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Picture book reading in the lives of 18-30 month old children: A diary study

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Abstract: Picture book reading is a common activity in the lives of many children. This work describes the frequency and character of picture book reading in American homes. Seventy-seven monolingual English-speaking families with children between the ages of 18-30 months took part in a 5-day diary study in which caregivers recorded details about picture book reading activities. This sample is characteristic of some laboratory samples but less nationally representative; 92.2% of caregivers held a college degree. Relative to previously reported averages, caregivers reported reading to children more often (6.8x/day), reported beginning reading at a younger age (2.2 months) and reported more books in the home (111.1 books). Caregivers reported both reading the book text and discussing the pictures with their children. These numbers suggest an extremely high upper-limit to the amount of language input some children receive from picture book reading. Consequences for language environments and language development will be discussed.