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ABSTRACT
This article describes a qualitative study of faculty members’ personal versus academic identities based on interviews with 31 self-identified social work faculty members of diverse groups. Participants were recruited with consideration of the following: gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or religion, to explore the impact of connecting vs. separating one’s academic and personal identity. Data were collected using direct scribing which allows the researcher and participant to collaborate in the interview process. Social work faculty reported their experiences with identity management as it relates to interactions with students, colleagues, and administrators alike, as well as how it influences their teaching and research. Implications for social work education and the academy are considered.

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There has been much discussion of the Grand Challenges in Social Work and how to operationalize them from an idea to a reality that can be accomplished. The Challenge, to “achieve equal opportunity and justice” (American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, 2013), is, indeed, a grand idea and fits well with the Council on Social Work Education’s (CSWE) directive to educate students to “engage diversity and difference in practice” (2015). One path to realizing this is through learning and teaching about the experiences of diverse populations and the subsequent successes and setbacks that coincide with diversity identification. In an effort to create more equal opportunities and promote social justice, we must first understand the lived experiences of those individuals who have not always been given equal chances. On a small scale, this issue can be examined by looking at faculty diversity within the ranks of social work education and whether the profession applies the practices that it teaches. In order for us to better educate students regarding the promotion of diversity in practice, we must first examine how we apply these mandates within our education system.

Every individual has multiple selves, and among them, a private and public self, and makes choices about how to connect those selves or keep them separate. This often occurs along a continuum, rather than a total connection or separation. For faculty whose self-definition includes an identity as a member of an historically underrepresented group, there is often a bigger question of the possible impact of being out as whatever that designation might be. While the notion of being out is most often associated with the LGBTQ community, any member of a diverse group may consider to what extent they make that diverse identity a part of the self that they present to the larger world. This may seem less optional for those whose diverse identity is more visible to others, but there may still be the possibility of making that identity a large part of the self one presents. Being out and incorporating that into one’s teaching and research can come at a high cost in the academy including the possibilities of demeaning or discriminatory behavior from students, exclusion by colleagues, or diminished capacity to be promoted (Bronstein & Farnsworth, 1998; Gentlewarrior, Martin-Jearld, Skok, & Sweetser, 2008; Kelly & McCann, 2015). However, none of these cited works explicitly examine the experiences of social work faculty. This article describes a qualitative study of faculty members’ personal versus academic identities.
(Berg, 2002; Levin, Walker, Haberler, & Jackson-Boothby, 2013) based on interviews with self-identified social work faculty members of diverse groups. Participants were recruited with consideration of the following: gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or religion, to explore the impact of connecting vs. separating one’s academic and personal identity.

A literature search was done using key terms of identity, diversity, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, cultural humility, and psychological acculturation and, in combination with the word faculty, of color, minority, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, race, and religion. The overarching questions that emerged from the literature, and became part of the interview questions for the participants, include how individual faculty members define themselves, and how they manage multiple identities (Anastas, 2010; Berry, 2005)? How these identities impact the way in which they present themselves in the classroom? Whether they see this as related to the authenticity of teaching and research? Self-definition may also impact how faculty attempt to create an environment of cultural sensitivity or competence.

The impact of identity may be seen at several levels across the individual’s ecosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), personally, by students, by colleagues, in social work programs, in a larger college or university setting, and in the community. Do faculty want to research or teach about the group with which they identify (Sadao, 2003)? Do they feel a desire or an obligation to represent a particular group of people (Medina & Luna, 2000)? When is it an advantage and when is it a burden (Wallace, 2002)? There has been some discussion in other disciplines/professions of whether being out has negative consequences on one’s perceived efficacy and credibility as an instructor (Boring, Ottoboni, & Stark, 2016; Russ, Simonds, & Hunt, 2002), an important topic for dialog in social work. What is the relationship of identity to the ability to present oneself as culturally competent by connecting these self-definitions in the academy, or the possible perceived results when someone does not connect them (Harold, Prock, & Groden, 2017)? How do these factors impact recruitment, retention, and mentoring of diverse faculty (Hughes, Horner, & Velez Ortiz, 2012; McAllister, Harold, Ahmedani, & Cramer, 2009)? And how do these questions impact faculty and institutional modeling for social work students?

**Feminist inquiry and identity in academia**

Feminist theory is a broad term that encompasses many frameworks, theoretical perspectives, and ideas that span multiple disciplines and shape how we approach research; social work feminist research is no different. Generally speaking, research with feminist underpinnings includes one or more of the following: (1) research for or with women or other marginalized or oppressed groups, (2) research that includes innovative data collection techniques that challenged conventional methods and encourages a collaborative approach, and (3) research that is concerned with social change and justice and promotes creating actionable change (Brisolara, 2014; Doucet & Mauthner, 2007). For this article, feminism provides a lens to understanding the impact of one’s individual or multiple self-defined identities for social work faculty in academia, as well as looking at systematic inequalities at the level of social structure (Mattsson, 2013; McCall, 2005).

When considering the significant challenges social workers are facing in a society that is unforgiving and at times uninterested in how diversity enriches our everyday lives, we are challenged to move beyond what has historically been accepted as feminist scholarship in social work to a more broad and intersectional approach to education, practice, and research that looks beyond the gender binary and takes into account other marginalized identities including race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation (Gringeri, Wahab, & Anderson-Nathe, 2010; Mehrotra, 2010; Wahab, Anderson-Nathe, & Gringeri, 2012). It is essential to consider how these socially constructed categories of identity interact with one another, and how possessing more than one marginalized status is influenced by social location and context as they are fluent and ever changing. In doing so, we avoid isolating or prioritizing one identity over another and approach identity from an intersectional lens that is driven by self-defined diversity (Hulk, 2015). Thus, we begin to shift the traditional feminist lens that examines differences
between gender to an approach that includes awareness of the intersections of marginalized identities and social justice, two issues that elicit complex narratives and subsequent action (McCall, 2005).

Using this lens, the questions in this study are intended to evoke powerful responses that examine the experiences of social work faculty who regularly experience environments where their intersecting identities are not always valued and may result in that faculty member having to engage in varying levels of identity management. For instance, one question included in this study and central to the entire topic of managing one’s identities relates to self-presentation and the movement that occurs between those identities. Sadao (2003) described the experience of faculty of color as existing in two separate cultures: “the ethnic culture in which he (or she) was born and raised, and the university culture where he (or she) found professional success” (p. 397). Further, she posited the concept of bicultural skill development as a way to describe how some faculty deal with the connection or separation of their identities. She concluded that faculty who develop bicultural skills, i.e., they are comfortable with both their personal and academic identities, possess the ability to code switch, a reference to a linguistic phenomenon where a person might go between two or more languages, to match what they perceive as the cultural norms of the university, “the capacity to understand and be part of two cultures” (p. 398). This capacity may make it possible for some faculty to connect their identities, without the need to compromise beliefs, values, or identity to function in the academic culture; this understanding is absent in the literature as it specifically relates to social work faculty who identify as a member of one or more diverse identity groups.

Also central to feminist research is an inquiry that drives the researcher and participant to understand the complex sociopolitical context that promotes inequity and unjust power differentials and in turn to strive to create environments that are equitable and just for all individuals, regardless of background, culture, or identity (Brisolara, 2014). Schools of Social Work should be prime examples of equitable environments as the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2017) dictates that all social workers, educators included, have a clear understanding of the importance and value of different cultures and identities and operate with mutual respect for those that are different than their own. Nevertheless, previous research has indicated that diverse faculty may not only receive less favorable evaluations from students but also experience discrimination within their departments and the larger university (Carr, Palepu, Szalacha, Caswell, & Inui, 2007; Russ et al., 2002) – both of which can result in the need to more closely manage one’s identity.

The current study

In an effort to better understand the issues surrounding identity, this article focuses on one of the key concepts asked about in the interviews and referred to above, code switching. Among other questions, including an invitation to reflect on their particular experiences, faculty who participated in the study presented here were asked the following: “There has been some work on how minority faculty have to ‘code switch’ and either translate their personal selves into academic selves, or hide one self in order to feel more secure. Are their parts of your identity that you choose not to bring into the academy? And if so … would you prefer to be able to bring your ‘whole self’ … and do you think there is anything the immediate or larger work place could do to make it easier for you to do so?” What follows is a description of the methods used to gather these data, the results, i.e., the voices of the faculty participants, and a discussion of possible meaning making, i.e., implications and conclusions.

Method

Participants and recruitment

Following IRB approval of this study, a sample of 31 social work academics at universities across the country was contacted via e-mail and word of mouth, employing snowball sampling as needed. Individuals were invited to participate if they were at least 18 years of age, identified as a faculty member.
in social work, and also as a person who would self-define as a member of a diverse group in terms of
gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or religion.

The sample, while not random nor generalizable, is somewhat large for a qualitative study. The
goal of interviewing these many subjects was to present as many voices as possible and from as
many diverse perspectives as this number might allow; and the sample is diverse: 21 identified as
women and 10 as men; 28 held doctorates, 1 was ABD, and 2 had terminal MSWs. Faculty were
almost evenly split between the ranks of Assistant, Associate, and Full Professor, with an addition
of two clinical non-tenure track faculty. Years in the academy ranged from one semester to
31 years (M=11.92, Mdn=10, SD=9.32).

In terms of diverse identities, 16 identified as faculty of color, 15 as LGBTQ, and 5 as members
of diverse religious groups. Age and class, although not selection variables, were also discussed by
participants, as were the intersections of their identities (McCall, 2005). The faculty participants
came from a range of universities and colleges that will not be enumerated here because theNs
would be small enough to potentially make subjects identifiable. Context, as discussed below, is
always an issue, and while some subjects talked about how some identities were not problematic in
their academic settings, other identities might be seen as more marginalized within those same
settings.

**Interview procedure**

Once determined eligible to participate, a research team member, all of whom are trained social
workers with considerable experience in conducting interviews, contacted each participant and
scheduled a time to conduct a semistructured interview. Subjects were interviewed for 1–2 hours,
face-to-face when distances allowed, or via Internet software, e.g., Zoom. Each participant received
a $10 iTunes card as a token of appreciation for their participation.

Data were collected using direct scribing (Martin, 1998; Nybell, 2013; Saldanha & Nybell, 2016),
which enables the interviewer to type the interviews while they occur, establishing a collaborative
and non-exploitative relationship between the interviewer and participant. With this method,
participants are given the opportunity to review and edit their own words to ensure accurate
representation and eliminate potential interviewer bias. This was further accomplished through
memoing and group reflection by and among the interviewers (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008).

Completed initial interviews were sent electronically to participants by the interviewer so that
they could edit, add, or change any wording or ideas that they presented during the actual interview
or add additional data as they saw fit. They also had the option of leaving the interview as is and
understood that if they chose not to return the interviews, they were agreeing to the use of the initial
interview for the purposes of data analysis. Eighteen subjects provided some editing of their
transcripts; four responded that the original was fine as sent to them, and nine did not respond to
the request for edits or comments. In the latter two scenarios, original interviews were used for
coding purposes, as had been agreed on at the time of the interview.

**Coding and analysis plan**

The research team employed a semistructured interview protocol whereby each individual was asked
the same set of questions. In the initial coding phase, all three authors read and re-read the
interviews while taking notes, which reflected the initial codes that were generated independently.
Researchers coded first according to question and then compared codes across the narrative. Codes
were then reviewed again for patterns and categories by each individual researcher and then
discussed by the team. After a number of such cycles of coding, themes began to develop and the
process continued until saturation and no new categories emerged. The team then met to refine and
organize the codes into basic themes, which were recorded in a codebook when consensus was met.
Interviews were examined using thematic analysis taking into account the multiple and intersecting
identities of the participants. Specifically, this method encourages researcher reflexivity while identifying themes and relationships that emerge through careful and repetitive reading of qualitative data and places an emphasis on understanding individual experiences within a larger system through their words (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In addition, all researchers kept a field log and an audit trail for all one-on-one interviews, as well as any telephone, e-mail, or other contacts with interview subjects. The field log included the date, time, and location of each interview and notes with researcher observations, follow-up questions, and reflexive statements. An audit trail was also created that includes interviewer memos post interview, a record of meetings with the research team, which included first- and second-level coding, thematic interpretation, and summarization of findings. Throughout the process, the team discussed their own experiences as members of diverse group(s), and how these experiences in the academy may have influenced the research process. These discussions were reflective of what the interviewers had put in their memos following the interviews themselves.

**Results**

As described above, all interviews were coded for themes, first individually, and then as a group, to ensure interrater reliability. Themes included struggles over when and how to discuss diverse identities, recruiting and welcoming diverse faculty, supporting student learning and identity. Subthemes were embedded in each area. In a profession where diversity is highly prized, and authenticity and role modeling are valued, with their status as a member of a diverse group faculty members voiced their stories about the ir experiences negotiating the academy and making decisions about how to handle their identities.

This article focuses on the theme of code switching, and how faculty reported making decisions about what part or parts of their multiple identities they might bring into the academy. Figure 1 shows the theme, its subthemes, and categories, some of which are discussed below with representative examples of data.

Several subthemes emerged. The first subtheme relates to personal growth for the participant and how either time or aging has increased their level of confidence with identification in their minority status:

- At this point, I am fully open about all of the aspects of myself that I previously described. That has not always been the case. I think it’s less the case in terms of with students, even now. I just don’t vocalize it. I don’t hide it, but I have limited interactions with students. But, I will say, historically it has been quite different.
- I could not figure out what to conform to because everybody was different. I just had to be me. At first I tried to figure out how to fit in. But after a couple of years I just decided to be me.
- Most all of my previous adjuncting was done at a small, faith based college. Talk about code-switching. I was deep in the closet there. There was a huge separation between who I was in my professional and personal life. It is much better integrated here. I decided that the cost has been too much to continue to compartmentalize. I don’t go to my classes and announce it, but if students ask me I don’t hide it either. It is a very different experience here.

The second relates to *policy changes and the political climate*, specifically federal and state policy changes that have occurred over the participants’ lifetime and has influenced their sense of identity in the academy:

One participant commented in a pre-2016 Presidential election interview:

- It is interesting. I see them [my identities] so combined that is hard to say I rank one over the other. But given the most recent election year, I am thrilled to be a woman thinking that we may have a woman president. So if I had to rank them, I might say female first, and Hispanic second. Although, now that I think about it, I don’t know that I have ever done
that. I kept my name when I married … because that was important to me. It is Mexican and it is important to me. But this year has changed that.

And post-election, two participants talked about how political context has played a role in terms of the importance they place on different parts of their identities, and whether they choose to focus on or share these distinct parts of themselves:

- Within some contexts, I would also add being an immigrant as an identity, but only when it comes up in certain discussions and contexts. But, day to day, the immigrant category does not come up for me. Although lately, thanks to the election, it is coming up more and more than in the past.
- Immigration status is something I share. We are talking a lot about the election. I shared with my class that I don’t have voting rights – and that has certain implications for me being in the country. It gives students a way to think about immigrants and the election.

A third subtheme is regional location, where social work faculty work and live and how that contributes to safety around student bias and LGBT employment discrimination practices.
My first academic position was in the South, and there it was frightening to be identified as gay by students. They would call you a dyke. It just was not alright to be out. Passing was a deliberate act there. But since that time, it has been different for me.

Now that I am older, there are no parts of me that I hide. I am a senior instructor … and being a queer Black woman gives me clout. When I first started teaching I was not always out with my queer identity, but it had a lot to do with geography. I was living in a state where it was still legal to fire someone for being queer.

If a faculty member can feel safe to bring their authentic self and if they feel secure enough in their environment (need both – safety in the environment and secure enough in their own self), my teaching can be a slam dunk everyday. My teaching will be golden.

Disadvantages may be that a particular identity may walk on its own whether a particular faculty wants to participate in that group or not. I think depending on the setting making their membership known may lead to persecution or exclusion or safety issues.

These last few quotes also reflect the notion of safety as it relates to history, geography, and university doctrine. The last decade has seen a tremendous change in the social fabric and acceptance and valuing of difference in our society. However, those changes certainly have also produced a backlash for some individuals and communities who are out loud and proud of whatever that diversity might be.

Another subtheme was participants’ perception of their identity and what it means to them vs. an identity-driven motivation that others impose on them. For example, one participant said:

- I don’t always think that what I am doing or saying is because I am Japanese. That doesn’t cross my mind.

While another commented:

- Sometimes it is hard to tell if people react/respond to me as a black person, as a woman, as an older person?

Sometimes the participants noted that parts of their identities were more critical to others than to themselves and did not always accurately reflect their identities:

- The fact that I am so openly lesbian is a big deal to others, and not so much to me.
- As I have gotten older, I don’t prioritize it as much … I am floored when people say things to me about my gender expression that are so different than the way I perceive myself, that I will or will not be interested in things, like shoes, because I am lesbian. I am a person, a whole person.
- I think they [my colleagues] think of me more as gay than I do, practically, in the school environment anyway … I am lesbian and that is what they see, as opposed to just seeing a woman.

Still, other participants talked about the visibility of one’s diverse identity:

- One unique aspect of my identity is that I also don’t look native, so I am considered an invisible minority.
- My ethnicity was not a value to the university I worked at because I am an invisible minority.
- Because I don’t have an outward Hispanic appearance I am not always identified that way. My name is a very traditional name and people who know that may make that association.

For one international scholar, the topic of being aware of the strength and also possible issues related to visible identities is expressed in this quote:
I’ve been known not to bring my African identity to the academy for two or three reasons. One, my culture is different from my American culture. Two, I have to watch the way I express myself or I may offend people out of my ignorance of norms of the American culture. And three, I have to be cognizant that people will question my integrity and ability as a researcher, a scholar, and a professor.

Participating faculty talked about the importance of having the opportunity to talk in the classroom about assumptions regarding identity, and how this motivated some of them to be more visible or prioritize one part of their identity over another:

- … there is more of a need to be visible as a Latina – because there are fewer on campus. There sometimes is subtle pressure from colleagues. Some examples [include being] on several search committees in a row, in part to have diverse representation, despite the tremendous workload that entails.
- It [my openness] varies with context. In the classroom, the invisible ones [identities], such as my queer identity, are ranked first because I use myself as a teaching tool in my courses. But, in social settings, not so much.
- I made the conscious decision to just use neutral pronouns and speak of my partner as my partner. I wear a wedding band and I talk about my partner and some students would eventually get up the courage to ask. Then, in that moment, I would have the opportunity to talk about why that would matter and have that conversation.
- It is easy to derail diversity questions and start to talk about yourself. I think there is a power issue around this. It is not about “I don’t want to be out because I will get bad evaluations.” Actually, I think I get better ones when I come out because students see me as more approachable. The danger in that is that students see me as a representation of the population, and it takes away from the students’ learning and puts the attention on me.

Another key subtheme that emerged surrounding faculty identity management is how one’s diverse identity influences their activities in the academy; participants overwhelmingly reported that their identity plays a significant role. For instance,

- I think in general terms, the academy needs to show they value people who are different. They need to show they value the person, the scholarship, and the experience that is diverse as well. You need to see more diverse different identities in the academy.
- If you don’t have to be the only representative of that group, I think that it’s much easier. You still get “credit” for being a minority, but you don’t have to do all the work. If you are the only one, you have to do all the work, and it is exhausting. It is a real disadvantage.
- Institutions need to recognize that they can’t use minority faculty as their selected tokens for representation in their universities. Many minority faculty are expected to work with the group they identify with. That should also be demystified. People should be able to work with any kind of research or with any group they like whether they identify with it or not.
- The idea is to let folks know they can be their whole selves, in this academy, in this School. We don’t want to be color blind or strip you of your unique identity. We want you to be Black or Asian, or whoever you are, and that is what we want.

Discussion

In the literature, the topic of personal and academic identity has been examined more from the perspective of how diverse faculty have to code switch and either translate their personal selves into academic selves or hide oneself to feel more secure. This was not a forced choice, i.e., a binary choice for participants, but rather an acknowledgment of their stated need to manage identities. There has
been little discussion about how this might occur among social work faculty where diversity is more highly valued and perhaps more expected given the values that drive the profession. The study presented here explores the issue of social work faculty members’ personal versus academic identities through a feminist lens, including the intersection of participants’ multifaceted identities, and the choice to connect or separate one or more of these identities in their roles within social work programs, with their students, and as a component of their teaching or research. As social work scholars, it is essential to first have a clearer understanding of how our programs and individual faculty manage this internal dialog before facilitating a larger discussion surrounding the potential multilevel impact on social work education and the training of the next generation of social work practitioners and academics. We have a responsibility to expand the discussion beyond individual-level diversity factors to one that examines the multifaceted diversity of individuals that is complex and anticategorical (McCall, 2005).

Despite an intentional inquiry regarding the intersections of this sample of social work faculty’s multifaceted diverse identities, participants tended to speak to one component of their identity dependent on how that identity was, or was not visible, valued, or celebrated within that particular situation or environment. As indicated, no one in the sample defined themselves in nonbinary terms. Instead, participants indicated the need to highlight or minimize certain components of their identities to be effective, to advocate for change, or to maintain personal and professional safety. Similar to previous research in other disciplines, being out and forward about all aspects of one’s identity remains a struggle for some social work faculty in this study. However, in line with the values of the social work profession, many more participants reported that to promote change and create educational environments that are built on the values of equity and justice, it is imperative that we put forth our whole selves and as one participant stated, “be who we are.”

There are many strengths of this work, chief among them the direct scribing methodology that allows subjects to reflect on their responses to ensure that what they had said truly represents their experiences. Privileging the voices of the participants is important from both a feminist and a social work perspective. As with all research, however, there are also limitations. Although the study has participants from several diverse groups, not all diversities are represented, and as with all qualitative studies, the small number of people from a given group gives the researchers a glimpse into their academic and personal lives, but cannot represent an entire group’s experiences. Additionally, participants were recruited through channels known to the researchers, which can potentially introduce response bias. Participants were assigned to interviewers with whom they did not have a previously established relationship in an effort to decrease this likelihood. In addition, no participants were sought or interviewed from the researchers’ home university. Finally, given the exploratory nature of this study, results should be interpreted with caution.

**Implications for social work education and the academy**

The introduction to the article references both the Grand Challenge to *achieve equal opportunity and justice* and the CSWE mandate to *educate students to engage diversity and difference in practice*. The participants in this study spoke about both of these issues, and their words begin to provide a path forward for change. Their interviews and their reflections on their own experiences as members of diverse groups raised questions such as how to do things differently? Can a feminist lens be used to create a new paradigm around recruitment, retention, and promotion of faculty? Participants were concerned with social change that could create justice and equity within the academy. This project then is not just about discovering or identifying what the issues are but thinking about the next steps that would include coming up with solutions, even if they might challenge the current norms. It is necessary to look at social work education as a part of the larger system of the universities themselves, and the communities in which they are located, striving for an inclusive intersectional environment, creating change, pushing boundaries, providing mentorship, all of which might lead to
a greater valuing of difference and more equal opportunities, both for the faculty themselves, and for the students with whom they interact. Two examples of needed action follow.

Many issues were considered idiosyncratic to individual institutions, but there was also a sense that CSWE, as the overseer of social work education and accreditation, should provide more guidance and incentive regarding the value of diversity. One respondent said,

- CSWE could play a bigger role. We need more of a mandate that there should be diversity on campus. If accreditation is on the line, that would be a motivation for a school to push for diversity … CSWE needs to hold schools accountable.

Another, who acknowledged CSWE’s leadership in programming for diverse faculty members, talked about the need to take it to the next level and create similar programs in the universities themselves, perhaps with CSWE’s support and urging. This respondent seemed to be suggesting that CSWE might try and use its influence, through its role modeling and perhaps through the reaccreditation site visit as well as, to encourage the universities within which Schools of Social Work are situated, to create leadership and mentorship programs for diverse faculty members.

- I know places like CSWE have the [minority] fellowship [program] and things where they provide strong mentorship. But something like that could be replicated in the institutions to help minority students have [a sense of] belonging in the academy.

In referencing a more diversity-friendly academic environment that provided equal opportunities for all faculty, many participants also discussed issues relating to recruitment, retention, and promotion. This topic, as a whole, is beyond the scope of this article, but it is important to briefly raise these issues here in considering implications from these data. One participant said,

- If the academy does not make purposive, dedicated efforts to retain/maintain/promote, address and support faculty life within and outside the academy that will enhance possibilities for success “within” the academy, I question the strength of its desire to actually build and maintain a diverse, inclusive organization.

Another commented on what having diverse faculty means to any given organization, and questions what constitutes enough diversity within a social work faculty.

- I still see a sense of too many faculty having the mindset of “we’ve got enough” of that particular identity or group of people, instead of seeing it as there is never enough. We may have two or three self-identified gay faculty, and some will see it as we have enough of that group. We have met that quota. If we have 10 more apply, and they are the most awesome and qualified, I think we should hire them all. But not all faculty think that way. If it were ten white males, it would be treated differently; they would be hired. It is definitely not the same with other minorities.

This is a powerful statement and one which social work education and the academy need to consider. Although it may not be a universal finding, it does beg the question of the value of diversity, and the messages we send to our colleagues who identify as a member of a diverse group, as well as the role modeling we provide for our students. Academic social work leaders will need to decide whether they want to pursue changes recommended under a critical feminist perspective.

**Conclusion**

In sum, participants in this study were aware of their multiple diverse identities and were able to describe the ways in which they acknowledged them with colleagues, students, and the community.
They discussed factors that both encouraged and discouraged their decisions to be out, and what factors seemed to propel them to code switch between identities, choosing to present – or not – one or more, or the intersection of multiple identities. Each participant had a rich story to tell, and they were cognizant of the fact that by participating in this study, they were advancing the dialog, especially as it related to social work education. They expressed the desire to move social work further into the conversation and to help people see the necessity of living the values and ethics we hold to be a cornerstone of our profession. Their words and stories require that we take a look at how diversity enriches social work education and what can be done to preserve and encourage the value that diversity brings. As one subject said,

- I am a qualitative researcher and the reason that I am is that people’s voices don’t get heard more in scientific research. My voice isn’t heard, and it should be. I am interested in those communities that are not heard. I am interested in hearing my story in the literature.

**Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

**Notes on contributors**

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