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# A day in the life of 12 toddlers: How does parent input vary across activity contexts?

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## Introduction

- Historically, parent-child interaction has often been studied during researcher-directed activities, limiting **ecological validity**<sup>1</sup>
- Parental input to children can vary depending on parents' **perceptions** of the **purpose** of an activity<sup>2</sup>
- Daylong recording** devices like LENA capture children's naturalistic interactions, but this technology has rarely been combined with **qualitative data** exploring parents' views<sup>3</sup>
- Aim:** to explore parental input across activities, using a combination of naturalistic audio recordings and qualitative interviews

## Methods

- Participants** = 12 parent-child dyads (mean age **39.4 months**) living in Bristol, UK. Recruitment targeted diversity in parental education, ethnicity and family structure

- Data collection:**



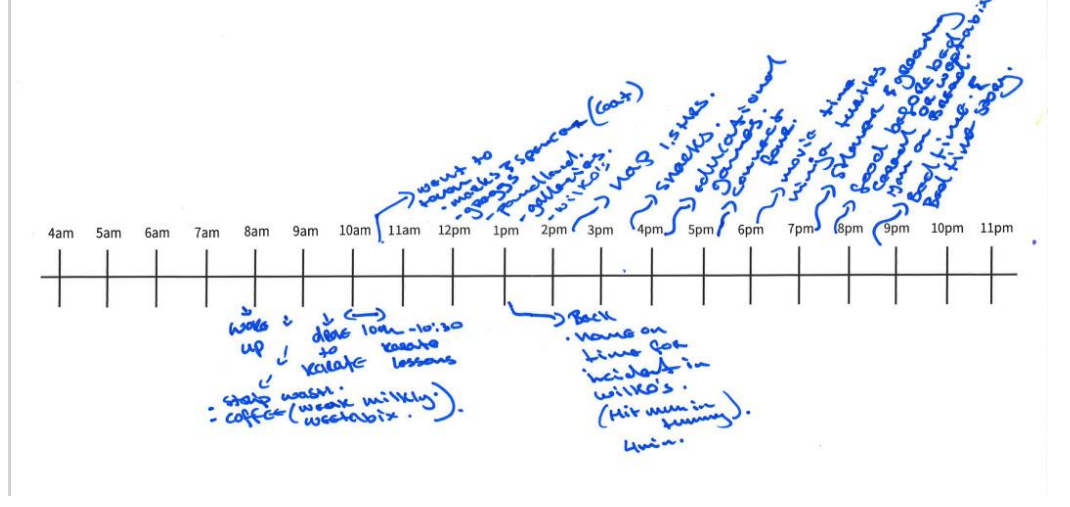
1. Audio recording



2. Photo diary



3. Parent interviews



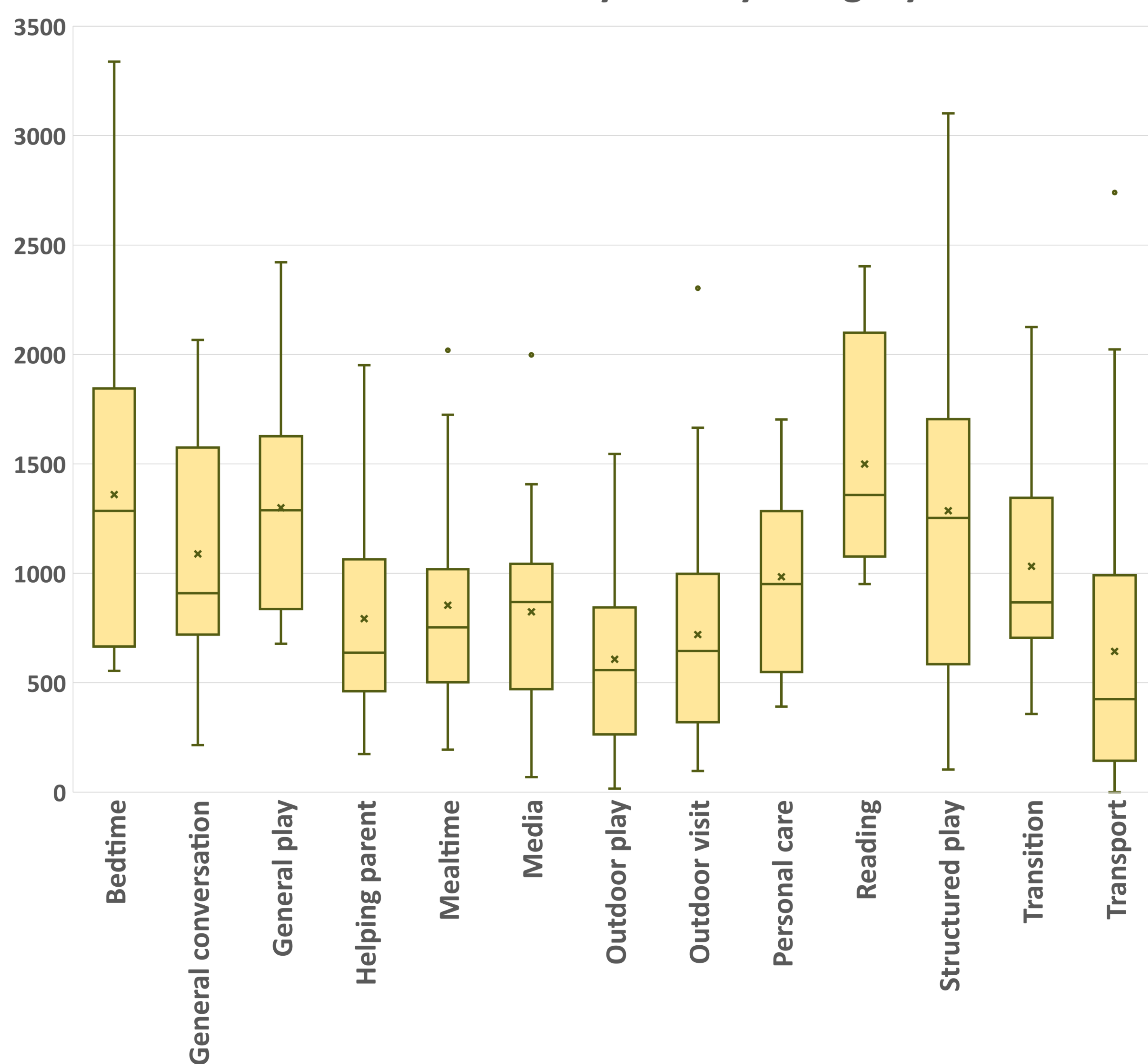
4. Parent timelines

- Data analysis:** **1) Activity analysis** – automated analyses of adult word count (AWC) were divided into 30-minute extracts and coded to activity categories, using information from photos, parent timelines and LENA extracts. **2) Qualitative analysis** – in-depth activity analysis of photos and LENA extracts, reflexive thematic analysis of parent interviews<sup>4</sup>

## Results

### Activity analysis

Adult word count by activity category



- AWC** was highest during reading, bedtime and play activities and lowest during transport, outdoor play and outdoor visits
- Activity frequency analysis** showed a different pattern – extracts were least frequently coded as reading (3%) and general play (4%). The most frequent activities were mealtime (15%) and outdoor play (14%)

### Qualitative analysis

- Parent interviews revealed the **multiplicity of activities** in everyday life, which may pose challenges when coding activities

“During that time, she's done so much! She goes...from one thing to another”

“It was just like having breakfast and watching some things on the tablet”

- Photos show that families **engage** in the same activity in different ways:



- Parents had different views about the activities that provide **opportunities for interaction** – for example during mealtime:

“It's really important to have a meal as a family. This is when you talk about your day”

“Just wanna chill...sit down and eat your food and not really have to talk”

- They valued interaction during **infrequently studied activities**, like doing their children's hair or household chores
- Parents described **factors** affecting their **engagement** in activities like reading and play, including a lack of time and language barriers:

“I don't tend to play with them cos I'm always very busy”

“We don't have books [in] Somali, and she can't understand it”

## Discussion

- Higher AWC was observed during play and book reading contexts, replicating the results of previous naturalistic studies<sup>5</sup>. However, the infrequency of these activities in families' days suggests they may not be the most ecologically valid activities for observation
- Qualitative results present a broader picture, showing variation in the activities that parents valued as opportunities for interaction, diversity in the way that families engage in those activities, and additional factors impacting their engagement
- This work illustrates the value of combining quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the context and meaning behind everyday interactions

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