

To be or not to be; but at what cost?

Perception is reality! This statement is critical throughout the internship or job-search process, [during interviews](#), and after entering the work environment. This holds especially true for individuals who identify with historically underrepresented or vulnerable populations. Minority groups may be at a disadvantage in this process since [research](#) indicates that resumes that have been ‘white washed’ can solicit more callbacks from employers. Examples of this include an applicant altering their name to appear more Anglo-Saxon, removing titles of student organizations or scholarship(s) devoted to a racial or ethnic group, or listing hobbies associated with wealthy white America; i.e. fencing, rowing, golf. It is important to think through this approach early on.

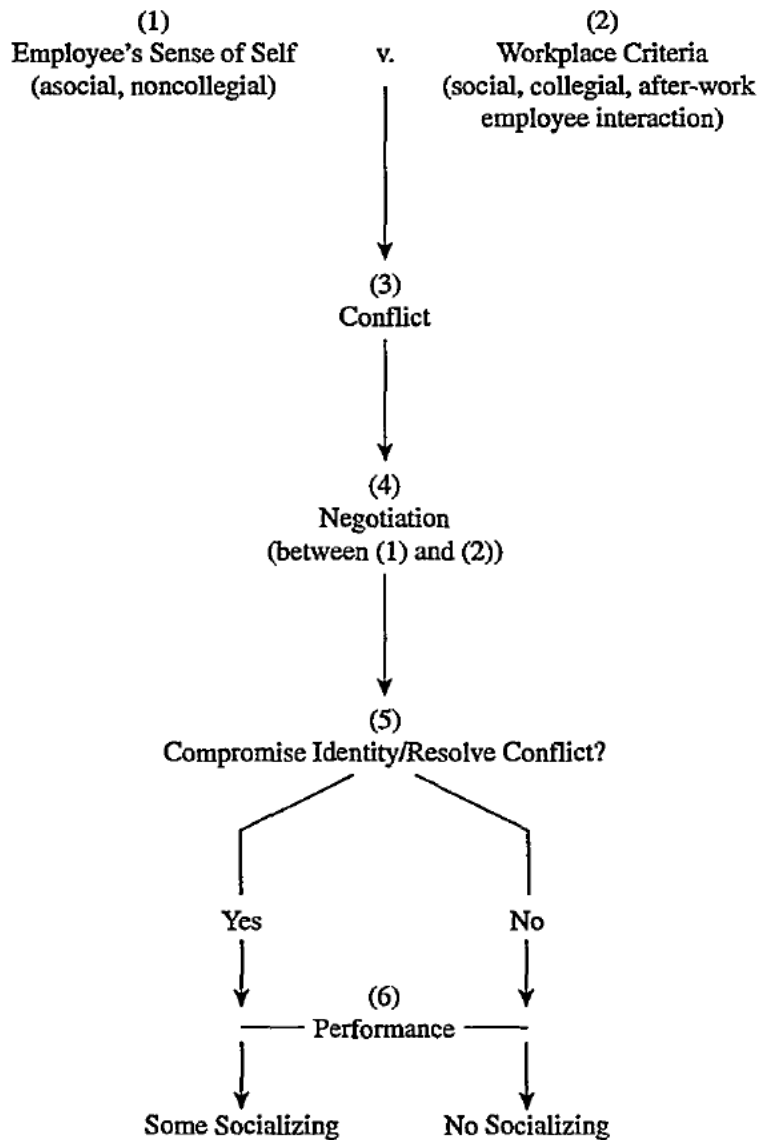
Whether on paper or in person, [appearance does matter](#). The norms, practices, standards, and the appropriate attitudes in the U.S. professional setting for most industries are defined and constructed by hetero-normative, white male ideas. Cognitive biases, such as the [horn effect](#), does influence hiring practices. Minority groups and women who do not adhere to or reinforce such paradigms risk being overlooked for roles, or even promotion. There are [jobs and industries that are historically white](#). This impacts the [wide racial divide in the work force](#), which also includes racial and gender disparities and inequities in non-manual labor too; [Silicon Valley](#) and [the publishing industry](#) are good examples.

The following items are worth considering for your success.

- Are you willing to [cover up](#) certain aspects of your identity? What do you gain through this approach? What do you risk sacrificing for this gain? Ultimately, it is a tricky balancing act to manage the (internal and external) pressure to conform to a dominant majority.
- Does the potential employer have a diversity statement? If so, who is responsible for it? Diversity is defined by [‘who’ is doing the talking](#). [Not all employers](#) claiming to be inclusive reflect it in their daily practice or have infrastructure and resources to retain non-white, sexual, or religious minorities.
- Have you requested [informational interviews](#) with underrepresented populations who currently work at the company or organization you are focusing on? Listening to the lived experiences of these individuals and how they navigate their work environment can assist you to think through your concerns or solidify your choice to further pursue, or not, a potential opportunity.

You do have agency. You also have the option to highlight your perceived “otherness” in both your resume and during the interview. This can serve as a litmus test for employers. Below is a visual reference that highlights this kind of negotiation, albeit in the context of personal characteristics. It is a gamble, but ultimately, it is *YOUR* judgement call. What do you want to do?

FIGURE 1
PERFORMANCE/NEGOTIATION DYNAMIC



Carbado, D., Gulati, M. 2000. Working Identity. *Cornell Law Review*, 85(5), p. 1267.

To further discuss this topic, please [schedule an appointment](#) with the [Internship Coordinator, Ned Khatrichettri](#).

