



# Role of Deliberate Ignorance on Overestimation of Racial Equality



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## Introduction:

Racial inequality is a social issue that is central to our history as the United States, but many Americans believe this to be a vestige of the past (Kraus, 2019). This misperception can be a barrier to progress in racial equality.

## Primary Research Questions:

- Are White people's misperceptions about racial inequality based on *deliberate* or *unintentional* ignorance (Hertwig, 2022)?
- Are White people willing to seek out information to correct their misperceptions on race-related issues?

## Hypothesis:

- Deliberate ignorance will be positively associated with overestimating racial equality, and information-seeking will be negatively associated with overestimation of racial equality.
- People randomly allocated to the race condition will be less likely to overestimate racial equality.

## Methods – Independent Variables:

- 305 White participants from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (202 Female) completed a questionnaire on Qualtrics
- Deliberate ignorance measure:

### Deliberate Ignorance Measure Example:

#### RACE

After the Civil War, the White supremacist movement Ku Klux Klan (KKK) grew in popularity, with their membership running in millions in the early 20th century. They were responsible for many violent attacks against racial minorities. Imagine that you have access to your family's records that can confirm if one of your close family members was a member of the KKK or if they were against the movement. Would you want to know about their involvement during that time, or would you not want to know?

#### NON-RACE

The 1950s Red Scare was a period of intense anti-communist hysteria in the United States when thousands of alleged communist sympathizers were targets of firings, arrests, and alienations from friends and family. Most of these people ended up being innocent of the allegations. Imagine that you have access to your family's records that can confirm if any of them were part of the scare and turned in friends or neighbors or if they opposed such actions. Would you want to know about their involvement during that time, or would you not want to know?

- Information-seeking measure:

### Information Seeking Measure Example:

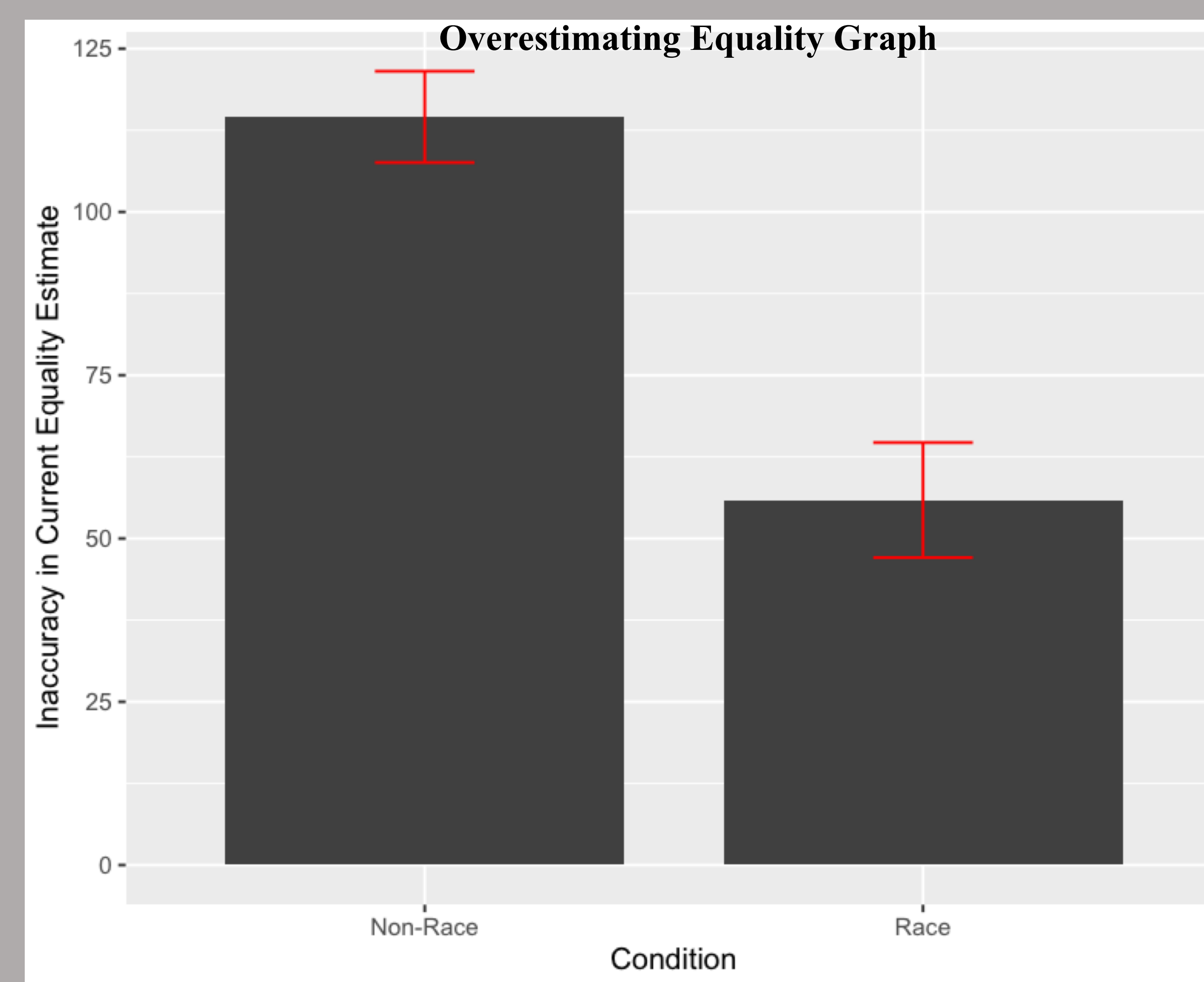
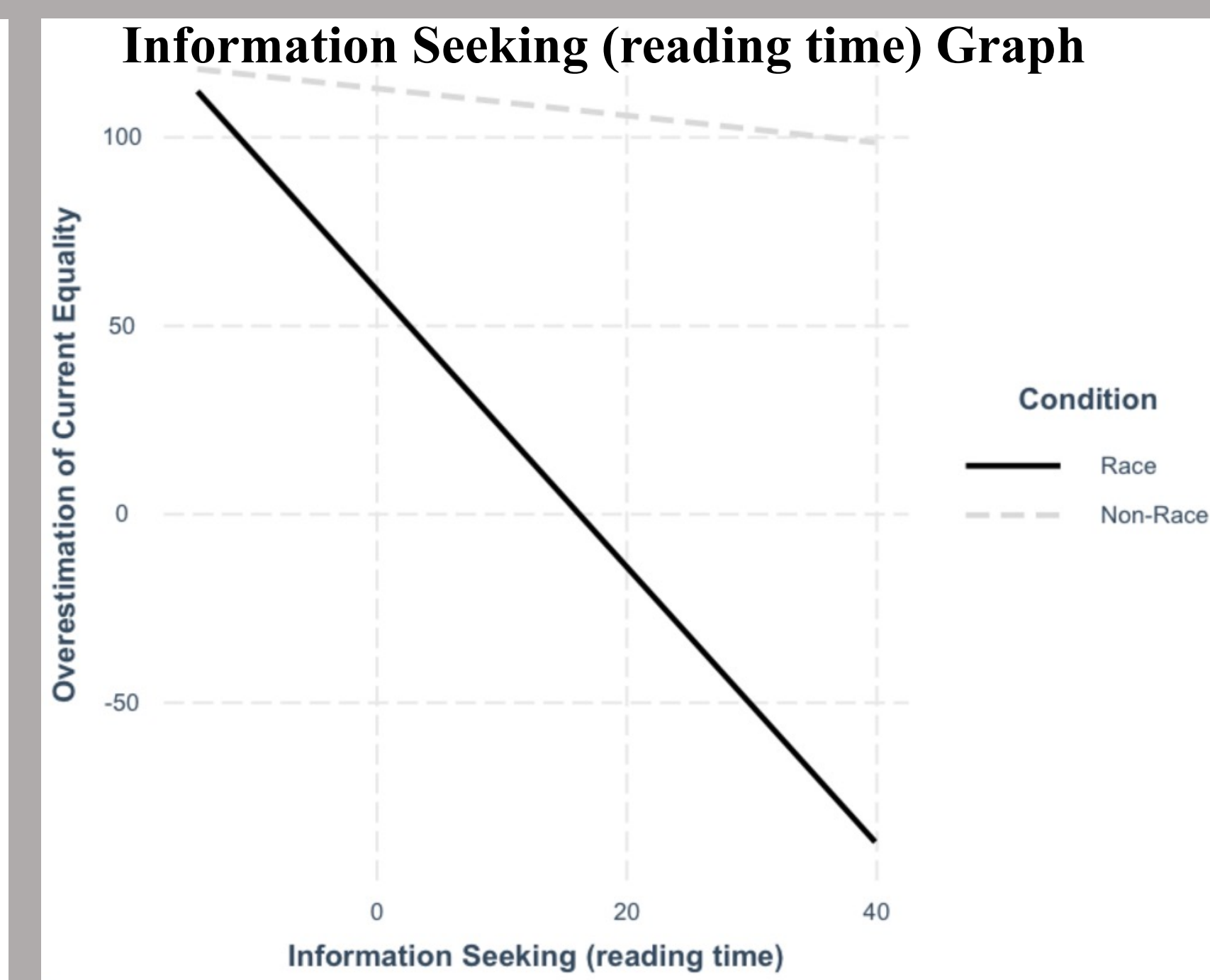
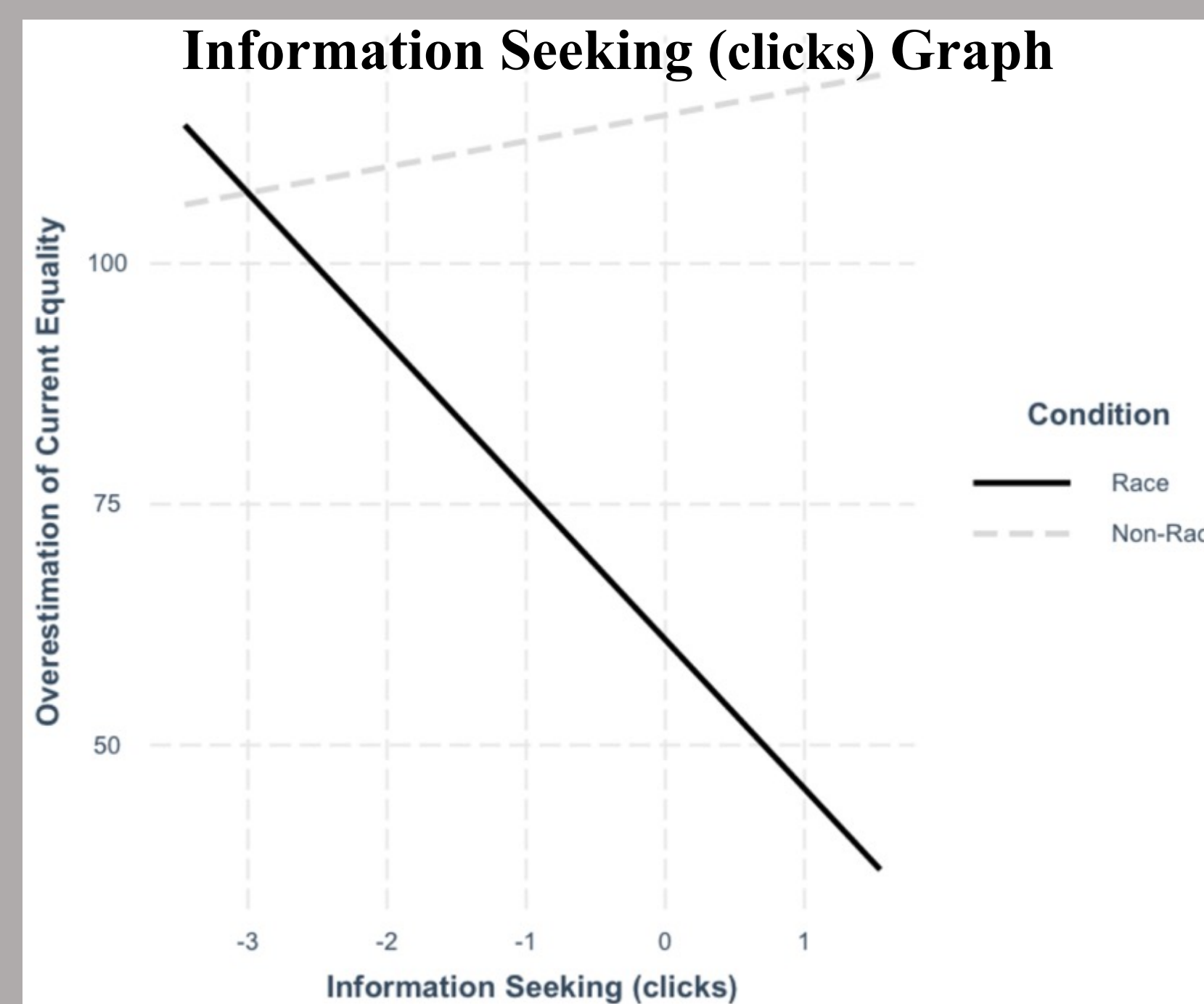
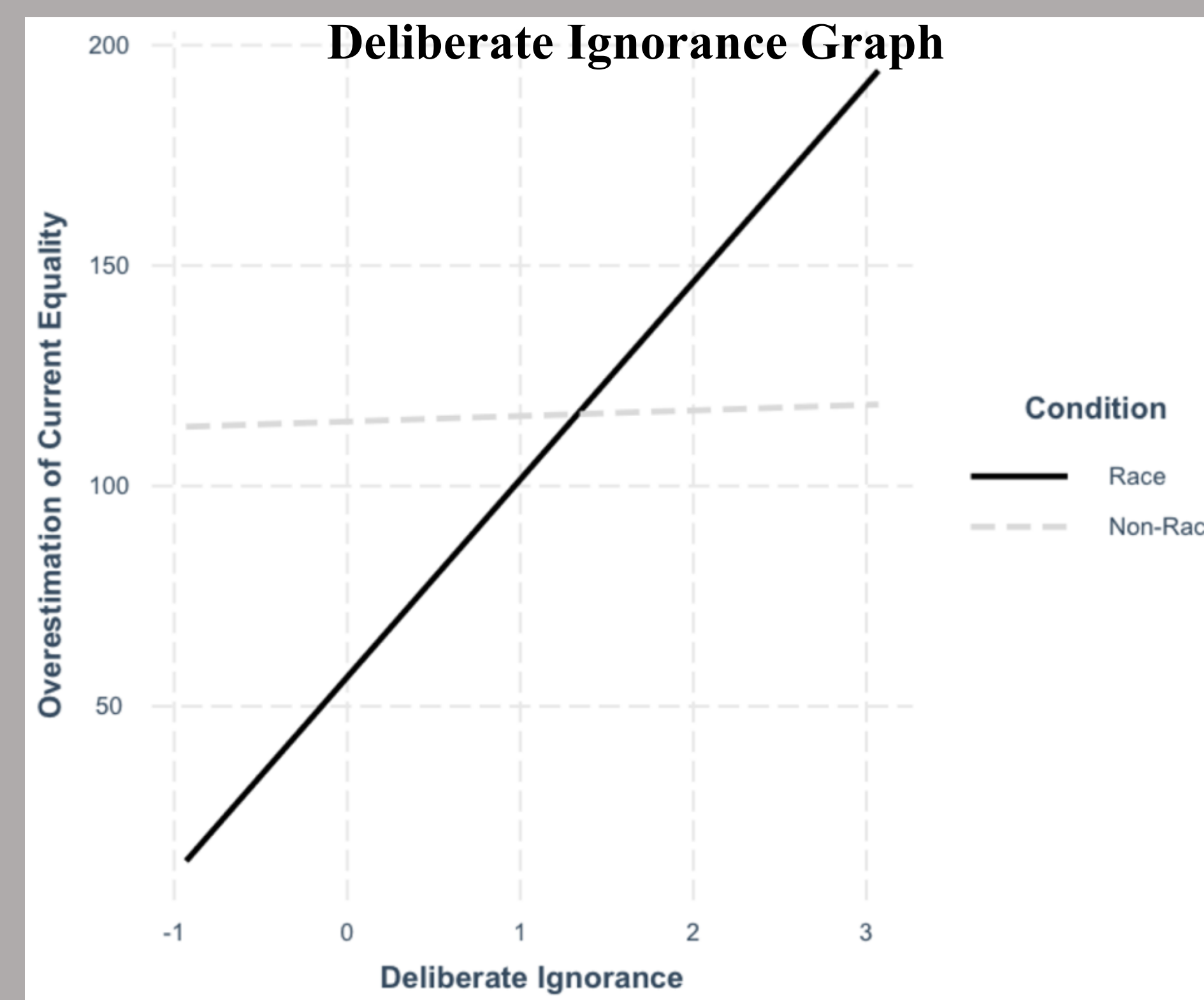
The Black-White wealth gap has significantly narrowed since the 1960s

Despite the Civil Rights movement and subsequent policies to protect Blacks from Discrimination in job opportunities and education, the Black-White wealth gap has remained largely unchanged since the 1960s. According to the census records, in 1967, for every \$100 of wealth accumulated by a White individual, a Black individual averaged \$12.65. By 2019, this figure had only marginally increased to \$12.74, indicating minimal racial progress in wealth disparity over more than five decades.

Adding salt to water makes it boil faster

The difference between boiling water with salt and boiling water without salt is negligible. As Middlebury College chemistry professor Lesley-Ann Giddings explained, "The temperature of saltwater will get hotter faster than that of pure water, but it still has a higher boiling point, and the mass is still greater when you add salt to the same volume of water. This doesn't mean that the saltwater boils faster."

## Results:



## Methods – Dependent Variables:

- Overestimation of racial equality measure:

### Overestimation of Racial Equality Measure Example:

For every \$100 earned by an average white family, how much do you think was earned by an average black family? (100 would mean equality)

Move the slider to the right to make your best estimate.

0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180 200

In 1947

In 2019

## Deliberate Ignorance Results:

- Those who chose to avoid learning about potentially negative race-related information about themselves or their family significantly overestimated racial equality. There was no association found in the non-race related condition.

## Information Seeking Results:

- Those who clicked on the race misconception to learn more about the subject and spent more time reading the information were less likely to overestimate racial equality. There was no association found in the non-race related condition.

## Overestimating Equality Results:

- Those in the race condition overestimated racial equality significantly less than those in the non-race condition.

## Discussion:

- People's tendency to deliberately ignore or not seek out accurate information poses a challenge to interventions aimed at correcting misperceptions related to racial inequality.
- But people who do seek out accurate information are more likely to correct their racial inequality misconceptions.
- **Questions for Future Research:**
  1. Why do some people choose to deliberately ignore information on topics they have limited understanding of (such as race)?
  2. What personality traits (e.g., intellectual humility) spur some individuals to seek out (or not) information to correct their own misconceptions about race?

## References:

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