Information Seeking and Prejudice

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INFORMATION SEEKING AND PREJUDICE

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ABSTRACT

Research has suggested that racial differences act to influence decision-making associated with the selection of individuals on some social dimension such as friend, work partner, or roommate. However, there is also evidence that when one has information impacted regarding the similarity or dissimilarity of an individual being selected on some social dimension, the importance of the racial differences, as criteria for selection, decreases. The present study investigated the comparative effects of race and attitude similarity on the information-seeking behavior of subjects who had as their task the selection of potential roommates.

In this study white male undergraduates from the University of Rhode Island were given the opportunity to select potential roommates of four types: white-similar; white-dissimilar; black-similar; and black-dissimilar. An attitude measure was given to subjects four weeks before the selection procedure and, using subject responses, attitude protocols for potential roommates were created to appear as similar or dissimilar. A photograph was used to present the race variable. The photograph and each item on the attitude questionnaire were placed in separate envelopes and subjects were allowed to seek freely as much information (item-by-item) as they required in order to make a comfortable decision about accepting or rejecting the potential roommates. The amount of information used for each condition was analyzed using a 2x2 factorial ANOVA. It was hypothesized that both the race and similarity of the
potential roommates should have an effect on information-seeking behavior and that there would be an interactive effect.

The results supported the hypothesis that the similarity of a potential roommate significantly affected the information-seeking behavior of subjects. Information-seeking behavior was not significantly affected by the race variable nor was there a significant interaction effect between race and similarity.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

History

In one way or another, research regarding racial prejudice has been going on since the early 1900's when Bogardus (1928) first examined the problem through the use of social distance measures. In the 1950's and 1960's work in this area increased and many psychologists became involved in examining the nature of prejudice in an attempt to come to some understanding concerning the critical variables associated with this phenomenon. Social distance measures were refined through the use of factor analysis (Triandis, 1964) and attitude measures were added in order to explore the effect of belief similarity and dissimilarity on prejudice (Byrne, 1961; Rokeach, Smith, & Evans, 1960; Dienstbier, 1972). This work has touched off a lively debate in the literature concerning the cause of prejudice (Triandis, 1962; Rokeach, 1961). Two views have been proposed. The difference between these two views can be sharply seen by comparing statements by two different researchers, Triandis and Rokeach. As Triandis (1961) puts it, "People do not exclude other people from their neighborhood, for instance, because other people have different belief systems; they exclude them because they are Negroes."

The opposite point of view can be seen in a statement by Rokeach (1960): "The major finding in all samples was that discriminatory preferences are made primarily on the basis of belief congruence rather than on the basis of ethnic or racial congruence." This latter view has come to be known as the belief view of prejudice.
Triandis has been the most powerful spokesman of the opinion that actual racial differences are the most important factor in determining prejudice. In 1960, he utilized a social distance scale consisting of 15 statements selected from an original list of 59. The selection was based upon items which yielded a successive interval scale according to the method of Edwards (1957, Chapter 5). Subjects were then given descriptions of different stimulus individuals and asked to rate these individuals on the 15-item social distance scale. Stimulus individuals consisted of descriptions such as, "Negro," "different religion," "Portuguese," "physician," and "Greek," "truck driver," "white," "same religion." Triandis (1960) found that, "For the subjects of this study race is by far the most important factor determining social distance."

Triandis (1961) then added to the characteristics of the stimulus individuals a description of 13 ways to live prepared by Morris (1956). These consist of brief descriptions of different philosophies of life. For example, way number one:

In this 'design for living' the individual actively participates in the social life of his community, not to change it primarily, but to understand, appreciate, and preserve the best that man has attained. Excessive desires should be avoided and moderation sought. One wants the good things of life but in an orderly way. Life is to have clarity, balance, refinement, control. Vulgarity, great enthusiasm, irrational behavior, impatience, indulgence are to be avoided. Friendship is to be esteemed but not easy intimacy with many people. Life is to have discipline, intelligibility, good manners, predictability. Social changes are to be made slowly and carefully, so that what has been achieved in human culture is not lost. The individual should be active physically and socially, but not in a hectic or radical way. Restraint and intelligence should give order to an active life.
Subjects were asked to read these 13 different philosophies and to indicate their most and least preferred way of life. They were then instructed to think of their most preferred way of life when the stimulus individual included "same philosophy as you" and to think of their least preferred way of life when the stimulus individual included "different philosophy than you." The conclusions were not different from the 1960 study and Triandis maintained that race was the most important factor associated with social distance.

Triandis (1964) conducted further studies in which he found five factors associated with social acceptance. These factors were:

1. Formal Social Acceptance, which included such items as, "I would admire the ideas of", "I would ask for opinion of", etc.

2. Marital Acceptance, which included such items as, "Fall in love with", "Go out on a date with", etc.

3. Friendship Acceptance, which included such items as, "Accept as an intimate friend", "Go fishing with", etc.

4. Hostile Acceptance, which included such items as, "Permit to do me a favor", "Admit as a tourist in my country", etc.

5. Interaction with Superiors-Subordinates, which includes such items as, "Recommended by"
In examining these factors Triandis and Davis (1965) found that only some of the factors supported the earlier contention that race is the most important variable for social distance and prejudice. They found that Factor 1 is responded to on the basis of perceived belief and also, depending upon the level of prejudice of the subject, it was found that Factors 3 and 5 acted similarly. Only Factors 2 and 4 were responded to on the basis of race per se and these items, by and large, represent extreme interpersonal behavior of small social distance, exclusively.

It is obvious that in his later work Triandis changed from his 1960 position which considered race as the primary variable affecting social distance and prejudice and included the belief theory view under many of his own conditions.

Many researchers have investigated the belief theory. Basically there have been two experimental paradigms. The first consists of having subjects respond to paper and pencil measures of attitudes. From these questionnaires other "stimulus protocols" may be established giving the appearance of being similar or dissimilar. These are then associated with stimulus individuals who vary according to race, religion, ethnic group, etc. The original subjects are then asked to respond on some social dimension to different stimulus individuals (Byrne, 1961; Byrne & McGraw, 1964; Stein, Hardyck, Smith, 1965; Robinson & Inski, 1969). Unlike the original stimulus individuals of Triandis (1960), for whom differences were transmitted by the statement of difference, these stimulus individuals have had their
characteristics created out of the pre-measured characteristics of the subjects themselves. That is, to say, Triandis would ask a subject to respond to a bogus subject described as black, truck driver, doesn't believe in God. If the subject responded with, "strongly believe in God," the bogus individual could be presented as being different by presenting his response as, "strongly do not believe in God."

Because of concerns that paper and pencil measures alone are limited in their ability to be generalized to real life situations, a second paradigm has been used.

In this paradigm subjects have real life encounters with individuals holding similar or dissimilar beliefs. These stimulus individuals also vary in race and attitude and subjects are asked to respond to them in some sort of public interpersonal behavioral situation (Rokeach & Mezei, 1966).

The notion that prejudice results primarily from perceived difference of belief has been extensively explored by Rokeach, Smith, and Evans (1960). These researchers used the first paradigm to study the belief variable associated with racial as well as religious differences. As they put it, "...we hypothesize that insofar as psychological processes are involved, belief is more important than ethnic or racial memberships as a determinant of social discrimination."

Rokeach and Mezei (1966) studied the same issues using the second paradigm. In the 1966 study their method was as follows:
A naive subject engages four strangers, confederates of the experimenter, in a group discussion about an important or situationally relevant topic. Two of the confederates are white and two are Negro. One white and one Negro agree with the subject, and one white and one Negro disagree with him. The subject is then asked to state preference for two of the four confederates.

One of the situations involved a university setting and the other involved a situation in which subjects were actual job applicants.

Using the two paradigms, both the 1960 study (Rokeach, Smith, & Evans) and the 1966 study (Rokeach & Mezei) yielded results consistent with the belief theory and showed that similarity or dissimilarity of perceived belief was the major factor in social choices. The authors were careful to point out in both studies that the belief hypothesis was only being tested in the absence of external pressure to discriminate along racial lines.

Byrne (1961) extended the belief theory to studies of strangers. He hypothesized that "a stranger who is known to have attitudes similar to those of the subject is better liked (attraction hypothesis) than a stranger with attitudes dissimilar to those of the subject." In addition he proposed that strangers with similar attitudes are judged to be more intelligent, better informed, more moral, and better adjusted (evaluation hypothesis) than a stranger with dissimilar attitudes. The study included both black and white strangers. The pré-testing of subject attitudes and the subsequent use of bogus stimulus individuals was again used. The subjects were made to respond to the manufactured attitude questionnaires on the basis of an
interpersonal attraction scale (i.e., "Would you like to work
with this person?") and four evaluation scales of intelligence,
knowledge, morality, and adjustment. Both the attraction and evaluation
hypotheses were confirmed and in this study attraction and evaluation
were affected primarily by perceived belief of the stimulus individuals
and not their racial characteristics.

Byrne and Wong (1962) then reversed the question. They hypo-
thesized that highly prejudiced individuals would perceive greater
dissimilarity of belief in the direction of their prejudice. That is,
a prejudiced white subject, given a white and black stimulus individual
would perceive the black stimulus individual as having a more dissimilar
belief system than the white stimulus individual.

Weeks after establishing the degree of prejudice of the subjects
they were asked to rate individuals on the basis of physical appearance.
Byrne and Wong reported that, "statistically significant trends toward
perceived dissimilarity were found in the hypothesized direction."

Byrne and McGraw (1964) did the same kind of study with the
addition of a photograph to the bogus protocol. With this metho-
logical difference the high-prejudice subjects were found to rate
Negroes more consistently negatively, in terms of race, no matter what
their belief. Thus, there was a primary effect of race similar to that
described by the Triandis studies.

In later studies (Insko & Robinson, 1967; Robinson & Insko,
1969) subjects' perception of individuals was again found to be
dependent upon both race and perceived belief depending upon the
intimacy of the social situation involved. That is, situations like marriage were more affected by race than belief. Like Triandis (1964), Robinson and Insko (1969) found that the relative effects of race or belief depended upon the kind and quality of information.

Stein, Hardyck, and Smith (1965) conducted a series of studies in which they used a modified form of the attitude questionnaire. They were interested in a teen-age population and constructed a specialized teen-age attitude questionnaire which had items appropriate for that age group. The items concerned attitudes of other people which were to be judged as desirable or not; for example, "Try to please their parents by the things they do," "Let everybody have his fair say in running things in the school," and "Go along with what most other students do and stand for, not be too different." They also found both race and belief effects and concluded from their data that when little information was provided, subjects responded on the basis of race but when relevant information was provided decisions concerning interpersonal attraction, social distance and evaluation were made on the basis of belief. This notion, that as information input increases, primary racial effects disappear and one sees the principal effect of prejudice within the sphere of the belief system, was further supported in a study by Mezei (1971). Mezei examined subjects' reactions to white-similar (similar in attitude questionnaire responses), white-dissimilar stimulus individuals. He reported, that using a multiple regression technique (Hays, 1963, p. 504), he was able to partial out the effects of social pressure on the race and belief prejudice scores.
He concluded that, "The results show that when the effect of perceived social pressure on both race and belief prejudice is statistically eliminated, belief prejudice is stronger than race prejudice, even for intimate social interaction."

Thus, it appears that the amount of information about another's belief system is a major variable in determining prejudice. The more information we have about an individual the less likely we are to respond on the basis of race prejudice.

Present Study

If this is true, then a critical variable in the real world is how much information an individual seeks about another and an important question is, What are the effects of race and belief on information seeking? Does a white person stop seeking information about another person because the other person is black, because the belief system begins to appear different, or both? What if the belief system and race of the other person are the same? Does this cause increased or decreased information seeking behavior? These questions have not been asked in the literature concerning prejudice. In the Stein, Hardy, and Smith (1965) study for example, information about another person was utilized only insofar as it was or was not present. When the information was available it was presented to a captive subject who could not freely choose to reject it or ignore it. In the real world the conditions are quite different. People may or may not seek out information about another person and the stimuli which "shut down" information-seeking behavior are critical to the subsequent modes of evaluation.
The present study is concerned with the effects of race and belief on information-seeking behavior and the social situation involved will be limited to the selection of potential roommates.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses which underlie the study are as follows:

1. The similarity or dissimilarity of a prospective roommate's attitudes will affect the amount of information used to select or reject him.

2. The race of a prospective roommate will affect the amount of information used to select or reject him.

3. There is an interaction between race and belief which will affect the amount of information used to select a prospective roommate.

However, at this time it is not felt that there are enough experimental data to allow a prediction concerning the direction of the change.
CHAPTER II

METHOD

Subjects

In order to control for race and sex, 40 white male subjects were used. These subjects consisted of student volunteers from an undergraduate psychology class at the University of Rhode Island.

Materials and Procedure

Each subject was given the attitude questionnaire developed by Stein, et al (1965). This questionnaire consists of 25 items which describe qualities that an individual might or might not possess. Subjects responded on the basis of whether or not they felt that these qualities are desirable in a roommate. Responses are given on a five-point Likert-type scale and consist of the following: (5) strongly feel they should, (4) feel they should, (3) don't care, (2) feel they shouldn't and (1) strongly feel they shouldn't. The attitude questionnaire is similar to many which were used in earlier studies by Rokeach, Smith, and Evans (1960). For a variety of questionnaires of this type they report test-retest Pearson product-moment correlations of .94 to .73 with a one to three month intertest interval.

For the present research, reliability data for the attitude questionnaire were collected at the University of Rhode Island. The sample consisted of 50 white, male undergraduate students. The
questionnaire was administered at two sittings one month apart so that a test-retest Pearson r could be determined for each item. A correction for restricted range was performed, using the standard deviation of item 18 as being representative of an unrestricted sample, according to Guilaksen (1950). The results, for an item-by-item correlation, are presented in Table I.

The research was then conducted in two phases separated by one month.

Phase 1

Subjects were first asked to complete the 25-item attitude questionnaire. Instructions were as follows:

"We are interested in the process of selection of roommates at universities. The questionnaire you have been given offers you the opportunity to express some of your ideas regarding the qualities you feel are desirable in a roommate for you. Each item is a description of a quality which a roommate might or might not have. You are to express your feelings as to how desirable each quality for a prospective roommate of yours is by indicating after each item whether you strongly feel they should have the quality, should have the quality, don't care, feel they shouldn't or strongly feel they shouldn't. To do this circle the appropriate letter. Are there any questions?"

Interphase Interval

During the interphase interval four "stimulus protocols" for each subject were constructed. The "stimulus protocols" were constructed on the basis of each subject's attitude questionnaire in order to appear similar or dissimilar to that subject. The "stimulus protocols" were designed to represent four combinations: black individual with similar attitudes, black individual with
TABLE I

RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS
FOR THE ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE
(N=50)

| Item | Correlation |
|------|-------------|
| 1    | .66         |
| 2    | .79         |
| 3    | .48         |
| 4    | .21         |
| 5    | .81         |
| 6    | .81         |
| 7    | .86         |
| 8    | .82         |
| 9    | .70         |
| 10   | .84         |
| 11   | .86         |
| 12   | .85         |
| 13   | .79         |
| 14   | .82         |
| 15   | .78         |
| 16   | .77         |
| 17   | .77         |
| 18   | .80         |
| 19   | .60         |
| 20   | .74         |
| 21   | .87         |
| 22   | .85         |
| 23   | .83         |
| 24   | .55         |
| 25   | .85         |

*Corrected for restricted range
dissimilar attitudes, white individual with similar attitudes, and white individual with dissimilar attitudes. Thus "stimulus protocols" were varied along two dimensions, race and belief.

The race was determined by attaching a photograph of either a black or white individual to the appropriate protocol. In order to select the photographs, 30 undergraduate students at the University of Rhode Island were shown 10 photographs from the 1970, John Bowne High School (Flushing, New York) Year Book and asked to rate them on the basis of few or no stereotyped characteristics. The instructions were as follows:

"Sometimes you can look at a photograph of a person and feel that you have an idea about what that person would be like in real life. Other photographs seem to provide little or no feeling about the way the person would be in real life. You are to look at the photographs provided and rate them for the amount of information you feel they provide, which tells you the kind of person they are in real life. If you feel the photograph gives you little or no information about what the person is really like rate the photograph as "low information". If you feel that the photograph gives a lot of feeling for what the person is like in real life rate the photograph as "high information". Use the rating of "medium information" if the amount of information you feel is provided is somewhere between low and high. You are to consider such characteristics as social class, economic class, aggressiveness, passiveness, serious student type of individual, sports-living type of individual, etc.

The photographs which were used were generally rated as providing little or no information regarding the above characteristics.

The similar "stimulus protocol" consisted of 76% similar responses with the dissimilar responses appearing in positions 4, 6, 13, 18, 20, and 22. The dissimilar "stimulus protocol" consisted
of 76% dissimilar responses with the similar responses appearing in positions 4, 6, 13, 18, and 22.

Thus, there are two independent variables. The first is race which is defined as the skin color of the person in the photograph. The second is similarity-dissimilarity, defined by the "stimulus protocol" as previously described.

After the "stimulus protocol" for the individual was constructed the individual items were cut apart and placed in 25 envelopes. The first envelope contained the photograph and the second through the twenty-sixth envelopes contained one item each from the "stimulus protocol." The black photographs were attached to the similar protocol for half the subjects and to the dissimilar protocol for the other half of the subjects. The white photographs were similarly treated.

Phase 2

Subjects were presented with four packages each containing 26 envelopes. Each package represented one "stimulus protocol" varied on the two dimensions race and belief. Instructions were as follows:

"As you may recall we are doing some research involving the selection of roommates. Many universities hire trained professionals to aid in the selection of roommates. We have reason to believe that certain students can make judgments about roommates which will be just as good as the judgments made by the professionals. However, we are not only interested in comparing your decisions about roommates with professionals but also comparing the amount of information you use to make those decisions. You have been given some envelopes which contain information similar to the
questionnaire you filled out four weeks ago. This information comes from a student who is seeking a roommate. Each envelope represents one piece of information and you are to decide whether you would want this individual for a roommate. However, you should consider that each bit of information costs something because the more information one requires the more extra time and people are required for its processing. Therefore, you should make your decision on the basis of the minimum information needed to make a decision that is comfortable for you. With some roommate applicants the professionals use a great deal of information and with others a small amount of information. We are interested, therefore, not only in whether your decision is the same as the professionals but how much information is used by you in coming to your decision.

Begin with the first envelope and continue to use subsequent envelopes until you feel you are able to make a comfortable decision as to whether or not you would want the individual for a roommate. When you have made your decision put a check in the appropriate box and record the number of envelopes you have opened.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Effects of Similarity and Race on Information Seeking Behavior

Table II presents the total amount of information which was used by subjects in selecting or rejecting potential roommates under different conditions. Out of 2000 possible items of information, 1172 were sought to make decisions about similar roommates while only 767 items were sought to make decisions when the potential roommate was dissimilar. This difference contrasts with the seeking-behavior associated with the selection of roommates when the potential roommate varied on the racial dimension. On this basis 952 items were sought for white potential roommates (similar and dissimilar) and 987 items were sought for black potential roommates (similar and dissimilar). Appendix I presents a breakdown of the data according to the dimensions white-similar, white-dissimilar, black-similar, black-dissimilar.

Table III presents the direction of the decisions (accept or reject) of subjects along the dimension of similar potential roommates versus dissimilar potential roommates. The direction of the decisions were consistent with the great body of social psychology literature regarding similarity and interpersonal attraction (Byrne, 1971). That is, subjects in general, accepted potential roommates who were similar to themselves in the attitudes measured and rejected those potential roommates who were dissimilar. Out of a possible 80 potential roommates, 75 were accepted who were similar while only 5 were rejected who were similar. There were 78 roommates rejected who were dissimilar while only 2 were accepted who were dissimilar.
|                | Number of Items | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|----------------|-----------------|------|-------------------|
| Similar        | 1172            | 14.7 | 5.9               |
| Pot. Roommate  |                 |      |                   |
| Dissimilar     | 767             | 9.6  | 4.3               |
| Pot. Roommate  |                 |      |                   |
| White          | 952             | 11.9 | 5.7               |
| Pot. Roommate  |                 |      |                   |
| Black          | 987             | 12.3 | 5.8               |
| Pot. Roommate  |                 |      |                   |
TABLE III

CHOICE OF ROOMMATE
ON THE BASIS OF SIMILARITY

| Similar | Dissimilar |
|---------|------------|
| accept  | reject     | accept  | reject  |
| 75      | 5          | 2       | 78      |
| total   | 80         | total   | 80      |

Table IV presents the direction of the decisions of subjects on the basis of white versus black roommates. These data, for different racial conditions, are strikingly similar indications.

TABLE IV

CHOICE OF ROOMMATE
ON THE BASIS OF RACE

| White | Black |
|-------|-------|
| accept| reject| accept| reject|
| 38    | 42    | 39    | 41    |
| total | 80    | total | 80    |
Table V presents the analysis of variance of the amount of information used to accept or reject potential roommates under conditions of similar or dissimilar attitude and black or white race. The $F$ value for similarity was 38.29, which for 1 and 156 degrees of freedom is statistically significant ($p < .01$). Both the race and interaction effects were not statistically significant, having a $F$ value of less than 1.

**TABLE V**

ANALYSIS OF THE VARIANCE OF AMOUNT OF INFORMATION USED TO SELECT OR REJECT ROOMMATES UNDER DIFFERENT CONDITIONS

| Source       | SS    | df  | MS    | $F$  | $p$  |
|--------------|-------|-----|-------|------|------|
| Similarity   | 1025.16 | 1   | 1025.16 | 38.29 | .01  |
| Race         | 7.66  | 1   | 7.66  | 1.00 | ---- |
| Interaction  | 11.56 | 1   | 11.56 | 1.00 | ---- |
| Error        | 4176.37 | 156 | 26.77 |      |      |
| Total        | 5220.74 | 159 |       |      |      |

Table VI presents the mean difference between the amount of information sought for white potential roommates and the amount sought for black potential roommates. The data from which these means were calculated are presented in App. II.
Hypothesis 1 led to the prediction that there is a difference in the amount of information sought to select a potential roommate, depending upon whether the potential roommate is similar or dissimilar in attitude. This prediction is supported by the data (P<01).

Hypothesis 2 led to the prediction that there would be a difference in the amount of information sought to select a potential roommate depending upon whether the potential roommate is black or white. This prediction is not supported by the data.

Hypothesis 3 led to the prediction that the amount of information sought to select a potential roommate is affected by the interaction of the attitude and race of the potential roommate. This prediction is not supported by the data.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Information-Seeking Behavior and Race

In the sample which was studied no statistically significant effect of race was found with regard to information-seeking behavior. This finding is surprising in view of the Triandis earlier findings (1964) suggesting that the closer the social situation was between two individuals, the more meaningful the racial difference would be in determining the behavior associated with that situation. It would seem that the roommates situation easily qualifies as a close social situation. In addition, Dienstbier (1972, p. 159) has said that, "when the belief information is relevant to racial issues, these assumptions of dissimilar beliefs are not always simply and quickly allayed by the presentation belief information." In the present study many of the items were concerned with issues traditionally involved in the black stereotype. That is, the stereotype of the lazy, unintelligent, dishonest, and untidy black is certainly dealt with in such attitude items as the following:

- Be able to stick to hard problems
- Be intelligent, be able to think clearly about things
- Be honest and trustworthy
- Be well groomed, keep themselves neat and attractive.

Apparently the subjects involved in the present study were able easily to seek, find, and to utilize accurately similar and dissimilar information without confounding by race. The lack of overall effect of
the racial variable seems in contradiction to the views of both Triandis and Dienstbier.

Another view expressed by Dienstbier (1972, p. 160) is as follows:

"There may indeed be times when a greater reliance on one or the other (race or belief—author's note) of those constructs may provide us greater success in the prediction and control of certain behaviors, but these are concepts so different in structure that they can neither be logically compared for relative strength, nor can they be hierarchically seen as hierarchically arranged. They held, instead, relationships with each other most fruitfully seen as mutually causal or interactive."

No interaction between race and belief was observed on the sample studied. Perhaps, as noted below these interactions do not depend on the situation at all, but rather on the type of the individuals involved, that is, prejudiced or non-prejudiced. With regard to Dienstbier's question of hierarchical arrangement, it would seem that in the sample studied the question of similarity or dissimilarity of belief was the salient characteristic predicting the behavior, rather than race.

Because of the conflicting views and other discrepancies regarding race and its effect on the behavior of individuals, it would seem worthwhile to consider explicitly what the possibilities are which might account for the results of the present study. The following possibilities are presented:

1. There is no effect of race on information-seeking behavior.
2. Race is not a salient variable for the selection of roommates in the sample studied.

3. The salience of race as a control factor in information-seeking behavior is an individual matter and not enough individuals for whom this variable is salient were sampled.

4. Whatever effect race has on information-seeking behavior, it was rendered inoperable due to the powerful salience of similarity or dissimilarity of attitude.

The notion, in the first possibility, that race has no effect on information-seeking behavior not only fails to be tenable empirically, but also fails to be supported by other information-seeking paradigms. For example, Kogen and Wallach (1964) have demonstrated that the risk involved in a decision has a significant effect on the amount of information which is required to make that decision. From this point of view, in order to believe that race would never affect information-seeking behavior, one would have to conclude that no white individual perceives a differential risk in selecting a white versus black roommate. This would imply, at the least, no effect of stereotyping and stereotyping has been demonstrated to be a significant variable associated with prejudice (Jones, 1972).

It is much more likely, as possibility 2 suggests, that race was not a salient variable in selection of potential roommates for the sample studies. The individuals for the most part were white, middle-class individuals from Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Also, the University of Rhode Island is a university in which interracial housing is common, as well as being a university in which there has been no history of interracial conflict.
This notion leads directly to possibility 3 which suggests that the salience of racial considerations and its effect on information-seeking behavior is an individual matter. From this point of view, the question of sampling the appropriate population is relevant. Is there any evidence, within the data presented, that supports this view? Table VI shows the mean and standard deviation of the difference between the amount of information sought for white potential roommates and black potential roommates. Inspection of the data in App. II shows that for the most part individuals in the sample held to within one standard deviation of the mean with regard to the difference between the amount of information used in making decisions about white potential roommates versus black potential roommates. However, two subjects appear to have utilized information quite differently from the rest of the sample. Subject number 9 is 2.3 S.D.'s above the mean and Subject number 25 is 2.9 S.D.'s above the mean. This raises the question, "Is there some deviation from the mean of the difference in quantity of information sought, beyond which one is dealing with a different class of individuals?" All the subjects were interviewed after the second sitting and Subject number 40 said frankly that he would never room with a black guy. Clearly, if there had been more individuals like him sampled (See App. I), there would have been a significant effect of the racial variable.

Finally, there is the question of the possibility of a dampening effect on race as a critical variable, by similarity and dissimilarity of attitude. One of the characteristics of the test items, found in the reliability study, was their restricted range. That is, subjects'
attitudes for any one item did not cover the complete range of possible attitudes presented, but instead clustered around one homogeneous attitude. For example, in Item 8, "Be concerned about other people, not be self-centered," most all the attitudes expressed by subjects involved those of "strongly feel they should" and "feel they should." Thus, in these items, it would seem that not only attitude is being measured, but also general consensus. A potential roommate of different attitude is not only expressing a different attitude, but also deviation from the consensus. It would seem that this would be a fault of any attitude questionnaire which has an associated restricted range. The combination of different attitude and deviance from the general consensus could well summate to cause the similarity dimension to be overdetermined.

Information-Seeking Behavior and Similarity

In the sample studied there was a statistically significant effect of similarity on information-seeking behavior. That is, the similarity or dissimilarity of a potential roommate determined the amount of information a subject would require to make a decision concerning that potential roommate. As presented in Table II the differences in the amount of information required for making decisions concerning similar versus dissimilar potential roommates are quite striking. Much more information was sought when the potential roommate was similar than when the potential roommate was dissimilar. An important implication of this behavior is that subjects tended to learn more about similar potential
roommates than they did about dissimilar potential roommates. That is, because of an earlier "shut down" in information-seeking, subjects would be unlikely to discover dimensions of similarity in an individual who initially presented as dissimilar. The fact, as App. I shows, that no particular items were consistently used as critical items for decision making, suggests that the behavior is not bound to specific items of information. Rather, it seems to be a characteristic behavior associated with the dimension of similarity-dissimilarity itself. These findings raise the question as to whether individuals come to know more about other individuals who are similar to themselves than they do about individuals who are dissimilar to themselves in general, or, whether the information-seeking behavior is tied into the salience of the area. That is, do the same effects on information-seeking behavior ensue from information, for example, regarding similarity of political attitudes versus sexual attitudes? In any event, it may be concluded from the present study that information-seeking behavior is enhanced by similar input and decreased by dissimilar input.

Suggestions for Further Research

In the discussion section, it was proposed that the racial effect on information-seeking behavior might well be an individual matter, reflected in increased differences between the amount of information one requires to make the same decisions for whites versus blacks. This is a hypothesis which can be tested directly by using independent measures of prejudice and observing their relationship to differential
amounts of information-seeking for white versus black potential roommates. That is, the hypothesis leads to the prediction that the higher the information-seeking differential is in the selection of white versus black potential roommates the higher the probability is that scores on independent measures of prejudice will be positive. This is particularly worthwhile exploring since the present instrument has some advantages over traditional instruments which measure prejudice. The traditional measures usually deal with the negative aspects of prejudice. That is, they measure such things as exclusion of blacks, sanctions against blacks and increased social distances with regard to blacks. The present technique makes no such distinction since it is concerned with only the differential of information-seeking behavior. It is sensitive to increased needs for information regarding blacks or decreased needs for information regarding blacks and this is independent from the final choice. That is, even though one may accept on the basis of similarity, one may require more information for a black than white to do this, or less information for a black than white to do this. Thus, the information-seeking technique will be sensitive not only to negative aspects of prejudice in which an individual rejects a black on little information but also to ingratiating attitudes such that, even though the final decision is to accept the black student as a roommate the subject requires far more information to make this decision than he does for an identical white, potential roommate.

With regard to the effect of similarity on information-seeking behavior the potential for further research seems broad. The data presented in this study suggest that, in general, persons tend to seek more information about those people who are similar to themselves
than they do about individuals who are dissimilar. Other questions arise in regard to this notion. Is interpersonal attraction increased by similarity or is interpersonal attraction a repercussion of an information search which remains ongoing? Do we disengage from individuals because they are dissimilar or because we have ceased to search additional information about them? Additional questions are raised about the possibility of differential effects of similarity on information-seeking behavior depending upon the general area of the information. That is, how much of the effect seen in this study is associated with political issues versus religious issues? Finally, there seems the need to determine if the effect of similarity on information-seeking behavior is associated with attitudes of unrestricted range as well as with attitudes of restricted range. Are differences in attitudes about stealing, for example, more potent in their effect on information-seeking behavior than differences in attitudes about preferences in music? Information-seeking, as a generalizable behavior, has not been studied. Thus this study has raised more questions than it has answered!
The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of race and similarity on information-seeking behavior. Past research has indicated that both race and similarity are important variables in situations where an individual is selecting or rejecting another individual on some social dimension such as friend, co-worker, or roommate. However, there has been some conflict as to the relative importance of the race variable versus the similarity variable. Some studies have shown that when information is forced upon subjects concerning similarity or dissimilarity of another individual, the racial effects disappear. In the everyday world however, information concerning others is seldom forced upon us. Usually we come to know what we know about others because we either seek or do not seek information. Thus, the present study was concerned with the racial and similarity variables in terms of their effect on information-seeking behavior.

To test these effects subjects were allowed to seek information in order to make a decision concerning the acceptance or rejection of four types of potential roommates. The four types were, white-similar, white-dissimilar, black-similar, black-dissimilar. It was hypothesized that, the similarity of a potential roommate should have an effect on information-seeking behavior, that the race of a potential roommate would have an effect on information-seeking behavior and that there would be an interaction affect. The amount of information used under the different conditions was analyzed using a 2x2 factorial ANOVA and the results are as follows:
1. Information-seeking behavior was significantly affected by similarity

2. Information-seeking behavior was not significantly affected by race

3. There was no significant interactive affect on information-seeking behavior.
## APPENDIX I

| SUBJECT | NUMBER OF ITEMS USED TO MAKE ROOMMATE SELECTION FOR DIFFERENT POTENTIAL ROOMMATES |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | SIMILAR WHITE | DISSIMILAR WHITE | SIMILAR BLACK | DISSIMILAR BLACK |
| 1       | 17            | 7                | 14            | 9               |
| 2       | 6             | 8(A)             | 7             | 5               |
| 3       | 15            | 11               | 13            | 11              |
| 4       | 8             | 10               | 9             | 13              |
| 5       | 26            | 17               | 26            | 20              |
| 6       | 14            | 9                | 9             | 13              |
| 7       | 16            | 8                | 16            | 8               |
| 8       | 9             | 9                | 9             | 13              |
| 9       | 10(R)         | 4                | 26(R)         | 3               |
| 10      | 15            | 13               | 16            | 19              |
| 11      | 22            | 9                | 17            | 13              |
| 12      | 16            | 7                | 15            | 8               |
| 13      | 18            | 7                | 19            | 9               |
| 14      | 9             | 4                | 11            | 4               |
| 15      | 9             | 5                | 9             | 7               |
| 16      | 9             | 8                | 10            | 10              |
| 17      | 10(R)         | 3                | 18            | 5               |
| 18      | 20            | 8                | 20            | 8               |
| 19      | 26            | 10               | 14            | 13              |
| 20      | 26            | 9                | 26            | 9               |
### APPENDIX I (CONTINUED)

| SUBJECT | NUMBER OF ITEMS USED TO MAKE ROOMMATE SELECTION FOR DIFFERENT POTENTIAL ROOMMATES |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | SIMILAR WHITE | DISSIMILAR WHITE | SIMILAR BLACK | DISSIMILAR BLACK |
| 21      | 9             | 8               | 10            | 13              |
| 22      | 23            | 4               | 13            | 6               |
| 23      | 13            | 9               | 15            | 12              |
| 24      | 11            | 8               | 13            | 9               |
| 25      | 26            | 11              | 13            | 6               |
| 26      | 9             | 11              | 8             | 9               |
| 27      | 15            | 10              | 21            | 11              |
| 28      | 16            | 14              | 16            | 16              |
| 29      | 11            | 13              | 13            | 10              |
| 30      | 15            | 15              | 15            | 26              |
| 31      | 26            | 10              | 26            | 10              |
| 32      | 16(R)         | 7               | 14            | 5               |
| 33      | 8             | 16              | 19            | 20(A)           |
| 34      | 22            | 19              | 24            | 19              |
| 35      | 10            | 6               | 13            | 9               |
| 36      | 10            | 7               | 9             | 8               |
| 37      | 12            | 6               | 9             | 14              |
| 38      | 12            | 9               | 12            | 6               |
| 39      | 16            | 9               | 14            | 9               |
| 40      | 7             | 6               | 1(R)          | 1               |
| TOTAL   | 568           | 364             | 584           | 409             |

Note: All potential roommates under similar white and similar black were accepted except where noted by "R" for reject. All potential roommates under dissimilar white and dissimilar black were rejected.
APPENDIX II

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE AMOUNT OF INFORMATION SOUGHT
FOR WHITE POTENTIAL ROOMMATES AND BLACK POTENTIAL ROOMMATES

| SUBJECT | NUMBER OF ITEMS | DIFFERENCE |
|---------|----------------|------------|
| 1       | 1              | 1          |
| 2       | 2              | 2          |
| 3       | 2              | 2          |
| 4       | 4              | 4          |
| 5       | 3              | 3          |
| 6       | 1              | 1          |
| 7       | 1              | 0          |
| 8       | 2              | 2          |
| 9       | 15             | 15         |
| 10      | 7              | 7          |
| 11      | 1              | 1          |
| 12      | 0              | 0          |
| 13      | 3              | 3          |
| 14      | 2              | 2          |
| 15      | 2              | 2          |
| 16      | 3              | 3          |
| 17      | 10             | 10         |
| 18      | 0              | 0          |
| 19      | 9              | 9          |
| 20      | 0              | 0          |
| 21      | 0              | 0          |
| SUBJECT | NUMBER OF ITEMS DIFFERENCE |
|---------|--------------------------|
| 22      | 8                        |
| 23      | 5                        |
| 24      | 3                        |
| 25      | 18                       |
| 26      | 3                        |
| 27      | 7                        |
| 28      | 4                        |
| 29      | 1                        |
| 30      | 11                       |
| 31      | 0                        |
| 32      | 4                        |
| 33      | 5                        |
| 34      | 2                        |
| 35      | 6                        |
| 36      | 0                        |
| 37      | 5                        |
| 38      | 3                        |
| 39      | 2                        |
| 40      | 11                       |
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