Article:
Madan, S, Basu, S orcid.org/0000-0002-4457-4247, Ng, S et al. (1 more author) (2022) The Breadth of Normative Standards: Antecedents and Consequences for Individuals and Organizations. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 172. 104181. ISSN 0749-5978

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2022.104181

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The Breadth of Normative Standards: Antecedents and Consequences for Individuals and Organizations

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Acknowledgements: Parts of this research were conducted when Krishna Savani was at Nanyang Technological University. We thank Elison Lim, Michael W. Morris, Chi-Yue Chiu, Mohit Wadhawan, and seminar participants at SPSP, AOM, Columbia Business School, University of Michigan, University of Leeds, and Virginia Tech for their helpful feedback. We are grateful to Velvetina Lim, Ee Hwee Lau, Dayana Bulchand, Andrea Low, Sylvia Chin, Neeraj Pandey, Caroline Zoufaly, Sydney Johnson, Tara Hackett, Shermaine Yeo, and Pei May Ng for invaluable assistance with this research.

Cite: Madan, S., Basu, S., Ng, S., & Savani, K. (in press), “The Breadth of Normative Standards: Antecedents and Consequences for Individuals and Organizations”, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*

Abstract

Normative standards refer to ideals to which people, products, and organizations are held. The present research (*N*=2,224) investigates a novel construct—the breadth of normative standards, or the number of criteria that normative standards need to meet. Using archival and primary data in both organizational and consumer contexts, Studies 1-2 found that Indians' and Singaporeans' normative standards in several domains (e.g., a good job, a good body wash) needed to satisfy more criteria than those of Americans and the British. Using incentive-compatible designs, Studies 3-5 identified two downstream consequences of broader normative standards; decision-makers with broader standards pay greater attention to detail when evaluating others' work, and people with broader standards search for more options, even at a cost, before making a choice. This research complements past work on norms as prevalent behaviors, values, and attitudes by examining norms as standards, and documents its consequences for employees and organizations.

Keywords: normative standards; criteria; culture; attention to detail; maximizing

The Breadth of Normative Standards: Antecedents and Consequences for Individuals and Organizations

What does a job need to offer to be considered a good job? Some people might think that a good salary is sufficient to qualify a job as a good job, but others might think that a job does not only need to have a good salary but also offer paid leave, health insurance, yearly increments, career advancement, flexible work arrangements, and so on, to be considered a good job. People can differ in whether they think each of these criteria is required for a job to be considered a good job, in other words, people can have *narrower* or *broader* normative standards. Further, if people think that a criterion is required, they can differ in the minimum *level* of the criterion that they think is needed to consider that the criterion has been satisfied. For example, is a minimum wage of $7.25 per hour sufficient to qualify as a good salary, or does it need to be at least $25 per hour? This example illustrates two dimensions of normative standards, i.e., the *breadth* of criteria (e.g., a good salary, vacation days), and the *level* of each individual criterion (e.g., the amount of the salary, the number of vacation days) that define normative standards.

Past research has studied the *level* of normative standards in the academic domain (e.g., how high a student's GPA needs to be for them to be considered a good student, e.g., Goyette & Xie, 1999; Naumann et al., 2012). However, to our knowledge, little to no research exists on the second dimension, that is, the *breadth* or the number of criteria that need to be met to achieve a normative standard. The breadth of normative standards can have numerous consequences in organizational contexts. For example, the breadth of employees' normative standards for a good job can influence which jobs they apply for and which jobs they choose to stay in, and what employers need to offer in a job to ensure that their organization can recruit and retain the right talent. Similarly, organizations' breadth of normative standards for a good employee can influence how easily they can fill job openings, how they evaluate and promote employees, and what expectations they have of employees' productivity. In the marketplace, the

breadth of consumers' normative standards can shape the benefits that products and brands need to offer. For example, consumers with narrow normative standards may think that a good shampoo must clean their hair well. In contrast, those with broad normative standards believe that a good shampoo must clean their hair and scalp, prevent dandruff, increase hair volume, make their hair shiny, have natural ingredients, protect their hair from sun damage, and so on. If consumers have broad normative standards in a domain, then companies need to design products that offer multiple benefits, which would require them to allocate more resources for research and development, packaging, marketing, legal claims, and so on.

Our focus on normative standards is distinct from past research that has conceptualized *norms* as prevalent behaviors (Gelfand et al., 2011; Savani et al., 2015), or as prevalent attitudes, values, and beliefs (Shteynberg et al., 2009; Zou et al., 2009). In addition to being defined in terms of prevalent behaviors, norms are also defined by their content (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). The new Oxford American Dictionary (Stevenson & Lindberg, 2010) lists two definitions of the word "norm"—first, "a pattern, especially of social behavior, that is expected or typical of a group," and second, "a required standard; a level to be complied with or reached." A normative standard refers to a set of attributes that serves as a point of comparison for an exemplar (e.g., a job, an employee, a student) to be considered "good" (Biernat & Eidelman, 2007; Miller & Prentice, 1996). For example, a focus on behavioral norms would ask, "What are the behaviors that good employees commonly engage in?" A manager might respond that a good employee completes the assigned work on time, promptly responds to emails, and is nice to their coworkers. In contrast, a focus on normative standards asks the question, "What are all the requirements that an employee must meet to be considered a good employee?" A manager might respond that an employee needs to be intelligent, hardworking, and a team player to be considered a good employee. Of course, the two definitions can overlap, such that behaviors that good employees commonly engage in might be included in the normative standard of a good employee. However, the normative standard likely involves a number of abstract

characteristics that are not behavioral in nature. Although people routinely judge and evaluate others against normative standards, past research on norms in organizational behavior has largely focused on the first definition of a norm—prevalent behaviors, values, and attitudes. In this research, we focus on the second definition of norms—i.e., normative standards.

Research on Normative Standards

Past research on normative standards has focused on standards that are defined on a single dimension (e.g., "Any attribute of a person or of a collection of people that serves as a point of comparison for an individual;" Miller & Prentice, 1996, p. 800). Thus, the focus is on a specific *criterion* that individuals need to surpass to meet the standard. Research in educational psychology has found that East Asian and Asian American students perform better in mathematics tests than European American students in part because Asian parents have higher standards for academic achievement for their children (Chen & Stevenson, 1995). Research in social psychology has found that self-aware individuals were more likely to achieve normative standards because they are more aware of the gaps between themselves and the normative standards (Wicklund, 1975). Self-aware individuals were also more satisfied with their achievements and rewarded themselves more when they met normative standards (Diener & Srull, 1979).

People use normative standards to not only judge themselves but also to judge others. For example, immigration policies in many economically developed countries may seek immigrants who satisfy a number of normative criteria, such as age, education, and linguistic proficiency (Gale & Staerkle, 2021). The normative standards that people use to judge others may shift based on their stereotypes about other groups (Biernat, 2003). For example, people label a Black student as "smart" when they compare the student to their perceived normative standard of other Black students, but consider the student as objectively less smart when they compare the student to their perceived normative standard for a White student (Biernat, 2012).

Empirical research on normative standards has predominantly focused on standards defined by a single dimension. In contrast, in real life, normative standards are likely defined on multiple dimensions. For example, the normative standard of a good employee might be predominantly determined by employees' job performance; however, other factors are also relevant, such as whether the employee engages in citizenship behaviors and gets along well with their colleagues. To our knowledge, no existing research has studied the breadth of normative standards. Given that employees and organizations are routinely judged based on whether they meet normative standards, in the present research, we investigate two key questions: What factors explain the variation in people's breadth of normative standards, and what are the organizational consequences of broad vs. narrow normative standards?

Antecedents of Breadth of Normative Standards

How do people define normative standards? In their norm construction model, Kahneman and Miller (1986) proposed that any specific stimulus or category (e.g., "a good job") recruits a set of elements that are central to the stimulus or category in people's memory (e.g., a high salary). Importantly, they argued that the memory activation process does not stop at the central elements but instead continues to propagate in an associative network with decreasing strength. That is, each activated element, in turn, activates its neighboring elements in the memory network, which in turn activate more neighboring elements, and so on. The strength of the activation signal is assumed to decline as one moves further away from the central elements (Anderson, 1983; Ratcliff & McKoon, 1981). The elements of a category that are initially activated are likely central to the normative standard (e.g., when people think of "a good job," they might first think of "a high salary"). As more and more elements are activated in the associative memory network, the subsequently activated elements would not be as central to the category (e.g., "a short commute"). At some point, activated elements would be so weakly connected to the category of interest (e.g., "sabbatical options") that people might not consider them relevant.

What prompts people to consider fewer or more criteria when they are thinking about a normative standard? Although not directly about norms, past work on causal attribution suggests that people's national background might be relevant (Choi et al., 1999). Specifically, in countries such as Japan, Korea, India, and China, people consider more attributes as relevant when making judgments than in countries such as the US, the UK, and Germany (Choi et al., 1999; Kitayama et al., 2009). For example, when asked to explain a person's behavior (e.g., why someone helped a person involved in a car accident) and presented with a large number of attributes that might or might not be relevant to the explanation (e.g., the color of the car), Korean participants considered fewer attributes as irrelevant (i.e., considered more attributes as relevant) compared to Americans (Choi et al., 2003). Similarly, when asked to explain an acquaintance's behavior, Indian adults invoked a wider range of potential causes outside the individual than did American adults (Miller, 1984). Overall, these findings suggest that people from multiple Asian countries consider a broader range of factors when making judgments and decisions (Choi et al., 1999).

Extending these findings to the domain of normative standards suggests that parallel cross-national differences might be observed when people are considering whether various criteria are essential components of normative standards. Specifically, when compared to people from the US, individuals from countries such as India, China, and Korea might consider a broader range of criteria as relevant to normative standards. Cross-national differences in individuals' normative standards can be reflected not only in the judgments of individuals but also in the decisions of organizations. For example, organizations in countries in which managers have broader normative standards would likely want employees who meet more criteria; and companies selling products and services in countries in which customers and clients have broader normative standards would likely have to provide goods and services that meet more criteria. We test these ideas in the current studies.

Consequences of Breadth of Normative Standards

In addition to influencing the behavior of organizations, we submit that the breadth of normative standards would also influence individuals' organizationally-relevant behaviors. Our specific hypotheses draw on the insight that the broader people's normative standards, the harder it would be to meet them. We theorize that this difficulty in meeting broader normative standards influences people's behavior in two key ways—one, making them more detail-oriented when evaluating others, and two, increasing their tendency to maximize, i.e., search for more options, when they are making choices.

Greater attention to detail. Attention to detail is a highly valued skill in the workplace and is considered one of the key dimensions of organizational culture (O'Reilly et al., 1991). Companies in which employees are more attentive to detail are more innovative (Sok & O'Cass, 2015), more efficient (Adler et al., 1999), and produce higher quality products (Naveh & Erez, 2004). Past research has identified factors that influence attention to detail. For example, employees are more attentive to details when they are more familiar with the stimuli (Forster, 2008), when they are experiencing stress and anxiety (Derryberry & Reed, 1998), and when they have a prevention focus (Forster & Higgins, 2005).

We posit that broader normative standards will lead people to pay more attention to detail. Research on multi-criteria decision-making suggests that when people evaluate a target against a set of criteria, they assess whether or not the target satisfies all the criteria required (Bettman et al., 1998). When normative standards are broad, decision-makers would need to evaluate a target on several different attributes. For example, consider a job description that lists two criteria as the normative standard for a good candidate (e.g., good GPA and relevant work experience). A recruiter evaluating prospective candidates against these two criteria can quickly scan resumes for GPA and work experience, while glancing over the other information. Now consider another job description that lists eight criteria (e.g., good GPA, relevant work experience, leadership experience, a specific degree, specific functional skills, ability to work with tight deadlines, experience with customers, professional certifications, and willingness to

travel). The recruiter would now have to carefully study each candidate's resume to assess whether they meet the eight criteria, forcing them to pay greater attention to detail.

In this research, we examine two instantiations of greater attention to detail. Past research suggests that a more detailed-oriented information processing style leads decision-makers to notice finer distinctions among options (Forster et al., 2008; Schwarz & Bless, 2005). For example, imagine that a recruiter is evaluating four candidates on two criteria (e.g., a minimum GPA and relevant work experience). Whether any of the four candidates meet these two criteria should be readily apparent without too much detail-oriented processing on the part of the recruiter. Thus, the recruiter may just form an overall impression of each candidate through this process, not a detailed understanding of all the ways in which the candidates differ from each other. Now imagine that the recruiter is evaluating the four candidates on eight criteria (e.g., a minimum GPA, relevant work experience, leadership experience, a specific degree, specific skills, experience with customers, professional certifications, and willingness to travel). To identify whether any of the four candidates meet these eight criteria, the recruiter would probably have to carefully study each resume. As a consequence, the recruiter would probably form a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which the candidates are distinct from one another and be able to differentiate more among the candidates.

Additionally, the mere presence of more criteria is likely to lead to greater variation in evaluation judgments. Building on the previous scenario, imagine the recruiter needs to assign a score out of ten to each candidate based on how well they meet the two vs. eight criteria. In the case of a narrow normative standard, if the two criteria are weighted with scores s1 and s2 (with s1 + s2 = 10), a candidate's score can take one of 4 values: 0, s1, s2, 10. For example, if the two criteria (i.e., minimum GPA and work experience) are both assigned a score of five points, then a candidate can either fail both and get a score of zero, meet one criterion and get a score of five points, or meet both and get a score of ten points. In the case of a broad normative standard, it is likely that different candidates will satisfy a different number and combination of

criteria, and hence, will be awarded different scores. For example, if the eight criteria all have a score of 1.25 (to total up to a maximum of ten points), a particular candidate's score can take any of the following values: 0, 1.25, 2.5, 3.75, 5, 6.25, 7.5, 8.75, and 10, depending on how many of the eight criteria they satisfy. Of course, here we assumed that all criteria are equally weighted, but the overall point holds even if different criteria have different weights. Thus, broader normative standards are likely to lead people to differentiate the options more.

As the second instantiation of greater attention to detail, we also examine whether managers with broader normative standards would micromanage their subordinates more. Micromanagement means "to direct and control a person, group, or a system with excessive or unnecessary oversight or input" (Serrat, 2017, p. 474), and is widely denounced as a "corporate disease" in the popular press (Canner & Bernstein, 2016, p. 1). Research has found that micromanagement reduces employee morale (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). However, little research has investigated the antecedents of managers' micromanagement. We propose that if managers with broader normative standards are more detail-oriented, then they would pay closer attention to their subordinates' work to ensure that their subordinates' work satisfies all the criteria. It is likely that subordinates perceive such close attention to their work as micromanagement.

Tendency to Maximize. A second potential consequence of broad normative standards is the tendency to maximize, that is, to "seek the best and requires an exhaustive search of all possibilities" (Iyengar et al., 2006, p. 143). Maximizing reflects people's motivation to select the best option from a set of options by searching exhaustively, as "one cannot be sure that one is making the best choice without examining all the alternatives" (Schwartz et al., 2002, p. 1185). Consistent with this definition, maximizers search through more options before making a choice (Chowdury et al., 2009; Dar-Nimrod et al., 2009; Polman, 2010; Yang & Chiou, 2010). In fact, maximizers are willing to sacrifice resources (e.g., time and money) to view more options before making a choice (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2009).

Maximizing is relevant in both personal and organizational domains. On the positive side, maximizing has been found to improve the quality of people's choices. For example, job seekers scoring in the upper half of a maximizing scale secured jobs with 20% higher starting salaries than those scoring in the lower half (Iyengar et al., 2006). On the other hand, these individuals experienced more negative emotions during the job search process and were also less content with the jobs they accepted (Iyengar et al., 2006). Research has documented other negative psychological outcomes of maximizing, including reduced happiness, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, and greater regret and self-blame (Newman et al., 2018; Roets et al., 2012; Schwartz et al., 2002).

When people hold broader normative standards, they might have a harder time finding options that would meet their normative standards. For example, any option would have a greater likelihood of not matching the standards when evaluated against eight different criteria compared to when evaluated against two criteria. Thus, decision-makers with broader normative standards might find it hard to find an option that meets all their criteria and continue searching for more options in the hope of finding one that meets the normative standard. On the other hand, if people are faced with a narrow normative standard, they can more quickly identify options that meet all criteria and thus can quickly abort their search. Thus, those with a narrow normative standard do not need to search for as many options as those with a broad normative standard. A careful reader may note that with a narrow normative standard, it is more likely that people can find an option that meets all criteria and thus do not have to satisfice with suboptimal options; with a broad normative standard, people might not find an option that meets all criteria, and thus would have to satisfice with a suboptimal option. However, consistent with Schwartz et al. (2002), we define maximizing as the number of options searched, not as whether the chosen option meets all criteria.

Overview of Studies

Studies 1 to 4 examine whether there is variation in the breadth of normative standards

across countries. Studies 1a-1b (latter pre-registered) examine whether, compared to people from the US, those from India believe that to meet the normative standards across domains, individuals, objects, and organizations need to meet more criteria. The next two studies test whether these findings replicate in organizational and consumer domains. Study 2a tests whether job advertisements posted on LinkedIn™ by the same companies for similar positions include more criteria in India than in the US. Study 2b tests whether best-selling body washes on Amazon™ stated that the product met more criteria in Singapore than in the UK.

After identifying the breadth of normative standards as a novel dimension that may vary across countries, the subsequent studies investigate the downstream consequences of the breadth of normative standards by both measuring and manipulating it. The next two studies test whether decision-makers with broader normative standards (Study 3a) or those asked to adopt broader standards (Study 3b, pre-registered) differentiate among options more. Studies 4a-4b (both pre-registered) test whether managers with broader normative standards micromanage their employees more in a lab setting. Study 5a tests whether people with broader normative standards seek more options before making an incentive-compatible choice, even when additional options come at a cost, thus, demonstrating a greater tendency to maximize. Finally, Study 5b (pre-registered) tests whether cross-country differences in the breadth of normative standards mediate cross-country differences in the tendency to maximize.

Across all studies, we report all participants, all experimental conditions, and all measures collected. Data, materials, and code for the studies are available at https://osf.io/en5a9. Additional analyses are reported in the Supplementary Materials.

Studies 1a-1b

These two studies tested our key prediction that Indians have broader normative standards than US Americans. Study 1a used a free-listing task in which participants were asked to write down all criteria that they think need to be met to attain a normative standard in a given domain.

Study 1a

Participants. Using the G*Power software (Faul et al., 2007), we conducted a power analysis for an independent samples t-test with a medium effect size, Cohen's $d = .40$, which is representative of psychology as a whole (Gervais et al., 2015). This analysis suggested a sample size of 100 per cell to detect the effect with 80% power and $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed). We recruited 110 students enrolled in two classes at a private university in Western India (M_{age} = 19.77 years; 63 women, 47 men; all Indian citizens). We posted the study for 100 participants at the behavioral lab pool at a private university in the Northeast US; 78 participants (M_{age} = 22.47 years; 48 women, 24 men, three others, three unreported; all US citizens) completed the study. US participants completed the study on computers in the lab in exchange for $5. Indian participants were run in a classroom and completed the study on paper; consistent with local norms, they were not paid as the task was done in a classroom setting. As English was the language of instruction at the university in India, we ran this study (and all subsequent studies) in English.

Procedure. First, we asked participants, "*Please list all the criteria that are required for a job to be considered a good job in your society.*" We then provided participants with 20 blank spaces. Participants could list as many or as few criteria that they felt were required for a job to be considered a good job. Next, we asked participants, "*Please list all the criteria that are required for an employee to be considered a good employee in your society,*" and again presented them with 20 blank spaces. The total number of criteria participants listed for both domains formed our dependent measure.

Results. We conducted an independent samples *t*-test with the total number of criteria listed by participants across the two domains as the dependent variable, and participants' country as the independent variable. We found that Indian participants listed significantly more required criteria, $M = 21.04$, 95% CI [19.97, 22.10], $SD = 5.62$, than American participants, M = 15.67, 95% CI [13.57, 17.76], $SD = 9.30$, $t(186) = 4.54$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .73$. See

Supplementary Materials for domain-specific analyses.

Study 1b

Study 1b tested the generalizability of our findings by including four different domains. Further, to avoid potential differences across countries in the motivation to write, we provided participants with lists of criteria and asked them to choose each criterion that is required for the normative standard. We first conducted a pilot study to create the lists of criteria to be presented to participants across different domains. Please see Supplementary Materials for the Pilot Study.

Participants. The hypotheses, sample size, participant inclusion criteria, and methods for this study were pre-registered (https://osf.io/exm69). Although we obtained a large effect size of $d = .73$ in Study 1a, as this study was conducted online, we expected a smaller effect size closer to $d = .23$. A power analysis with $d = .23$, $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed), and power = 80% indicated that we need to recruit a total of 596 participants. As per the preregistered protocol, we posted the study for 300 participants each from US and India on Amazon Mechanical Turk. In response, 328 participants from the US and 325 participants from India completed the study. All participants from the US completed the study from unique IP addresses. We excluded 38 participants from India who did not complete the study from unique IP addresses. The final sample consisted of 328 participants from the US (M_{age} = 38.00 years; 174 women, 142 men, one other, 11 unreported) and 287 participants from India (M_{age} = 30.63 years; 89 women, 166 men, 32 unreported).

Procedure. We presented participants with four domains, a good employee, a good job, a good house, and an attractive person, in random order. For each domain, we presented participants with a list of 20 criteria and asked them to choose the criteria that are required in their society to fulfill the normative standard. For example, in the good employee domain, we asked participants, “From the following list, please indicate whether or not each criterion is required for someone to be considered a good employee in your society?” For each of the 20

criteria presented, participants could indicate their response by clicking either “Yes” or “No” provided below the criterion.

As per the pre-registered analysis plan, we calculated the total number of criteria chosen across all domains, which formed a measure of the overall breadth of normative standards.

Results. As per the pre-registered analysis plan, we conducted an independent samples *t*-test with the total number of criteria chosen by participants as the dependent variable and participants’ country as the independent variable. Overall, Indians chose more criteria, M = 65.97, 95% CI [64.49, 67.47], SD = 12.85, than Americans, M = 52.00, 95% CI [50.66, 53.35], SD = 12.35, $t(613) = 13.70$, $p < .001$, Cohen’s $d = 1.11$. See Supplementary Materials for domain-specific analyses.

Discussion

Using free-listing and force-choice tasks, respectively, Studies 1a-1b provided evidence that Indians have broader conceptions of normative standards than US Americans. While Study 1a provided evidence for our hypothesis, participants were run in different conditions across the two countries (in a lab vs. in the classroom; using a computer vs. paper-pen). In all subsequent studies, we ensured that the procedure was identical across countries. Further, it is possible that American participants did not want to write much for some unexplained reason, whereas Indian participants were more motivated to write a lot. We believe this is an unlikely possibility given that US participants were paid, but Indian participants were not; as monetary rewards are likely to increase motivation, we would expect Americans to write more. Further, English is the first language for nearly all Americans but not for most Indians; as people write more in their first language than in their second language (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001), we would again expect Americans to write more. Nevertheless, Study 1b addressed this concern by not using a free-listing task. Apart from the specific alternative explanations mentioned above, we acknowledge that it is impossible to rule out all possible confounds in cross-national comparisons. Therefore, Studies 3-5 measure and manipulate the key construct—breadth of normative standards—and

investigate its downstream outcomes.

Studies 2a-2b

Studies 2a and 2b tested whether this cross-national difference would be visible in job advertisements posted in the US and India, and in the number of benefits listed on top-selling body washes on Amazon™ in UK and Singapore, respectively.

Study 2a

Human Resource (HR) managers who recruit employees often have a number of characteristics in mind that they want an ideal employee for that position to possess (Cole et al., 2007; Safon, 2007). They then draw up a recruitment advertisement listing these characteristics as the requisite criteria that applicants for the job should fulfill. If Indians hold broader normative standards compared to US Americans in the domain of a "good employee," then we would expect HR managers in India to define an "ideal employee" using more characteristics than do HR managers in the US. As a result, job advertisements in India should include more required qualifications than in the US. We tested this prediction using job ads posted in India and the US for the same position in the same company on the same portal (i.e., on LinkedIn.com).

Method. We created a list of 24 American companies that have a substantial presence in India (e.g., Amazon, Citibank, Pfizer). We next asked two research assistants who were blind to the hypothesis to search the most recent job advertisements posted by these companies in India between July – September 2020. For each job, the research assistants noted the total number of qualifications that the company had listed in the Indian job advertisement. Next, the research assistants searched for advertisements for the same job from the same company in the US. Once again, they noted the total number of qualifications that the same companies had required in the American job advertisements. The resultant dataset comprised 81 job advertisements in India and 81 in the US.

Results. As the job advertisements were for similar roles and from the same companies in both countries, we first conducted a paired samples *t*-test with the total number of

qualifications included in the job advertisement as the dependent variable, and the country as the independent variable. We found that companies required job applicants to fulfil more qualifications in the Indian job ads than in the US job ads (M_{India} = 11.59, 95% CI [10.49,12.69], SD = 4.97, M_{US} = 9.98, 95% CI [9.16, 10.79], SD = 3.67, $t(80) = 2.51$, $p = .014$, Cohen's d_z = .28). However, it is possible that even for the same company, the HR offices in the two countries act independently. We thus conducted an independent samples t-test, and again found a statistically significant difference ($t(160) = 2.35$, $p = .020$, Cohen's $d = .37$).

Another possibility is, given that the applicant pool size in India is greater than in the US due to population differences, recruiters may include more qualifications in the Indian job advertisements to reduce the number of applicants who might fulfill the criteria, and hence, apply for the job. To control for this possibility, we noted the number of applications that each job received on LinkedIn™, as well as the number of views each job had garnered. We regressed the number of qualifications required in the job advertisement on country (US = 0, India = 1), the number of applicants, and the number of views for each job advertisement as predictors. We found non-significant effects of the number of applicants (B = -.0061, 95% CI [-.014, .002], SE = .004, $t(158) = -1.56$, $p = .12$) and the number of views (B = .0015, 95% CI [-.001, .003], SE = .001, $t(158) = 1.38$, $p = .17$). In fact, even after controlling for these variables, the effect of country on the number of criteria listed remained significant (B = 1.76, 95% CI [.34, 3.18], SE = .72, $t(158) = 2.45$, $p = .015$).

Study 2b

This study examined another consequence of cross-national differences in the breadth of normative standards: the number of benefits that brands offer in consumer products. A key role of brand managers is to adapt brand characteristics according to their target consumers' tastes and preferences (Avlonitis & Gounaris, 1997; Iyer et al., 2019). As a result, differences in the breadth of normative standards should be reflected in the manner in which brand managers market their products. To increase the generalizability of our findings beyond India and the US,

we tested this idea using data from Singapore and the UK. We theorized that people from India, China, and Korea are more likely than those from the US, UK, and Germany to have broad normative standards because they consider more attributes as relevant when making judgments (e.g., Choi et al., 2003; Kitayama et al., 2009; Miller, 1984; Morris & Peng, 1994). As Singaporeans are predominantly ethnic Chinese (CIA Factbook, 2021), we predicted that Singaporean consumers would have broader normative standards than British consumers.

We predicted that consumer products would claim that they meet more criteria in Singapore than in the UK to match Singaporean consumers' broader standards. Specifically, we compared the benefit claims of the best-selling body wash brands in the UK and Singapore. Comparing Singapore and UK was ideal because they are both high-income English-speaking countries. In this way, we avoid any loss of information that may occur while comparing archival data from non-English speaking countries (e.g., China). We chose body wash because it is one of the most widely used personal grooming products (e.g., people typically use body wash every day, but they use shampoo a few times a week).

Pre-Test. We conducted a pre-test to test the assumption that Singaporean consumers have broader normative standards for body washes compared with UK consumers. Given that women are the primary shoppers for household products both in the UK (Statista, 2014) and in Singapore (Nielsen, 2020), we sampled women in this study. We recruited 76 women students (M_{age} = 23.81) from a large public university in Singapore, and 80 women students from the UK through Prolific Academic™ (M_{age} = 21.53 years). We presented participants with a list of 15 criteria that body washes can satisfy (e.g., be moisturizing, be cruelty-free, be dermatologist-approved), and asked them to select the benefits that were required for a body wash to be considered a good body wash. As in Study 1b, for each criterion, participants were asked to select either *Yes* or *No*. An independent samples *t*-test found that students in Singapore indicated that a good body wash needs to meet more criteria (M = 10.74, 95% CI [10.24, 11.24],

SD = 2.19) than did students in the UK (*M* = 9.91, 95% CI [9.32, 10.51], *SD* = 2.67, *t*(154) = 2.101, *p* = .037, Cohen's *d* = .33).

Method. We downloaded the lists of the top 100 best-selling body washes on Amazon.com in Singapore and the UK, respectively. Three research assistants who were blind to the hypotheses coded the details of these body washes. They noted the number of unique benefit claims made on the front and back of the product packaging. They counted all unique usage-related claims (e.g., refreshing, moisturizing, anti-bacterial), ingredient-related claims (e.g., made with aloe vera and jojoba oil), environment/sustainability-related claims (e.g., recyclable packaging, cruelty-free), and any other claims (e.g., dermatologist-approved). We obtained usable data from 79 body washes in the UK, and 91 body washes in Singapore; the remaining 21 items from the UK and nine from Singapore could not be analyzed because they were either in some other language (e.g., French in the UK, or Mandarin in Singapore), were duplicates, or the claims on the back of the pack were not available.

Results. We conducted an independent samples *t*-test with the total number of claims on the product packaging as the dependent variable and country as the independent variable. Consistent with our prediction, body wash products in Singapore included a higher number of unique benefit claims on the product packaging compared with those in the UK ($M_{Singapore}$ = 6.76, 95% CI [6.11, 7.404], *SD* = 3.103, M_{UK} = 4.35, 95% CI [3.91, 4.801], *SD* = 1.99, *t*(168) = 6.09, *p* < .001, Cohen's *d* = .91). It is possible that the number of claims on the product packaging is influenced by the price of the product, with more expensive products offering more benefits. To control for this, we conducted a linear regression with the total number of claims as the dependent variable and country (UK = 0, Singapore = 1) and the price per 100 ml (in US$) as predictors. We found a non-significant relationship between the price of the product and the number of claims (*B* = -.036, 95% CI [-.19, .11], *SE* = .076, *t*(167) = .47, *p* = .64). The effect of country remained significant (*B* = 2.38, 95% CI [1.56, 3.19], *SE* = .41, *t*(167) = 5.76, *p* < .001) even after controlling for price of the product.

Discussion

Study 2a conceptually replicated the key findings of the individual-level survey studies using archival data from multinational organizations: Indian recruiters had broader normative standards for an ideal job applicant compared to American recruiters for the same job position at the same company. Study 2b documented another consequence of cross-national differences in the breadth of normative standards. The top-selling body washes product packaging in Singapore claimed to offer more unique benefits than those in the UK because Singaporean consumers have a broader normative standard for evaluating body wash products compared to British consumers. This is also relevant from an organizational viewpoint as offering more benefit claims requires additional organizational resources for research and development, marketing, packaging, and so on.

Studies 3a-3b

The studies reported so far used cross-country differences to identify the breadth of normative standards as a construct of interest. In the remaining studies, we focused on behavioral outcomes of broad vs. narrow normative standards. Study 3a examined individual differences in participants' breadth of normative standards for a good presentation. Study 3b experimentally manipulated the breadth of normative standards for a good presentation. In both studies, we expected that participants with a broader normative standard for a good presentation would make more distinctions among the presentations they evaluate and thus assign the options more unique scores.

Study 3a

Participants. We used the effect size from Study 4a to calculate the sample size (as it was conducted before this study). A power analysis with $r = .22$, $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed), and power = 80% indicated that we need to recruit a total of 157 participants. Rounding up, we decided to recruit 200 participants from the behavioral lab pool of a large university in Singapore, which would give us 80% power to detect an effect with $r = .20$ and $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed). In response,

211 participants (M_{age} = 20.18 years; 113 women, 97 men, one unreported) completed the study in the lab.

Procedure. We first measured the breadth of participants' normative standard for a good presentation. After providing a short introduction about the importance of Powerpoint™ presentations in organizations, we asked participants: "According to you, what are the required features that a good Powerpoint™ presentation must have to be considered a good presentation?" As in Study 1b, we presented participants with 15 criteria such as "use of charts" and "few animations." Participants responded to each criterion by selecting either *yes* or *no*.

Next, we informed participants that we had recently conducted a competition among undergraduate students to create a presentation showcasing a new university building. We asked participants to help evaluate four presentations that other undergraduate students created as part of this competition. Participants were told to allocate 100 points among the four presentations. To ensure that participants did the task seriously, we informed them that a prize of $200 would be divided among the creators of the four presentations based on the average points allotted by participants completing the current study. Further, to ensure that the task was incentive-compatible, we informed participants that if their points allocation matched that of our expert panel comprising a group of professors, they would receive $50 as a bonus. We told participants that a match meant that their point allocation was within 5 points of the expert panel's average point allocation.

We took four presentations of varying quality made by participants in Study 4b (which was conducted before this study) and presented them to the participants of the current study. Participants were asked to allocate 100 points among the four presentations. We used the number of unique scores that participants provided to the four presentations as our dependent variable.[1] Our assumption was that the more distinctions among the four presentations

[1] We thank an anonymous reviewer for helping us conceptualize this dependent variable.

participants made, the more likely would they be to use four different numbers to score the presentations. For instance, a score distribution of [30, 30, 30, 10] would indicate that the participants evaluated three of the presentations equally. However, a score distribution of [10, 20, 30, 40] would indicate that a participant saw more differences among the four presentations.

Results. As our independent variable, we counted the number of criteria that participants indicated to be required for a presentation to be considered a good presentation. A higher score on this measure indicated that a participant held a broader normative standard for a good presentation. We found a significant correlation between participants' breadth of normative standards and the number of unique scores they provided to the four presentations (r = .16, 95% CI = [.022, .28], p = .023).

Study 3b

Participants. The hypotheses, sample size, methods, and analysis plan for this study were pre-registered (https://osf.io/3pc78).

As this study used a new experimental manipulation, we had no a priori basis for conducting a power analysis. Therefore, we decided to post the study for 100 participants on the website of the behavioral lab pool of a large university in Singapore, which would give us 80% power to detect an effect with d = .50 and α = .05 (one-tailed, as the study was pre-registered). However, due to a clerical error, the study was posted for 200 participants. We realized the error once 167 participants (M_{age} = 22.20 years; 102 women, 60 men, five unreported) had completed the study, and immediately halted data collection. Participants were randomly assigned to either the *broad standards* or the *narrow standards* (i.e., fewer criteria) condition.

Procedure. We used the exact same incentive-compatible presentation task used in Study 3a. We asked participants to evaluate the same four presentations by dividing 100 points among them. However, in this study, we experimentally manipulated participants' breadth of normative standards before they evaluated the presentations. In the broad normative standards condition, we provided participants with a list of ten criteria against which the presentation would

be evaluated (e.g., “the presentation should have good content,” “the presentation should use a template;” see Supplementary Materials for the full list). In the narrow normative standards condition, we provided participants with two criteria that were randomly selected from the ten criteria used in the broad normative standards condition (the random selection was performed separately for each participant).

Results. As in Study 3a, we calculated the number of unique scores that the participants provided to the four presentations. An independent samples *t*-test found that participants in the broader normative standards condition provided more unique scores to the four presentations (M = 3.62, 95% CI [3.50, 3.75], SD = .58) compared with those in the narrow normative standards condition (M = 3.37, 95% CI [3.19, 3.54], SD = .81, $t(165) = 2.36$, p = .020 (two-tailed), Cohen’s d = .37).[2]

Discussion

Studies 3a and 3b show that the breath of normative standards has behavioral consequences. Participants who held a broader normative standard when evaluating presentations distinguished more among the presentations by giving them more unique scores. The results held both when we measured participants’ normative standards (Study 3a) and when we experimentally manipulated them (Study 3b). We posit that the detail orientation engendered by broader normative standards resulted in participants noticing finer distinctions among the four presentations that they viewed.

Studies 4a-4b

These two studies sought to provide evidence for another consequence of detail-orientation induced by broader normative standards: increased micromanagement by

[2] We had pre-registered the standard deviation of the four scores as the dependent variable. As this variable was non-normally distributed, we used a non-parametric Mann Whitney *U* test, which indicated that there was a larger standard deviation in the scores allotted by participants in the *broad* normative standards condition (M = 12.3, 95% *CI* [11.17, 13.35], SD = 5.05) compared with those in the *narrow* normative standards condition (M = 11.14, 95% *CI* [9.65, 12.65], SD = 6.82, U = 2762, p = .020 (two-tailed), effect size r = .21).

managers. If managers need to ensure that employees' work meets the multiple criteria of a broad normative standard, then they might pay closer attention to employees' work even while employees are working on the task. In Study 4a, we examined if a broader normative standard for a "good manager" was related to participants' self-reported likelihood of micromanaging their subordinates. In Study 4b, we assigned participants to a role in a *manager-employee* dyad in the lab. We examined whether employees reported more micromanagement from managers who were informed that the employee's work would be judged on a broader normative standard. Note that employees had no idea about the breadth of the normative standards—only managers did.

Study 4a

Participants. The hypotheses, sample size, methods, and analysis for this study were pre-registered (https://osf.io/jts4f). Given that we were using a new independent variable in this study, we did not have an *apriori* measure of effect size. We decided to post the study seeking 100 participants from the behavioral lab pool of a large university in the US, which would give us 80% power to detect $r = .24$ (from Study 4b). In response, 100 participants ($M_{age} = 20.23$ years; 56 women, 44 men) completed the study in the lab for course credit.

Procedure. We first measured the breadth of participants' normative criteria for a good manager. We asked participants: "From the following list, please indicate each quality that a manager needs to have to be considered a good manager in the workplace." As in Study 1b, we presented participants with 18 criteria, such as "being transparent," "encouraging teamwork," and "being trustworthy." Participants responded to each criterion by selecting either *yes* or *no*. The total number of criteria selected by the participants formed our independent variable.

Next, we asked participants to imagine that they were a manager in an advertising agency. We told them that their team would need to make a presentation to the new vice-president of their agency's biggest client. To further bolster the importance of this task, we told them that the presentation would determine their agency's future business with the client. We

then asked the participants to respond to four items assessing their willingness to micromanage their employees. To assess micromanagement, we asked the participants to indicate how likely were they to do the following: (1) “Closely supervise your team’s work,” (2) “Tell your employees exactly what they need to put in the presentation,” (3) “Closely monitor your team's work as they work on the presentation,” and (4) “Point out any mistakes in the presentation no matter how small they are.” We measured these items using a 4-item, 7-points scale ranging from *not likely at all* to *very likely* (α = .76; Madan et al., 2022).

Results. We found a significant correlation between the breadth of participants’ normative standards for a good manager and their willingness to micromanage their team. (r = .22, *95% CI* = [.020, .40], p = .031).

Study 4b

Participants. The hypotheses, sample size, and methods for this study were pre-registered (https://osf.io/eutm9). To mirror the manager-employee dynamics in an organization, this study was run in dyads in which one participant was randomly assigned to be the manager, and the other, the employee. We pre-registered a sample size of N = 200 (100 dyads), which would give us 80% power to detect an effect with d = .50 and α = .05 (one-tailed, as this study was pre-registered). As per the preregistered protocol, we posted a study for 200 participants (100 dyads) in the behavioral lab pool of a large university in Singapore. Research assistants ensured that participants assigned to a dyad were not friends or acquaintances. They scheduled participants to arrive in the lab in pairs and randomly assigned participants to either the manager role or the employee role. In total, 180 participants (90 employee-manager dyads[3]; $M_{age\_managers}$ = 20.075 years; 65 women managers, 26 men managers; $M_{age\_employees}$ = 20.43 years; 58 women employees, 31 men employees, one unreported) completed the study.

[3] Three managers and five employees did not have responses from the other role due to absenteeism or technical issues in the online survey. In addition, one manager and two employees did not complete the study, leaving us with 90 usable dyads.

Procedure. We asked each dyad to enter a private room. We asked the manager and the employee to sit on different sides of the room so they could not view each other's screens. Participants playing the role of a manager (employee) were told that they were the supervisor (employee) and the other participant was their employee (supervisor). We informed managers that their task was to get their employees to create a three-slide presentation for a new university building. We further informed them that their employee's presentation would be evaluated against a specific set of criteria and that, as the manager, only they knew the evaluation criteria. To mirror real-world organizational contexts in which managers often receive bonuses if their team performs well, we told managers that they would earn a $50 bonus if the employee's presentation met the required criteria, as determined by a panel of experts.

We randomly assigned managers to either the narrow standards condition or the broad standards condition. As in Study 3b, participants in the broad standards condition were told that they would need to evaluate the presentation against ten criteria, whereas those in the narrow standards condition were told that they would need to evaluate the presentation against two criteria (which were chosen randomly from the ten criteria used in the other condition). The criteria were the same as those used in Study 3b. We informed all managers that their employees would get ten minutes to create the presentation, and while their employees worked on the presentation, they needed to complete a few short surveys. However, they could check in with their employees as they worked. All managers then responded to a battery of unrelated scales as a filler task, while the employees worked on the presentation.

Meanwhile, employees were informed that they needed to create a three-slide presentation for the new building within ten minutes. We provided all employees with a set of pictures of the new building that they could choose to use in their presentation. At the end of ten minutes, we asked employees to place their presentations in a specific folder on the computer. We told them that in case their manager was checking their work, they should ask their manager to go back to their assigned seat. Employees then rated the extent to which their

manager micromanaged them using four items as in Study 4a (α = .91).

Results. As per the pre-registered analysis plan, we conducted an independent samples *t*-test with employees' perception of managers' micromanagement as the outcome variable, and the experimental condition to which managers were assigned as the independent variable. As hypothesized, employees whose managers were in the broad normative standards condition reported being micromanaged more (M = 3.95, 95% CI [3.38, 4.51], SD = 1.78) than employees whose managers were in the narrow normative standards condition (M = 3.14, 95% CI [2.67, 3.61], SD = 1.63, $t(88) = 2.23$, $p = .029$ (two-tailed)[4], Cohen's d = .48).

Discussion.

These studies provide further evidence for how the breadth of normative standards makes people more detail-oriented. In Study 4a, participants' breadth of normative standards for a good manager was related to their self-reported likelihood of micromanaging their team before an important presentation. In Study 4b, participants who played the role of employees in a manager-employee dyad reported more micromanagement from their managers when the managers held broad normative standards. Managers with broader normative standards reportedly interfered more in their employees' work, ensured closer supervision, and nitpicked more compared with managers with narrow normative standards. Together with Studies 3a and 3b, the results from these two studies provide strong evidence that the breadth of normative standards is related to people's tendency to pay greater attention to details.

Study 5a

In the next two studies, we examined the effect of holding a broad normative standard on another behavioral outcome – people's maximizing behavior as demonstrated by their likelihood of searching for more options. As people with broader normative standards use more criteria to evaluate options, any given option would have a lower likelihood of satisfying the

[4] As we pre-registered a directional hypothesis, we pre-registered a one-tailed test in our analysis plan. The one tailed *p* value was .014.

standard, so people may want to keep searching for more and more options to find one that meets their broad standards.

In Study 5a, we tested the effect of broader normative standards on greater search using an incentive-compatible behavioral choice task. As searching for additional options is costly in terms of time and effort (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2009), in this study, we allowed participants to view more options but at a cost. To ensure that participants perceive the choice as relevant, and are involved in the task, we examined participants' choice of snack as a function of the breadth of their normative standards.

Participants. As this was a correlational study, we conducted a power analysis assuming $r = .20$, $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed), and power = 80%, which suggested a sample size of 191. We posted the study seeking 191 behavioral lab participants at a large public university in the US. One hundred and eighty-four participants completed the study online (M_{age} = 20.49 years; 99 women, 82 men, three unreported) in return for course credit.

Procedure. We presented participants with a list of 12 criteria that snacks can fulfill (e.g., low in calories, low in added fats), and asked them to select the criteria that were required for a snack to be considered a good snack. As in Study 2, for each criterion, participants were asked to select either *Yes* or *No*. The number of criteria that participants selected formed the independent measure, the breadth of normative standard for a good snack.

Participants were then told that this task was over. In the next task, participants were told that to thank them for their participation, we would give out a $50 hamper of their chosen snack to one lucky participant. We told participants that they could view up to 14 different snacks (Ritz Cheese Cracker Sandwiches™, Golden Oreos™, Toblerone™, Ritz Toasted Chips Cheddar™, Snickers™, Ritz Toasted Chips Sour Cream and Onion™, Oreo Thins™, Ritz Crackers™, Chips Ahoy™ Chewy Cookies, Chips Ahoy Original™ Cookies, Twix™, Doritos™ Cool Ranch, Doritos™ Nacho Cheese, and Oreo™ Cookies), one at a time. In a separate pre-test conducted with the same participant pool, we ensured that all snacks were similarly well-liked (average

liking ranged between 3.38 for Ritz™ Cheese Cracker Sandwiches™ to 4.87 for Oreo™ Cookies on a scale from 1-7, see Supplementary Materials). In the main study, we presented the snacks in increasing order of mean liking score (from the pre-test) to reduce the chances that most participants would just select the first snack shown.

Participants were first presented with Ritz™ Cheese Cracker Sandwiches and asked whether they would want to receive a $50 hamper of Ritz™ Cheese Cracker Sandwiches. If not, they could view an additional snack option, but then the value of the hamper they receive would be reduced by $1. For instance, if a participant chose to view four additional snacks (i.e., five snacks in total) before making a choice, they would be eligible to receive a hamper worth $50 - $1 x 4 = $46 of the snack that was ultimately chosen. Participants were allowed to go back and choose a previously seen snack to make their final choice, as in the real world.

The number of snacks that participants chose to view served as our dependent variable. Two weeks after the experiment was conducted, we randomly selected a participant and gave them an Oreo™ hamper worth $37 (as this participant had chosen Oreo™ Cookies, which was the fourteenth option in the series of snacks).

Results. As the snack options (e.g., Chips Ahoy™, Ritz crackers™, Doritos™) were common in the US but might or might not be common in other countries, we excluded 12 participants who were not born in the US, leaving 172 valid participants in the dataset (M_{age} = 20.83 years; 96 women, 76 men). Including these participants does not change the pattern of results reported below (see Supplementary Materials). We found that as expected, participants with broader normative standard for a good snack chose to view more snack options at a monetary cost (r = .16, *95% CI* [.006, .30], p = .041).

Discussion. This study provides incentive-compatible evidence for the idea that the breadth of normative standards is associated with greater searching, even when it is costly to do so. Participants with broader normative standards were willing to search more for their ideal snack even when such a search led to an objectively less valuable reward in monetary terms.

Study 5b

Study 5a shows that holding a broader normative standard is related to maximizing behavior. If this is true, then given cross-national differences in the breadth of normative standards documented in Studies 1-2, we should find parallel cross-national differences in people's tendency to maximize (i.e., search for more options). Past research has not found consistent cross-cultural differences in maximizing using rating scales. For example, one study found no differences between Americans and Chinese on maximizing; however, the Chinese experienced greater interest in learning about the forgone options, a tendency that is associated with maximizing (Roets et al., 2012). Another study found that Americans were higher than Japanese on various scale measures of maximizing (Oishi et al., 2014). However, cross-national differences in responses to Likert scales are difficult to interpret given various methodological concerns (Chen et al., 1995; Heine et al., 2002; Peng et al., 1997). For instance, Americans tend to use scale endpoints more than Taiwanese (Chen et al., 1995). Further, Americans and Japanese often have different reference groups in their mind when responding to Likert scales about self-esteem (Heine et al., 2002). However, past research using the number of options searched as a measure for maximization has found that Asians search longer and go through many more options than Westerners (Pattaratanakun & Mak, 2015). This finding is consistent with our theorizing that cross-cultural differences in the breadth of normative standards would lead Asians to search more despite the presence of search costs. To avoid biases related to Likert scales, we presented participants with decision scenarios in which they had to choose between maximizing or satisficing behaviors on two ends of a bipolar scale (see Rattan et al., 2012). We predicted that Indians would exhibit a greater maximizing tendency compared to Americans. We further expected that these cross-national differences would be mediated by differences in the breadth of normative standards.

Participants. The hypotheses, sample size, participant inclusion criteria, and methods for this study were pre-registered (https://osf.io/fm8kr).

A power analysis based on $d = .23$, $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed), and power = 80% indicated that we needed to recruit a total of 596 participants. As per the preregistered protocol, we posted surveys seeking 300 participants each from the US and India on Amazon Mechanical Turk. In response, 354 participants from the US and 352 participants from India completed the study. We excluded two participants from the US and 66 participants from India who completed the study using duplicate IP addresses. As per pre-registered plan to ensure that we have culturally homogenous samples, we excluded 21 participants from the US sample who were not living in the US or were not US citizens. From the Indian sample, we excluded 26 participants who were not living in India or were not Indian citizens. The final sample consisted of 331 participants from the US (M_{age} = 37.50 years; 197 women, 131 men, two other, one unreported) and 260 participants from India (M_{age} = 30.68 years; 92 women, 168 men).

Procedure. First, we asked participants to select the criteria that were required for a house to be considered a good house in their society, and for a woman to be considered attractive in their society. In each domain, we presented participants with a list of 24 criteria. For each criterion, participants were asked to select either *Yes* or *No*. The total number of criteria that participants selected formed the measure of the breadth of normative standards.

Next, in an ostensibly unrelated study, we presented participants with five scenarios in which they had to choose between engaging in either maximizing behavior, that is, to keep searching for a better option even at a cost, or satisficing behavior, that is, to choose one of the existing options. For example, in one scenario, we told participants: “Imagine you are at the car dealership and you have found a car that you really want at the right price, except that it is not in your ideal color. Getting the ideal color requires waiting a month for it to come into this dealership or driving far away to another dealership and renegotiating a deal.” For each scenario, we presented participants with a 7-point bipolar scale in which the anchor at the lower end described a *satisficing* behavior (e.g., “You buy the car anyway because you need to buy a car soon.”) and the anchor at the higher end described a *maximizing* behavior (e.g., “You go to

more dealers to see if they have the color that you want."). We asked participants to indicate which behavior they would be more likely to engage in on this 7-point bipolar scale. Please refer to the Supplementary Materials for the complete scenarios. We averaged participants' responses across the five scenarios to form a measure of their maximizing behavior (α = .58).

Results. As per the pre-registered analysis plan, we conducted an independent samples *t*-test with the total number of criteria chosen across the two domains as the dependent variable, and participants' country as the independent variable. As in the previous studies, Indian participants chose more criteria as being required for the normative standards, *M* = 35.90, 95% CI = [34.89, 37.01], *SD* = 8.72, than Americans, *M* = 27.89, 95% CI = [26.76, 29.06], *SD* = 10.92, *t*(589) = 9.66, *p* < .001, Cohen's *d* = .81. See Supplementary Materials for domain-specific analyses.

We also found that Indian participants were more likely to maximize, *M* = 4.32, 95% CI [4.27, 4.60], *SD* = 1.33, than American participants, *M* = 3.90, 95% CI [3.78, 4.02], *SD* = 1.09, *t*(589) = 5.35, *p* < .001, Cohen's *d* = .35. Further, the relationship between total number of criteria chosen and maximizing behavior was significant for both Indian (*r* = .17, *p* = .006) and American (*r* = .13, *p* = .02) participants. Finally, we tested whether the breadth of normative standards mediates cross-country differences in maximizing using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012). A bootstrapped analysis with 5000 resamples indicated a significant indirect effect, *B* = .14, *SE* = .04, 95% *CI*[5] [.057, .23]. As the reliability of the maximization measure was relatively low (α = .58), we also conducted multilevel regression analyses with the five maximization items as within-participant measures. These analyses, reported in the Supplementary Materials, provided similar results to the main analysis reported above.

Discussion. Taken together, results from Studies 5a and 5b provide converging evidence that the breadth of normative standards is related to maximizing. This study

[5] We had pre-registered 90% CI as a directional hypothesis was pre-registered. The 90% CI [.07, .21] also did not contain zero.

conceptually replicated the findings of Studies 1-2—Indian participants required a house and an attractive woman to meet more criteria to be considered a good house and an attractive woman than Americans. More importantly, we also found that Indians were more willing to engage in maximizing behaviors compared to Americans. Finally, differences in the breadth of normative standards across countries mediated the differences in maximizing.

General Discussion

A series of studies investigated a novel dimension of normative standards—the breadth of normative standards, or the number of criteria that must be met to achieve a normative standard. Using a free listing task, Study 1a found that participants from India listed more criteria as being required for a good job and a good employee than those from the US. Study 1b (pre-registered) conceptually replicated this finding: compared to Americans, Indians believed that normative standards for various categories (e.g., a good job) needed to meet more criteria. Study 2a found that job advertisements for the same role by the same company on LinkedIn™ listed more required qualifications in India than in the US. Study 2b found that body washes offered more benefits (i.e., more claims on pack) in Singapore than in the UK.

The next two incentive-compatible studies investigated a key consequence of broad normative standards—increased attention to detail. Study 3a found that participants with a broader normative standard for a good presentation differentiated more among options while evaluating them. Study 3b (pre-registered) replicated these results by experimentally manipulating the breadth of participants' normative standards. Study 4a (pre-registered) found that participants with a broader normative standard for a good manager were more likely to micromanage their subordinates. Study 4b (pre-registered) provided incentive-compatible behavioral evidence: when we informed managers that their employees' work would be evaluated on broader normative standards, employees reported more micromanagement by managers. The last two studies investigated the tendency to maximize, that is, to search for more options even at a cost, as another important consequence of the breadth of normative

standards. Study 5a found that the broader people's normative standards, the more they were willing to search for more options even at a monetary cost. Finally, Study 5b (pre-registered) found that compared to Americans, Indians had broader normative standards, and therefore, were more willing to search more in various decision scenarios.

Theoretical Implications

Norms shape people's expectations of themselves and others in various societal roles (Morris et al., 2015). How we evaluate our own and others' performance as a good employee, a good partner, a good student, and what we regard as a good job, a good office, or a good house are all determined by the normative standards we hold for these roles, objects, and places. Although there are two different meanings of *norms*, past research has largely focused only on *norms as behaviors*—what are most others doing in a given situation, or what do others approve or disapprove of in a given situation? Yet norms also refer to *standards to aspire to*, and this meaning of norms applies not just to behavior but to any social role, institution, or object. We contribute to the research on norms by investigating this overlooked aspect of norms—i.e., normative standards.

Research in the academic domain has found that Asian Americans have higher normative standards than European Americans (Goyette & Xie, 1999; Naumann et al., 2012; Stevenson & Stigler, 1994). The literature on perfectionism has also found that compared to European Americans, Asian Americans have higher personal standards for themselves in whatever task they undertake (Castro & Rice, 2003; Franche et al., 2012). The body of research on academic standards has largely focused on the *level* of a criterion that needs to be achieved in a unidimensional normative standard. Little research exists on multidimensional normative standards. The current research illuminates a novel dimension of normative standards—the number of criteria that need to be met to attain a normative standard.

The current findings provide a novel explanation for the finding that East Asians tend to outperform Americans in education (Stevenson, 1993). In addition to existing explanations, such

as Asian Americans' higher normative standards (e.g., Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Chen et al., 1995), their broader standards could be another explanation. There is some evidence for Chinese individuals' broader standards in the academic domain in popular culture, with an Asian dad meme saying, "I dun [sic] care you got A+ in English, Maths, History; you got A- in art. You fail life" (Eddie, 2010). Our finding goes against the stereotype that Asian American students focus nearly exclusively on academics while ignoring extracurricular activities (Camacho & Fuligni, 2015). If Asian Americans have broader normative standards, then Asian American students might be even more likely to participate in extracurricular activities than European American students. Some evidence is consistent with this idea (Bucknavage & Worrell, 2005).

Meeting versus failing to meet normative standards can have significant implications for people's motivation and well-being. People who do not meet normative standards for education, employment, or attractiveness, experience worse mental and physical health (Bjorkenstam et al., 2010; Madan et al., 2018; Szymanski & Cash, 1995). Research has investigated whether comparing oneself or others to normative standards results in assimilation (i.e., viewing oneself as satisfying the criteria to achieve a normative standard) or contrast (i.e., viewing oneself as not satisfying the criteria for the normative standard; Miller & Prentice, 1996). Antecedents of such assimilation vs. contrast judgments include positive or negative contextual cues about the target (Schwarz & Bless, 1991), and people's naïve theories of bias correction (Wegener & Petty, 1995). We contribute to this work by identifying a novel antecedent of assimilation vs. contrast judgments—people's breadth of normative standards. Studies 3a-3b show that when participants were judging presentations using a narrow normative standard, there was less variation in their scores for the four presentations, indicating that they assimilated all presentations as a "good presentation." However, in the broad normative standard condition, participants made more discerning evaluations of the presentations, as reflected in more unique scores, thereby contrasting some presentations against the standard of a "good presentation."

The current research also contributes to the literature on attention to detail (Derryberry &

Reed, 1998; O'Reilly et al., 1991). Scholars and practitioners alike have been interested in ways to increase employees' attention to detail, as greater attention to detail has several beneficial consequences for organizations, such as increased innovativeness (Sok & O'Cass, 2015), efficiency (Adler et al., 1999), and improved quality (Naveh & Erez, 2004). We contribute to this literature by identifying the breadth of normative standards as a novel antecedent of the increased attention to detail. Breadth of normative standards can serve both as an individual difference and an aspect of organizational culture. Companies can thus adopt broader standards for employees' work, which would likely increase employees' attention to detail. A caveat to this recommendation is that chasing normative standards that are too broad may increase managers' micromanagement, which is likely to demotivate employees.

The current research also contributes to the literature on maximizing vs. satisficing (Schwartz et al., 2002). Using Likert scale measures, past research has found that Chinese and Americans are similar in their maximizing tendency (Roets et al., 2012), and that the Japanese are less maximizing than Americans (Oishi et al., 2014). In contrast, using choice scenarios with bipolar scales, we found that Indians are more maximizing than Americans. The asymmetry between our findings and those of past research could be due to the fact that we sampled Indians whereas past research sampled Chinese and Japanese, or due to the fact that we used a bipolar choice measure whereas past research used a Likert scale measure (cf. Heine et al., 2002). Future research can resolve this inconsistency. Further, we found that these differences in maximizing are mediated by cross-national differences in the breadth of normative standards. Thus, the current research identified people's breadth of normative standards as a novel antecedent of their maximizing tendency.

Managerial Relevance

The finding that the breadth of normative standards may vary across individuals, organizations, and countries has implications for both individuals and society across personal and professional domains. First, it may be harder to meet normative standards in India as they

tend to be broader (i.e., requiring the fulfillment of more criteria). For example, it may be more difficult to find an ideal employee who meets 20 normative qualities versus an ideal employee who has to possess just five such qualities. Conversely, it may be more difficult to please an Indian job seeker who wants their ideal job to offer several different benefits. Hence, Indians might reject a greater number of potential romantic partners, job candidates, jobs, and houses, even if they seem attractive/qualified, as they may not meet the many criteria that Indians have for normative standards.

This issue might be particularly relevant for managers working in a different culture on expatriate assignments. For example, an American manager working in Singapore would likely be evaluated on several additional criteria than they would be in their home country. For example, whereas the expectations for a good manager in the US might be to deliver the results on one or two specific projects, in Singapore, the expectations are likely to involve other criteria, such as developing the team, improving relationships with suppliers and customers, being liked by subordinates and superordinates, and so on. Given the prevalence of multinational organizations, it is imperative for managers to understand possible cross-national differences in normative standards. For example, not meeting broader normative standards in a foreign country can have both reputational and revenue-related consequences for American firms operating in India, and trying to meet several criteria that other parties do not care about can lead Indian firms to stretch themselves too thin when operating in the US.

In addition to between-country differences, between-individual differences in the breadth of managers' standards can also have important consequences for organizations. Consider a manager with a broader normative standard for a good employee. The broader standards might motivate her subordinates to work harder in multiple domains to meet the manager's standards, which can increase employees' performance and citizenship behaviors. However, unless her subordinates meet all her criteria, this manager is likely to be less pleased with the subordinates' performance, and might thus give them lower performance evaluations than a

manager with narrower standards. The broader standards might thus lead to lower employee job satisfaction, and eventually, higher employee turnover. In this sense, a broader standard can be a double-edged sword as it can both increase employees' performance but reduce employees' job satisfaction. Future research can test whether teams led by managers with broader normative standards perform better but experience greater dissatisfaction and turnover.

Further, people may hold themselves to more broad standards as well. Arguably, having more multi-dimensional standards may be motivating—students, employees, and parents might work harder to excel in multiple domains that they believe are required to meet normative standards. For example, in the organizational domain, a supply planning manager who defines "a good supply planning manager" exclusively in terms of "percentage of orders fulfilled" might work hard to achieve her *monthly orders fulfilled* target, but not focus as much on other important aspects of the job, such as optimizing days of stock on hand, reducing slow-moving stock, ensuring warehouse and distribution safety, and managing the innovation pipeline. But a supply planning manager who defines "a good supply planning manager" in terms of "high percentage of orders fulfilled, reduced inventory, reduced slow-moving stock, high operational safety, and strong new launch delivery" might work hard in all these areas. Holding oneself to a broader normative standard may result in higher achievement across several domains in life. Future research can test whether experimentally manipulating the breadth of normative standards increases people's motivation, performance, and persistence in the work domain.

However, these differences in the breadth of normative standards might also have some potentially negative consequences. If employees think that broad normative standards are out of their reach because they require meeting so many attributes, they might be more easily demotivated. For example, a supply planning manager who defines "a good supply planning manager" in terms of "high percentage of orders fulfilled, reduced inventory, reduced slow-moving stock, high operational safety, and strong new launch delivery" might stop working on *all* these aspects if she realizes that she simply cannot reduce the slow-moving stock, as failing to

achieve even that one target means that the normative standard is out of her reach. Broader standards might also contribute to the "Tiger Mom" style of parenting (Park, 2018), which involves having high academic and extra-curricular expectations of children, and using strong disciplinary tactics to prevent children from falling behind those standards (Chua, 2011).

Limitations and Future Directions

Study 1a used a free listing dependent measure to assess participants' breadth of normative standards in India and the US. It is possible that American participants may have listed a few broad criteria (e.g., good total compensation package), whereas Indian participants listed many narrow criteria (e.g., high salary, decent bonus, sufficient retirement benefits). Our forced-choice paradigm in the subsequent studies addresses this concern by presenting participants in both countries with identical criteria. However, future research may empirically determine if there are country-related differences in the inclusiveness of the specific criteria, that is, whether Indians and Americans differ in how their specific criteria are. This is likely to be domain-specific as the criteria for some normative standards may have idiosyncratic differences across countries (such as a 9-month base salary and summer support for academic salaries in the US compared to 12-month salaries in the rest of the world) versus criteria that have no sub-components (for example, although Americans and Indians might list *big eyes* as a criterion for an attractive person, they are both unlikely to list big irises, big corneas, and big eyelids).

Although we focused on the number of criteria included in a normative standard, future research can examine other features of the criteria, such as the proportion of people who select a given criterion as belonging to the normative standard. Across all studies, we sampled a wide range of criteria across a wide range of normative standards (e.g., good job, good employee, good manager, good snack, good house, good presentation). Clearly, there is variation in that many more participants than others select some criteria (e.g., virtually everyone selects a high salary as a criterion for a job to be considered good, but few choose working from home as a criterion), indicating that some criteria may be more central to the normative standard than

others. In the Supplementary Materials, we provide tables indicating the proportion of participants who selected each criterion for each normative standard in each study in which we measured normative standards. Future research can examine whether the centrality of various criteria to the normative standard influences people's decisions.

Our conceptualization assumed that the criteria are non-compensatory, that is, a high level on one criterion does not compensate for a low level on another. Further, we assumed that people have a fixed level of a criterion that needs to be met to satisfy the normative standard. Future research may examine whether people indeed consider specific criteria to be compensatory or not, and whether they evaluate exemplars on how close they are to a particular criterion or how much they have exceeded a criterion. For example, imagine a hiring manager evaluating a candidate's resume for a customer-facing position in a bank. Two criteria in their normative standard for a good candidate for this role are three years of experience in customer-facing roles and knowledge about banking operations, respectively. Imagine they receive the profile of a candidate with five years of customer-facing experience in the beauty industry. Would this greater number of years of work experience override or compensate for this candidate's lack of banking knowledge? Or would the manager require employees to meet all criteria before hiring them? Future research may investigate this proposition.

Future research may also examine domain-specific variations in the breadth of people's normative standards. For example, are there domains in which people across countries would have a similarly high or similarly low number of criteria? Although we found consistent results across multiple domains, it is possible that in domains in which the stakes are very high (e.g., the number of criteria that need to be met to be qualified as a good brain surgeon or a good military commander), people across the world might come up with a similarly large number of criteria. Additionally, we tested the cross-national differences in the breadth of normative standards across India, Singapore, the US, and the UK, respectively. Future research may test the cultural limits of this phenomenon beyond individual countries. That is, future research may

test if Western countries generally have more narrow normative standards than Asian countries.

Finally, there may be within-person variance in the breadth of normative standards across domains. It is possible that people may have a broad normative standard in one domain and a narrow normative standard in another. For example, a careerist may have broad normative standards for their job but not for other domains; a dieter may have broad standards for the snacks they eat but not for other domains. Future research could examine the antecedents and consequences of between-domain and within-person across-domain variance in the breadth of normative standards across a large number of domains. This investigation may shed light on the idea whether the breadth of normative standards may be considered as an individual difference that is stable across domains. If this is the case, then future research may develop a scale to assess individual differences in the breadth of normative standards.

Although there are two different meanings of *norms*, past research has nearly exclusively focused only on *norms as behaviors*—what are most others doing in a given situation, or what do others approve or disapprove of in a given situation? Yet norms also refer to *standards to aspire to*, and this meaning of norms applies not just to behavior but to any social role, institution, or object. The present research identifies antecedents and consequences of this other meaning of norms and will hopefully usher in a new wave of empirical research on *norms as standards*.

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