To be or not to be your authentic self? Catering to others' preferences hinders performance

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ABSTRACT

When approaching interpersonal first meetings (e.g., job interviews), people often cater to the target's interests and expectations to make a good impression and secure a positive outcome such as being offered the job (pilot study). This strategy is distinct from other approaches identified in prior impression management research (Studies 1A, 1B and 1C), and does not produce the benefits people expect. In a field study in which entrepreneurs pitched their ideas to potential investors (Study 2), catering harmed investors' evaluations, while being authentic improved them. People experience greater anxiety and instrumentality when they cater to another person's preferences than when they behave authentically (Studies 3A and 3B). Compared to behaving authentically or to a control condition, catering harms performance because trying to anticipate and fulfill others' preferences feels instrumental and increases anxiety (Studies 4 and 5). Taken together, these results suggest that although people believe using catering in interpersonal first meetings will lead to successful outcomes, the opposite is true: catering creates undesirable feelings of instrumentality for the caterer, increases anxiety, and ultimately hinders performance.

1. Introduction

In both social and professional interactions, people commonly focus on managing the impressions they make on others, especially when they do not know others well or when the stakes are high, such as during a job interview, a meeting with a new client, or a promising first date. Making a positive impression during an early encounter influences important long-term outcomes, such as getting the job, inking a deal, or starting a romantic relationship (Gilmore & Ferris, 1989; Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Wayne & Ferris, 1990).

One strategy people use in their attempts to make a good impression is to cater to the interests and expectations of the person they want to impress. Building on past perspectives on impression management (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1995; Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984), we introduce a new construct we call *catering*. We define catering as an assertive impression management tactic in which people intentionally use verbal and nonverbal behaviors that they believe are commensurate with others' interests, preferences, and expectations rather than their own.[1] To be successful, then, catering

requires the ability to detect and respond to others' desires and to understand the expectations, interests, and preferences of the target. Catering is not a personality trait: rather, it is an approach to impression management that people consciously or unconsciously use, with the intent of reaching the best possible outcome in the interaction they are part of, whether a date or a job interview.

In this article, we focus on how catering affects performance during interpersonal first meetings and compare the effects this approach produces to that of another: being authentic. Authenticity refers to "owning one's personal experiences, be they thoughts, emotions, needs, wants, preferences, or beliefs" and "further implies that one acts in accord with the true self, expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings" (Harter, 2002: 382). As recent research has found, authenticity engenders positive outcomes across a variety of domains. Presenting oneself authentically to others so that they understand us *as we understand ourselves* (i.e., self-verification, Swann, 1983) facilitates committed, harmonious relationships (Burke & Stets, 1999) and is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and performance (Cable & Kay, 2012; Swann, Milton, & Polzer, 2000). A

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[1] Like other impression-management tactics, catering is a conscious attempt to create, maintain, protect, or otherwise alter others' impressions of oneself (Schlenker, 1980). Although managing impressions is often a deliberate process, people do not need to be aware of their underlying motives for a behavior to be considered a form of impression management (Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981).

recent study (Moore, Lee, Kim, & Cable, 2017) found that job seekers who act authentically (i.e., have higher self-verification striving) and stay true to themselves during job interviews are more likely to receive a job offer than applicants who act less authentically (have lower self-verification striving). Another study found that during organizational entry, experiencing authenticity by reflecting on one's strengths predicted lower levels of turnover as compared to conditions that did not offer such opportunity for reflection (Cable, Gino, & Staats, 2013).

Here, we use being authentic as a reference point to examine whether catering helps or hinders performance during interpersonal first meetings. On the one hand, research on impression management leads to the prediction that catering will *help* people's performance in such settings (Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009; Gilmore & Ferris, 1989; Kacmar & Carlson, 1999). For example, a meta-analysis of self-promotion and other self-enhancement tactics is consistent with this prediction, suggesting that these impression management tactics positively influence supervisor and interviewer evaluations of employees in work settings (Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003). By catering to the interests and expectations of an interaction partner, people may flatter the person or increase his or her positive mood. As a result, the person may be less critical about the information heard or received (Bless, Mackie, & Schwarz, 1992; Bodenhausen, 1993) and make more positive judgments overall (Forgas & Bower, 1987).

On the other hand, a diverging prediction—that catering will *harm* one's performance in interpersonal first meetings—emerges from the psychology literature. When catering, the caterer presents her arguments in an attempt to match the target's preferences and expectations. Such preferences and expectations are not known with certainty, making catering inherently uncertain. As psychological research on emotions has found, this uncertainty can heighten anxiety (Lerner & Keltner, 2001). Catering also raises the caterer's anxiety due to another reason: the caterer's propensity to hide her internal mental state and sense of self, in an attempt to gauge the target's perspective (Gross & John, 2003; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997). Given that it is rare for the caterer's preferences and interests to overlap completely with those of the target, catering is, at least to some extent, always inauthentic. When people behave inauthentically by straying from what they consider to be their true self, they experience psychological discomfort (Gino, Kouchaki, & Galinsky, 2015). Consistent with these findings, research has found that inauthenticity is associated with higher anxiety and stress (Ryan, LaGuardia, & Rawsthorne, 2005) and reduced well-being (Thomaes, Sedikides, Van de Bos, Hutteman, & Reijntes, 2017).

Along with this anxiety, minimizing one's true beliefs in favor of others' interests or preferences—regardless of the extent to which they differ from one's own—emphasizes the strategic nature of their actions and deliberate alignment for the sake of obtaining a certain benefit (e.g., a positive evaluation from the target). This clear intent to achieve a self-serving goal results in higher instrumentality and strategic purposing (Shah & Kruglanski, 2003; Zhang, Fishbach, & Kruglanski, 2007).

In this way, catering may increase evaluation anxiety and perceived instrumentality, with detrimental effects on the caterer's performance. Anxiety, in fact, drains working memory and is detrimental to information processing (Eysenck, 1992), and it impairs a person's ability to take the perspective of another (Todd, Forstmann, Burgmer, Brooks, & Galinsky, 2015). Similarly, perceived instrumentality highlights to the caterer her selfish motives and clear self-serving intent, which are kept hidden from the target. This secrecy is cognitively draining (Slepian, Chin, & Mason, 2017), thus affecting performance negatively.

From this perspective, catering may harm performance during interpersonal first meetings. This prediction is paradoxical: it implies that focusing on others and attempting to please them may lead to poorer outcomes than if a person only focuses on being herself. Thus, catering is an ineffective self-presentational strategy, among other strategies discussed in prior work (Steinmetz, Sezer, & Sedikides, 2017).

In this paper, we compare the effects of catering versus being authentic in two organizational contexts that are both common and consequential: job interviews and entrepreneurial pitches. We develop and test predictions about how catering influences people's emotions and outcomes. By doing so, we advance the literature in three main ways. First, we contribute to management and organizational behavior research by identifying a new tactic people use during high-stakes interactions, catering, and by examining its effects on performance as compared to those of another practical approach, being authentic. Prior work has overlooked the fact that impression management tactics that are other focused or that involve some exaggeration or deception may cause anxiety and distress, thus hampering the likelihood of success (Schmit & Ryan, 1992; Zott & Huy, 2007)—an important possibility we examine in this work. Though some recent research has examined the positive effects of using an authentic approach in interpersonal first meetings or interactions, no prior work has examined the effects of catering. This omission is important, as catering is an approach often used in practice.

Second, we extend research on flattery by investigating boundary conditions. Across a wide range of situations, research has found that flattery is a successful tactic to secure positive evaluations (Vonk, 2002; Westphal & Stern, 2007). Here, we consider how catering to another person's interests and expectations, though potentially flattering to the target, is less effective than just being yourself.

Third, this work makes strides in establishing the importance of one's psychological experience (e.g., one's emotions) to impression management. Our research demonstrates that impression management tactics cannot be understood completely without a careful consideration of their psychological implications. This research highlights the often neglected conflict between honesty motives (e.g., authenticity) and impression management ones (e.g., pleasing others even if that involves some deception). This conflict creates anxiety and discomfort, and also raises a sense of instrumentality.

2. Theory development and hypotheses

People are all concerned about making a good impression on others (Schlenker, 1980), especially in high-stakes first meetings. The motives underlying impression management generally emerge from one of two desires (Collett, 2009): to portray one's ideal self—the way one wishes to be, or to live up to external standards, such as others' expectations or interests. This latter desire is particularly powerful when people are being evaluated by others who will decide outcomes relevant to the actor, such as getting a job or reaching a deal. To fulfill this external desire, people engage in tactical self-presentation (i.e., other-focused impression management) by catering to the ideals of others. Catering behaviors may conflict or align with one's own true preferences, attitudes, and beliefs—thus being experienced by the actor as more or less inauthentic. Independent of whether there is alignment, though, catering involves a clear intent to obtain a benefit for the self and is inherently uncertain as the caterer is not completely sure about the preferences, interests and expectations of the target. Even when there is some overlap, people do not have direct access to what the target believes and making inferences to align with the target's preferences and interests involves some extent of catering.

2.1. Catering as a distinct construct

Our conceptualization of catering builds on the psychology and management literatures on impression management, which have long examined assertive, other-focused impression management tactics. Jones and Pittman (1982) distinguished between five categories of impression management tactics: intimidation, ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication (see Table 1 for descriptions, and how catering differs from them). Individuals use these types of assertive tactics to establish or manage a certain reputation with a

Table 1
A brief description of each impression management tactic, as identified by Jones and Pittman (1982) and our conceptualization of Catering.

Impression Management Tactic	Description
Ingratiation	• Strategic behaviors designed to enhance social attraction (Jones & Wortman, 1973). • Ingratiation can take many forms. For example, one might ingratiate by being extra polite or giving a gift to someone to win favor. Other methods of ingratiation include flattery, opinion conformity, and doing favors (Bolino et al., 2008).
Intimidation	• Intimidators try to convince their targets that they are dangerous—that they have the ability (and the potential inclination) to harm them (Jones & Pittman, 1982). • Example: a boss threatens to fire an employee if a job is not performed in a certain way. Such a threat creates fear or anxiety in the target and motivates compliance with the intimidator's desires in order to avoid harm or punishment.
Self-promotion	• The primary objective of this tactic is to project competence. • In trying to attune others to their intelligence, talents, and accomplishments, self-promoters emphasize global competence (e.g., intelligence) or skill-based abilities (e.g., knitting).
Exemplification	• A tactic directed at securing respect and admiration for integrity and moral worthiness. • Qualities such as honesty and fairness can be asserted through personal claims or demonstrated through example, such as publicly contributing to a fund-raising campaign (Farrell, 2010).
Supplication	• Supplicants convey neediness in order to elicit help. They try to project dependence, weakness, or disadvantage in hopes of capitalizing on others' pity and securing their assistance with personal objectives.
Catering	• Similar to ingratiation, catering is an assertive and other-focused tactic (focus of the interaction is the target). Yet, in contrast to ingratiation, catering requires the ability to detect the target's expectations and interests. Giving a simple compliment can be categorized as the flattery form of ingratiation, while detecting the target's special interests and offering a customized comment about that particular domain would be an example of catering. • In contrast to intimidation, catering is other-focused. Intimidation includes behaviors that induce anxiety and fear in others (threatening to fire an employee), while catering requires an understanding of the target's interests and expectations in a given situation (e.g. a job applicant who has an understanding of company's culture emphasizing those values in an interview). • In contrast to self-promotion, catering is other-focused. Bragging about intelligence, skills, and/or accomplishments would be examples of self-promotion. Catering, on the other hand, would not be about emphasizing any strength' rather, it would be emphasizing strengths that the actor thinks the target care about. • Similar to exemplification, catering is an assertive tactic. However, the focus of emphasis in exemplification would be qualities that are important for integrity and morality, while catering's emphasis is only about the target's expectations and interests rather than a concern for other values. • In contrast to supplication, catering does not project weakness or neediness. Catering signals that the actor "cares" about what the target wants.

target person or audience (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Similarly, catering is assertive since people use it to endeavor to gain a favorable evaluation in interpersonal first meetings.

Assertive tactics can be self-focused or other-focused (Wayne & Liden, 1995). Self-focused tactics are commonly used in an attempt to improve the target's view of one's skills and potential (Zivnuska, Kacmar, Witt, Carlson, & Bratton, 2004). Other-focused impression management tactics are aimed at inspiring liking from a target and may consist of doing favors and engaging in flattery and praise (Zivnuska et al., 2004).

Given that the goal of other-focused tactics is to directly increase liking for the actor from the target, we conceptualize catering as a strategy people use to fulfill or exceed the expectations of the target. Despite its similarities to prior perspectives, our conceptualization of catering is distinct in its focus on a person's attempt to match her behavior to the interests and expectations of the perceiver. Another important difference is that catering results from the desire to live up to the target's expectations and interests rather than from a fear of not living up to one's own ideal self. With catering, the caterer tries to achieve a good outcome for him or herself, potentially promoting one's skills and strengths. But self-promotion is not the main focus of this approach: it is to be other-directed and to match the target's preferences, interests, and expectations.

We also argue that catering is different from high self-monitoring. According to self-monitoring theory, people differ in how much they can and do control their self-presentation and expressive behavior (Snyder, 1979). High self-monitoring individuals regulate their self-presentation based on the public appearance they desire to make, and they are sensitive to cues that convey what is the appropriate behavior to show in the given situation (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). Though Gangestad and Snyder (2000) have conceptualized self-monitoring as a unitary construct, various scholars have argued and demonstrated it is not, and have identified two main dimensions: public performance and other-directedness. Public performance refers to one's ability to modify one's behavior to function well in social interactions, while other-

directedness refers to one's attention to the target's expectations and one's willingness to mask one's true preferences and feelings to please the target. Both these dimensions have been found to relate to authenticity, though in different ways (Pillow et al., 2017).

Generally, self-monitoring refers to the extent people regulate their behavior, and it is commonly viewed as a trait. Catering, instead, is about the extent to which people strategically alter their behavior to fit others' expectations (but does not necessarily involve sublimating one's true self as other-directedness). It is an approach to impression management individuals choose to rely on, not a trait. High and low self-monitoring individuals are likely to differ in their ability to use catering effectively, and in the emotional experience of doing so.

2.2. Catering flatters evaluators

Several streams of research suggest that being other-focused in social or professional interactions leads to positive outcomes. In the hiring context, Kacmar and Carlson (1999) found that other-focused strategies increase interviewer interest in the applicant. Similarly, across several studies, Wayne and colleagues (Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Kacmar, 1991; Wayne & Liden, 1995) found that in non-interview contexts, other-focused tactics enhanced liking. Research on a particular other-focused tactic, ingratiation, supports these findings. Ingratiation positively influences career success (Judge & Bretz, 1994) and supervisor ratings of subordinate likability (Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995). Further, ingratiation positively affects supervisor evaluations of in-role job performance (Ferris, Judge, Rowland, & Fitzgibbons, 1994) and organizational citizenship behavior (Bolino, Varela, Bande, & Turnley, 2006).

Similarly, catering to the target's interests and expectations may increase liking. People like those who conform to their values and preferences (Byrne, 1971), and agreeing with others' opinions or principles is a powerful way to win acceptance (Bohra & Pandey, 1984). Even behavioral conformity can be ingratiating (Van Baaren, Holland, Steenaert, & van Knippenberg, 2003), as mimicry facilitates social

interactions and increases liking between parties (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). In the hiring context, perceived applicant–interviewer similarity is a main predictor of interviewers' liking of applicants (Baskett, 1973; Frank & Hackman, 1975) and hiring decisions, more so than objective qualifications of the applicants, such as work experience or GPA (Cable & Judge, 1997; Gilmore & Ferris, 1989; Kristof-Brown, 2000).

In addition, catering may flatter the target. Research has found that flattery secures positive evaluations (Vonk, 2002). People are so responsive to flattery that they react to a computer's pre-programmed flattery as if it were genuine praise from a human (Fogg & Nass, 1997). In fact, people enjoy flattery even when it is obviously insincere (Chan & Sengupta, 2010). Because flattery is egocentrically validating, people are motivated to believe that it is genuine (Vonk, 2002) and accept it without question (Bless et al., 1992; Chan & Sengupta, 2010; Vonk, 2002; 2007).

Taken together, this past research leads to the prediction that catering—an approach that increases agreement between the caterer and the perceiver and is likely to make the perceiver feel flattered—should *improve* the caterer's performance as a result of receiving a more positive evaluation from the perceiver.[2]

2.3. Catering raises anxiety and feels instrumental

Despite the convincing set of findings reviewed above, an alternative perspective derives from the management and psychology literature: because one cannot be certain about what the target thinks or expects, catering makes the caterer feel uncomfortable and stressed. In general, people experience discomfort, in the form of anxiety, when they are (1) motivated to make a good impression and (2) unsure whether they will make the desired impression successfully (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). People typically lack complete information about the expectations and interests of others (Epley, 2014). In fact, people's accuracy during perspective taking—anticipating the minds of others—is surprisingly poor (Epley, 2014). During the process of catering, the caterer must predict what the perceiver wants to hear and act accordingly, but making such predictions is difficult and commonly leads to errors and inaccuracies. It is even more difficult for a person to cater to a heterogeneous group of evaluators, who may have differing preferences and interests among themselves.

There is another source of anxiety, compounding the discomfort caused by the uncertainty inherent in catering. Trying to match others' preferences and interests rather than expressing one's own is a form of inauthenticity, especially when the two differ and are not aligned, and inauthenticity heightens psychological discomfort (Gino et al., 2015).

In addition to making people feel anxious, catering is also likely to raise the caterer's perceived sense of instrumentality. The caterer has a clear intention and unique goal to reach when using catering: matching the target's expectations to obtain a positive outcome (e.g., make a good impression and receive a positive evaluation). Psychological research on goals suggests that the stronger the association between a given means and a goal one wants to reach, the higher perceived instrumentality is (Shah & Kruglanski, 2003). When a single goal is attached to a means (vs. the means is associated with multiple goals), perceived instrumentality is higher (Zhang, Fishbach, & Kruglanski, 2007).

Catering to a target's interests and expectations requires behaviors that are intentional attempts to impress the target and obtain a positive evaluation or outcome from her. Individuals have negative reactions to their own selfish intentions (Casciaro, Gino, & Kouchaki, 2014), even when these intentions drive prosocial actions, such as donating money to charity (Lin-Healy & Small, 2012). Catering has a selfish intent, as it is designed to obtain personal benefits. This intent is clear to the caterer

but not observable by the target. As a result, the caterer is likely to feel he or she is being somewhat deceptive and secretive.

As a result, catering is likely to increase the anxiety that is common in situations in which one is being evaluated and judged, and to increase perceived instrumentality. In turn, this heightened anxiety and higher instrumentality are detrimental to the caterer's performance in the interaction with the target. Supporting this prediction, prior work found that anxiety experienced immediately before or during a performance event harms performance. Feeling anxious harms both intrapsychic and interpersonal performance (Brooks & Schweitzer, 2011; Eysenck, 1990; Gino, Brooks, & Schweitzer, 2012). Anxiety impairs information processing, and anxious people have been shown to use up their working memory on ruminating and worrying rather than focusing on the task they are facing (Eysenck, 1992). In addition, feeling anxious increases egocentrism and reduces one's ability to perspective-take (Todd et al., 2015), and anxiety experienced when communicating with others is negatively related to perceived effectiveness (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001). Finally, anxiety might also reduce how positively we evaluate ourselves, which then translate in impaired self-presentation.

Similarly, both secrecy (Slepian, Chin, & Mason, 2017) and deception (Blandón-Gitlin, Fenn, Masip, & Yoo, 2014; Gombos, 2006) which the caterer is likely to experience when he perceives his behavior as highly instrumental have been found to be detrimental to performance as they drain cognitive resources. Deception also impairs a person's ability to read other people (Lee, Hardin, Parmar, & Gino, 2019). Even when the caterer believes he has accurately predicted what the target wants to see and hear, he is likely to enact those behaviors poorly and in an unconvincing manner because he feels instrumental or anxious. Thus, catering may hinder performance in interpersonal first meetings.

Together, these streams of research lead to the prediction that catering will cause caterers to feel anxious about their incomplete information about the target's expectations and interests and to feel instrumental due to their strategic intent. This anxiety and sense of instrumentality, in turn, decrease caterers' ability to take others' perspectives and thus will *harm* their performance in interpersonal first meetings. These arguments lead to the following hypotheses, summarized in Fig. 1.

> H1: People who adopt a catering approach (rather than an authentic approach) during an interpersonal first meeting will reach lower levels of performance.
> H2: People who adopt a catering approach (rather than an authentic approach) experience greater anxiety and instrumentality.
> H3: A catering approach (as compared to being authentic) results in lower levels of performance because of greater anxiety and instrumentality.

3. Overview of studies

Across one pilot study, five online experiments, one field study, and two laboratory experiments, we examine how catering influences actors' emotional states and evaluators' perceptions to draw conclusions about the efficacy of catering versus being authentic. To ensure internal and external validity, we explore these concepts in the context of hiring, entrepreneurial pitching, and in interpersonal interactions more generally.

In our studies, we report all variables collected and describe how we chose sample sizes. No participants who completed our studies were excluded from any of the analyses unless otherwise indicated. All participants across online and laboratory studies answered two attention checks at the beginning of the study after some initial instructions; those who failed either attention check were automatically kicked out of the study, and their data was not recorded.

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[2] We note that though flattery is a likely consequence of using catering in interpersonal meetings, it is not an integral component of this tactic.
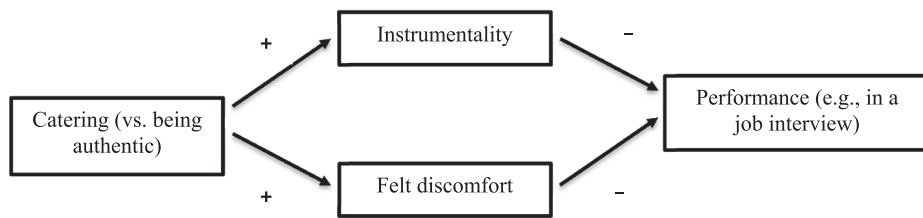
Fig. 1. Theoretical Model.

3.1. Pilot Study

We conducted a pilot study to examine people's lay beliefs about the effectiveness of the two approaches: catering to the target's expectations and interests versus acting authentically by being oneself. We recruited 458 employed adults from MTurk (M_{age} = 31.04, SD = 7.96; 49% female) to participate in a survey in exchange for $1. We asked them to imagine they were about to have an important professional interaction, such as interviewing for their dream job, conducting a very valuable negotiation for their company, pitching an entrepreneurial idea to potential investors, or making a presentation in front of a client. We then asked them to indicate which approach they would use in such a situation. Participants chose between two approaches: (1) "I would position my statements for what I believed to be the expectations or interests of the person I was interacting with" or (2) "I would simply be myself." Next, they were asked to indicate which of these two approaches they thought would be most successful and lead to the best outcome (e.g., getting the job).

Sixty-six percent of the respondents (303 out of 458) indicated they would use catering, and 71% (325 out of 458) reported believing that catering would be the most effective approach in the given situation. Together, these results suggest that most people believe catering to another person's interests and expectations is a more promising strategy than being oneself for securing positive outcomes and would use this strategy in high-stakes interpersonal first meetings. But are these beliefs misplaced? We examine the accuracy of these lay beliefs in most of our studies, after showing that catering is a distinct construct.

3.2. Main studies

In Studies 1A, 1B, and 1C, we examine convergent and discriminant validity of catering as a construct. In Study 2, a field study, we investigate the use of catering versus authenticity by entrepreneurs pitching their ideas to potential investors. In Studies 3A and 3B, we explore the psychological consequences of using catering versus authenticity in interpersonal first meetings. Finally, in two laboratory studies, Studies 4 and 5, we explore the performance consequences of catering, and show how catering and being oneself affects actors' emotions and interviewers' evaluations in a job interview.

4. STUDY 1: Catering as a distinct construct

An important first step in any scale development process is clearly defining the construct and delineating its boundaries (Hinkin, 1998). We define catering as a strategy an individual engages in when interacting with another person (target) that has the clear goal to position his or her statements to the perceived expectations or interests of the target. Catering is subjective—an approach used by a person, as perceived by him or her during an interaction with another person or a group of people. Using this definition, we developed and validated a measure of catering, and assessed its reliability, factor structure, convergent and discriminant validity in Studies 1A, 1B and 1C. To distinguish catering from constructs that appear to share conceptual overlap, an important step in scale development (Hinkin, 1998), we identified self-monitoring (Studies 1A and 1B) and existing impression management strategies (Study 1C) as the constructs that are the most

conceptually similar to catering (see Table 1).

Based on our conceptualization and definition for catering, we developed five items (listed in Appendix A) to capture this construct. These items are simple to understand, consistent in terms of perspective, and not double-barreled, as Hinkin (1998) recommended.[3] This measure provides a parsimonious representation of the construct, and it aligns with the number of items recommended for assessing most constructs (i.e., four to six items; Hinkin, 1998).

4.1. Studies 1A and 1B: Method

4.1.1. Participants

Data from two different samples were used for this stage of the validation process. Following Hinkin (1998), we first conducted an exploratory factory analysis (EFA) with Sample 1 to determine if all items identified by our measure of catering load onto a single factor. We verified this factor structure with a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Sample 2, and tested the internal consistency of the scale in both samples to ensure it exceeded the recommended cutoff of 0.70 (Hinkin, 1998).

Sample 1. Six-hundred one full-time employees in the U.S. (M_{age} = 38.31, SD = 11.48; 53% male) completed a survey via Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Respondents were compensated $2.00 for completing the 15-minute survey online. All respondents completed the catering scale we developed, along with scales for self-monitoring, authenticity and well-being (for convergent and discriminant validity testing purposes). Descriptive statistics and correlations for this sample can be seen in Table 2.

Sample 2. Three-hundred one students and working adults (M_{age} = 34.08, SD = 12.95; 49% male) from a subject pool at a large university in the Northeastern U.S. completed an online survey and were paid $20 for completing a series of studies in a one-hour session. The survey was part of these studies.

4.1.2. Measures

We used the two samples to conduct exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses on our items, and to distinguish our measure from conceptually similar ones.

Catering. Participants indicated how well each of five statements described them (α = 0.91 in Study 1A, and α = 0.84 in Study 1B), using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "does not describe me at all" to "describes me very well."

Self-monitoring. Self-monitoring captures a person's ability and willingness to modify how others view them. As in Pillow and colleagues (Pillow et al., 2017), we used the 18-item scale (the dichotomous version) composed of two factors: public performance (e.g., "I would probably make a good actor") and other-directedness (e.g., "I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain people"). Higher scores indicate

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[3] To create a measurement construct for catering, we first generated 12 items using a deductive item-generation approach (Hinkin, 1998). We administered the survey to 300 Mturk participants (all working adults, 54% male), and eliminated seven items that either demonstrated low factor loadings (λ < 0.40) in an exploratory factor analysis or that could generate spurious high reliability (e.g., items that had the same item root). We used the resulting five-item scale shown in Appendix A to measure catering.

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations for Study 1A.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Catering	4.40	1.28						
2. Public performing (PP)	4.67	2.25	0.12^{**}					
3. Other directedness (OD)	2.60	1.34	0.16^{**}	0.13^{**}				
4. Self-alienation (SA)	2.40	1.53	0.25^{**}	0.05	0.37^{**}			
5. Authentic living (AL)	5.75	1.08	-0.28^{**}	-0.05	-0.30^{**}	-0.55^{**}		
6. Accepting external influence (AEI)	3.07	1.48	0.48^{**}	-0.002	0.20^{**}	0.52^{**}	-0.46^{**}	
7. Psychological well-being	5.03	1.00	-0.16^{**}	0.11^{**}	-0.32^{**}	-0.65^{**}	0.59^{**}	-0.45^{**}

$*p < .05, ** p < .01.$

more self-monitoring. As noted by Pillow et al. (2017: 395), "this two factor breakdown is dominant in reviews of the self-monitoring construct demonstrating the utility of the two factors."

Authenticity. We used the Wood et al. (2008) authenticity scale, a 12-item measure, rated on a 7-point Likert scale, capturing three domains of authenticity, each through four items: self-alienation (e.g., "I don't really know how I feel inside;" $\alpha_{S1A} = 0.91$ and $\alpha_{S1B} = 0.85$), authentic living (e.g., "I am true to myself in most situations;" $\alpha_{S1A} = 0.86$ and $\alpha_{S1B} = 0.82$), and accepting external influence (e.g., "I usually do what other people tell me to do;" $\alpha_{S1A} = 0.89$ and $\alpha_{S1B} = 0.85$). Higher scores on authentic living and lower scores on self-alienation and accepting external influence indicate more dispositional authenticity.

Psychological well-being. We used Ryff's (1989) well-validated 18-item measure to assess psychological well-being ($\alpha_{S1A} = 0.91$ and $\alpha_{S1B} = 0.87$), with each item rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

4.2. Study 1A results

Convergent validity. To provide evidence for convergent validity, one needs to show that the focal construct is empirically related to theoretically linked constructs, such that it retains its uniqueness, but reflects the underlying similarities with these related constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). As we discussed earlier, catering is theoretically related to self-monitoring and authenticity (as well as other impression management strategies). Thus, we expected measures of these constructs to correlate with catering, but not highly.

As shown in Table 2, the subfactor with the largest statistical linkage with the catering scale was "accepting external influence" ($r = 0.48, p < .001$). The correlation of catering with "self-alienation" was 0.25 ($p < .001$), and the one with "authentic living" was -0.28 ($p < .001$). As for self-monitoring, the correlation of catering with "public performing" was 0.12 ($p < .01$), and the one with "other directedness" was 0.16 ($p < .001$). These results confirm that although catering, authenticity and self-monitoring share some conceptual overlap, catering is a distinct construct, and even the most closely related construct is far from unity.

Discriminant validity. To provide evidence for discriminant validity, one needs to show that catering is unique and distinct from related constructs. We provide evidence for discriminant validity by modeling the focal construct and related ones in a series of one- and two-factor measurement models and using a chi-square difference test to determine if one model has significantly better fit.[4]

The five-item scale of catering resulted in a single factor with all loadings above the recommended cutoff of 0.40 (average loading = 0.81), and the fit statistics from the one-factor model indicated that the one-factor model fit the data well (CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.02). Together, these results

provide evidence for the unidimensional nature of catering.

Next, we examined whether or not catering is independent from either of the two subscales of self-monitoring, and found it was. The fit statistics from the two-factor model of catering and public performing indicated that it fit the data well (CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.05), while those from the one-factor model did not (CFI = 0.57, TLI = 0.51, RMSEA = 0.15, SRMR = 0.18). The difference between the chi-square fit statistic of the one-factor model and the two-factor one exceeded the critical chi-square-value ($\alpha^2 = 1272, p < .001$), supporting a two-factor solution (see Table 3). As for other directedness, the fit statistics from the two-factor model of catering and other-directedness indicated that it fit the data well (CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.03), while those from the one-factor model did not (CFI = 0.77, TLI = 0.71, RMSEA = 0.16, SRMR = 0.14). The difference between the chi-square fit statistic of the one-factor model and the two-factor one exceeded the critical chi-square-value ($\alpha^2 = 613, p < .001$), supporting again a two-factor solution (see Table 3). As shown in Table 3, we found similar results when comparing catering to the subscales of authenticity.

4.3. Study 1B results

Convergent validity. As for Study 1A, we examined correlations among the constructs included in the survey (see Table 4). Providing further evidence consistent with catering being a distinct construct, the subfactor with the largest statistical linkage with the catering scale was "accepting external influence" ($r = 0.44, p < .001$). The correlation of catering with "self-alienation" was 0.22 ($p < .001$), and the one with "authentic living" was -0.13 ($p < .05$). As for self-monitoring, the correlation of catering with "public performing" was -0.08 ($p = .18$), and the one with "other directedness" was 0.11 ($p = .064$).

Factor structure. We also examined the factor structure of catering, with a CFA. The α values for all five items exceeded the recommended 0.40 cut-off value and significantly loaded onto one factor (average loading = 0.72). Fit statistics (CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.10, SRMR = 0.028) indicated that the factor structure fit our data well, thus providing evidence for acceptable measurement model fit for self-reported catering.

Discriminant validity. For the chi-square difference tests, catering and each related construct were separately modeled as one- and two-factor measurement models, as in Study 1A. As shown in Table 5, for all constructs, the two-factor models were preferable to the one-factor ones.

4.4. Study 1C: Method

4.4.1. Participants and procedure

Five-hundred two full-time employees in the U.S. ($M_{age} = 32.67$, SD = 7.45; 53% male) completed a 15-minute online survey via Amazon's MTurk for $2.00. All respondents were told that they would be asked to recall a certain event for a few minutes and write about it. They would then answer a few questions. The instructions read:

Please think about a recent professional interaction you had, such as

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[4] This test examines whether the items from each measure share a common factor, or whether these items are empirically distinct (e.g., Kline, 2005).

Table 3
Results of chi-square difference tests between catering and related constructs (i.e., self-monitoring and authenticity), Study 1A.

| Measurement models | Comparison of 1 versus 2 factors models | | | | | | | | |
| | One-factor model | | | | Two-factors model | | | | Difference |
	α^2	df	CFI	SRMR	α^2	df	CFI	SRMR	α^2
Catering and PP	1682.66***	119	0.57	0.18	410.90***	103	0.92	0.05	1271.76***
Catering and OD	719.90***	44	0.77	0.14	106.58***	34	0.98	0.03	613.32***
Catering and SA	1128.52***	27	0.65	0.22	37.20**	19	0.99	0.01	1091.32***
Catering and AL	1558.85***	27	0.57	0.26	53.85***	19	0.99	0.02	1505.01***
Catering and AEI	1085.13***	27	0.70	0.17	91.39***	19	0.98	0.02	993.74***

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Table 4
Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations for Study 1B.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Catering	4.21	1.26						
2. Public performing	5.52	2.33	−0.08					
3. Other directedness	2.79	1.39	0.11	0.15**				
4. Self-alienation	2.72	1.47	0.22**	−0.02	0.26**			
5. Authentic living	5.61	1.04	−0.13*	0.02	−0.21**	−0.31**		
6. Accepting external influence	3.31	1.37	0.44**	−0.14*	0.12**	0.51**	−0.28**	
7. Psychological well-being	5.03	0.87	−0.12*	0.07	−0.24**	−0.55**	0.50**	−0.33**

* p < .05, ** p < .01.

Table 5
Results of chi-square difference tests between catering and related constructs (i.e., self-monitoring and authenticity), Study 1B.

| Measurement models | Comparison of 1 versus 2 factors models | | | | | | | | |
| | One-factor model | | | | Two-factors model | | | | Difference |
	α^2	df	CFI	SRMR	α^2	df	CFI	SRMR	α^2
Catering and PP	671.47***	119	0.51	0.15	254.19***	103	0.87	0.06	417.28***
Catering and OD	171.91***	44	0.84	0.09	61.71**	34	0.97	0.04	110.21***
Catering and SA	550.30***	27	0.53	0.23	34.94*	19	0.99	0.03	515.35***
Catering and AL	548.26***	27	0.54	0.22	84.66***	19	0.94	0.04	463.61***
Catering and AEI	401.02***	27	0.68	0.14	68.64***	19	0.96	0.04	332.38***

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

a job interview, an internal negotiation or a presentation in front of a client. You can focus on an interaction that went well or one that did not go so well. Please think of one such interaction that occurred in the last six months or so. Please think about the situation you were in for a minute or so before moving to the next screen.

On the next screen, participants were asked to briefly describe the type of interaction they had thought of and who they interacted with (e.g., an interviewer, a colleague etc). We then asked them to think back to that interaction and indicate the extent to which they used a range of behaviors. We included catering and some common impression management strategies.

4.4.2. Measures

Unless otherwise noted, participants answered all questions using 7-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 = not at all to 7 = very much.

Catering. Participants indicated the extent to which they catered to the other person's likely interests using the five items listed in Appendix A (e.g., "I positioned the message for what I believed to be the other person's expectations," $\alpha = 0.92$).

Dishonesty. Next, they indicated the extent to which they were dishonest during the interaction they had thought of on three items (from Marr & Cable, 2014): "I answered the other person's questions as honestly as possible [reverse-scored]," "I found myself exaggerating or making up information," and "I manipulated my interview responses to

appear like a better applicant / candidate / partner" ($\alpha = 0.77$).

Impression management strategies. Participants then answered questions about self-promotion ($\alpha = 0.92$), ingratiation ($\alpha = 0.88$), exemplification ($\alpha = 0.80$), intimidation ($\alpha = 0.93$), and supplication ($\alpha = 0.95$), each tactic measured through five items.

Self-reported emotions. Participants indicated the extent to which they felt various emotions. We assessed anxiety with three items (anxious, nervous, tense: $\alpha = 0.91$, see Brooks & Schweitzer, 2011) and inauthenticity with three other items (inauthentic, true to myself [reverse-scored], morally tainted; $\alpha = 0.60$; as in prior research, see Gino et al., 2015).[5] We assessed feeling uncomfortable with three items (uncomfortable, uneasy, discomfort: $\alpha = 0.96$) and instrumentality with three items (I was being instrumental, strategic, and purposeful: $\alpha = 0.75$).

Evaluation of the interaction. Participants also indicated the extent to which (1) they thought they had something good to offer in the interaction, (2) they were a strong candidate, (3) they got what they wanted out of the interaction, and (4) they believed the interaction

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[5] Prior research (Gino et al., 2015) has found that inauthenticity is experienced as morally impure. Thus, we included the item morally tainted to assess inauthenticity in some of our studies. When excluding this item, the measure of inauthenticity has a higher reliability ($\alpha = 0.71$). When using the two-item measure of inauthenticity, we find that the correlation with catering is still not significant (r = 0.04, p = .35).

Table 6
Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations for Study 1C.

	Mean	SD
1. Catering	4.83	1.54
2. Dishonesty (DIS)	2.48	1.43
3. Self-promotion (SP)	4.82	1.63
4. Ingratiation (ING)	3.44	1.61
5. Exemplification (EXE)	3.70	1.52
6. Intimidation (INT)	1.98	1.47
7. Supplication (SUP)	1.95	1.37
8. Anxiety (ANX)	3.79	1.86
9. Inauthenticity (INA)	2.27	1.18
10. Discomfort (UNC)	3.07	1.92
11. Instrumentality (INS)	4.36	1.52

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Catering										
2. Dishonesty	0.18**									
3. Self-promotion	0.37**	0.10*								
4. Ingratiation	0.30**	0.31**	0.35**							
5. Exemplification	0.22**	0.22**	0.40**	0.57**						
6. Intimidation	−0.05	0.33**	0.05	0.41**	0.43**					
7. Supplication	−0.07	0.37**	−0.01	0.38**	0.38**	0.83**				
8. Anxiety	0.08	0.17**	0.13**	−0.05	0.05	−0.06	−0.001			
9. Inauthenticity	0.03	0.55**	−0.06	0.18**	0.12**	0.28**	0.35**	0.27**		
10. Discomfort	−0.07	0.24**	−0.06	−0.05	0.03	0.06	0.12**	0.72**	0.47**	
11. Instrumentality	0.31**	−0.14**	0.24**	0.13**	0.10*	−0.10*	−0.08	−0.11*	−0.19**	−0.19**

	Had something good to offer	Was a strong candidate	Got what they wanted	Interaction went well
1. Catering	0.34**	0.21**	0.22**	0.23**
2. Dishonesty (DIS)	−0.28**	−0.30**	−0.09	−0.16**
3. Self-promotion (SP)	0.32**	0.29**	0.13**	0.17**
4. Ingratiation (ING)	0.032	−0.01	0.14**	0.13**
5. Exemplification (EXE)	0.034	0.029	0.09*	0.09*
6. Intimidation (INT)	−0.28**	−0.23**	0.004	−0.07
7. Supplication (SUP)	−0.34**	−0.27**	−0.03	−0.10*
8. Anxiety (ANX)	−0.16**	−0.10*	−0.21**	−0.29**
9. Inauthenticity (INA)	−0.39**	−0.38**	−0.26**	−0.32**
10. Discomfort (UNC)	−0.38**	−0.29**	−0.34**	−0.49**
11. Instrumentality (INS)	0.39**	0.35**	0.30**	0.38**

*p < .05, ** p < .01.

went well. We included these measures to examine whether they are correlated with catering and other common impression management strategies.

4.5. Study 1C results

Convergent validity. We first examined correlations among the constructs included in the survey (see Table 6). The subfactor with the largest statistical linkage with the catering scale was "self-promotion" ($r = 0.37$, $p < .001$). The correlation of catering with "ingratiation" was 0.30 ($p < .001$), the one with "exemplification" was 0.22 ($p < .001$), the one with "intimidation" was −0.05 (*ns*), and the one with "supplication" was −0.07 (*ns*). In Table 6, we also present correlations between the various scales we included and participants' evaluation of the interaction.

Discriminant validity. As in Studies 1A and 1B, we conducted chi-square difference tests by modeling catering and each related construct measured in Study 1C separately as one- and two-factor measurement models. As shown in Table 7, and as expected, for all constructs, the two-factor models were preferable to the one-factor models.

4.5.1. Discussion

Together, the results of Studies 1A, 1B and 1C show that catering is a distinct construct that differs from authenticity, self-monitoring and also from various impression management strategies focused on in prior work.

5. STUDY 2: Catering and authenticity in the field

In Study 2, we investigate the effects of catering and authenticity in a professional field setting—entrepreneurial pitch competitions—to test whether people's lay beliefs about catering are correct. To do so, we use objective performance metrics, namely the entrepreneurs' success in attracting investor funding. In this study, we did not use an experimental manipulation. Rather, we measured both catering and being authentic through a self-reported measure.

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants and procedure

One hundred sixty-six entrepreneurs ($M_{age} = 28.1$, $SD = 1.24$; 32.5% female) participated in a "fast-pitch" competition held at a private university in the northeast United States. We did not choose the sample size in this study: it resulted from the number of entrepreneurs who took part in the competition.

Each entrepreneur presented his or her venture idea to a panel of three judges. The ideas pitched were all in the earliest stages of their lifecycle, and none of the ventures had received any external financing. The judges were experienced, active members of angel investment groups (see Huang, Wu, Bao, Hudson, & Bolle, 2017). After each pitch, judges filled out a brief scoring card.

At the end of the event, the judges collectively deliberated to choose ten semi-finalists who would be invited to participate in the final round of the competition. After each entrepreneur made their pitch, we had

Table 7
Results of chi-square difference tests between catering and related constructs (i.e., dishonesty, impression management, anxiety, discomfort, instrumentality), Study 1C.

Measurement models	Comparison of 1 versus 2 factors models								
	One-factor model				Two-factors model				Difference
	α^2	df	CFI	SRMR	α^2	df	CFI	SRMR	α^2
Catering and DIS	568.74[***]	20	0.77	0.17	42.72[***]	13	0.99	0.02	526.02[***]
Catering and SP	1558.24[***]	35	0.58	0.24	99.38[***]	26	0.98	0.02	1458.86[***]
Catering and ING	1287.29[***]	35	0.61	0.24	143.01[***]	26	0.96	0.03	1144.28[***]
Catering and EXE	971.68[***]	35	0.66	0.22	67.53[***]	26	0.99	0.02	904.15[***]
Catering and INT	1848.93[***]	35	0.53	0.32	99.05[***]	26	0.98	0.02	1749.88[***]
Catering and SUP	1803.80[***]	35	0.58	0.33	50.90[**]	26	0.99	0.01	1752.90[***]
Catering and ANX	1139.80[***]	20	0.61	0.25	33.10[**]	13	0.99	0.01	1106.70[***]
Catering and INA	314.25[***]	20	0.86	0.13	50.13[***]	13	0.98	0.02	264.12[***]
Catering and UNC	1764.64[***]	20	0.50	0.29	44.56[***]	13	0.99	0.015	1720.08[***]
Catering and INS	396.38[***]	20	0.83	0.15	49.73[***]	13	0.98	0.02	346.66[***]

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

them answer a few questions about their presentation and indicate their gender.

5.1.2. Measures

Authenticity. Entrepreneurs indicated the extent to which they felt they were being themselves when presenting by answering two items: "Reflecting on the pitch you just delivered, to what extent do you feel you were being authentic?" and "Reflecting on the pitch you just delivered, to what extent do you feel you were being genuine?" ($\alpha = 0.90$).

Catering. Entrepreneurs also indicated the extent to which they felt they were "catering to the judges' likely interests" and "positioning the message for what you believed to be the judges' expectations" ($\alpha = 0.72$).

Competition outcome. We used real outcomes from the pitch competition to distinguish between the winners and the non-winners. A value of 1 was assigned to all entrepreneurs who were chosen by the panel of judges to move on to the final round of the competition (i.e. a winner), and a value of 0 was assigned to all entrepreneurs who were not chosen.

Perceived venture outcomes. In addition to the actual outcome of the competition, judges completed a brief scoring card after each entrepreneur's pitch. Using 5-point scales (1 = not at all, 5 = very much), judges rated entrepreneurs on viability, or "the likelihood that this entrepreneur will continue to take this idea forward in the next year" ($r = 0.71$), "the propensity that this venture will receive outside funding in the next year" ($r = 0.68$), and "the likelihood that this entrepreneur will achieve profitability at some point in the future" ($r = 0.75$).

Control variable. We asked the entrepreneurs to identify their gender, as gender is a demographic variable that has been shown to affect funding decisions (e.g. Brooks, Huang, Kearney, & Murray, 2014; Lee & Huang, 2018). Though other variables may affect these decisions, we focused on gender since it is a salient characteristic and one we could capture without being disruptive to the entrepreneurs' pitches.

5.1.3. Results

Table 8 reports the descriptive statistics of the measures we collected. As shown, catering was negatively correlated with feelings of authenticity ($r = -0.18, p < .05$).

Table 9 reports the results of our hypothesis testing. In our analyses, we measured the effects of catering and authenticity independently in Models 1, 4, 7, 10 (for authenticity), and Models 2, 5, 8, 11 (for catering). The combined models are Models 3, 6, 9, 12.

Hierarchical binary logistic regression analyses were used in Models 1, 2, and 3. As shown in Model 2, catering in pitching entrepreneurial ideas to judges significantly predicted lower odds of being one of the

winners of the competition, consistent with our theorizing. Authenticity, instead, significantly predicted higher odds of being one of the winners of the competition (see Model 1).

We further examined the effects of catering and authenticity on judges' ratings of entrepreneurs' presentations. As Table 9 shows, there was a negative and significant effect of catering on the perceived likelihood that an entrepreneur would continue furthering the venture idea and receive outside funding. There was a positive and significant effect of authenticity on the perceived likelihood that an entrepreneur would continue furthering the venture idea and achieve profitability. As shown in Table 9, when we have both catering and authenticity in the model, catering is driving the additional R^2 above and beyond any effects of authenticity for both Furthering Venture Idea (Model 6) and Propensity for Funding (Model 9).

5.1.4. Discussion

These results show that in professional settings—here, a professional entrepreneurial presentation setting—individuals who choose to cater to their audience achieve worse results than those who are authentic. In our next studies, we extend these findings and identify a causal mechanism that might explain these results.

6. STUDY 3: Experiencing catering versus authenticity

In Study 3A and 3B, we examine the psychological experience of catering versus being oneself. Our main goal with these studies is to show that when people try to just "be themselves" during an interpersonal first meeting, they experience lower anxiety, discomfort, and instrumentality than those who adopt a catering approach.

6.1. Study 3A: Method

6.1.1. Participants and procedure

Four-hundred and seven ($M_{age} = 36.31$, $SD = 9.24$; 49% male) individuals recruited on MTurk completed an online study in exchange for $2. We aimed for 150 participants in each condition, but only reached 407 by the pre-determined time of closure of the study.

We randomly assigned participants to one of three conditions: catering vs. authenticity vs. control, and asked them to recall a past event and write about it in detail for 5–10 min. In the Catering condition, the instructions were as follows (bold added):

Please think about a recent professional interaction you had, such as a job interview, an internal negotiation, or a presentation in front of a client. Please think of **a situation where you positioned your statements for what you believed to be the expectations or interests of the person you were interacting with.**

Table 8
Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations for Study 2.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Gender	0.32	0.47						
2. Authenticity	3.95	0.76	0.02					
3. Catering	3.07	1.33	0.03	−0.18*				
4. Winner	0.06	0.24	−0.04	0.17*	−0.15			
5. Likelihood of Taking Forward	3.05	1.18	−0.11	0.16*	−0.40**	0.07		
6. Propensity to Invest	2.90	0.43	−0.07	0.03	−0.16*	0.18*	0.06	
7. Likelihood of Success	2.77	0.82	0.05	0.26**	−0.03	0.17*	0.03	−0.05

*p < .05, ** p < .01.

Table 9
Results of Regression and Logistic Regression Analyses [a] for Study 2.

	Winner of Competition			Furthering Venture Idea			Propensity for Funding			Likelihood of Profitability		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12
Gender	−0.43 (0.68)	−0.30 (0.67)	−0.35 (0.69)	−0.11	−0.10	−0.10	−0.07	−0.06	−0.06	−0.05	−0.05	−0.05
Authenticity	1.15* (0.55)		1.00* (0.57)	0.16*		0.10	0.03		0.01	0.26***		0.26***
Catering		−0.50* (0.28)	−0.34 (0.25)		−0.40***	−0.38***		−0.15*	−0.15*		−0.03	0.02
Observations	166	166	166									
Log likelihood	70.04	71.66	68.15									
Chi-squared	5.54*	3.92*	7.42*									
Degrees of Freedom	2	2	3									
F	3.34**			3.37*	16.91***	11.94***	0.45	2.39*	1.59	6.03**	0.29	4.01***
R^2	0.21			0.04	0.17	0.18	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.07	0.01	0.07
Δ R^2	0.04			0.03*	0.16***	0.14***	0.00	0.02*	0.02*	0.07***	0.01	0.07***
Adj. R^2	0.15			0.03	0.16	0.17	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.06	0.00	0.05

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.
[a]Tabled values are standardized regression weights.

In the Authenticity condition, the instructions were as follows (bold added):

Please think about a recent professional interaction you had, such as a job interview, an internal negotiation or a presentation in front of a client. Please think of **a situation where you were yourself when interacting with another person. That is, you were genuine and authentic with the person you were interacting with.**

In the Control condition, the instructions were as follows:

Please think about a recent interaction you had with another person at work. Other people engaging in this type of introspective task frequently write about instances where they had a conversation with a colleague over a lunch break, worked on a project with someone else, or spent time catching up with a colleague.

In all conditions, we asked participants to describe the situation in detail and how they felt so that a person reading their essay would understand what happened.

Next, they answered questions about the event they described using 7-point scales (1 = not at all, 7 = very much) and then indicated their age and gender.

6.1.2. Measures

Self-reported emotions. Participants indicated the extent to which they felt various emotions. As in Study 1C, we assessed anxiety (anxious, nervous, tense: α = 0.93), inauthenticity (inauthentic, true to myself, morally tainted; α = 0.67), and felt discomfort (uncomfortable, uneasy, sense of discomfort: α = 0.96). We also measured instrumentality with the same three items as in Study 1C (α = 0.84).[6]

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[6] In a series of factor analyses, in Studies 3A and 3B, we found that these emotions loaded onto three different factors: felt discomfort (with the six items measuring anxiety and discomfort), inauthenticity, and instrumentality. We report here the four measures, but the results do not change in nature and significance when considering felt discomfort as an aggregate measure resulting from the six items (α = 0.95). We follow the same approach in Study 3B.

The inauthenticity measure serves as an additional manipulation check in the analyses presented below.

Impression of the target. Participants then indicated the extent to which they felt the person they interacted with was powerful, influential, and a key contact in their career (α = 0.84).

Evaluation of the interaction. Participants also indicated the extent to which (1) what they were trying to get out of the interaction was important to them, (2) the interaction went well, and (3) they got what they wanted out of the interaction. We included these questions to control for potential differences between conditions in the success of the interaction participants recalled and wrote about, and how important the interaction was to them.

Manipulation check. Participants indicated whether the interaction they had written about was one in which they had been themselves or one in which they had catered their statements to another person's interests and expectations.

6.1.3. Results

Table 10 reports the descriptive statics of the main measures by condition. For the analyses below, the nature and significance of the results did not change when we controlled for how successful, according to the participants, their interaction had been, the importance of what they wanted out of the interaction, what they got out of it or when we controlled for participants' impression of the target (see Table 10). Table 11 reports partial correlations.

Manipulation check #1. All participants correctly answered the manipulation check.

Manipulation check #2: Inauthenticity. Inauthenticity varied by condition, $F(2, 404) = 15.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.07$. Participants reported feeling more inauthentic when catering rather than just being themselves ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.46$ vs. $M = 1.80$, $SD = 1.00$, $p < .001$) or as compared to the control condition ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 1.01$, $p < .001$).

Anxiety. Anxiety varied by condition, $F(2, 404) = 21.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.09$. Participants reported feeling more anxious when

Table 10
Descriptive Statistics of the Measures Collected in Study 3A and Results from ANOVAs.

	Anxiety Mean (SD)	Inauthenticity	Discomfort	Instrumentality
Authencity condition	3.22 (1.89)	1.80 (1.00)	2.62 (1.78)	4.85 (1.53)
Catering condition	3.75 (2.04)	2.52 (1.46)	3.16 (2.19)	5.62 (1.26)
Control condition	2.32 (1.66)	1.89 (1.01)	2.19 (1.65)	4.15 (1.72)
One-way ANOVA (*F* statistics, and *p*-value)	21.05***	15.05***	9.19***	32.49***
With controls				
- Powerful target	16.58***	17.18***	10.40***	21.97***
- Important outcome	18.22***	14.75***	8.22***	26.59***
- Interaction went well	23.97***	16.85***	11.33***	33.92***
- Got what you wanted	25.99***	19.06***	13.64***	31.54***

*p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Table 11
Partial Correlations for Study 3A.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Felt discomfort[1]						
2. Inauthenticity	0.56**					
3. Instrumentality	0.15**	0.02				
4. Powerful target	0.04	−0.09	0.33**			
5. Important outcome	0.10*	0.04	0.25**	0.21**		
6. Interaction went well	−0.50**	−0.50**	0.14**	0.20**	0.05	
7. Got what you wanted	−0.34**	−0.32**	0.26**	0.24**	0.18**	0.75**

*p < .05, ** p < .01.
Notes: [1]Six-item measure.

focusing on catering rather than just being themselves ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 2.04$ vs. $M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.89$, $p = .023$) or as compared to the control condition ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.66$, both $ps < 0.001$).

Discomfort. Discomfort also varied by condition, $F (2, 404) = 9.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$. Participants reported feeling more discomfort when catering rather than just being themselves ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 2.19$ vs. $M = 2.62$, $SD = 1.78$, $p = .021$) or as compared to the control condition ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.65$, $p < .001$).

Instrumentality. Instrumentality varied by condition, $F (2, 404) = 32.49$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.14$. Participants reported higher levels of instrumentality when catering rather than just being themselves ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.26$ vs. $M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.53$, $p < .001$) or as compared to the control condition ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 1.72$, $p < .001$).

6.1.4. Discussion

Consistent with Hypothesis 2, these results show that when people try to just be themselves during an interpersonal first meeting, they experience lower anxiety, discomfort and instrumentality than those who adopt a catering approach. These results did not change in nature nor significance when we controlled for other aspects of the situation, such as participants' perceptions of the target's power and their desire for the prospective job.

6.2. Study 3B: Method

In Study 3B, we compare the effects of catering to those of being inauthentic. We do so to show that these two approaches are different. Though catering does engender some inauthenticity, as we explained in our theorizing, catering and inauthenticity are distinct and produce different emotions.

6.2.1. Participants and procedure

Two-hundred seventy-six ($M_{age} = 35.82$, $SD = 8.69$; 50% male) individuals recruited on MTurk completed an online study in exchange for $2. We aimed for 150 participants in each condition, but only reached 276 by the pre-determined time of closure of the study. We followed the same procedure and used the same measures as in Study 3A, but with one difference. We randomly assigned participants to two

conditions only: catering vs. inauthenticity. In the Inauthenticity condition, the instructions were as follows (bold added):

Please think about a recent professional interaction you had, such as a job interview, an internal negotiation or a presentation in front of a client. Please think of **a situation where you were not yourself when interacting with another person. That is, you were not genuine and inauthentic with the person you were interacting with.**

6.2.2. Results

All participants correctly answered the manipulation check. As we expected, using catering or inauthenticity as an approach to the interaction participants thought and wrote about led to differences in their emotional experience. Participants reported lower anxiety ($\alpha = 0.92$) in the catering condition than in the inauthenticity condition ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.98$ vs. $M = 4.39$, $SD = 1.74$, $t(274) = -4.20$, $p < .001$, d = 0.50), lower inauthenticity ($\alpha = 0.73$; $M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.39$ vs. $M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.13$, $t(274) = -14.36$, $p < .001$, d = 1.74), and lower discomfort ($\alpha = 0.97$; $M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.97$ vs. $M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.74$, $t(274) = -7.41$, $p < .001$, d = 0.89), but they also reported greater instrumentality ($\alpha = 0.74$; $M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.14$ vs. $M = 4.94$, $SD = 1.36$, $t(274) = 3.46$, $p = .001$, d = 0.42). The nature and significance of these results did not change when controlling for how successful, according to the participants, their interaction had been, the importance of what they wanted out of the interaction, what they got out of it or when we controlled for participants' impression of the target.

6.2.3. Discussion

These results show that catering and inauthenticity are two different approaches people can use in interpersonal first meetings, and that these approaches lead to distinct emotional and psychological experiences for those using them even though they both engender inauthentic feelings.

7. STUDY 4: Catering hinders performance

So far, we found that catering (1) leads to less favorable evaluations than expressing one's authentic thoughts and (2) causes actors to feel more anxious and instrumental than when expressing their authentic thoughts. To replicate the performance findings of Study 2 in a different professional context and further examine the psychological mechanisms underlying them, we conducted a lab experiment. Conducting this study in the laboratory allowed us to hold contextual factors related to the interview structure constant.

7.1. Method

7.1.1. Participants and procedure

Two hundred fifty-eight individuals ($M_{age} = 22.70$, $SD = 4.54$; 58.5% female) recruited through a university-affiliated research pool participated in a job interview study for $20. Among the participants,

235 were students, and 20 were currently employed. Two hundred forty-four participants reported having job interview experience. We determined our sample size based on an estimated effect size $d = 0.4$ and 80% power.

We randomly assigned participants to one of four conditions in a 2 (role: interviewer vs. applicant) X 2 (approach: catering vs. authenticity) between-subjects design.

7.1.2. Mock job interview experiment

Participants came to the behavioral lab in groups of six or eight to complete an interview study. After being randomly assigned to one of the four conditions, each participant was taken to a different room, where they received their role materials and instructions for preparing for the interview. This package included a description of a company (El Fresco, a supermarket chain) and job role (customer service manager), adapted from Van Iddekinge, Raymark, and Roth (2005) and more recently used in Carson and Cable (2014).

Interview role (interviewer vs. applicant) manipulation. Participants assigned to the applicant role received basic information about the company and the job role, while participants in the interviewer role were given more detailed information about both the company and the position, including important criteria needed to determine whether an applicant was suitable for the position.

Applicants were told that the purpose of the interview was to give the interviewer an opportunity to determine whether the applicant's personality, attitude, and abilities were a good fit for the job role. Interviewers were told that the goal of the interview was to evaluate the applicant.

Approach to interview (catering vs. authenticity) manipulation. In the catering condition, participants were instructed to cater to the interviewer's interests. They were specifically told to answer the interviewer's questions in a way that they believed met the interviewer's expectations. In the authenticity condition, participants were instructed to be themselves during the interview. We asked them to answer the interviewer's questions in a way that was authentic and genuine.

Interview structure. To focus the content of the interview on the job role and to control for the influence of interview-interviewee dynamics on evaluations (Mischel, 1977; Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), we encouraged interviewers to structure their interview. Specifically, we told them that a typical interview has three main components: (1) informing the applicant about the role and company, (2) asking the applicant questions aimed at assessing whether he or she is a good fit for the position, and (3) asking the applicant if he or she has any questions for the interviewer. Interviewers were given a blank sheet of paper on which to plan their interview by outlining the main questions and comments that they wanted to discuss during the 15-minute interview. Similarly, the applicants were informed about the same structure and were given a blank sheet of paper on which to prepare for the interview by listing the questions they wanted to ask and the notes they wanted to use during the 15-minute interview.

After reading the materials and preparing for the interview, applicants were taken to an interviewer room. Next, interviewers and applicants completed a 15-minute mock job interview. After the interview, applicants were taken back to their individual rooms, and both the interviewers and applicants completed a post-study questionnaire. In the post-study questionnaire, interviewers evaluated applicants' performance, while applicants rated their own anxiety level and completed a manipulation check. Finally, all participants answered demographic questions (age and gender).

7.1.3. Measures

Anxiety. Applicants rated the extent to which they felt anxious, nervous, and tense ($\alpha = 0.92$) on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all,

7 = very much) during the interview.[7]

Applicants' performance. Interviewers rated the extent to which they thought the applicant was a good fit for the job and evaluated applicants by indicating their agreement with four items adapted from Morrison and Phelps (1999) ("I think this candidate would fulfill the responsibilities specified in the job description," "I think this candidate would perform the tasks that are expected as part of the job," "I think this candidate would meet performance expectations," and "I think this candidate would adequately complete job responsibilities") on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The reliability was high ($\alpha = 0.92$), and we used an average of these items for our analyses.

Authenticity. To ensure that our interview approach manipulation was effective, we asked applicants to indicate their feelings of authenticity. Applicants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt they were being authentic and genuine during the interview on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). Reliability was high ($\alpha = 0.93$); we averaged the two ratings to create a composite measure of authenticity.

Catering. Applicants also indicated the extent to which they felt they were "catering to the interviewers' interests" and "positioning answers for what you believed to be the interviewers' expectations" on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). Because the reliability was sufficiently high ($\alpha = 0.84$), we averaged the two ratings for a measure of catering.

7.1.4. Results

Manipulation check. We first checked whether our interview approach manipulation was successful by analyzing the self-reported feelings of authenticity and catering. Applicants in the "be yourself" condition felt more authentic during the interview ($M = 5.55$, $SD = 1.36$) than did those in "catering" condition ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.68$), $t(1\,2\,7) = 5.37 p < .001$, $d = 0.94$. Similarly, applicants assigned to the catering condition reported higher levels of catering ($M = 6.03$, $SD = 0.83$) than did applicants in the "be yourself" condition ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.50$), $t(1\,2\,7) = 5.37 p < .001$, $d = 1.16$.

Anxiety. As depicted in Fig. 2, participants reported feeling more anxious in the catering condition ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.34$) than they did in the being yourself condition ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 1.08$), $t(1\,2\,7) = -3.87 p < .001$, $d = 0.67$.

Applicants' performance. Applicants in the being yourself condition received higher performance ratings ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.66$) than did those in catering condition ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.76$), $t(1\,2\,7) = 2.37 p = .019$, $d = 0.40$ (see Fig. 2).

Mediation. To examine whether experienced anxiety mediated the relationship between interview approach and performance evaluations, we followed the steps Baron and Kenny (1986) recommended. The first and second criteria hold that the independent variable should influence both the dependent variable and the mediators. The prior analyses indicated that these two criteria were met, as interview approach (being oneself vs. catering) had a significant effect on anxiety and performance. To assess the third and fourth criteria, we conducted a hierarchical ordinary least-squares (OLS) regression analysis predicting performance from the interview approach (being oneself vs. catering) (Step 1) and anxiety (Step 2). The third criterion is about the mediator significantly predicting the dependent variable with the independent variable as a control. This criterion was also met: controlling for the interview approach, anxiety significantly predicted lower performance ($\beta = -0.19$, $t = -2.09$, $p = .039$).

To complete the test of mediation for anxiety, the fourth criterion specifies that the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable should decrease when the mediator is controlled for. After

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[7] In this study, we focus only on anxiety as a potential mediator. We consider the role of both anxiety and instrumentality as mediators in Study 5.
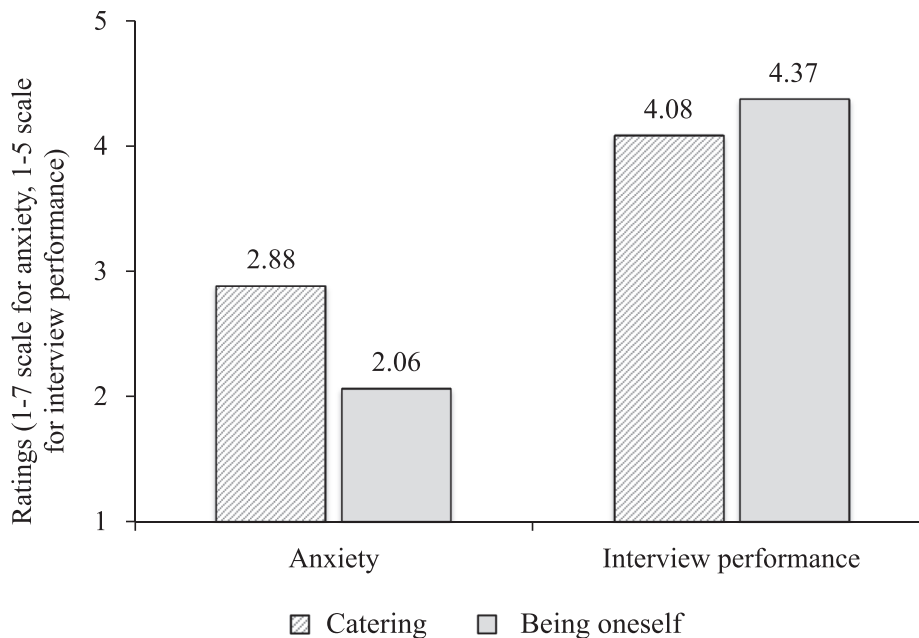
Fig. 2. Anxiety and Applicants' Performance, Study 4.

controlling for anxiety, the effect of interview approach (being oneself is coded as 1, catering is coded as 0) on performance decreased significantly (from $\beta = 0.21$, $p = .019$ to $\beta = 0.14$, $p = .12$). To test whether the size of the indirect effect of interview approach on performance through anxiety differed from zero, we used a bootstrap procedure to construct bias-corrected confidence intervals based on 10,000 random samples with replacement from the full sample (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The 95% bias-corrected confidence interval excluded zero (0.007, 0.143), indicating a significant indirect effect.

7.1.5. Discussion

These results suggest that applicants who catered to the interviewers' interests and expectations performed worse in the job interview than did those who were authentic, thus providing further support for Hypothesis 1. Consistent with Hypotheses 2 and 3, compared to being authentic, catering increased anxiety and, as a result, hindered performance.

8. STUDY 5: Catering raises discomfort, feels instrumental and hinders performance

In Study 5, we provide a conceptual replication of Study 4, and examine alternative psychological mechanisms explaining why catering results in lower performance. Specifically, we focus on the role of perceived instrumentality in addition to anxiety and test the theoretical model depicted in Fig. 1, where instrumentality and felt discomfort mediate the relationship between catering and lower levels of performance in the job interview.

8.1. Method

8.1.1. Participants and procedure

Three-hundred seventy-nine ($M_{age} = 32.74$, $SD = 7.34$; 55% male) individuals recruited on MTurk completed an online study in exchange for $3. As the instructions explained, top performers (as rated by a research assistant with expertise in hiring, and based on whether she would be interested in hiring them for the job) would also receive a $10 bonus. We aimed for 150 participants in each condition, and reached 379 with valid data (i.e., produced a video) by the pre-determined time of closure of the study.

Table 12

Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations for Study 5.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Manipulation check: catering	5.39	1.04				
2. Felt discomfort	4.00	1.81	0.19**			
3. Inauthenticity	2.88	1.43	0.09+	0.40**		
4. Instrumentality	4.93	1.18	0.52**	0.11**	0.12**	
5. Performance in the interview	4.05	1.53	−0.42**	−0.27**	−0.19**	−0.33**

+ $p < .05$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

The instructions informed participants that they would read the posting for a job and then prepare a 2-3 min long video to upload in which they spoke about themselves and the job they were asked to imagine applying to. They would then be asked to answer a few questions. The job posting is presented in Appendix B. Participants were told to imagine that the video would be sent to the hiring manager, and were reminded to read the instructions needed for the video carefully.

We randomly assigned participants to one of three conditions: catering vs. authenticity vs. control. In the Catering condition, the instructions read: "*In the video, please position your statements for what you believe to be the expectations or interests of the person who will watch the video to review applicants.*" In the Authenticity condition, the instructions read: "*In the video, please be yourself. That is, try your best to be genuine and authentic with the person who will watch the video to review applicants.*" In the Control condition, the instructions read: "*In the video, please remember that a person will watch the video to review applicants.*"

After participants uploaded their videos, they answered the same set of questions used in Studies 3A and 3B about anxiety ($\alpha = 0.94$), inauthenticity ($\alpha = 0.64$), discomfort ($\alpha = 0.96$), and also instrumentality ($\alpha = 0.75$). Since anxiety and discomfort loaded onto the same factor, we averaged the six items into an index of felt discomfort ($\alpha = 0.96$). Again, we use inauthenticity in our analyses as an additional manipulation check.

Finally, participants answered a manipulation check for catering with the same five items as in Study 1C (see Appendix A; e.g., "I talked about what I thought the hiring manager wanted to hear;" $\alpha = 0.88$), and then answered questions about their gender and age.
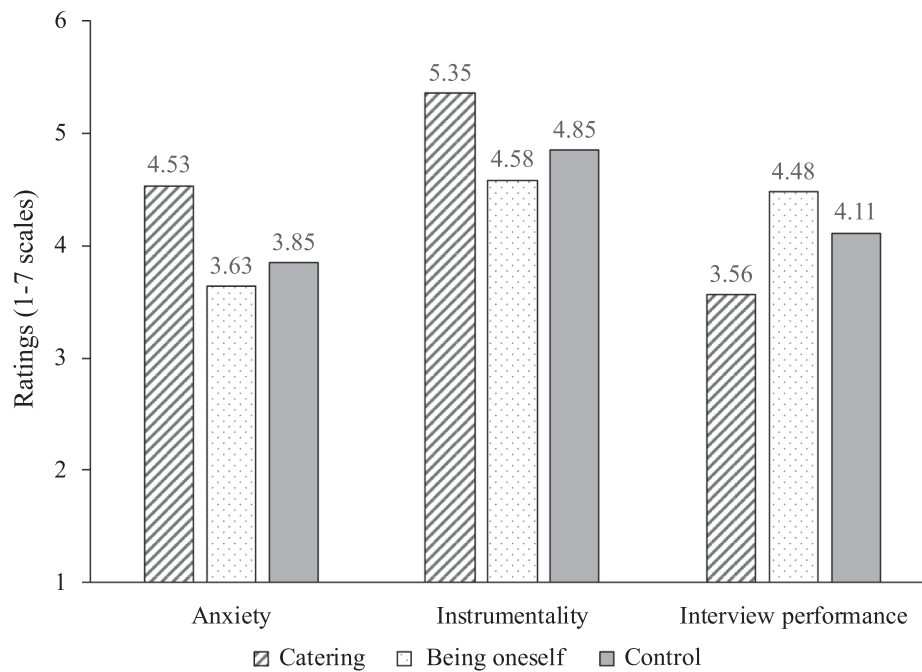
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Fig. 3. Anxiety, Instrumentality and Performance, Study 5.

8.1.2. Measures

Applicants' performance. A research assistant with expertise in hiring, and who was blind to the study hypotheses and conditions, watched all the videos and rated each of them on the following questions (all 7-points scales, from 1 = not at all, to 7 = very much): (1) How likely is it you'd offer the person the job if you were the hiring manager, based on this video? (2) How well did the participant do in the video? and (3) How good of an impression did the candidate make on you based on this video (imagining you were the hiring manager)? We averaged the answers to these questions into a performance index for each participant (α = 0.92).

9. Results

Table 12 reports descriptive statistics and correlations among the constructs measured in the study.

Manipulation check #1: Catering. Self-reported catering varied by condition, $F(2, 376) = 28.48, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.13$. Applicants assigned to the catering condition reported higher levels of catering ($M = 5.88, SD = 0.75$) than did applicants in the authenticity condition ($M = 4.98, SD = 0.96; p < .001$), and those in the control condition ($M = 5.30, SD = 1.16; p < .001$).

Manipulation check #2: Inauthenticity. Inauthenticity was highest in the catering condition ($M = 3.26, SD = 1.48$), more so than in the authenticity condition ($M = 2.56, SD = 1.22; p < .001$), and in the control condition ($M = 2.82, SD = 1.43; p = .015$), $F(2, 376) = 7.96, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.04$.

Felt discomfort. Participants' felt discomfort also varied by condition, $F(2, 376) = 8.68, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.04$ (see Fig. 3). Participants in the catering condition reported higher levels of felt discomfort ($M = 4.53, SD = 1.73$) than did applicants in the authenticity condition ($M = 3.63, SD = 1.78; p < .001$), and those in the control condition ($M = 3.85, SD = 1.82; p = .003$).

Instrumentality. Participants' sense of instrumentality also varied by condition, $F(2, 376) = 14.83, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.07$. Participants in the catering condition reported higher levels of instrumentality ($M = 5.35, SD = 1.12$) than did applicants in the authenticity condition ($M = 4.58, SD = 1.06; p < .001$), and those in the control condition ($M = 4.85, SD = 1.22; p = .001$).

Applicants' performance. Participants in the catering condition received lower performance ratings ($M = 3.56, SD = 1.51$) than did those in authenticity condition ($M = 4.48, SD = 1.42; p < .001$) or in the control condition ($M = 4.11, SD = 1.52; p = .004$), $F(2, 376) = 12.38, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = 0.06$.

Mediation. We next conducted mediation analyses to test whether felt discomfort and perceived instrumentality mediated the relationship between catering and lower performance. The results, based on bootstrapping (with 10,000 iterations), supported the model depicted in Fig. 1, suggesting that felt discomfort (indirect effect = −0.120, SE = 0.05, 95% CI = [−0.239, −0.042]) and instrumentality (indirect effect = −0.177, SE = 0.07, 95% CI = [−0.338, −0.068]) both served as mediators. After controlling for both felt discomfort and instrumentality, the effect of catering on performance decreased significantly (from $\beta = -0.55, p = .004$ to $\beta = -0.25, p = .16$). Felt discomfort ($\beta = -0.18, p < .001$) and instrumentality ($\beta = -0.35, p < .001$) both predicted performance.[8]

10. Discussion

The results of Study 5 provide more evidence for Hypothesis 1, showing that catering hinders performance in a job interview. Compared to behaving authentically or to a control condition, catering negatively impacted the outcome because trying to anticipate and fulfill others' preferences feels instrumental and increases anxiety. The findings also provide support for Hypotheses 2 and 3: catering leads to higher levels of anxiety and instrumentality as compared to being authentic and also as compared to a control condition, and this explains the link between catering and lower levels of performance.

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[8] In our theorizing, we suggested that one source of anxiety is the inauthenticity the caterer experiences. This suggests that inauthenticity mediates the relationship between catering and higher levels of felt discomfort. We found this was in fact the case (indirect effect = 0.207, SE = 0.09, 95% CI = [0.040, 0.405]), using again bootstrapping (with 10,000 iterations). After controlling for inauthenticity ($\beta = 0.38, p < .001$), the effect of catering on felt discomfort decreased significantly (from $\beta = 0.18, p = .003$ to $\beta = 0.12, p = .025$).

11. General discussion

In this paper, we examined how catering to another person's interests and expectations in interpersonal first meetings (e.g., job interviews)—compared with expressing one's authentic thoughts and feelings—influences outcomes (e.g., getting the job). We show that this strategy is distinct from other approaches previously identified in impression management research (Studies 1A, 1B, and 1C), and that it does not produce the benefits people expect. In a pilot study, we found that most people use catering to try to make a good impression on the target and that they believe this strategy will be effective by leading to positive outcomes. However, across different contexts, we demonstrate that these lay beliefs are wrong. In a field study in which entrepreneurs pitched their ideas to potential investors, we showed that catering harmed investors' evaluations (e.g., the likelihood of getting funded), while being authentic improved them (Study 2). In two online studies (Studies 3A and 3B), we examined why this outcome difference may occur and found that people experienced greater anxiety and instrumentality when they cater to another person's preferences than when they behave authentically (or compared to a control condition). Finally, in two laboratory studies (Studies 4 and 5), we replicated the detrimental effect of catering on the outcome of a job interview, and we further tested the psychological mechanisms explaining this effect. We found that catering, as compared to being oneself or as compared to a control condition, leads to worse evaluations because it increases anxiety (Studies 4 and 5) and feelings of instrumentality (Study 5). Taken together, these results suggest that although people believe using catering in interpersonal first meetings will lead to successful outcomes, the opposite is true: catering creates undesirable feelings of instrumentality for the caterer, increases anxiety, and ultimately hinders performance.

11.1. Theoretical and practical implications

Our work makes several theoretical contributions that fundamentally advance existing research. First, we contribute to the management and organizational behavior literature by examining the role of two different practical approaches (e.g., catering vs. being oneself) during high-stakes interactions such as job interviews and entrepreneurial pitches. Across the world, people find themselves in professional interactions like these every day. They may follow the common advice of trying to make a good impression in an attempt to manage the target's evaluation, advice that is generally interpreted as "pleasing the other side" by catering to their interests and expectations. However, past research on interviews has overlooked the fact that impression management tactics that are other-focused or involve some exaggeration or deception may cause anxiety and distress, which may lead to lower performance (Schmit & Ryan, 1992). In addition, the entrepreneurship literature has largely ignored the possibility that entrepreneurs who engage in impression management to interest financiers and resource holders may be concealing other important parts of their message as a result, impeding their ability to receive the types of resources they so critically need (Huang & Pearce, 2015; Zott & Huy, 2007).

Second, by examining how catering influences people's performance in interpersonal first meetings, we clarify the boundaries of flattery in interactions with others. Across a wide range of situations, flattery has been found to be a successful tactic to secure positive evaluations (Vonk, 2002; Westphal & Stern, 2007). Similarly, one may expect catering to flatter the target and thus result in favorable outcomes for the actor. Here, however, we provide evidence from both the laboratory and the field that catering to another person's interests and expectations, while flattering to the target, can be less effective than just being yourself. Catering, in fact, makes the actor feel more anxious and inauthentic, with detrimental effects on the actor's performance.

Third, this research advances our understanding of the relevance of psychology to impression management. To date, impression

management research has paid scant attention to people's psychological experience as they manage others' impressions. Our work shows that impression management tactics cannot be fully understood without carefully considering their emotional implications. We find that catering, rather than just being oneself, increases anxiety and feelings of instrumentality and thus hinders performance.

Finally, our work contributes to research on authenticity. Although there previously has been no "coherent body of literature on authentic behavior" (Harter, 2002), interest in the concept of authenticity has revived over the past decade both in social psychology and with the emergence of the "positive psychology" movement (Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006; Seligman, 2002). In our research, we draw upon this body of research to demonstrate the effectiveness of being one's authentic self compared to catering, a more common approach in interpersonal interactions. We extend existing work by showing that authenticity has important implications not only for an actor's psychological experience (e.g., his or her emotions) but also for performance in high-stakes interpersonal settings.

11.2. Directions for Future research

Despite these contributions, our work has limitations that point to possible directions for future research. First, further studies could test the boundary conditions for the detrimental effects of catering on performance. For instance, having experience with this tactic or high ability in properly executing a catering approach may result in higher rather than lower performance. The success of any form of impression management depends on whether the target perceives the actor to be sincere and authentic (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Liden & Mitchell, 1988). People who are suspected of strategically managing impressions are more likely to be seen as selfish, cold, manipulative, and untrustworthy (Stern & Westphal, 2010). Thus, skill is critical to effective impression management. Consequently, impression management attempts by politically skilled individuals are more likely to be perceived as authentic than those by less politically skilled individuals (Treadway, Ferris, Duke, Adams, & Thatcher, 2007).

Examining boundary conditions for the detrimental effects of catering on performance could also shed light on the differences between our findings and those of previous research on the positive effects of assertive/other-focused impression management tactics (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, & Gilstrap, 2008). In addition to flattering the target, these tactics tend to be effective because they make candidates look more attractive in the eyes of those evaluating them. This is likely to occur only if candidates are actually comfortable (rather than anxious) in promoting themselves. Factors that reduce their anxiety, from individual differences such as their level of self-confidence to situational factors such as knowing that "everybody behaves inauthentically" in specific contexts or the availability of information about the target's expectations, may lead to the type of positive effects of assertive/other-focused impression management tactics found in prior work.

Another possible boundary condition future research could explore is for the person relying on an authentic approach to be rather self-focused and preoccupied – so much so to miss important social clues. This is a case where the phenomenon we investigated may reverse.

Future studies could also deepen our understanding of the emotional and cognitive consequences of catering as an impression management strategy by investigating its different forms. For example, in our studies, we focused on *in-the-moment* catering—that is, situations in which actors try to act like a different person in the moment, which makes them feel anxious. However, actors could also engage in *a priori* catering—namely, by taking actions to cater to the target before interacting with him or her (e.g., by cutting one's hair before an interview to appear more professional to the interviewer). A priori catering may be more effective than in-the-moment catering, as it gives actors more time to prepare. Similarly, catering may involve both verbal and nonverbal inauthentic behaviors, which may affect actors differently. For

instance, an actor may construe nonverbal catering attempts as more authentic than verbal ones, thus resulting in lower levels of anxiety and potentially better performance in interpersonal first meetings such as job interviews.

Future research could further examine why catering hinders performance. We suggested that the greater anxiety and instrumentality catering produces are detrimental to the caterer's cognitive resources, thus negatively affecting the caterer's self-evaluation and self-presentation to the target. But it is also possible that the target of catering perceives anxiety and inauthenticity from the person relying on this tactic. People can tell when others are being inauthentic (Korb, With, & Niedenthal, 2014). In fact, they register that inauthenticity in their bodies, experiencing a rise in blood pressure (Butler, Egloff, & Wilhelm, 2003). This physiological response helps explain our discomfort around people who seem "fake." Further examining whether the target of catering sees through this approach could advance our understanding of the link between catering and performance.

Future research could also examine factors that may enhance authenticity. Rogers (1959) proposed that people are naturally authentic at an early age but that the constraints of social life erode this authenticity. Similarly, Harter, Stocker, and Robinson (1996) and Neff and Harter (2002) demonstrated that people are more authentic when they feel their true self is accepted by others. Though we investigated interpersonal first meetings, we suspect that catering is less common (and perhaps even more detrimental) in established relationships. Future work should focus on increasing our understanding of how and when individuals should aim for authenticity in professional settings.

Future work could also investigate why people commonly view authenticity as an ineffective approach to interpersonal first meetings and professional interactions more generally. Authenticity has been correlated with an increase in self-esteem and life satisfaction (Goldman & Kernis, 2002; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008), relationship satisfaction (Brunell et al., 2010), psychological well-being (Ménard & Brunet, 2010; Pisarik & Larson, 2011), and mindfulness (Lakey, Kernis, Heppner, & Lance, 2008)—all outcomes that are beneficial to one's engagement and productivity at work. Authenticity also correlates with a decrease in verbal defensiveness (Lakey et al., 2008), depressive symptoms (Ryan et al., 2005), anxiety, and stress (Ryan et al., 2005). Thus, one might ask why people view authenticity as problematic and do not behave authentically more often. In our initial pilot study, we found that most people believe catering to another person's interests and expectations is a more promising strategy than being oneself for securing positive outcomes and would use this strategy in high-stakes interpersonal first meetings. Examining why these beliefs exist would improve our understanding of how to best help people use strategies that are effective in their interactions.

Finally, in our work, we investigated contexts in which catering goals were likely to be at odds with authenticity goals—in interpersonal first meetings when individuals doubt that their true selves are what evaluators desire. Also, we manipulated this variable in our laboratory experiments to ensure independence between a catering condition and an authenticity condition. However, in life, catering motives may sometimes align with authentic, ideal-self motives. That is, who we think others want us to be and who we really are may overlap. We suspect that individuals are most at ease and least anxious in situations in which catering and authenticity motives align, and future work could explore this possibility. Relatedly, future research could explore the role of *in*authenticity that catering engenders. We suggested that the greater the perceived overlap between the caterer's set of interests and the target's expectations, the less inauthentic catering may feel to the caterer, thus making the differences we find in our studies between catering and being authentic less pronounced. Future studies could examine the potential moderating role of the perceived overlap between the caterer's interests and the target's expectations.

12. Conclusion

Making a positive impression can mean the difference between employment and unemployment, or having an active social life and being alone. In this research, we have found that although people believe that catering to a target's interests and expectations is more effective in assuring a good impression than simply being oneself, the opposite is true: authenticity in interactions with those we are trying to impress can lower anxiety and perceived instrumentality, and improve performance.

Authors note

Credit authorship contribution statement

Francesca Gino: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Resources, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing. **Ovul Sezer:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Resources, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing. **Laura Huang:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Resources, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing.

Appendix A

A.1. Measuring catering

A.1.1. Scale used in Study 1A

1. In one-on-one interactions, I cater to the other person's likely interests.
2. When talking to someone, I position the message for what I believe to be the other person's expectations.
3. When interacting with another person, I talk about what I think the other person wants to hear.
4. In talking to someone else, I use statements that address what the other person expects.
5. In professional or personal interactions with another person, I present arguments that I think are consistent with this person's interests.

A.1.2. Scale used in Study 1C

1. I catered to the other person's likely interests.
2. I positioned the message for what I believed to be the other person's expectations.
3. I talked about what I thought the other person wanted to hear.
4. I used statements that addressed what the other person expected.
5. I presented arguments that I thought were consistent with the other person's interests.

Appendix B

B.1. Job posting used in Study 5

B.1.1. Senior Manager, Analytic Specialist

The role is data and analytically intensive. Successful candidates will offer a strategic perspective, sound business judgment, deep analytical capabilities, and a collaborative working style. They will possess strong intellectual curiosity, and a passion for achieving practical business impact.

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