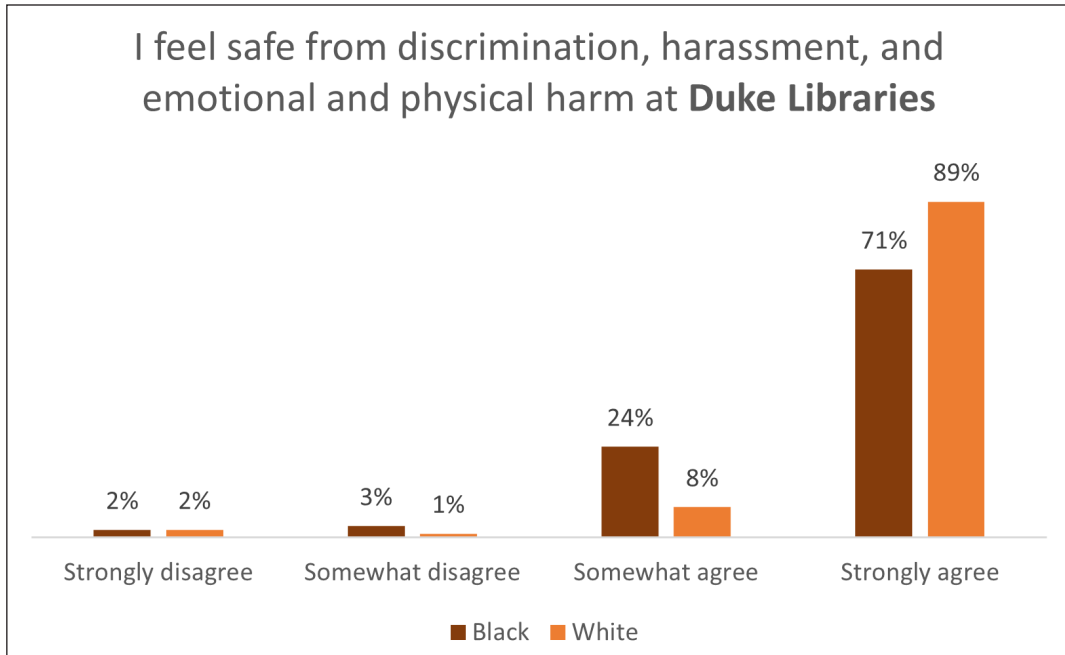
Many participants discussed how demoralizing it is when White people make the frequent assumption that they were admitted to Duke as part of an athletic program,<sup>8</sup> or tell them that they were accepted to Duke as part of a racial quota instead of on the same academic merits as other students.

“Sports are so intertwined with our identity. If I tell people I go to Duke they’re like ‘oh, so are you an athlete?’—there’s an assumption that I couldn’t get in here on my academic merit.”

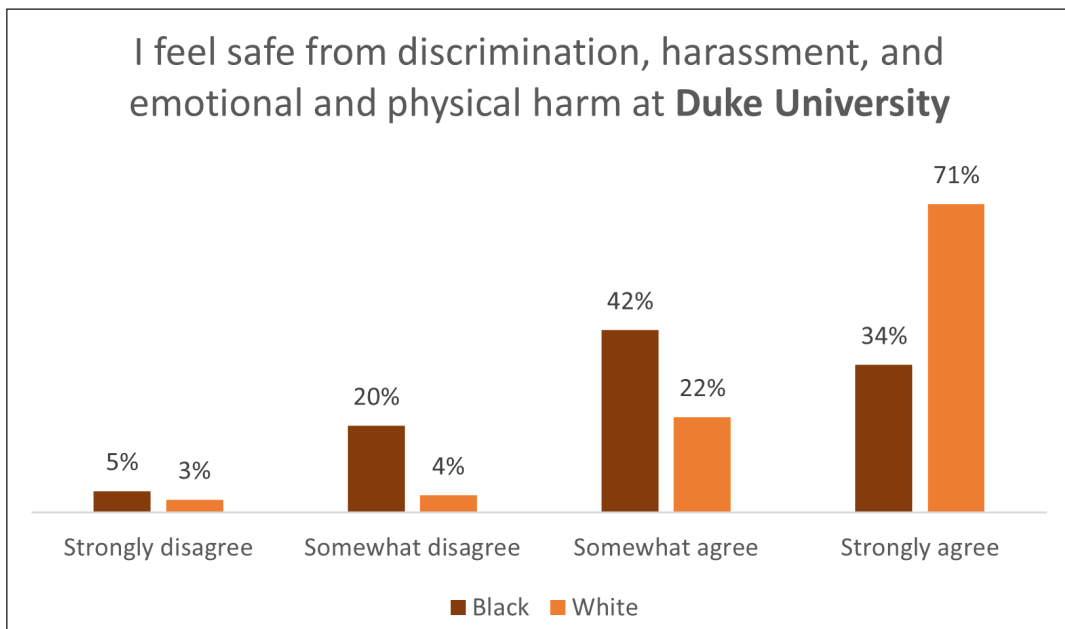
Participants acknowledge and appreciate the diversity of the Black student experience and wish others would do the same. Black students at Duke are rich and poor. They come from countries spanning the globe and from different religions and cultural backgrounds. While some are athletes, most are not.

There was a general feeling that Duke Libraries and Duke, while not actively hostile or racist, are complicit in their silence. Students do not see enough explicit signals supporting diversity and inclusion, efforts to limit White western European cultural dominance, or to educate elite White students about minority experiences.

The 2020 Duke Libraries student survey asked students whether they feel safe from discrimination, harassment, and emotional and physical harm at Duke Libraries and at Duke University. There are stark differences by race among the 2,600 students who responded. Black students do not feel as safe from discrimination, harassment, and emotional and physical harm as White students either on campus or in the library



**Figure 1.** 2020 DUL student satisfaction survey: “I feel safe” at the library



**Figure 2.** 2020 DUL student satisfaction survey: “I feel safe” at Duke University

Fewer (34%) of Black students “strongly agree” that they feel safe at Duke University, versus 71% of White students. A quarter of all Black students do not feel safe to some extent, versus only 7% of White students. More Black and White students feel safe in the Libraries than on campus in general, but fewer Black students “strongly agree” with the statement than White students—71% versus 89%. In the words of one Black survey respondent:

“The library is the one place at Duke where I actually feel safe. It’s intended to study, to learn, and to be a student, which is all I’m trying to do.”

Discussion group participants believe that if campus spaces want to make minoritized students feel welcome, they need more visible signs or statements about inclusion and diversity, particularly because the default in Duke spaces is overwhelming visible representations of White people and Western art and architecture.

Almost all participants reported experiencing a form of bias or microaggression on campus or in Durham. Microaggressions are pervasive and happen in living spaces, academic spaces, and social spaces. These may revolve around others' disbelief that they are academically gifted enough to be admitted to Duke or involve pervasive stereotypes about Black students and athletics on campus. Though participants reported a few negative experiences in the library, none reported experiencing bias or microaggressions because of their race.

Graduate students shared experiences of microaggression and explicit racism that they have encountered at Duke:

“In any White liberal space, I think of microaggressions. It's never blatant, there's never a confederate flag you can capture in a picture. It's a mood. It's an atmosphere.”

“A friend was walking from East to West campus. He was on the sidewalk. These guys in a truck were driving by, waving the confederate flag at him as he was walking to class. That's intimidation: ‘you're not supposed to be here.’”

## *Systemic Injustice Perpetuated through the Curriculum*

“We were absent in the scholarship. Not just black people—any people of color. And when it was there, it was highly problematized...Every time people of color are mentioned, it's in some kind of negative context. We're deficient in some sort of way.”

Academics at Duke are often a space where Black students do not see themselves highly represented or valued. From the arts and sciences to statistics and economics, participants report systemic bias in a variety of areas ranging from instructors' behavior to the scholarship assigned in class. One graduate student in a Photovoice session submitted a photo of documents studied in a seminar with the following caption:

“All of the scholarship studied in this seminar comes from dead white men. I feel unwelcome on campus when there is a lack of diversity in the scholarship presented in seminars.”

In addition to racial biases in scholarship assigned, participants discussed the behavior of faculty and instructors as it contributed to systemic injustice in the classroom:

“Particularly in statistics classes, almost all data that were racialized normalized Whites and problematized Blacks and other minorities, relatively. There was one assignment where we were supposed to look at and interpret the data, and White people were clearly worse off. The professor did gymnastics to interpret it in such a way where Black people would still be worse off. Come on! They couldn't even see a way for White people to ever be worse off. And this happens all the time. Whether it's a guest lecture or whatever...They just focus on the disparities, they interpret it very narrowly, and then there's no discussion of the origins of those disparities or any solutions to them.”

Black students often expect to face racial bias in their daily lives outside academia or from other students on campus. But faculty are both mentors and authority figures who represent the face of Duke to their students. Their silence can speak as loudly as their words in molding students' perceptions of the extent to which Duke, as well as academic fields more broadly, value them.

## How Spaces and Services Help Students Feel Supported On White and Western Dominance of Physical Spaces

Physical spaces communicate priorities, expectations, and cultural values both implicitly and explicitly. They do this via architecture, materials in the spaces such as art, signs, and decorations, and social groupings within spaces. There are parts of Duke that Black students find welcoming and inclusive, but overall, participants do not consider the physical spaces of campus to be as inclusive for Black students as they are for White students.

Students across discussion groups listed example after example of spaces at Duke—including a number of libraries—where art and architecture caused physical spaces to feel exclusionary. Duke’s campus and libraries are filled with photography, statues, and portraits depicting mostly White males. This theme was raised by both undergraduates and graduates as a way that campus spaces make Black students (and likely other groups) feel unwelcome and excluded:

“In the library at the [professional] school, there’s this room...A bunch of huge paintings of old White guys...It means something, right? Because there’s no other part of that library where you’ll see a big portrait painting of someone who isn’t a White male. It’s more White supremacy in itself: the absence of other people being represented in this school says a lot. If they wanted to do something about it they could. They could put in more paintings. There have been people of color who’ve been through Duke and have gone on to do great things.



**Figure 3.** Photograph of a reading room in the main campus library

An undergraduate submitted a photograph of the portraits in a library reading room that features ornate paintings of White men, looming large over study tables (Figure 3). The photograph was captioned, “concentrated white dominance.” While these portraits may go unnoticed for many White students, in the discussion, the student explained:

“When we walked in, I literally looked at my friend and told her how uncomfortable I felt.”

Another aspect of library spaces that students discussed was the visibility of collections in public spaces. One student submitted a photograph of row upon row of library bookshelves lining a busy thoroughway in the main campus library with the caption:

“Walking around lit[erature] dedicated to western European thought can be alienating. Sometimes an emphasis on monumental contributions from other places of the world would be more inspiring.”

Indeed, library staff have not previously considered where different classifications of books are shelved or attempted to balance the cultural relevance in areas that students must constantly walk by to reach the bathrooms, study areas, or other library services. A number of the discussion groups touched on a related topic, which is the lack of a library or a room within the main campus library dedicated to Black studies. Many students came from undergraduate schools that did have such spaces and were surprised to find them lacking at Duke, especially given the presence of the Nicholas Family Reading Room for International Studies and the East Asia Reading Room, which house reference collections for many non-English languages—though not all Asian. One of the more common suggestions across discussion groups was to create such a space within the main campus library, similar to the Nicholas Family Reading Room or the East Asia Reading Room. Such a space would display books and journals related to Black studies or Black history and feature art, photographs, or exhibits related to Black culture or the history of Black people at Duke or in Durham.

## Features of a Space Matter

The Duke Libraries’ 2020 student survey asked whether respondents enjoy working in a campus library more than other campus spaces. A third of White students “strongly agree” with this statement, versus one-fourth of Black students. Participants highlighted three features that greatly contribute to study spaces feeling welcoming and supportive, which are likely true for students from all backgrounds: natural light, green spaces and greenery, and vibrant colors (Figure 4).

“The [basement of the main campus library] just has such good energy. You come from the first floor, which is so dull and dead and, ‘Ah!’ Bright green walls. Glass, windows, booths. The TV display. It’s just really a nice feeling.”

In comparison, other areas of the library were seen as needing significant improvement. Participants suggesting modernizing the decor in older spaces and adding vibrant colors via paint, carpets, furniture and art. Students noted that the drab colors in study rooms and general open study areas exacerbate the sense of stress that already pervades the library.

Campus and library wayfinding came up in multiple discussion groups as an area that needs improvement and contributes to students feeling unwelcome and stressed. Duke’s policy to not have



**Figure 4.** Photovoice image submission of furniture in a campus student center

visible external building signage and to use the same architecture for nearly all buildings leads newcomers to feel excluded and lost. Participants were critical of the fact that the main campus library has no external signage and noted the need for better directional and informational signage inside the library.

### Affinity Spaces are Critical and Signal What Duke Values

Many Photovoice participants submitted photographs and captions about the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture and its programming and staff. For participants, the fact that Duke University funds and supports programming for such a large, beautiful space underscores Duke's commitment to Black students and Black culture. However, not everyone feels welcome on the campus as a whole. One student said they go to the Mary Lou to “escape the white gaze” of the broader campus. These spaces should not be seen as spaces one has to go to escape the general campus experience, but rather as spaces that contribute to their campus experience.

Graduate students talked about the robust support networks in their academic programs. Students reported feeling supported in many ways, from professors who learn students' names and Deans attending welcome lunches with new students, to orientation activities, peer and professor mentor programs, support for healthy work-life balances, and committees on diversity and inclusion.

Participants felt welcomed by events hosted solely for Black students, such as Black Convocation (Figure 5) and parties held by Black Greek organizations, as well as outreach from the Mary Lou Williams Center to all incoming Black students.

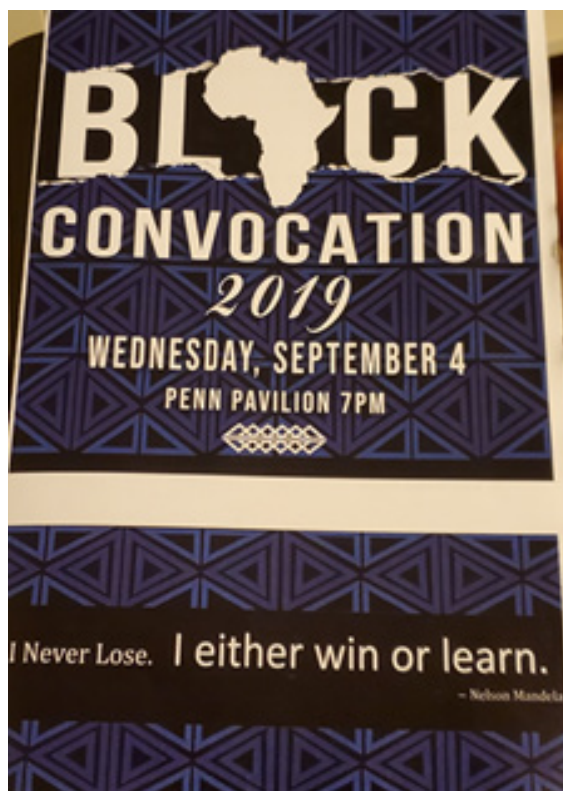
### Library Services Support Students

Participants praised numerous library services, including library materials and online resources; textbook lending; scanners, printers, 3D printers, and DVD players; library events and study breaks; orientation sessions; reservable study rooms; and Oasis Perkins.<sup>9</sup> Students are surprised by how many services the library offers and want more marketing and information about these services.

The library's textbook lending program<sup>10</sup> came up in every undergraduate discussion group. Students were enthusiastic about the program and the financial burden that it alleviates.

“I think [library] rental textbooks are really nice... Thinking, ‘oh no I have to buy this \$200 math book online—no, you can rent it from the library until you know whether you're even supposed to be in that math class. Knowing that I can get through the first part of the semester without having to worry about textbooks is big.”

According to results from the Duke Libraries' 2020 student survey, about one-fourth of all undergraduate students (regardless of race) said that textbook lending is important to them. At the same time, only 48.5% of both Black and White students said that the current program completely meets their needs, and 8% of those who said textbook lending is important to them reported being unaware of the library's textbook lending program.



**Figure 5.** Photovoice image submission of the program for Black convocation



## Person-To-Person Interactions Make a Difference

Interactions with other people can be critical contributors to whether students at Duke feel welcome and supported. Participants discussed positive interactions on campus and in the library, with library service desk staff, librarians assisting with research, friendly security staff, housekeeping staff, academic program office staff, Mary Lou Williams Center staff, and financial aid counselors. Black staff at Duke also provide important social support for students, whether assigned as mentors or simply lending a sympathetic ear:

“Since she’s a sister, we can just talk about anything. She looks out for me in a way that I know only a Black person would look out.”

While Duke is a PWI, the city of Durham is historically a famous hub of Black businesses and financial services. Students noted Durham as a community of belonging to some extent, and welcome interactions with the Black Durham residents working on campus:

“Something I do like about Duke is actively getting to engage with the people who work here, the Black people who are just from Durham. Like the guy who cleans my hall’s bathrooms... we always have prolonged conversations about life.”

Library security staff stand out as a group that can help students feel safe and supported with just a friendly word or wave (though it is important to note that security staff can also make Black students feel unwelcome):

“First semester sophomore year when I was [at the library] really late, there was this one security guard who I saw just going around and around, and each time he would wave. Then I was studying there just two nights ago, I just saw him again and he waved, and it just felt really good.”

Participants value library staff members’ friendliness and good customer service, as well as their subject expertise. However, discussions highlighted the fact that initial impressions and experiences are critical, and if students’ initial interactions are negative, they are likely not to come back. In particular, library staff must be mindful of the delicate balance between their roles as teachers and as service providers. While many library staff are trained to teach research skills, students often approach the service desk expecting staff to help them complete their task as quickly and efficiently as possible. Efforts to teach them how to complete the action by themselves instead of just assisting them can be interpreted as patronizing, a rebuke for having “bothered” staff, or poor customer service.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, discussion group participants and survey respondents have a positive view of Duke Libraries. They recommended improvements, especially for physical spaces, and noted the importance of marketing services such as textbook lending and library-sponsored relaxation events. Participants shared valuable insights that can help library staff understand what it means to be Black at Duke and in Durham, and ways that library staff can make spaces more welcoming and help ease the burden that Black students feel on a daily basis.

PWIs such as Duke were not originally intended for Black students. Despite efforts to transform the institution, Duke remains a historically White space, and Duke’s past continues to shape the culture of the campus. Students of color are immersed in curricula, histories, and campus cultures that are normatively White and exclusive of their presence here. While Duke and Duke Libraries cannot change the fact that these are historically White spaces, library staff can strive to ensure that all students’ voices are heard and aim to make library spaces, services, staff, and resources welcoming and inclusive to everyone.

Since we concluded this study and published our report of findings in April 2020, the research team has presented and discussed the study with colleagues in the library and across campus. Findings and follow-up

discussions became the basis for nearly 40 recommendations, and in fall 2020, the library formed another team to prioritize and implement recommendations.

We are holding ourselves accountable to do this important work, and we are keeping library colleagues and users well informed of the changes we are able to make as a result of what we learned through this study. We owe that to ourselves, our colleagues, and especially to the 32 Black undergraduate and graduate student participants and Black student survey respondents who entrusted us with their stories about what it means to be Black at a highly selective, predominately white institution in the South.

# APPENDIX 1: FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome, everyone, and thank you for being here. My name is [name], and I am [brief description of Duke affiliation and program/unit/work area]. Library staff want to be sure they are fully meeting the needs of particular groups of students at Duke. Last year, they talked with first generation college students, and this year they're learning more about the needs and experiences of Black students at Duke. They asked me to lead a discussion with you today.

I will moderate today's session, and Brenda will take notes and help watch the clock to make sure we stay on schedule. I have some questions to guide us through the discussion. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, and you don't have to answer every question. [Person's name] is taking notes and recording this session so we can flesh out anything they might miss. Nothing you say today will be connected to your name. There is a recording consent form in front of you. Please take a moment to review and sign it if you haven't done so already.

Here are a few ground rules that we have found helpful in keeping these discussions productive [review ground rules].

Okay, let's get started.

## Discussion Questions

Warm-up (5 min)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brief intro from moderator</li> <li>2. Brief intros from participants: Name and place you call home. End brief intros with more info from the moderator or note taker to model openness and vulnerability.</li> <li>3. POST-IT: Think about the people, services, or spaces you feel are most supportive and safe at Duke or in Durham. Take a moment to write these down, one idea per post-it. We'll be discussing these later but not posting them anywhere.</li> </ol>
Sense of belonging (15 min)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SCRATCH PAPER: What has made you feel welcome at Duke? Take a moment to write your thoughts on the blank paper in front of you; then we'll discuss as a group. [Discuss as a group.]</li> <li>2. Now, look back to the post-its that you wrote a few minutes ago. What makes the people, services, or spaces that you wrote on the post-its feel particularly safe and supportive for you?</li> <li>3. SCRATCH PAPER: What has made you feel unwelcome at Duke? Take a moment to write your thoughts on the blank paper in front of you; then we'll discuss as a group. [Discuss as a group.]</li> </ol>

<p>Campus as inclusive space (20 min)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Think about your experience as a Black student at Duke. To what extent does Duke University feel inclusive of Black students?</li> <li>2. SCRATCH PAPER: A microaggression is a “comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)” (<a href="#">definition from Merriam-Webster</a>). Have you experienced microaggressions or bias in your time at Duke? Take a moment to write your thoughts about microaggressions or bias at Duke on the blank paper in front of you; then we’ll discuss as a group. <i>[Note: Students might bring up experiences off campus. Moderator should encourage students to do this and clarify where students were (e.g., Durham, outside Durham, on campus) when they encountered microaggressions or bias.]</i> [Discuss as a group.]</li> <li>3. What do you do when you experience bias or microaggression?</li> <li>4. Time permitting: Tell us about your experience reporting bias or microaggression. What are your thoughts about the process, experience, or resolution? [Consider returning to this question at the end of the discussion, if needed.]</li> </ol>
<p>Library—experience (10 min)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. POST-IT: What words or feelings come to mind when you think about the libraries at Duke? Take a moment to write these down, one idea per post-it. These might come up in conversation, but we won’t be posting these anywhere.</li> <li>2. Have you used the libraries at Duke? Think about library study spaces, websites, research materials, visits from a librarian to your class, workshops, etc. Describe how you’ve use these during your time at Duke.</li> <li>3. If you have not used the library, why have you not used it?</li> <li>4. If you have used the library, what about the library works well for you? Again, think about all aspects of library spaces and programs.</li> <li>5. What about the library does not work well? Again, think broadly about the library.</li> </ol>
<p>Libraries as inclusive space (15 min) *High priority section!*</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To what extent does the library feel inclusive of Black students?</li> <li>2. SCRATCH PAPER: Have you experienced microaggressions or bias in the library? Describe your experience. Take a moment to write your thoughts on the blank paper in front of you; then we’ll discuss as a group.</li> <li>3. What did you do when you experienced bias or microaggression?</li> <li>4. Time permitting: Tell us about your experience reporting bias or microaggression. How satisfied were you with the process or experience?</li> <li>5. Based on your experience, how is the library supportive, welcoming, or inclusive of Black students?</li> <li>6. Based on your experience, how might the library be more supportive, welcoming, or inclusive of Black students?</li> </ol>
<p>Libraries—self-reflection (10 min) *Time permitting*</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are there things that you know now about the libraries at Duke that you wish you had known before you started at Duke?</li> <li>2. If so, what are those things?</li> <li>3. How did you come to know them?</li> </ol>

## CONCLUSION

Those are all the questions I have. I’ve really enjoyed talking with you this afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us. I’d be happy to stay after this session or meet with you later if you’d like to share anything else.

# APPENDIX 2: PHOTOVOICE SCRIPT

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome, everyone, and thank you for being here. My name is [name], and I am [brief description of Duke affiliation and program/unit/work area]. Library staff want to be sure they are fully meeting the needs of particular groups of students at Duke. Last year, they talked with first generation college students, and this year they're learning more about the needs and experiences of Black students at Duke. They asked me to lead a discussion with you today.

I will moderate today's session, and [person's name] will take notes and help watch the clock to make sure we stay on schedule. We will be using the seven photo prompts as a guide for this discussion. We'll be displaying photo submissions and captions anonymously, although it's fine for you to tell the group which pictures you took. It's fine to comment on submissions even if they are not your own. Feel free to discuss a theme even if you did not submit a photo for that prompt. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions, and you don't have to answer every question. It's also important that what we say in this room stays in this room. [Person's name] is taking notes and recording this session so we can flesh out anything thing they might miss. Nothing you say today will be connected to your name.

You'll see a recording consent form in front of you. Please take a moment to review and sign it if you haven't done so already.

Okay, now just a few ground rules that we have found helpful in keeping these discussions productive [review ground rules].

In front of you is a list of questions to consider as you review each image. These are the same questions you received when we scheduled this discussion session. You also have a Notes sheet you can use as we view and discuss the **20 or so** photos. We'll be collecting this Notes sheet at the end of the session but, again, we won't connect your names to any of the notes.

Let's start with introductions.

## Discussion Questions

Getting settled/introduction (above) and warm-up (10 min)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Brief intros from moderator and note taker: Name and place you call home</li> <li>2. Brief intros from participants: Name and place you call home</li> </ol> <p>End brief intros with more info from the moderator or note taker to model openness and vulnerability.</p>
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<p>What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong on campus? (8 min)</p>	<p>I'll start by displaying several photos/captions you took on this theme. As I click through these photos and captions, jot down any thoughts you have about them. We'll then discuss the topic. Remember that you can make comments or ask questions about any photo and discuss all of the photos, regardless of whether you took them.</p> <p>Questions to consider as we discuss each theme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What stands out from this set of images?</li> <li>• What do you find interesting about this set?</li> <li>• What other thoughts do you have about this theme, related to the images or not?</li> </ul> <p>[If no submissions for this theme]: We didn't get submissions for this theme, but we'd like to discuss it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeat prompt, "What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong on campus?"</li> </ul>
<p>What makes you feel unsafe or unwelcome on campus? (8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong in the Libraries? (8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>What makes you feel unsafe or unsupported in the Libraries? (8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>What microaggressions or bias do you experience because of your race in the Libraries, on campus, in Durham, or in North Carolina? (8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>What campus services, spaces, and programs do you use and find helpful? (8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>
<p>What library services (e.g., study spaces, research materials, visits from a librarian to your class, workshops, and other programs) do you use and find helpful? (8 min)</p>	<p>See above</p>

<p>Overflow, if needed (14 min)</p>	<p>Return to any prompts that students would like to discuss further OR use this extra time if students would like to continue discussing a prompt once you reach the 8-min limit.</p>
<p>General—self-reflection (10 min) *High priority section! Please make time for question 1. Question 2 is less critical.*</p>	<p>Now that we've discussed themes/photos...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What changes can the Libraries make to help Black students feel supported and included? How can the Libraries improve spaces, services, and programs?</li> <li>2. [As time permits] What changes can the University make to help Black students feel supported and included? How can the University improve spaces, services, and programs?</li> </ol>

## CONCLUSION

Those are all the questions I have. I've really enjoyed talking with you this morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to meet with us. If you have anything else you'd like to share, I have contact information for Joyce and Emily, Duke Libraries staff who are happy to talk with you.

# APPENDIX 3A-D: EMAILS TO RECRUIT AND INSTRUCT PARTICIPANTS

## 3A: DIRECT RECRUITMENT EMAILS SENT TO SAMPLE FROM INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

Dear [first name],

The Duke Libraries need your help. We want to understand the unique needs of all the students we serve, and this year we are speaking with Black students. Your input will help us improve library services, spaces, and resources to better meet your needs and help staff understand your experiences at Duke and with the Libraries. If you'd like to learn more about the kinds of conversations we are having with students, see this post about our discussions with 1G college students at Duke.

We have two different paid opportunities for you to share your thoughts with us.

1. **Photovoice focus group** (\$25 Amazon gift card, up to 8 spots available). With this option you will have two weeks to take 8-10 photos around Duke and/or Durham in response to various prompts (for example, "What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong on campus?"). You'll write captions for each photo and send them to us. You will then meet with a group of other graduate students who have done the same in a 1.5-hour session, look at all the photos (no one will know which photos you took unless you volunteer the info), and discuss the photos and your experiences at Duke.
2. **Focus groups** (\$10 Amazon gift card, up to 16 spots available). The second option is a more traditional focus group with no pre-work. You will meet for a moderated 1.5 discussion with a group of 5-8 other graduate students.

### [Sign up here](#)

If you are interested in participating, please RSVP by the end of the day, Wednesday, September 11th. Students will be accepted on a first-come-first-serve basis, with a waiting list.

Once we have a list of participants, we will schedule the discussions at a time that works for the majority of volunteers (likely before Fall Break for the traditional focus groups and during the weeks of Oct 7 and 14 for the Photovoice focus groups). All focus groups will last 90 minutes and include snacks. We understand that you might not be able to participate once the exact date and time are set, and that's OK—at this point, we just want to know who's interested! Depending on interest, we may not be able to accommodate everyone who volunteers due to a limited number of spots.

Questions or concerns? Don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for considering this request and helping Duke Libraries staff improve services to better meet your needs!

[Signature]

Your privacy is important to us:

We truly value the many unique perspectives that students bring to Duke, and it is important to the Libraries to understand all students' experiences, backgrounds, and information needs. We hope you will consider joining us. While the Libraries will summarize what we learn from the focus groups in a report that will be shared



internally with library staff as well as with the Office of Access & Outreach, your participation in the focus group will be confidential. Participants' names will not be included in any report, and your name will not be associated with anything you say. However, you will not be anonymous to your fellow focus group participants during the discussion. We will ask everyone present to please keep what is said confidential out of respect for each other.

Follow the link to opt out of future emails:  
[Click here to unsubscribe](#)

### 3B: MODERATOR RECRUITMENT EMAIL TO DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATORS

Administrators for the Sociology, Cultural Anthropology, and Psychology & Neuroscience departments were asked to forward this message to their student listservs.

Subject: Would you share an opportunity with your graduate student list?

Body: Dear [Title, last name],

The Duke Libraries will be conducting a series of focus groups with Black students at Duke at the end of September and beginning of October in order to better understand their experiences at Duke and with the Libraries, and learn about how the Libraries could improve spaces, services, and materials to better meet their needs. This is part of a series of conversations we are having with students from different populations at Duke (see our [report on conversations with first generation college students](#) from 2017 as an example). One set of focus groups will use the Photovoice method, and the others will be traditional focus groups. We are looking for two Duke graduate students to moderate the discussions, as student peers. We can pay them each \$50 per session moderated. We would like to recruit moderators from the Cultural Anthropology, Sociology, or Psychology and Neuroscience departments, thinking that students in these departments may have classwork, experience, or interest in qualitative research methods and focus groups. Additionally, we hope that participating in the project might be of interest to your students as something to add to their resumes. Staff from our Assessment & User Experience department will prepare the students to lead the focus groups, though we would not be in the room during the focus groups.

Would you all be willing to share information about this opportunity with your graduate students via email at the beginning of August? If so, I would write up an email that you could forward.

**An important note:** we are looking for moderators who identify as Black (international students are welcome). We were thinking that forwarding the email to your grad student listserv would be the best way to reach folks, but the opportunity would not be available to students who don't self-identify as Black.

Thank you so much for considering this request, and please let me know if you have any questions.

[Signature]

### 3C: MODERATOR RECRUITMENT EMAIL DIRECT TO STUDENTS

This email was sent directly to every graduate student in the Sociology, Cultural Anthropology, and Psychology & Neuroscience departments. Students' email addresses were found on department websites.

Subject: Earn \$100 and get great experience! Facilitate discussion groups with Black students at Duke

Body: Duke University Libraries staff are looking for two graduate students to moderate discussion groups with

Black students in late September and early October. Library staff want to better understand the Black students' experiences at Duke and with the campus libraries and learn how library staff could improve spaces, services, and materials to more fully meet Black students' needs.

This is part of a series of conversations we are having with students from different populations at Duke. You can see our [report on conversations with first generation college students](#) from 2017 as an example. Discussion groups with first generation college students led to additional funding and support for important programs like textbook lending and summer orientation sessions. We hope that focus groups with Black students will similarly provide opportunities for the Libraries to understand students' experiences and better meet students' needs. Two of our fall group discussions will use the [Photovoice method](#), and four will be more traditional focus groups. Discussion group facilitators will be paid \$150 (\$50 per discussion session), and have a very interesting project to add to their CV. While prior experience with or interest in qualitative research methods/focus groups is a bonus, staff from the Libraries' Assessment & User Experience department will prepare and support the students who moderate the discussions.

**Required:** Moderators must self-identify as Black (international students are welcome). Moderators must be available to lead a total of three 60 to 90-minute discussions during the weeks of Sept 23, Sept 30, Oct 3, or Oct 14 (exact days/times to be determined based on the availability of participants and moderators, but all discussions will be on weekdays or weekday evenings). We're looking for moderators with interest in qualitative user research methods, who will additionally be able to meet with librarians at Perkins Library for one hour in August or September to learn about the study and receive training and a few explanatory readings.

**Preferred:** Experience with qualitative user research methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups, ethnography), or coursework related to qualitative user research methods.

Please contact Joyce Chapman, Assessment Analyst & Consultant at Duke Libraries ([joyce.chapman@duke.edu](mailto:joyce.chapman@duke.edu)) with a short statement of interest no later than August 9th if you'd like to be a part of this project. Feel free to reach out with questions as well!

Thank you,  
[signature]

### 3D: INSTRUCTIONS FOR PHOTOVOICE PARTICIPANTS

Dear X,

Thank you so much for volunteering to talk to the Libraries about your experiences as Black grad students at Duke. I know you have very busy schedules and we really appreciate you taking time to help the Libraries better understand the experiences of Black students and how we might better meet your needs. I will send you a calendar invite shortly.

Below are the instructions for the Photovoice prework.

#### *Instructions*

- Take 8-10 photos around Duke and/or Durham in response to the seven prompts below.
  - o You do not need to take a photo for each prompt (though you can!). You can take multiple photos for a single prompt, and you can skip some prompts. You can also discuss things that you didn't take photos of during the conversation.
  - o Don't worry about taking "great" photos—anything large or small that represents something to you is a good subject

- Write a caption for each photo (the caption should help others who are viewing the photo understand what it is and what it represents)
- Email your photos and captions to me **by noon on Monday, October Xth**. You can just put your captions as text in the email and photos as attachments.
- Name your photos with numbers that correspond to your caption (“photo1, photo2” and a list of captions labeled “1, 2, ...”). Mostly I just need to know which captions go with which photos.
- In our discussion, the group will look at all the photos and captions together, but anonymously. If you do not want people to know which photos you took, they will not know. You are also welcome to talk about your photos in the session and say which one you took.
- Everything said in our group discussion or included in your captions/photos is confidential.

## Photo Prompts

1. What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong on campus?
2. What makes you feel unsafe or unwelcome on campus?
3. What makes you feel supported, safe, or like you belong in the Libraries?
4. What makes you feel unsafe or unsupported in the Libraries?
5. What microaggressions or bias do you experience because of your race in the Libraries, on campus, in Durham, or in North Carolina?
6. What campus services, spaces, and programs do you use and find helpful?
7. What library services (e.g., study spaces, research materials, visits from a librarian to your class, workshops, and other programs) do you use and find helpful?

We will have the Amazon gift cards for you at the discussion. If you do not want a gift card or have another issue with it, please let me know individually beforehand.

Thank you again! Please email me with any questions about these instructions.

[signature]

## NOTES

1. According to the Duke University Class of 2023 Profile, the incoming 2019-20 undergraduate class was 12% Black, 45% White, and 29% Asian. See <https://admissions.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Duke-2023-Class-Profile.pdf>.
2. Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris, “Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment.” *Health Education and Behavior*, no. 24 (June 1997): 369-387.
3. See “[Black Students at Duke: Qualitative Analysis of Focus Group Data](https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/handle/10161/20251),” by Pamela Zabala, Ph.D. Student, Duke Department of Sociology, December 2019, <https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/handle/10161/20251>.
4. We based our affinity mapping methods on the process detailed in <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/affinity-diagram/>.
5. See “[Understanding the Experiences and Needs of Black Students at Duke](https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/handle/10161/20753),” by Joyce Chapman, Emily Daly, Anastasia Forte, Ira King, Brenda W. Yang, and Pamela Zabala, Duke University Libraries, April 2020, <https://dukespace.lib.duke.edu/dspace/handle/10161/20753>.
6. Aggregate survey findings are available at <https://library.duke.edu/about/2020-student-survey>.
7. Nan Jokerst, Trina Jones, Carla Brady, Grainne Fitzsimons, Kerry Haynie, Emily Klein, Joshua Socolar, “[Report to the Academic Council Task Force on Diversity](https://library.duke.edu/about/2020-student-survey).” Duke University, May 2015.
8. None of our discussion group participants were on Duke sports teams.
9. “Oasis Perkins,” Duke University Libraries, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://library.duke.edu/using/oasis-perkins>.
10. “Top Textbooks,” Duke University Libraries, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://library.duke.edu/course-support/course-reserves/textbooks/about>.