

ABSTRACT:

Asian Americans face numerous stereotypes, such as being labelled unassertive and weak, which in turn biases outcomes, such as being underrepresented in leadership positions, an effect known as the “Bamboo Ceiling” (Lu, Nisbett, & Morris, 2020; Yu, 2020). **We hypothesize one reason for this underrepresentation may be the perceptions and stereotypes of Asian Americans as being younger than their actual age (Lick & Johnson, 2018).** Participants rated Asian and White (men and women) in terms of their perceived age and traits related to leadership ability. Proposed results using mediation models suggest that Asian faces will be rated as younger than their actual age, and that this age perception bias will mediate lower ratings in leadership ability, compared to White faces. Implications and future directions are discussed.

Keywords: *prejudice, stereotypes, Asian Americans, age perception, bamboo ceiling*

INTRODUCTION:

Asian Americans, while one of the fast-growing racial minority groups in the United States (Bell, 2007) and as one of the largest racial cohorts in areas such as STEM and health care (Yu, 2020), are still underrepresented in higher-level leadership positions within organizations and businesses, a phenomenon termed the “Bamboo Ceiling” (Lu et. al, 2020; Sy et al., 2010; Yu, 2020).

We propose that another, possibly more fundamental, process may account for Asian Americans underrepresentation--a bias in visually estimated age. Indeed, past work shows that Asians are viewed as younger than their actual age (Lick & Johnson, 2018) and that, for everyone, perceived age and facial maturity is a determinant of leadership potential and selection (Re & Rule, 2017).

To test this, we used a mediation model (Figure 1) to examine whether biases in age perception account for decreased perceived leadership ability for Asian, compared to White, individuals. Overall, our research will highlight a novel, and theoretically derived, explanation for the “bamboo ceiling.”

Why Aren't There More Asian Americans in Leadership Positions?

PROPOSED METHODS:

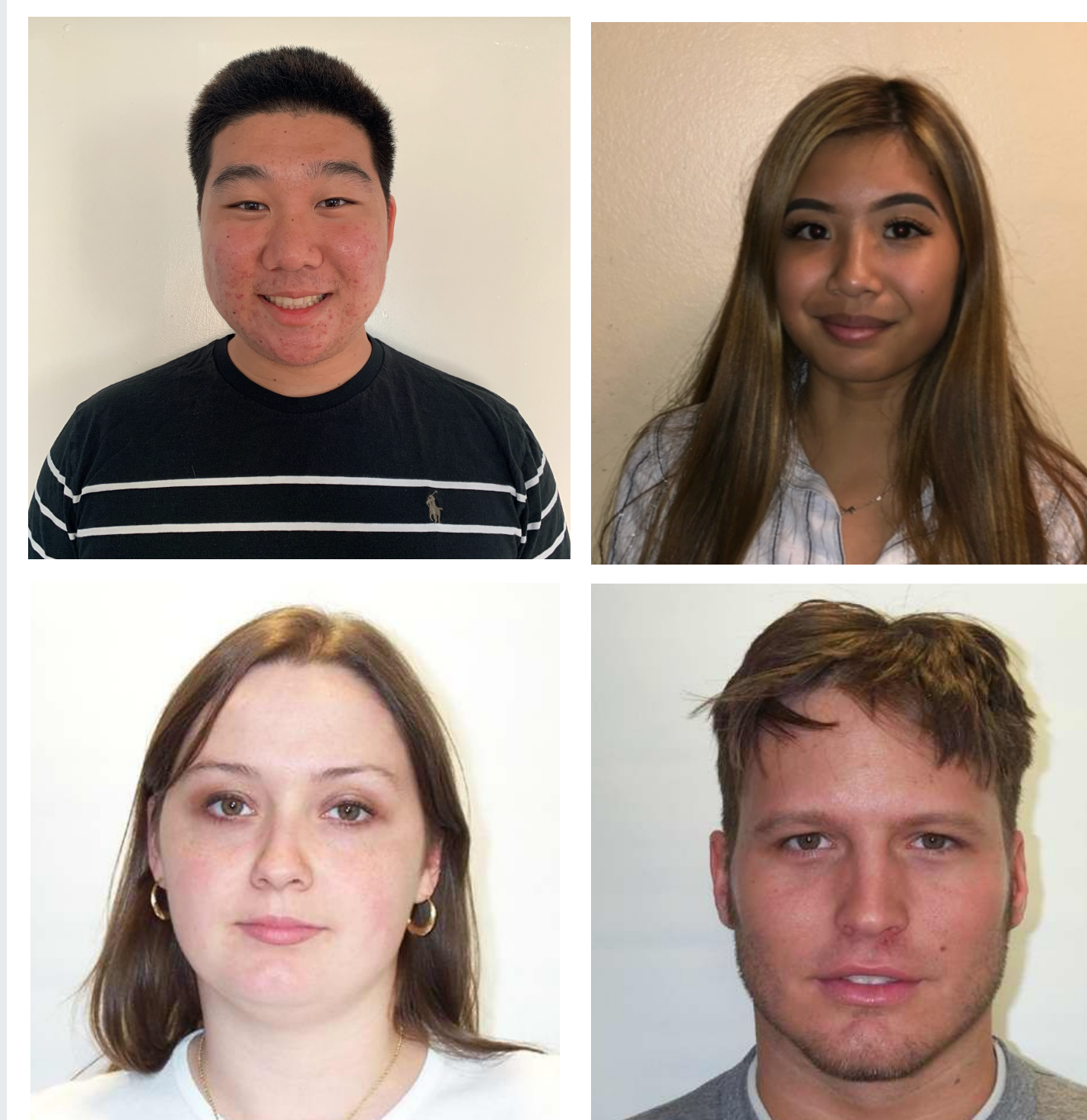
Participants: We will recruit 80 participants on Amazon's Mechanical Turk, an online participant pool.

Methods: Participants will see 40 faces (20 White, 20 Asians, split equally in terms of gender). Pilot data was collected to equate perceived attractiveness and perceived emotional expression across all groups.

In two separate blocks, participants will assess each person's perceived age and rate each person on leadership-related questions derived from Cronshaw & Lord's (1987) leadership typicality measure (see below).

For data analysis, we will compare our results with the mediation model to test whether Asian faces are perceived to be younger than White faces and if this will affect their leadership perceptions (considered to be fit for a leader or not).

Sample Stimuli



Survey Items

18

How old do you think this person is (in years)?

60



- To what degree does this person fit your image of what a leader should be?
- To what extent do you think this person looks typical for a leader?
- How willing would you be to choose this person as a leader of a work group?

1 - not at all

2

3

4

5

6

7 - very much

EXPECTED RESULTS:

Proposed Mediation Model

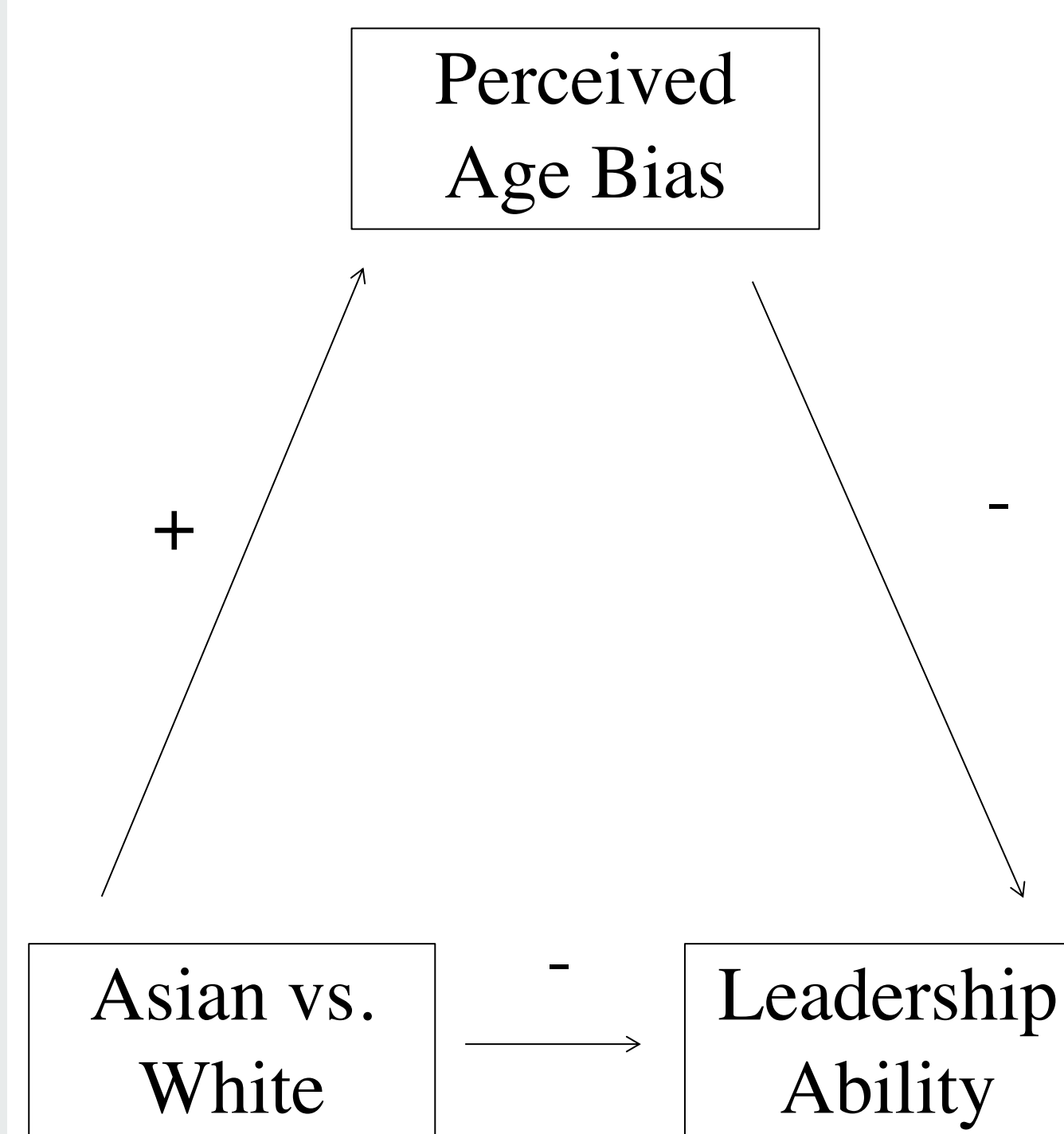


Figure 1: This model proposes that age biases will be higher for Asian individuals than White individuals (viewed as younger) and that this age bias will account for Asian individuals lower perceived leadership ability.

Age Bias (actual age – guessed age)

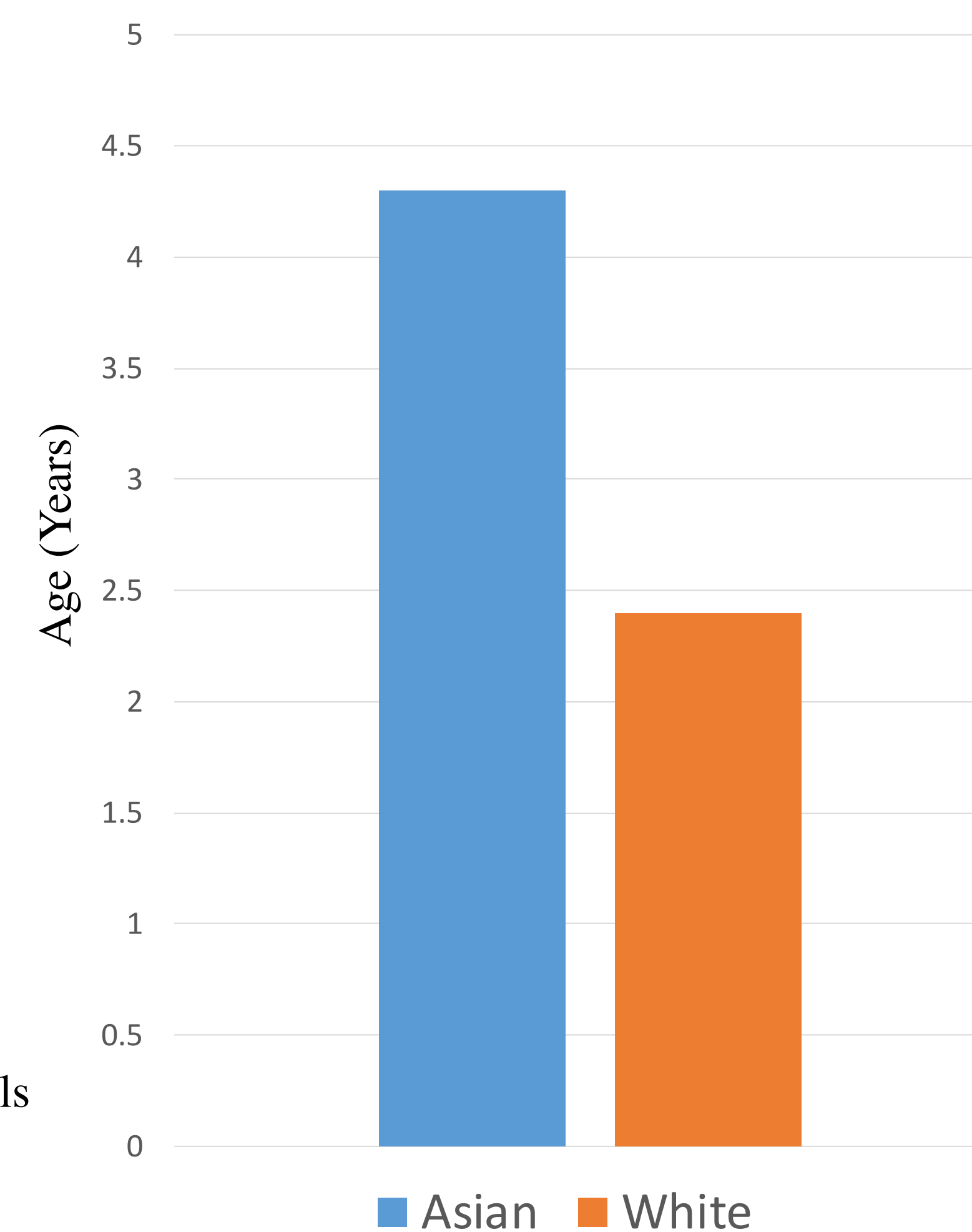


Figure 2

Leadership Ratings

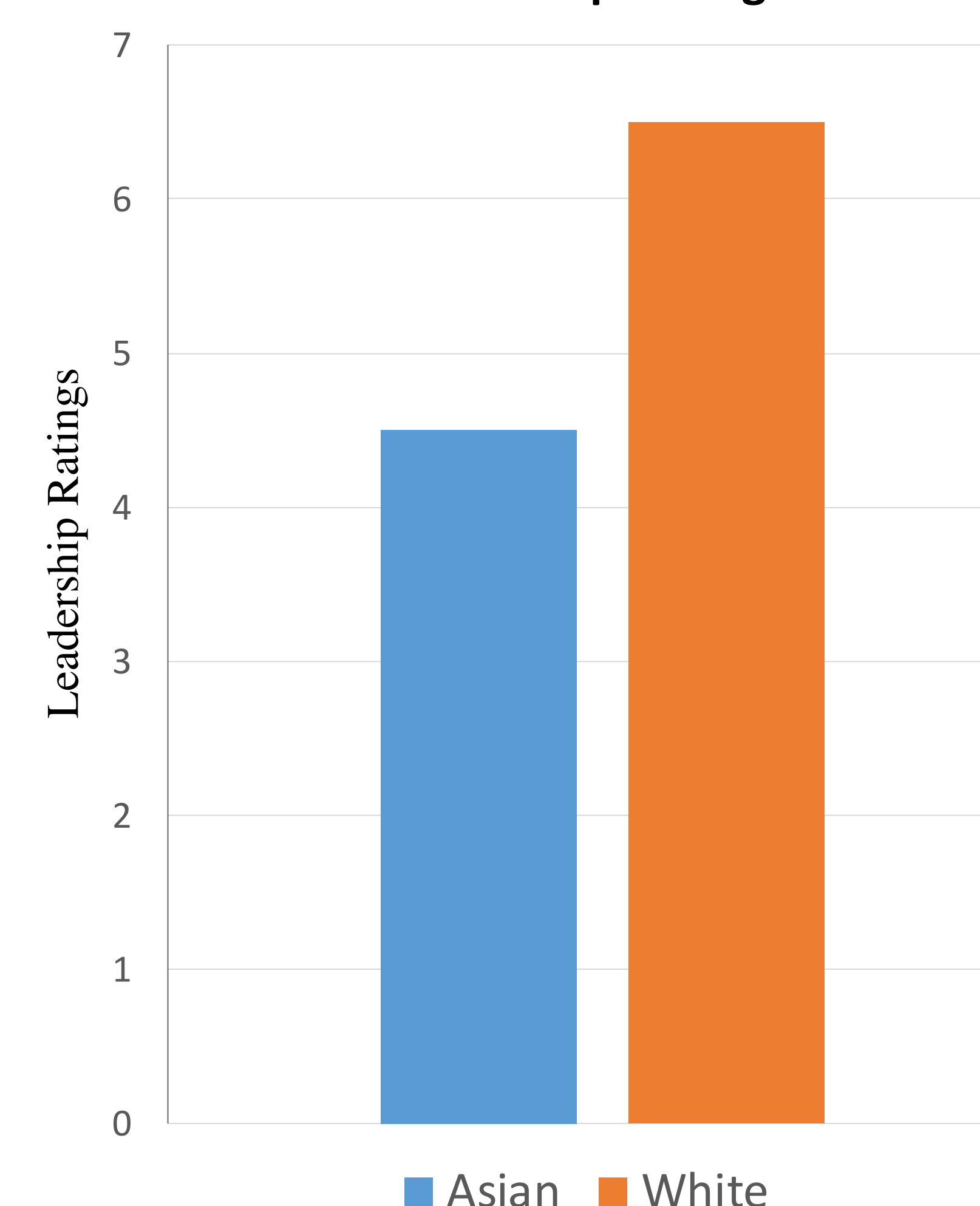


Figure 3

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS:

We anticipate results to show that Asian faces will be perceived as younger than their actual age. We also propose that the age bias will mediate judgments of leadership for Asian but not White individuals, showing a significant negative indirect effect.

Implications of this study will try to reduce the bias made against Asian Americans by bringing awareness and provide discussions of better representation when it comes to leadership.



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