

Introduction

Social exclusion is harmful and leads to negative consequences in the cognitive and social domains (Wesselman & Williams, 2013). To mitigate its negative effects, children use strategies that facilitate social connection, such as sitting closer to others and imitate others more accurately (Marinovic et al., 2017; Watson-Jones et al., 2014). To use these strategies effectively, children should track and evaluate social excluders and their evaluations should inform their affiliation choices.

However, children do not evaluate those who directly exclude them negatively (Woodward et al., in prep). Children in this study may have had issues tracking who excluded them or may have responded based on emotional responses to being excluded.

The current study investigates whether children detect exclusion or evaluate excluders in observed scenarios.

Design

Participants

69 children: 16 3-year-olds, 19 4-year-olds, 17 5-year-olds, 17 6-year-olds

Introductions

Children met two different dog puppets and were then introduced to different pairs of mice.

Games

(order counterbalanced)

Children watched the dog and mice play catch.

Inclusion: ...the mice threw to both the dog and each other for all 36 throws.

Exclusion: ...the mice threw to only each other for all 36 throws.

Each video was watched twice

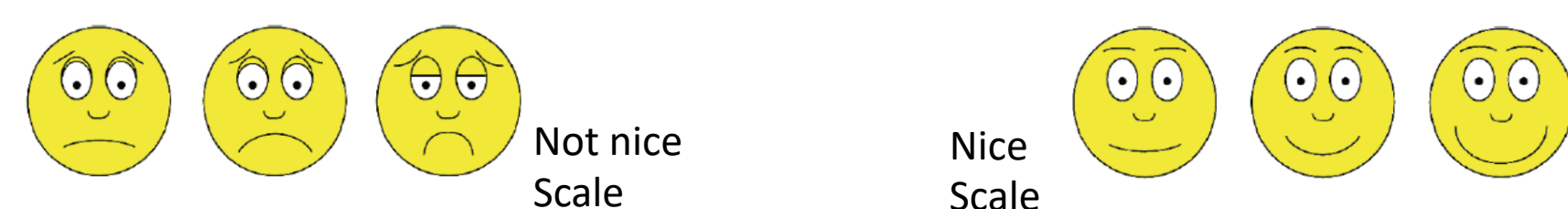
Test Measures

Exclusion Detection

Did the (color) dog get to play or did he/she have to watch?

Evaluations

Do you think the (color) mouse is nice or not nice?



Memory Check

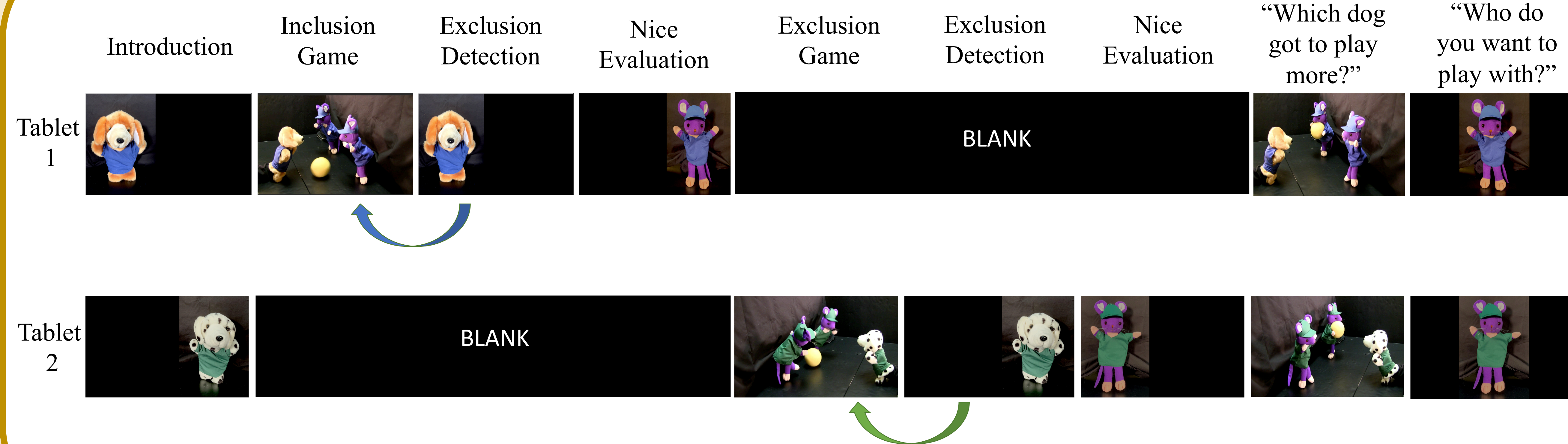
Which dog got to play more?

Play Partner Choice

Which mouse would you want to play with?

Why?

Exploratory questions probing reasoning



Conclusions

Across all ages:

Children detect social exclusion when it happens and do not when it does not happen

Children evaluate social excluders more negatively than includers.

With age, children evaluate more negatively but consistently evaluate includers positively

Differences in older and younger children:

Only 5- and 6-year-olds preferred to play with includers

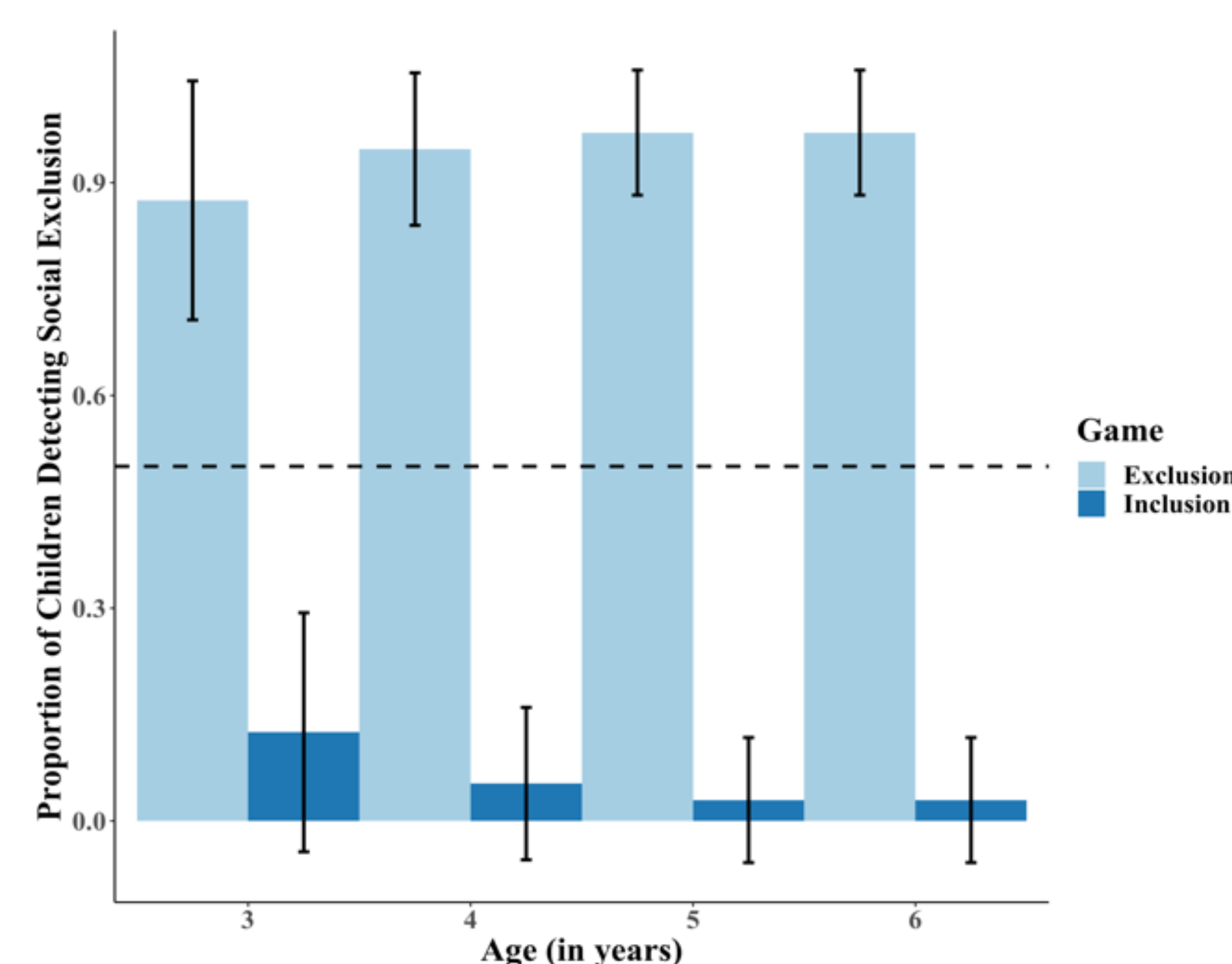
3- and 4-year-olds showed no preference

Differences in play choices and evaluations

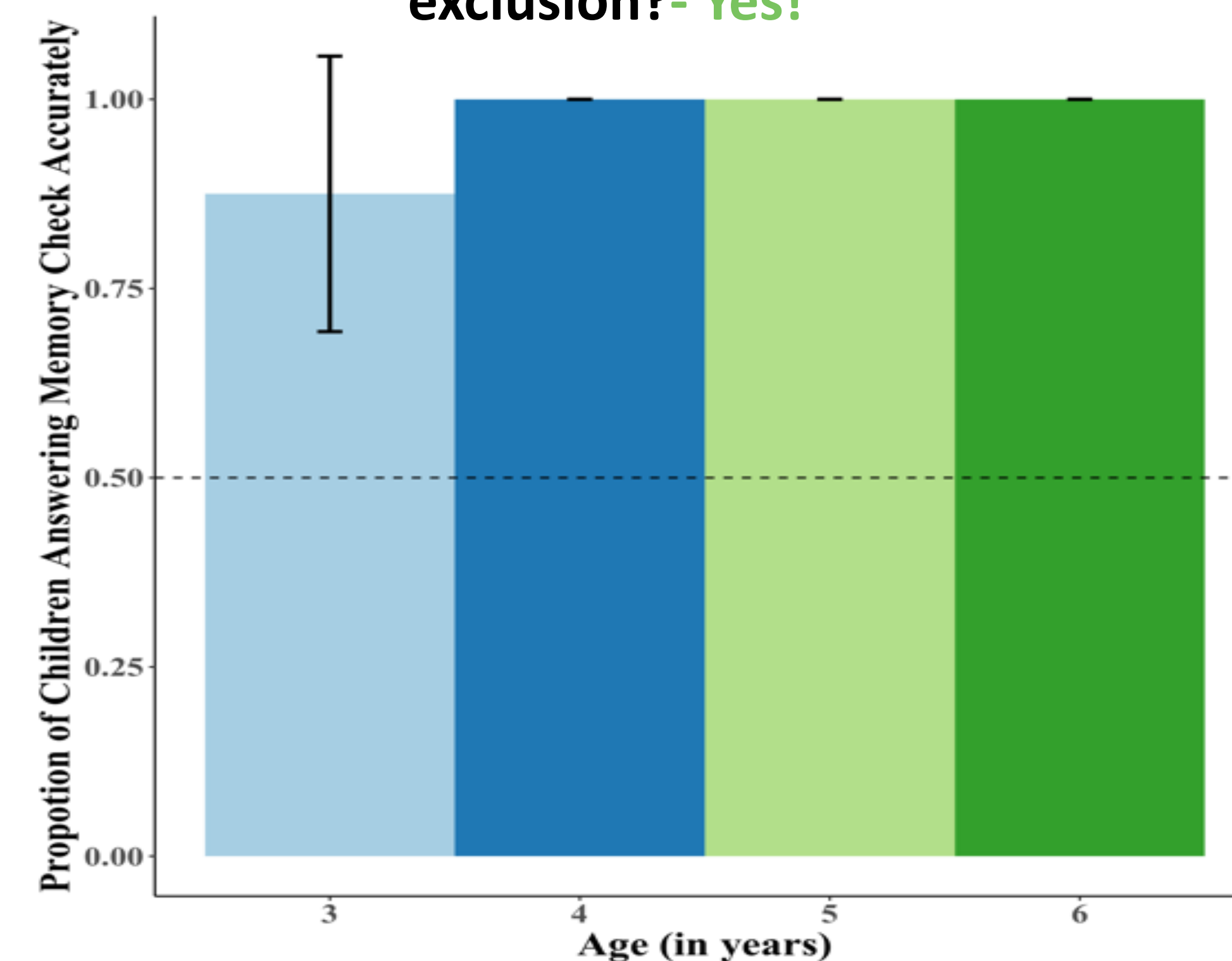
Children's play preferences do not match their character evaluations

Results

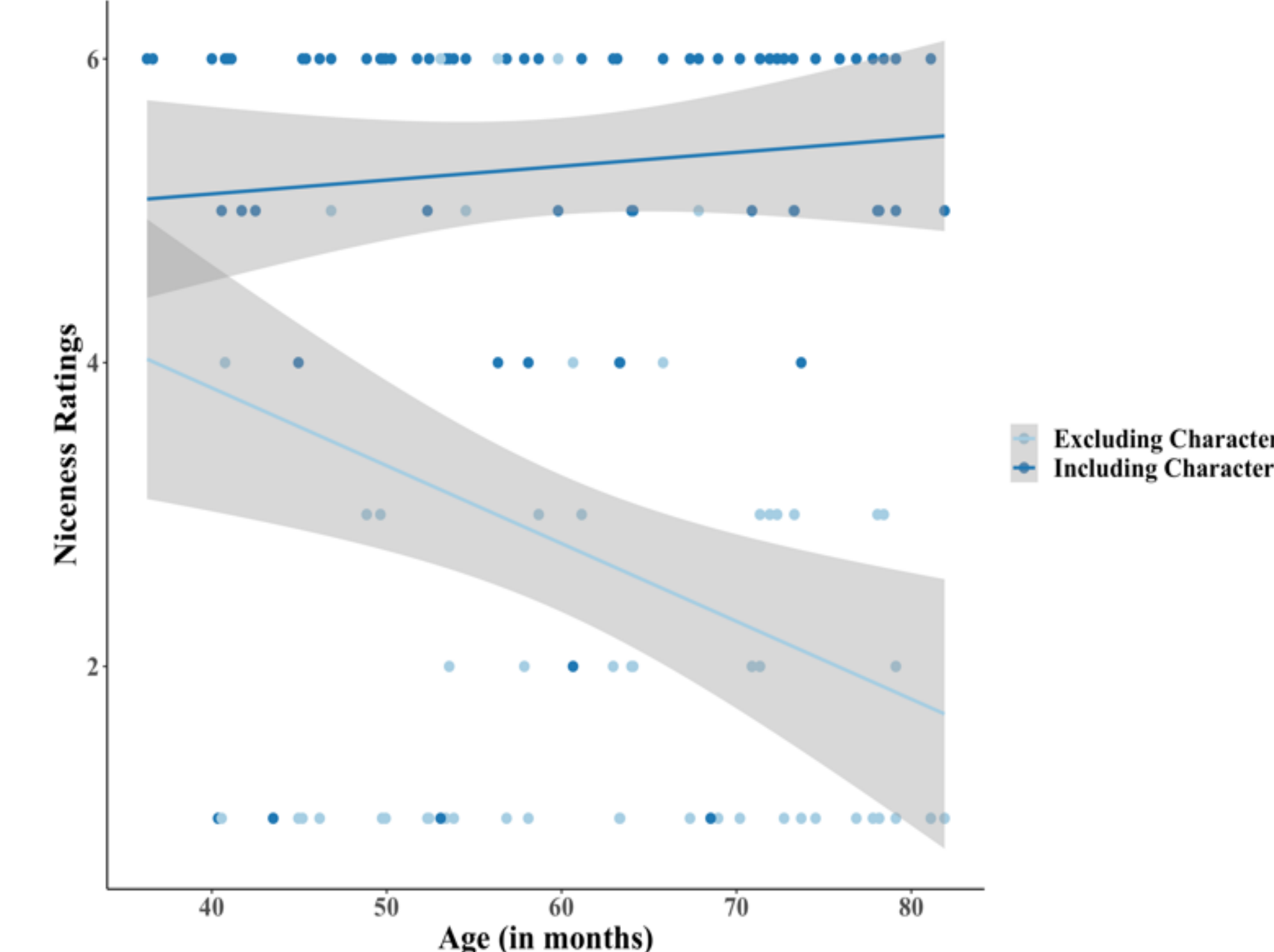
Do children detect exclusion? – Yes!



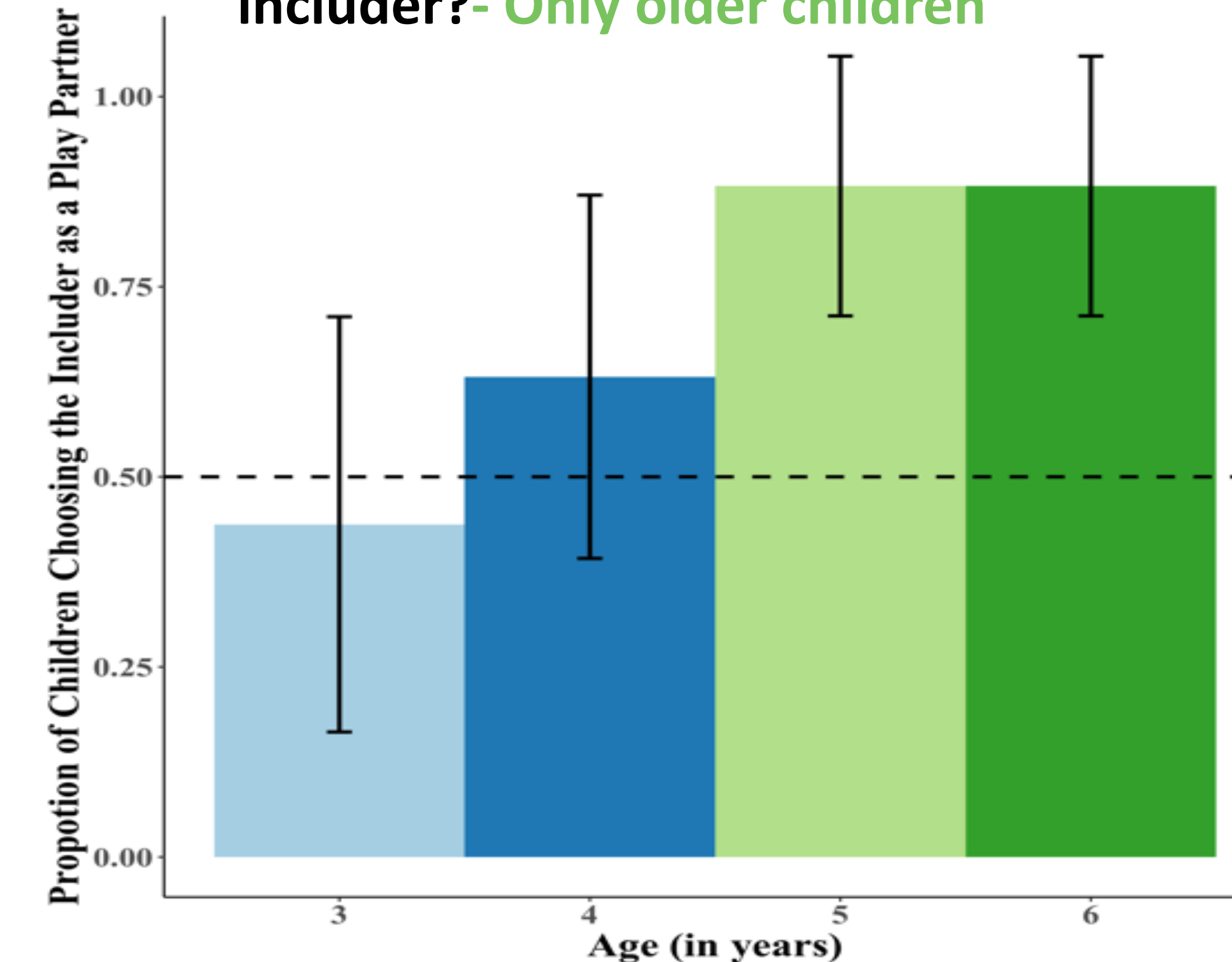
Do children remember seeing exclusion? – Yes!



Do children evaluate excluders negatively? – Yes!



Would children rather play with an includer? – Only older children



Future Directions

In third-party scenarios, children detected and negatively evaluated excluders. This is inconsistent with children's evaluations after being excluded. Future work should directly compare children's evaluations after first-hand experiences of exclusion and observations.

Interestingly, young children evaluated excluders negatively, but did not prefer to play with includers. Future work should examine how and why children's evaluations deviate from play choices.

References

- Marinovic, V., Wahl, S., & Trauble, B. (2017). "Next to you" – Young children sit closer to a person following vicarious ostracism. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 156, 179-185. 10.1016/j.jecp.2016.11.011
- Watson-Jones, R.E., Legare, C.H., Whitehouse, H., Clegg, J.M. (2014). Task-specific effects of ostracism on imitative fidelity in early childhood. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 35, 204-210. 10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2014.01.004
- Wesselman, E.D., & Williams, K.D. (2013). Ostracism and stages of coping. In C.N. DeWall (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Social Exclusion* (20-30). Oxford: Oxford University Press.