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TODDLERS' BODY SCALE ERRORS: Influences of age and parents

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Title: TODDLERS' BODY SCALE ERRORS: Influences of age and parents

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Abstract

Introduction:

A body scale error occurs when someone makes a serious attempt to perform an action with an object that cannot be successfully completed due to the extreme differences in the size (DeLoache, Uttal, & Rosengren, 2004). For example, a toddler may want to ride a toy bus and persist in an attempt to get inside. Scale errors are most prevalent during early childhood. Here we asked: Do scale errors occur most often at the end of infancy (around 18 months), as children are just becoming symbol-minded? And also, how do parents' reactions to scale errors influence their child's actions?

Methods:

To address these questions, we used an archive of video records of 56 typically developing toddlers (half girls) and their parents who interacted for 40 minutes in a semi-naturalistic Communication Play Protocol (Adamson, Bakeman, & Deckner, 2004). We applied a coding scheme that located body scale error episodes, the toy eliciting the error, the duration of the BSE, the parents' reaction to the error, and the child's reaction to the parent's reaction. Transcripts were also made of the dialogue that occurred about each BSE.

Preliminary Results:

Twenty-one children (37% of the sample) committed a total of 31 body scale errors

(range 0 – 4). We found, as expected, that approximately half (48%) of the BSE occurred during the first visit (18 months). Parents most often discouraged these errors; rarely did they encourage them.

Conclusion:

The ensuing dialogues suggest that children are not swayed by their parents' comments.

This study's finding replicates earlier studies about when BSE occurs and adds new information about how parents react and how these reactions influence young children.

Keywords:

body scale errors, toddlers, parents, child development