

Do Twins Engage More in Pretend Play Than Singletons?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to analyze whether twins differ from non-twins in terms of types of play in 5-year-old children. Children came to a laboratory playroom at age 5, where they were paired with a same-sex, same-age, unfamiliar child and were allowed to play together. The APS-P coding scheme was used to code frequency of pretend play, functional play, and non-play behaviors. MANOVA analyses showed a significant sex difference in no play, suggesting that girls engaged in more of all types of play compared to boys. Results also showed a significant difference between twins and singletons in terms of their functional and pretend play. Twins engaged in more functional play while singletons engaged in more pretend play. These results are interesting because non-twin children do not have a same age play mate who is virtually always present in their lives, as do twins. It is possible that twins are at risk of less pretend play because of poorer verbal abilities.

INTRODUCTION

- Pretend play occurs when a child uses a toy in a playful and imaginary way, differently than how it is intended (Fein, 1987).
- This study examines whether having a twin is a factor that determines how much play children engage in.
 - Other research showed that individual differences that led to pretend play come from experiences in the relationships children have with their mothers and siblings (Youngblade & Dunn, 1995).
 - Some studies have suggested that having a sibling the same age to grow up with may cause them to adapt to certain behaviors by learning how to play with the other (DiLalla, 2006).
 - This leads to our main hypothesis that having a twin will enhance pretend play compared to having a sibling relationship experience.
- When it comes to sex differences, some but not all studies show that girls tend to engage in more pretend play than boys do (Jones & Glenn, 2006).
 - Previous studies show boys to be more active than girls, suggesting less time to sit and play pretend (Payne & Jamnik, 2021).
- Thus, the primary purpose of this study was to examine whether having a twin made a difference in the types of play children engaged in. We also looked at whether sex differences had an effect in types of play.

HYPOTHESES

- H1: Girls will engage in more pretend play than boys.
- H2: Having a twin will help engage in more pretend play than singletons.

PARTICIPANTS / PROCEDURE

- Children and parents were tested as part of the Southern Illinois Twins/Triplets and Siblings Study (SITSS; DiLalla & Jamnik, 2019).
- The current sample includes 55 children (30 twins and 25 singletons); of that group, we had 30 girls and 25 boys.
- Procedure
- The children came to the lab at the age of 5.
- All peers are the same-age and same-sex.
- At the lab two children who didn't know each other played together freely for 20 minutes with toys; this was recorded for later coding.

FIGURES

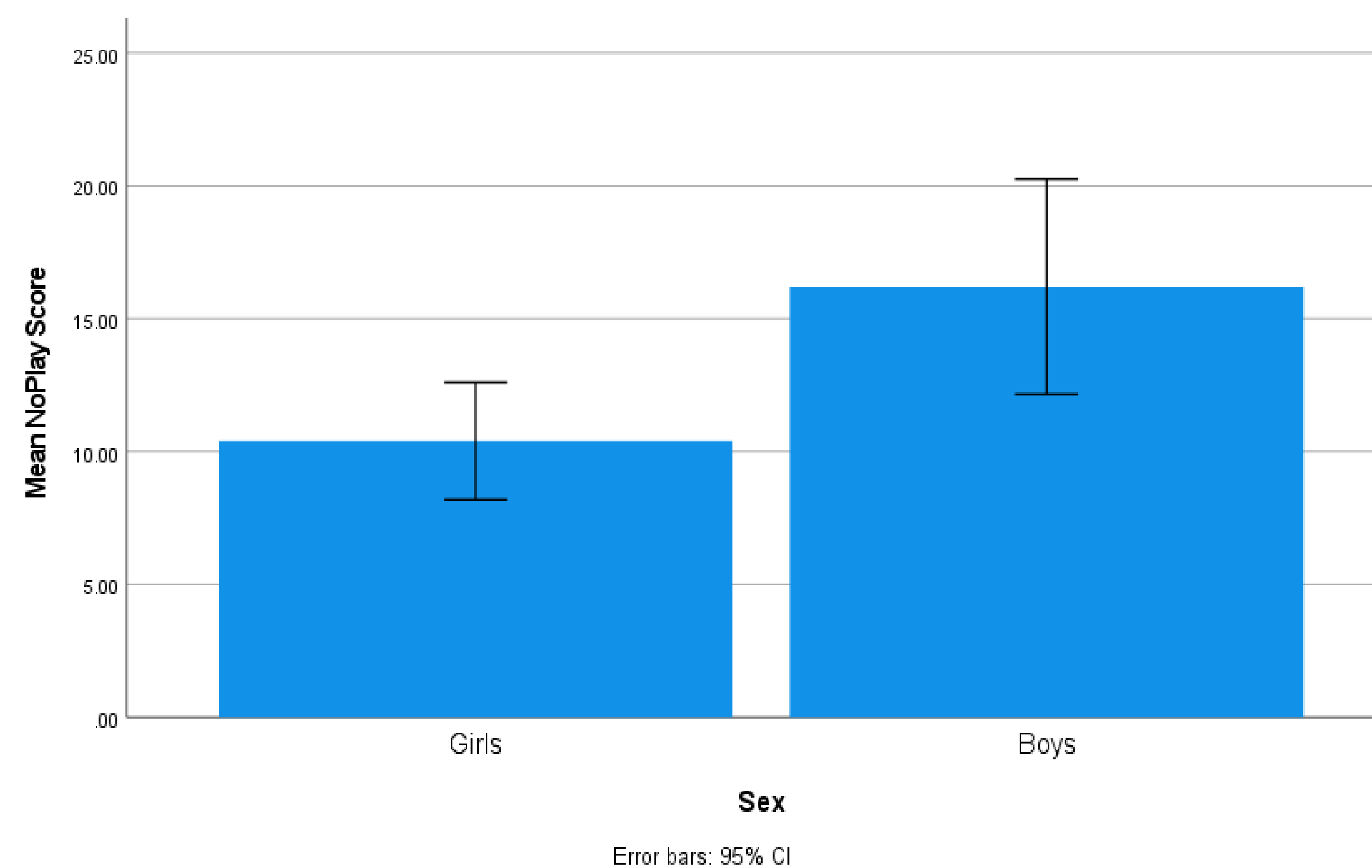


Figure 1. Means for Girls' vs Boys' No Play

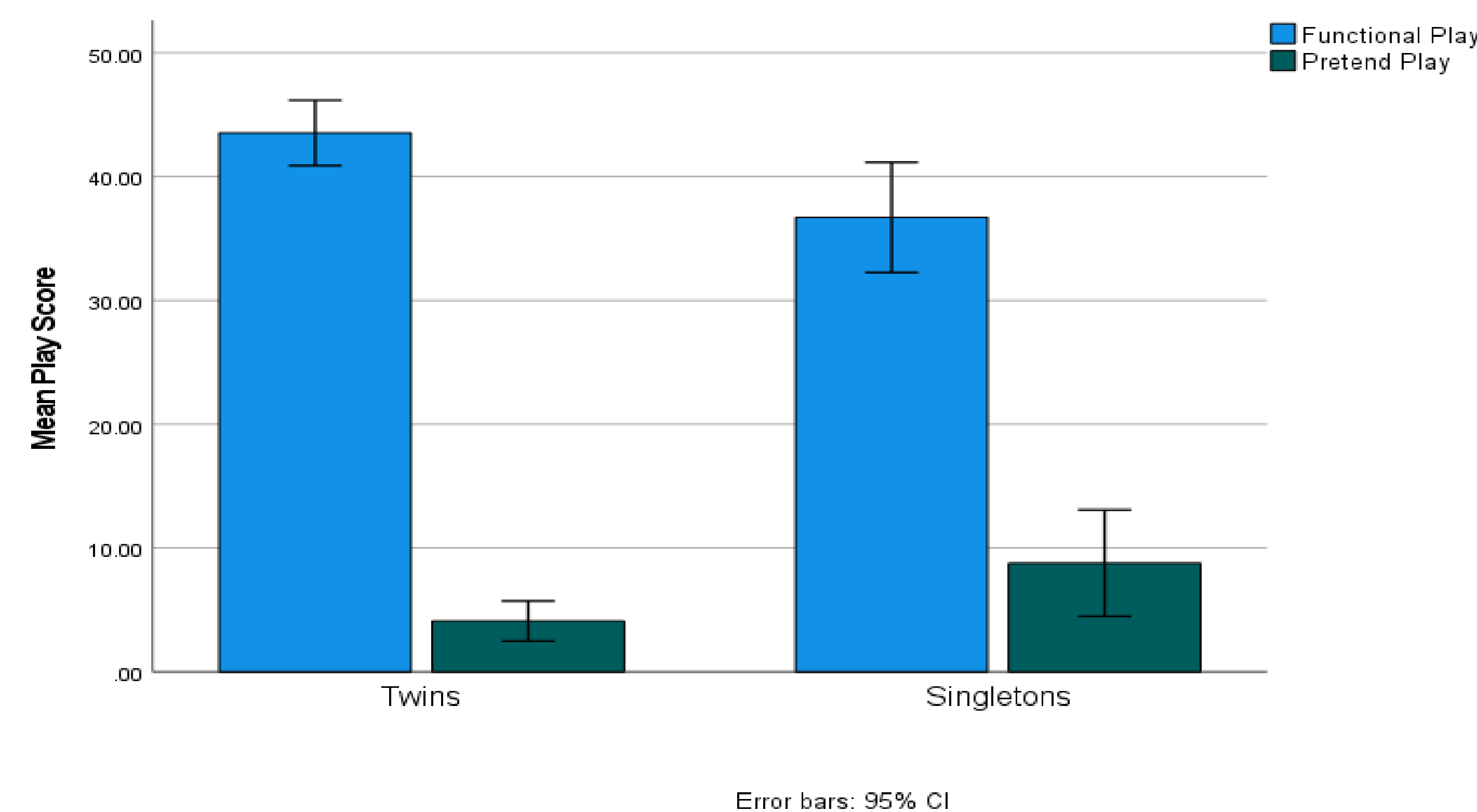


Figure 2. Means for Twins vs Singletons for Both Play Measures

MEASURES

- We used the APS-P (Affect in Play Scale- Preschool) assessment measure (Fehr & Russ, 2013).
- This yields 3 scores: Pretend Play (Using imagination, not using toys as they were intended to be played with), Functional Play (Using toys in their intended manner), and No Play (When a child did not interact with a toy).
- For our data analyses we used SPSS 27.

RESULTS

- Only one twin was selected from each family to maintain sample independence
- **Hypothesis 1** was supported. The overall MANOVA analyses showed significant sex differences, $F(3,49) = 3.06$, $p = .037$. Univariate analyses showed a significant effect for No Play, $F(1,51) = 9.33$, $p = .004$. See Figure 1.
- **Hypothesis 2** was supported. The overall MANOVA analyses showed a significance between twins versus singletons, $F(3,49) = 3.11$, $p = .034$. The Univariate analyses showed significant differences for functional play, $F(1,51) = 9.60$, $p = .003$ and pretend play, $F(1,51) = 3.81$, $p = .056$. See Figure 2.

DISCUSSION

- Results showed that boys were rated significantly higher when it comes to no play, demonstrating that it is a possibility that boys might just be more active than girls.
- Furthermore, results indicated a significance between twins versus singletons when it comes to types of play.
 - Interestingly, twins engaged in more functional play while singletons engaged in more pretend play.
 - This suggests that maybe not having a constant built in play mate leads to more engagement in pretend play.
 - It may also be that twins tend to have their own language or communicate less to others, suggesting they may have talked less and have been coded for functional play.
- One limitation of this study is how small the sample size was. Maybe with a bigger sample size we could have more chances for finding significant effects in other areas.
- Future research should examine whether activity levels have an effect on the types of play children engage in.

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