

## Student Perceptions of the Faculty Response During the Civil Unrest in Ferguson, Missouri

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Crisis events are historic in the lives of higher education institutions, and they may elevate the role of faculty to leaders, counselors, and supporters of their students. The civil unrest in Ferguson, Missouri during the 2014-2015 school year impacted Saint Louis University students as the Occupy SLU movement witnessed demonstrations surrounding the university's central clock tower. In this qualitative interview-based study, 19 Saint Louis University students were interviewed regarding their perceptions of how faculty addressed the events in the classroom. Six themes emerged: active faculty participation, passive faculty participation, course relevance, altered academic experience, business as usual, and deference for faculty position. These findings serve to capture student perceptions during a historic period of time and may inform and support faculty facing crisis events in the future. This study concludes with considerations for faculty regarding their role in the classroom, the relevance of their course content to the crisis event, and the potential impact on student life.

### Background

#### Historic Crises On-Campus and Off-Campus

The history of American colleges and universities has been marked, in part, by the crises that have occurred both on campus and in the surrounding community. The Society for College and University Planning identifies crises and major disasters as one of the most significant events in the life of an institution (2007). Historic on-campus crises in the past several decades have included the Kent State Massacre in 1970, the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007, and the Northern Illinois University shooting during that same year (Hauser & O'Conner, 2007; Kifner, 1970; Saulny & Davey, 2008). Off-campus events have impacted colleges and universities, as well, such as the effect of Hurricane Katrina on institutions in New Orleans, Louisiana, or the terrorist attack of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in 2001 (Schmemmann, 2001; Treaster & Zernike, 2005). As these crises manifest, students look toward various levels of leadership for cues to better able them to react and respond in a crisis situation. Though students do look toward institutional leaders, their contact with higher level administration is often limited, leaving them in need for more intimate guidance. As such, the role of faculty members as leaders, counselors, or supporters is often heightened.

#### Faculty Response during Crises

Support for higher education institutions during a crisis has primarily been directed towards senior leadership and student affairs personnel (Birchard, 2009; Calhoun, 2007; Lipka, 2007; Society for College and University Planning, 2007). However, resources have recently been published to support faculty when

addressing a crisis in the classroom (American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, 2012; Wildman, 2008). For instance, the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center at Northern Illinois University (2015) published a list of strategies for faculty to use in the classroom, such as taking time to hold a class discussion, inviting a professional counselor to talk to the class, or making accommodations for students as needed. Similarly, the Center for Teaching at Vanderbilt University published teaching tools and strategies for faculty to use during a crisis, such as taking a moment of silence, assigning relevant activities, and connecting students with on-campus resources (Chick, 2013).

Research on the faculty response to crises has focused on how instructors have addressed events in the classroom. Edwards (2009) identified a lack of crisis management preparedness for faculty, noting instructors' desire for more training to address their students' needs. Similarly, Asmussen and Creswell (1995) identified a lack of faculty involvement following an on-campus crisis, theoretically due to a lack of concern or feelings of unpreparedness. Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, DiPietro (2003) found that 10.5% of faculty did not address the crisis at all, while the remaining 89.5% did so in a variety of ways: 72% excused students from assignments or offered extensions; 55% held a brief class discussion; 36% incorporated the events into the curriculum.

Only one study to date has addressed student perceptions of how their instructors handled a crisis. In a study of over 400 students, Huston and DiPietro (2007) found that most students felt it helpful when faculty addressed the crisis, while others reported frustration, disappointment, and apathy when instructors did not address it at all. Students reported

a negative reaction when instructors acknowledged the crisis that had occurred, yet insisted the course go on uninterrupted.

### **Civil Unrest in Ferguson, Missouri**

The civil unrest that occurred off-campus is one example of how an event can affect the climate of colleges and universities. Beginning in August of 2014, when Michael Brown was shot and killed by Officer Darren Wilson of the Ferguson police department, the greater St. Louis area witnessed months of civil unrest, military deployments, and international media attention. Governor Jay Nixon twice declared a state of emergency, one just after the shooting in August and one closer to the release of the grand jury decision in November of 2014 (Nixon, 2014a; Nixon, 2014b).

Despite the increased presence of law enforcement and the deployment of the National Guard, unrest throughout the greater St. Louis area continued to escalate after the initial shooting of Michael Brown and throughout the release of the grand jury indictment of Officer Darren Wilson. The St. Louis area witnessed ongoing protests, both peaceful and violent, as well as riots and vandalism (Bogan et al., 2014).

Local colleges and universities were looked to for guidance and leadership during this sensitive time; many executive officers at those institutions sent messages to their constituents, though those messages varied in content and tone (Lucas, Linsenmeyer & O'Brien, 2016). Many students took part in on-campus protests throughout the greater St. Louis area, which sparked a larger social conversation and mass protests throughout the country (Davey & Blinder, 2014; Navarre, 2014; Srinivasan & Wishinrad, 2014). The first on-campus demonstration was held at Saint Louis University with the Occupy SLU movement.

### **Demonstrations at Saint Louis University**

Though the Saint Louis University campus is located 12 miles away from the location of the Michael Brown shooting, prolonged demonstrations occurred on the university's main campus. Known as Occupy SLU, the demonstration lasted six days and included over 1,000 people, both students and nonstudents, that assembled at the university's clock tower. The demonstrations were abrasive at times, yet peaceful throughout (Addo, 2014). Classes were not officially cancelled, though faculty were given the latitude to cancel or adjust their courses as they saw fit (Lucas et al., 2016).

The protests ended on October 18, 2014 with the signing of the Clock Tower Accords, a 13-point agreement committing the university to a formal program of short- and long-term initiatives (Pestello, 2015). Saint Louis University President Fred Pestello

(2015) described the university's commitment to "retain and attract more students and faculty of color, to promote equal opportunity, and to advance focused economic development in disadvantaged neighborhoods" (Pestello, 2015).

Student reactions to Occupy SLU, as well as their perceptions of how faculty handled the events in the classroom, has yet to be captured thoroughly and objectively. The St. Louis Dispatch has documented a wide span of divided reactions from various constituents, including students, faculty, and parents (Addo, 2014). However, there is a clear need to thoroughly and objectively capture the experience of Saint Louis University students that witnessed this historic time on the university's campus.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to investigate student perceptions of how faculty addressed the crisis in Ferguson and the Occupy SLU movement during the 2014-2015 academic year.

### **Method**

This study utilized a qualitative interview-based design to investigate student perceptions of how faculty addressed the crisis in Ferguson during the 2014-2015 academic year (Creswell, 2014). Participants were recruited from the Saint Louis University student body via departmental emails, flyers, and word of mouth. The Saint Louis University Institution Review Board approved this study.

Data collection involved a brief 11-question survey, followed by an in-depth, semi-structured interview. The survey was administered online via Qualtrics (2016) to the Saint Louis University student body to collect basic demographic information regarding gender, ethnicity, full-time or part-time status, and classification as an undergraduate, graduate, or professional student. The survey included an opt-in/opt-out question which asked the participant to continue with a follow-up interview.

The interviews were conducted by the research team between March and April of 2016 and lasted between 30 to 90 minutes each. A semi-structured research guide was used to gather student perceptions of the campus, their classroom, and communication. More specifically, the interview question read, "How did your classroom instructors address the events that were happening on- or off- campus?" This question was followed by, "How did your instructors' reactions make you feel?"

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed to a Microsoft Word document, and analyzed using the constant comparative method, an inductive method

used to develop themes by repeatedly comparing incidents within the same set of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

### Results

A total of 35 participants completed the initial survey. Of these, 59% opted in to complete the semi-structured interview while the remaining opted out or did not complete the survey in full. Of those respondents ( $n=22$ ), three participants opted in to the interview but were unable to schedule adequate time to complete the interview process. Thus, the final population of respondents was 19. The population ( $n=19$ ) consisted of students from multiple institutions, although 95% of the respondents identified as attending Saint Louis University during the unrest in 2014 and 2015. 10% of the respondents, at the time of the interviews, had graduated from the university or were attending a different institution in 2015/2016. Student status included 10% part time and 90% full time, and 63% undergraduate students and 32% graduate. In terms of gender, 63% of the respondents identified as female, and 36% identified as male. The racial and ethnic breakdown of the study is reflective of the population of the university (Saint Louis University, 2016) with 73% of the respondents identifying as white or Caucasian, 9% as African American, 9% as Asian, 5% self-identified as Hispanic, and 5% choosing not to disclose the information. Respondents were asked to identify their socioeconomic status as being low (18%), medium (68%), or high (9%), and 5% chose not to indicate their SES. Although not a question within our survey, 14% of the respondents self-identified as active military or having a military veteran status.

Six major themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews; see Table 1. The first two themes capture the different ways that students perceived the faculty response in the classroom and are described as active faculty participation versus passive faculty participation. The third theme, course relevance, emerged in response to the clear distinction between the types of courses where faculty did or did not address the events. The next two themes emerged in response to how students' classroom experiences were affected, and they are described as an altered academic experience versus business as usual. The fifth theme, deference for faculty position, captured the different ways in which students perceived the knowledge and viewpoints of their professors. Each theme is presented in the following sections, including subthemes and illustrative quotes.

#### Active Faculty Participation

Many faculty took an active role in addressing the civil unrest occurring at Saint Louis University and in

the surrounding community. Active participation was characterized by the use or integration of events into the academic setting. The two strongest subthemes that emerged to characterize active participation were shaping lessons around the events and leading a class discussion. Among the participants in this study, 42% recalled ways in which their professors shaped the lesson content around the events in Ferguson. This was especially common among the humanities and social sciences. One student in an inter-professional healthcare class described her experience: "They would be talking about Medicare, Medicaid, or like—the health care systems, and they would be like—look at the area we live in, look what's happening right now, um, and bring it up as an example." Another student in a public health class described her experience: "If we talk about an example of policies that affect people's health, we talk about north city. It was always a part of the conversation and it became even more of the conversation."

After integrating current events into the lesson, leading a class discussion was the second strongest subtheme that emerged under active faculty participation. Among the participants in this study, 32% recalled their professors leading a class discussion about the events on campus and in Ferguson. Those that recalled participating in class discussions reported generally positive or neutral feelings towards that part of their experience. One student reported:

I didn't feel like it was being brushed off. I felt like, let's talk about this. What are you guys feeling? What do you guys think? I remember having some very healthy conversations during that time. I think the faculty that I was interacting with did a good job facilitating that, but then again we are in the school of public health—it can be very different than other schools on campus.

In contrast to hosting a discussion in class, 11% of participants recalled their professors holding forums for discussion after class; one participant in a history class theorized that this was due to the fact that they had a lot of material to cover. Five percent of participants reported that their professor set up an open forum discussion for students outside of class and that the forums continued on a weekly basis for at least two months.

The final subtheme that emerged under active participation was faculty engagement with the protests. Of those interviewed, 16% recalled that their professors were actively engaged in the events and shared their experiences with their students in the classroom. In response to the question, "What sticks out most in your mind about the campus during that time?," one participant answered:

Table 1  
*Emergent Themes and Subthemes of The Faculty Response to Ferguson.*

Theme	Subtheme
Active Faculty Participation	42% Shaped lessons around events 32% Hosted class discussion 16% Engaged with protests themselves 5% Set up open forums outside class 11% Made themselves available for discussion after class
Passive Faculty Participation	58% Made logistical accommodations 42% Offered a safety warning
Course Relevance	<i>Addressed:</i> Theater, sociology, race and ethnicity, cultural diversity, social studies, English, public health, theology, ethics <i>Not Addressed:</i> Physics, mathematics, engineering, law, ethics
Altered Academic Experience	16% Distracted during class 5% Distracted while studying 5% Course content seem more real 5% Altered perception of classmates
Business as Usual	79% Classes not affected 11% Enjoyed not having to talk about it 16% Upset when events not addressed
Deference for Faculty Position	32% Faculty were neutral 16% Faculty held valuable viewpoints 16% Discussion with faculty was the most memorable part 16% Faculty were unaware of events 5% Faculty were shocked 5% Faculty were unified 5% Faculty were directed by the president/administration

I believe just the engagement of the professors without outside resources—just really got to see them outside of how we see them all the time and them bringing the information back to us. My professors and the professionals really stood out at that time.

The theme of active faculty participation was characterized by shaping lessons around the events, hosting discussions during or outside of class, and engaging with the protests. This theme is contrasted with passive faculty participation, which is described in the following section.

### Passive Faculty Participation

Many faculty did not take an active role, but they did participate passively by addressing the events for administrative purposes. The two subthemes that emerged under passive faculty participation were the offering of a safety warning to students and logistical

accommodations. Of the students interviewed, 42% reported that their professors offered a safety warning, which was generally appreciated by students. One student recalled, “Receiving the message from my instructor, I felt relieved that she said it was OK if we felt unsafe because it was good to have a faculty member validate that I felt unsafe...”

Some participants recalled their professors’ safety warning in classes where they were required to leave campus and go out into the community. One student in a community nutrition class recalled having to go to the university’s Health Resource Center “across Delmar,” a street that is often referenced as the Delmar Divide between two starkly different St. Louis neighborhoods in terms of racial makeup and socioeconomic status (Harlan, 2014). This student hypothesized that her professor gave students a safety warning given the requirement of the class to visit the Health Resource Center and its location within the city.

Other students recalled their professors making logistical accommodations to class. Of those

interviewed, 58% identified various ways in which faculty made adjustments to their courses. Examples of logistical accommodations included cancelling class, moving to a different room, or moving the date of an exam. One student recalled an encounter with a protestor that referred to her using a religious pejorative while she was walking past the clock tower on her way to an exam. She recalled:

I went up to my professor that I had the exam when I had my encounter. I said I need to go make an incident report, because I was just walking to your exam, and this happened. And he was very understanding. He allowed me to go take care of that and then come take the exam.

In contrast with active faculty participation, passive participation was characterized by administrative changes or announcements within a course. Only two subthemes emerged under passive faculty participation, safety warnings and logistical accommodations, though a high percentage of students recalled instances of each.

### Course Relevance

Closely tied to the themes of active and passive faculty participation was that of course relevance. This theme emerged as there was a clear distinction between the types of courses where faculty did or did not address the events. Courses in which the professors did address the events actively were primarily within the humanities or social sciences; course subjects included sociology, race and ethnicity, cultural diversity, social studies, English, public health, theology, and inter-professional health care. Courses in which the professors addressed events passively or not at all were primarily within mathematics or sciences; course subjects included physics, mathematics, and engineering.

Students expressed strong feelings towards the appropriateness of class discussions given their relevance within the course subject. For instance, one student recalled, "It [a class] was called Race and Ethnicity or something like that. Obviously it was very germane to our class topic." In contrast, another student recalled, "I'm in the sciences and most of my classes, even the humanities, dealt with science-related matters, so social justice and race relations didn't really have a place in it, to be frank." At the same time, students recalled classes where the subject wasn't addressed but felt that it should have been. One participant reported, "I was in an ethics class, which could have been a good platform to be addressed."

Thus, course relevance was a significant factor in whether or not faculty actively addressed the events, as well as how students perceived the appropriateness of class discussions. There was a fairly clear distinction

between the humanities and social sciences versus mathematics and science. However, certain outliers, such as an ethics course, were perceived as appropriate platforms where discussions did not necessarily occur.

### Altered Academic Experience

Many participants described ways in which their academic experience was affected by the events on campus and in the community. The theme of altered academic experience emerged from these recollections and was characterized by distraction during class, distraction from studying, the course content seeming more applicable toward everyday situations, and an altered perception of classmates.

Of those that participated in this study, 16% of students recalled being distracted from class. Students reported being distracted in two ways, either due to the fact that they could hear the protests going on outside their classrooms, or due to the fact that they knew the protests were going on and were constantly thinking about them. One student described her experience, noting, "It was difficult to focus on anything because you knew that was going on outside. And you could hear them outside. Even when you are in your exams they were very loud." Similarly, 5% of participants reported distractions while studying. One student described changing study locations away from the library (which is close in physical proximity to the clock tower) due to student organizations that were protesting in designated quiet areas of the library.

Some students described how their academic experience was affected in the classroom, either as the course content seemed more applicable toward everyday situations or the relationships among students shifted. Of those interviewed, 5% described the course content as becoming more vivid and applicable to real life. A student described her experience: "I think this gave an opportunity, um, to like, take what you're learning in the classroom and apply it to real life. And get out there and see what cultural incompetence looks like..." Another student described how her perception of her classmates shifted after seeing their responses to the situation. She explained, "...[I]t gave a lot of insight to people that I thought I knew."

Many students felt their academic experiences were affected second to the events on campus and in the community, both in positive and negative ways. This theme contrasted with those who felt their learning was not affected in any way. The following theme, business as usual, captures the latter.

### Business as Usual

The theme of business as usual emerged from the majority of students that felt their academic experience

was not affected. Subthemes that emerged were both negative and positive reactions towards courses in which faculty did not address the events at length.

Of those interviewed, 79% felt their classroom experience was not affected. Students were generally positive towards the fact that their courses continued unchanged. One student reported, "I think it was professional of them to continue and not allow the unrest to affect education and affect the degree I was pursuing." Eleven percent of students described a feeling of comfort in being able to continue on with college life. For instance, a student in the Parks College of Engineering described:

I was happy with how the instructors handled it. I was happy with how the Parks dean handled it. They mentioned it, they gave safety advice, but they kept with the schooling. That was nice because it gave us something to fall back on.

In contrast, 16% of participants were upset when the events were not addressed at all. The students that reported distress in this manner recounted experiences in which they were required to leave campus and engage in the community as a course requirement. One student was required to participate an event at a farmer's market in Ferguson. She recalled, "The fact that it wasn't addressed and felt mute made me feel really uncomfortable, and um, kind of irritated." Another student was required to visit the university's Health Resource Center, located in a predominantly black neighborhood. She described an internal struggle of being a white person holding authority and trying to help individuals in the black community. She recalled, "If anything, I was very aware of my own race and not knowing how an interaction was going to go or not."

Most of the students that participated in this study felt their academic experience was business as usual, despite the tensions on and off campus. While some felt glad and even relieved that their courses weren't affected, others were upset that the events were not addressed, especially those required to engage in the community as a course requirement.

### **Deference for Faulty Position**

The theme of deference for faculty position emerged from students' perceptions of their professors. Subthemes that emerged included both perceived facts regarding what faculty knew about the events and students' ethical judgments regarding their professors' positions. Students expressed largely positive feelings and respect towards their professors' viewpoints and leadership.

The strongest subtheme that emerged under deference for faculty position was that faculty held neutral viewpoints in the classroom. Of those

interviewed, 32% recalled their professors as being neutral on the subject, a position that was largely appreciated among participants. One student recalled, "They [the professors] didn't express their opinions. They wanted to know what we thought and how we felt." Another student discussed the faculty member from the University of Missouri at Columbia that was fired in 2016 and sympathized for the difficulty of the situation; she explained, "You can't really step out of the 'I'm a teacher in this subject and I need to be doing this and doing more.'" None of the participants interviewed expressed any negative feelings towards faculty that held neutral viewpoints.

Some participants expressed notable esteem for their professors' viewpoints. Of those interviewed, 16% described how their professors held valuable viewpoints, either due to their involvement in the community or to nature of their professions. For instance, one participant described how one of her professors lived in Ferguson and would talk openly with her students about her experiences. The student recalled, "She would talk about the things the community was doing and not showing on the news every night: how they were rebuilding and how they were working towards other things." In reference to a psychology professor, one student described, "I mean, he's a psychology guy—he relates it to everything. Very smart individual, so he sort of related all of his knowledge to the incident." In fact, in response to an interview question about what stuck out most in respondents' minds about the events in Ferguson during the 2014-2015 school year, 16% stated that discussion with their professors was the most memorable part. These students' recollections of class events were largely positive in nature.

Lastly, some students recalled perceived facts about what their professors knew or how they were being ordered to behave. Sixteen percent of students stated they believed faculty were aware of the events, while 5% believed faculty were shocked. One student noted, "I saw a few instructors walk through the clock tower while it was happening, and they were just shocked: you could see it on their faces. They just didn't know how bad it was." Other minor subthemes that emerged were that faculty were being directed by the president and administration and that the faculty and staff were unified.

Deference for faculty position was characterized by respect for professors' neutrality, their activity within the community, or their relevant expertise in certain fields. Students also perceived certain facts about what their professors knew of the events or were being told to do by the university's administration. Whether or not those professed facts were true or not, these findings captured what students believed or assumed to be true during that time.

## Discussion

### Comparison to Previous Research

The findings of this study confirms prior research wherein some faculty members did not address the crisis at all, though others did so in a variety of ways. Mirroring DiPietro's findings on the faculty response following 9/11, the primary ways in which faculty actively addressed the events were by hosting class discussions and incorporating the events into the curriculum. One of the primary ways faculty passively addressed the events in both this study and DiPietro's was by offering logical accommodations; in this study, accommodations included cancelling class, moving to a different room, or moving the date of an exam, whereas DiPietro reported the most common examples of offering extensions or excusing students from exams. Also, offering a safety warning was a strong subtheme of passive faculty participation in this study, which did not appear in previous research findings.

These deviations were likely due to the nature of the crisis event to which faculty were responding. Whereas 9/11 was an isolated series of events that occurred within a span of less than two hours, the events in Ferguson and surrounding St. Louis city spanned several months. Also, the proximity of the events to faculty and students differed greatly. Though the 9/11 attacks threatened Americans' sense of national security, the terrorist attacks were isolated to distinct areas of specific cities. In contrast, the Occupy SLU movement was occurring in the center of the university's campus, often directly outside classrooms and student dorms. Thus, the strong subtheme that emerged from this study of faculty offering a safety warning is explained given the timeline and proximity of the events to both students and faculty.

In terms of student perceptions, this study confirms prior findings that students find it helpful when their professors address the events in the classroom, and they may feel frustrated or irritable when their professors do not address the events at all. Similar to prior studies, students may feel frustrated when their professors acknowledge the events but insist the course continue uninterrupted (Huston & DiPietro, 2007). However, a deviating finding of this study was that many students felt relieved when their classes were not affected. These students reported that classes provided a resulting sense of security, an opportunity to "go on with normal class life," something to "fall back on," and an appropriate setting to address the events. They also noted that other unrelated classes should not be affected.

### Considerations for Faculty

Several excellent resources have been published to support faculty in handling a crisis event in the classroom (American Academy of Experts in Traumatic

Stress, 2012; Chick, 2013; Northern Illinois University, 2015; Wildman, 2008). The findings of this study point towards additional considerations for to support, inform, and prepare faculty members. These recommendations are summarized below.

**Remember your position in the classroom.** Especially in times of crisis, students will look to you for guidance, leadership, and support. Whether you simply acknowledge students' concerns or reorient your curriculum around the events, you are in a powerful position to support your students' development. For some, conversations and interactions with you may be the most memorable part of their experience, especially if you teach in a subject matter germane to current events.

Also, given your position in your college of university, students may assume certain truths, such as your awareness of any developments, your alliance with other faculty or staff, or your submission to the leadership of your administration. At the same time, know that students appreciate you holding a neutral position and allowing students to develop their own opinions, especially during class discussions. Use discernment towards your expression of your own knowledge and opinions.

**Consider the relevance of your subject.** No matter your subject, most students will appreciate you at least acknowledging the events, offering a safety warning when appropriate, and making accommodations to your course as needed. When considering whether or not to actively address the events, such as holding a class discussion or adapting your curriculum, consider the relevance of your course subject to current events. Students will likely appreciate and even expect you to actively address the events when your subject matter is relevant, and yet they may prefer their courses continue uninterrupted when your subject matter is not. In fact, for those taking courses unrelated to current events, the opportunity to continue their education uninterrupted may provide a sense of stability.

**Consider how student life may be affected on and off campus.** Assess the impact of your course requirements on student life, such as whether they are required to transverse a part of campus that may make them feel unsafe or whether the dorms are in close proximity to events occurring on campus. If so, you may wish to make adjustments to your course, such as moving the location or opting for an online class meeting. Especially in the event that students have to leave campus to fulfill a requirement for your course, consider at minimum acknowledging the fact and listening to any student concerns. Though you are not accountable for all aspects of student life, you may wish to make adjustments to your course in ways that will support your students' needs. Students will appreciate that you understand they have full lives outside of your

classroom and that you are willing to make adjustments to your course to support them.

### Limitations & Future Research

The findings of this study are limited given that the population was representative of one university, the students self-selected to participate, and the interviews were conducted by two different research team members. Also, the nature of the civil unrest in Ferguson and the Occupy SLU movement is a different scope of crisis compared to other national events such as 9/11 or Hurricane Katrina. What's more, the findings depicted students' perceptions of how faculty reacted, but they do not reflect faculty members' own recollections of how they actually responded.

Further research is needed to investigate the student experience at other colleges and universities in the St. Louis area, the faculty perspective on how and why they addressed the events in Ferguson, and other aspects of the student experience related to Ferguson during the 2014-2015 academic year.

### Conclusion

Crisis events of some magnitude may be considered inevitable in the life of an institution. During these times, faculty can expect their students to look to them for leadership, support, and guidance. Especially when the course content is relevant to a crisis event, students will appreciate and even expect the events to be addressed in the classroom.

The findings of this study revealed both active and passive ways in which faculty addressed the civil unrest occurring on campus at Saint Louis University during the 2014-2015 school year. Given that the Occupy SLU movement was a historic time period in the life of Saint Louis University, these findings support that faculty responded in a variety of ways, largely in ways that fit their course content, addressed student needs, and supported student development. Though every institution and crisis event will require individualized planning, these findings may serve to inform and support faculty in how they may address crisis events in the future.

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