Understanding the Construct Maximizing

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Abstract

Recently, Cheek and Schwartz (2016) proposed a model of maximizing tendency that defines a maximizer as someone with both a maximizing goal (i.e., high standards) and maximizing strategy (i.e., alternative search). Using within time and time separated variables, the implied interaction of standards and search was tested. Various outcomes of maximizing tendency were tested using two different measures of alternatives search. Results showed little support for the strategy-goal framework of maximizing. Results question the implied interactive relation among maximizing strategy and goal.

Introduction

Maximizing Tendency

- What entails maximizing continues to be under debate:
  - Model 1: Dalal et al. (2015) Standards-Search Process Model
  - Model 2: Cheek and Schwartz (2016) Goal-Strategy Interactive Model
  - Model 1 proposes high standards affect outcomes through, among other constructs, alternative search.
  - Model 2 proposes an interaction between high standards and search.
- Initial tests of Model 2 interactions did not support the strategy-goal model (Sassaman & Dalal, 2018).
- These tests, though, suffered from some methodological limitations we seek to address in this study.
- This study also tests Model 1.

Research Question
Testing the two models

Model 1

Model 2
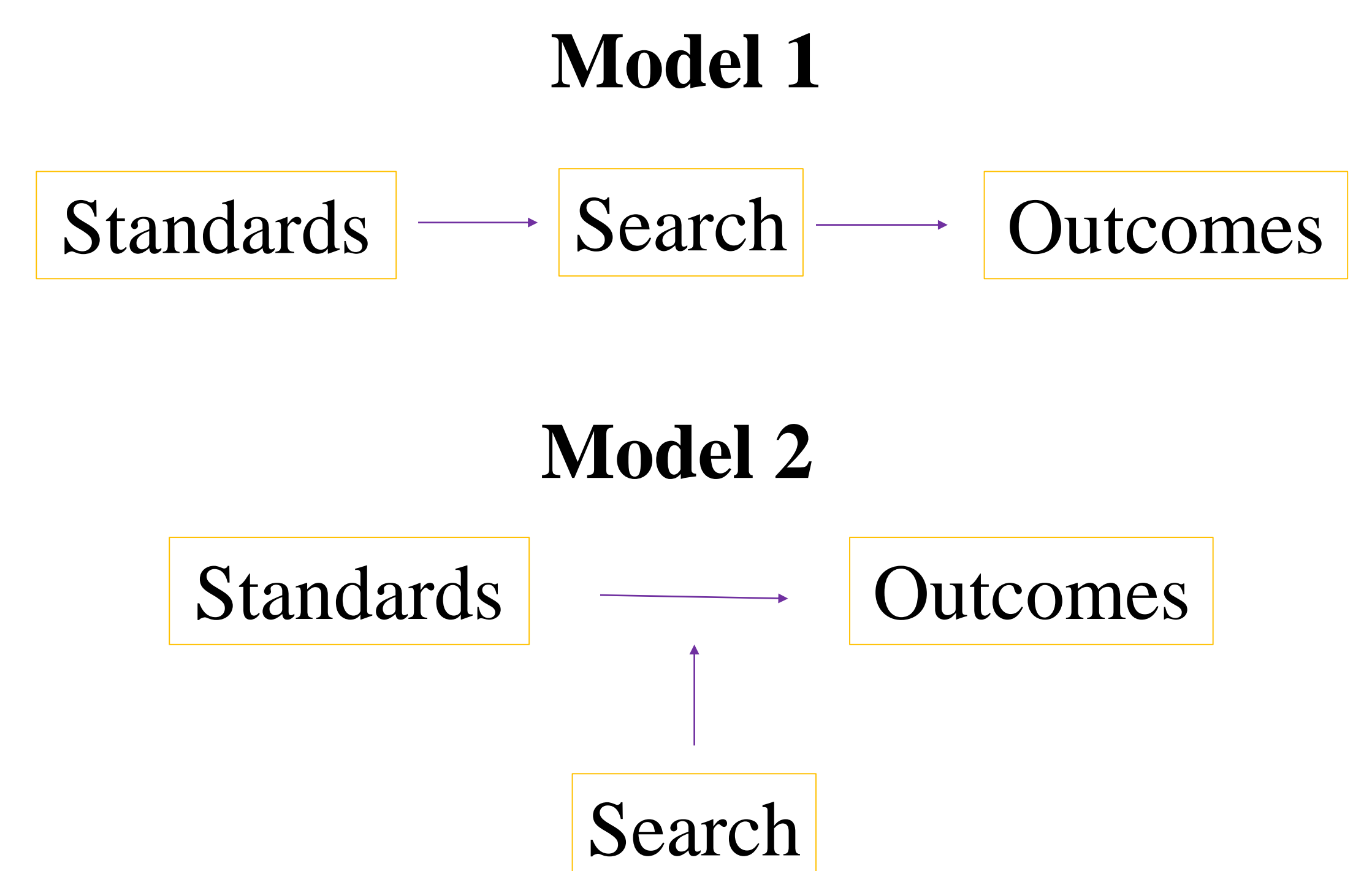
Method

Sample

Two samples of undergraduate psychology students
Sample 1: 349 students, 66% Female, Mean age = 19.1 (SD = 1.23)
Sample 2: 122 students, 77% Female, Mean age = 19.2 (SD = 1.15)

Measures & Procedures

All measures were completed online with a week separation between times 1 and 2
Time 1:
- High Standards: Maximizing Tendency Scale (9-items; $\alpha = 0.87$)
- Alternative Search: Maximization Scale (6-items; $\alpha = 0.65$) & Turner et al. scale (12-items, $\alpha = 0.82$)
- Temporal Discounting: Binary titration choice task with hyperbolic discount function
- Major turnover: intentions (single item) and count (single item)
Time 2:
- Time Perspective: 3-factors of the one scale; CFC
- State Optimism
- Life Satisfaction
- Decision Regret
- Delay of Gratification: 3-factors

Results

- 26 (13 per search scale) interactions were tested using moderated multiple regression
- 20 (10 per search scale) indirect effects were tested using path analysis and bootstrapping
- Although five interactions were significant, only two were in the theoretically expected condition:
  - Low standards and low search individuals show a strong hedonic present orientation
  - High standards and high search individuals show a strong future time perspective
- In short, less than 10% of the theorized interactions presented in the goal-strategy model of maximizing were supported.
- In contrast, 45% (9 of 20)of the indirect effects tested were in the expected direction

Expected Outcomes

Table 1: Outcomes and Expected Relations		
Outcome Variable	**Expected Relation Model 1**	**Expected Relation Model 2**
Temporal Discounting	Positive Indirect Effect	Accentuating Interacting
Major Turnover Intentions		Accentuating Interacting
Major Turnover		Accentuating Interacting
Hedonic Present	Negative Indirect Effect	Mitigating Interacting
Fatalistic Present	Negative Indirect Effect	Mitigating Interacting
Future	Positive Indirect Effect	Accentuating Interacting
State Optimism		Accentuating Interacting
Consideration of Future Consequences	Positive Indirect Effect	Accentuating Interacting
Life Satisfaction	Negative Indirect Effect	Accentuating Interacting
Decision Regret	Positive Indirect Effect	Accentuating Interacting
Delay of Money	Positive Indirect Effect	Accentuating Interacting
Delay of Achievement	Positive Indirect Effect	Accentuating Interacting
Delay of Social	Positive Indirect Effect	Accentuating Interacting

Discussion and Future Directions

Discussion

- Two models of maximizing tendency have been proposed:
  - Model 1: Maximizing Goal-Maximizing Strategy Process Model
  - Model 2: Maximizing Goal-Maximizing Strategy Interactive Model
- Whereas Model 1 predicts that Standards and Search interact to predict outcomes, Model 2 predicts that Standards predict outcomes via Search.
- Using archival data, past research has shown little support for Model 1.
- This study utilized different measures of alternative search, and with different behavioral and self-report outcomes, and still found no support for Model 1
- Extending beyond these studies, this work showed more robust evidence for the Goal-Strategy process model.
- These results suggest, as argued before (Dalal et al., 2015), that alternative search is better conceptualized as one, of many, behavioral outcomes of maximizing, and not part of the construct domain.

Limitations

- Some "outcomes" may not be caused by maximizing (e.g., state optimism)
- Few behavioral measures
- Did not test competing mediation models

Future Directions

- Include more maximizing outcomes
- Increase N to use structural regression models
- Include more behavioral measures

Selected References

Cheek, N. N., & Schwartz, B. (2016). On the meaning and measurement of maximization. Judgement and Decision Making, 11, 126- 146.
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