

# A NATURAL HISTORY OF REPETITION

## PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN'S REPETITIVE BEHAVIOUR DURING FREE PLAY



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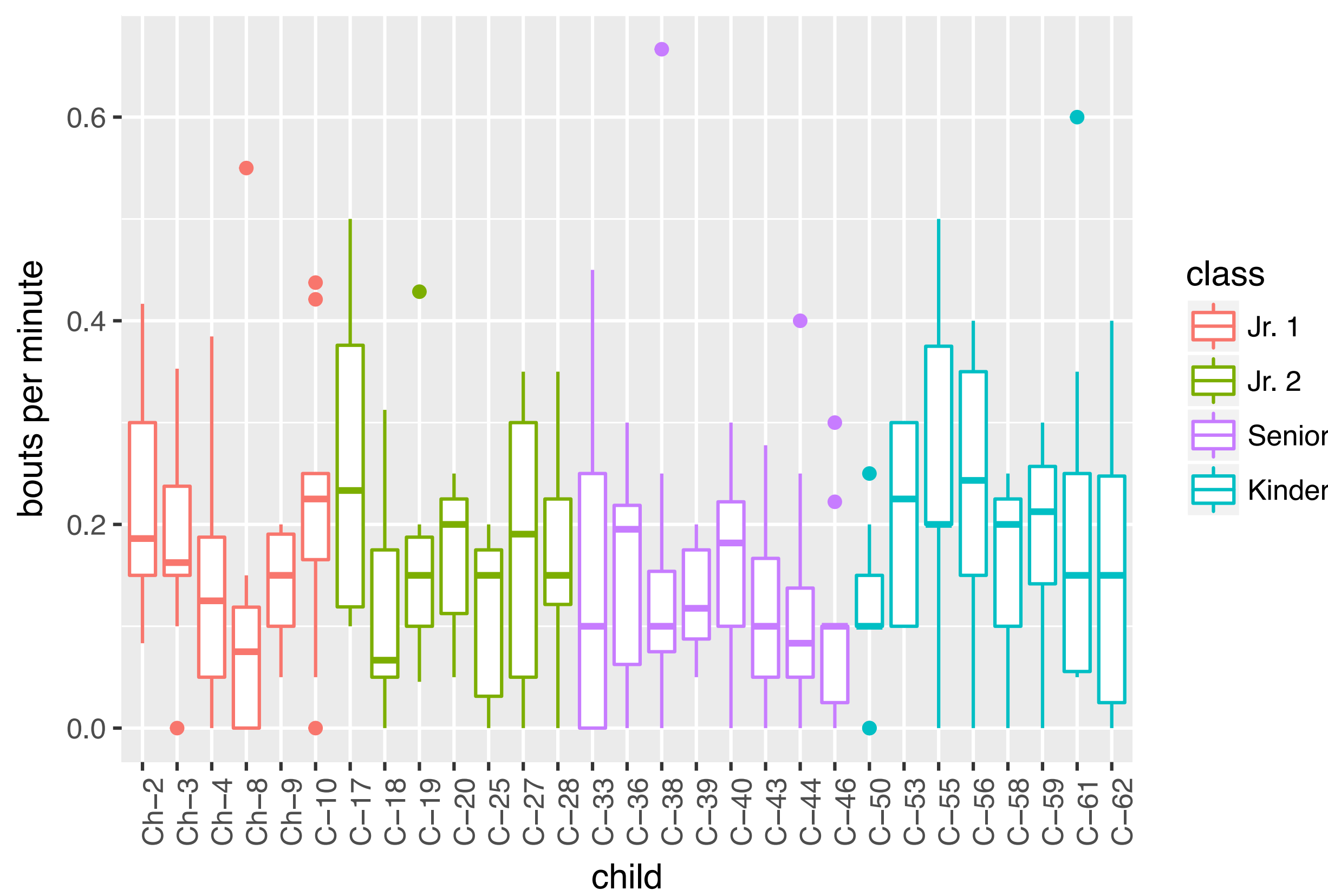


### INTRODUCTION

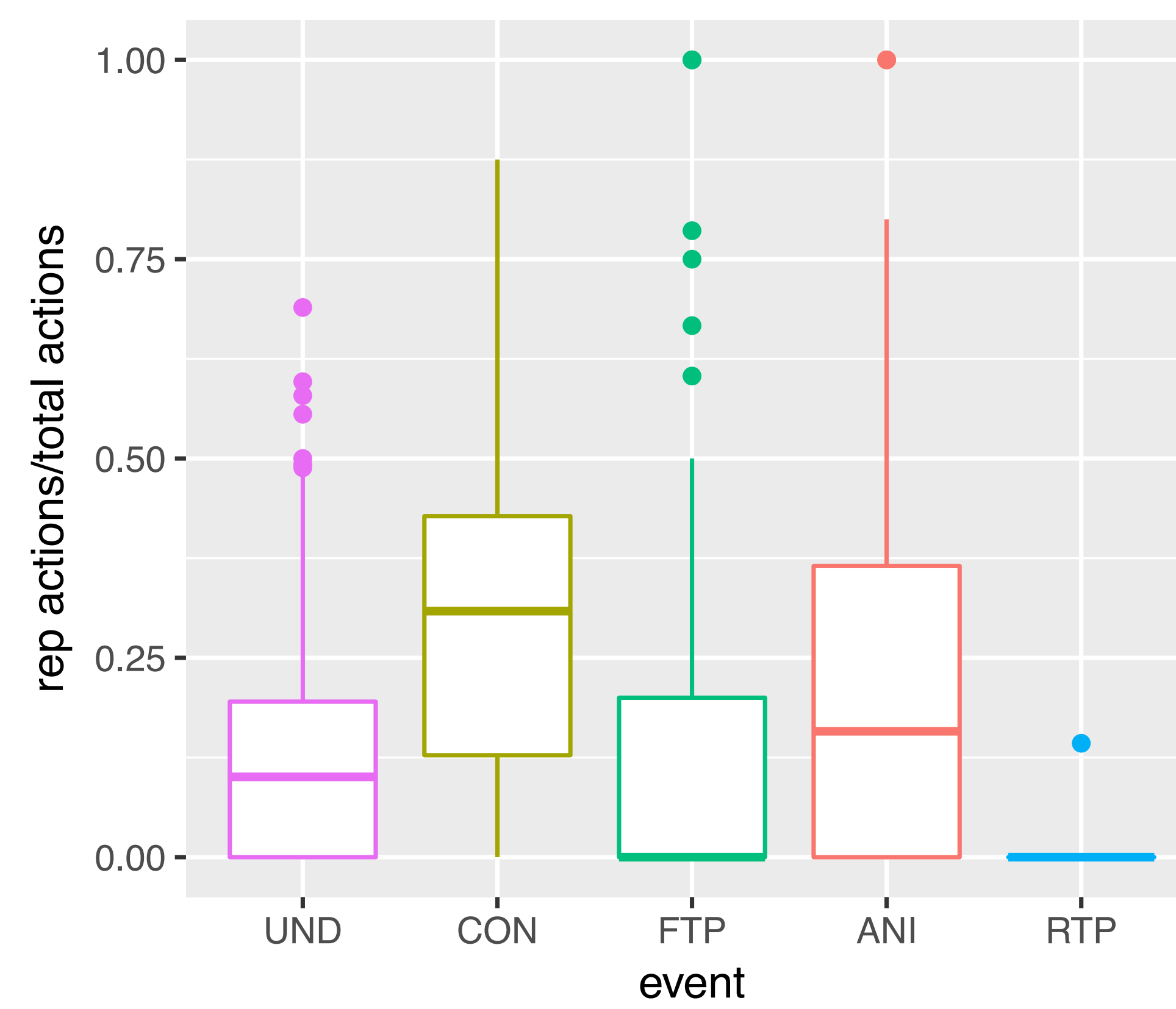
- Maria Montessori identified repetition as a natural tendency of children.
- Little research has been conducted on repetition outside of psychopathological contexts.
- This study determined the frequency, structure, and contexts of repetitive sequences among typically-developing children.

### METHODS

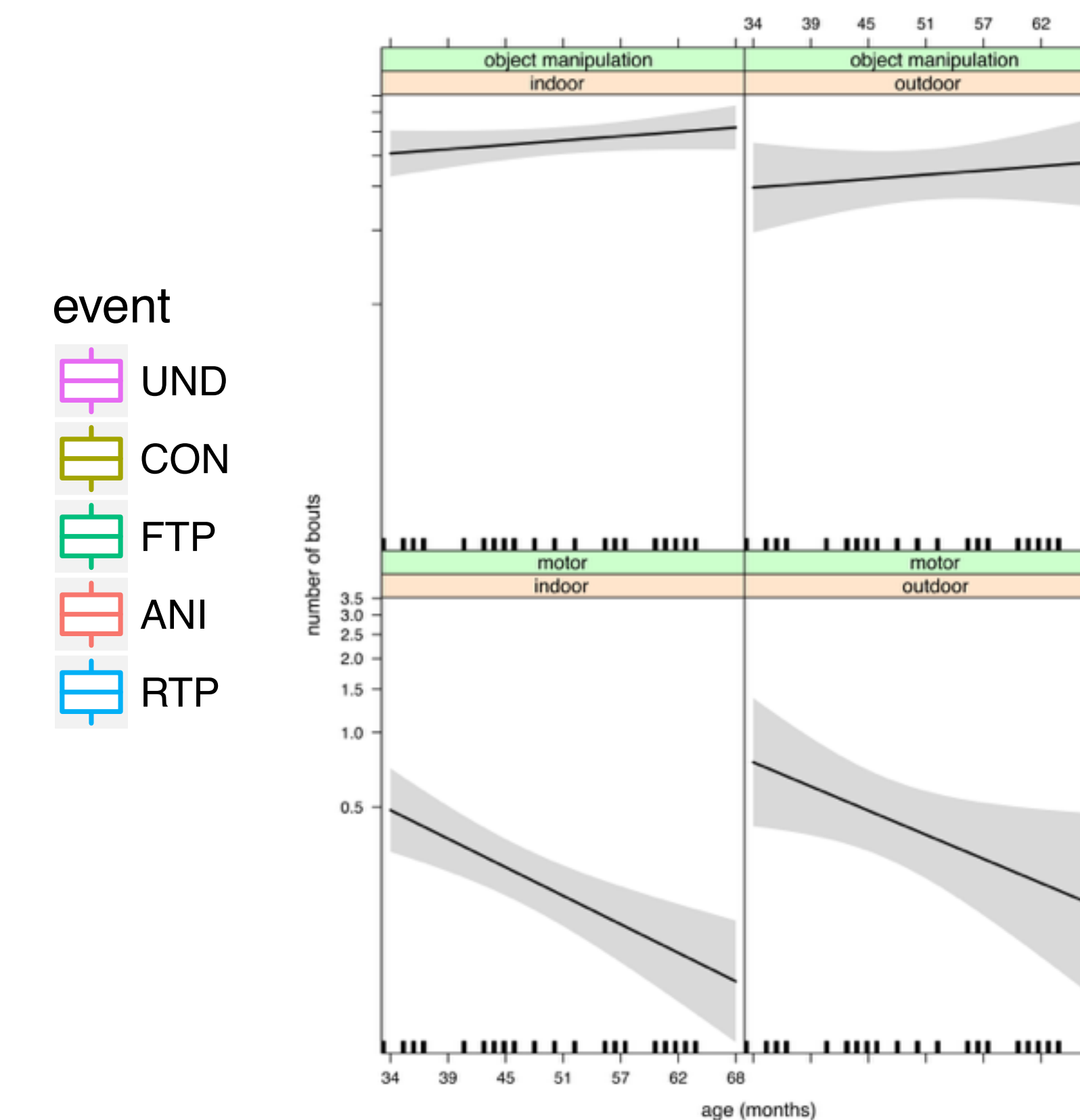
- 31 children (33-72 months) were observed in twenty-minute focal follows during free play for a total of 101 hours.
- Play contexts were coded as construction, animation, fantasy play, rough-and-tumble play, and undirected.
- Repetitive sequences of motor behaviours were scored across contexts.



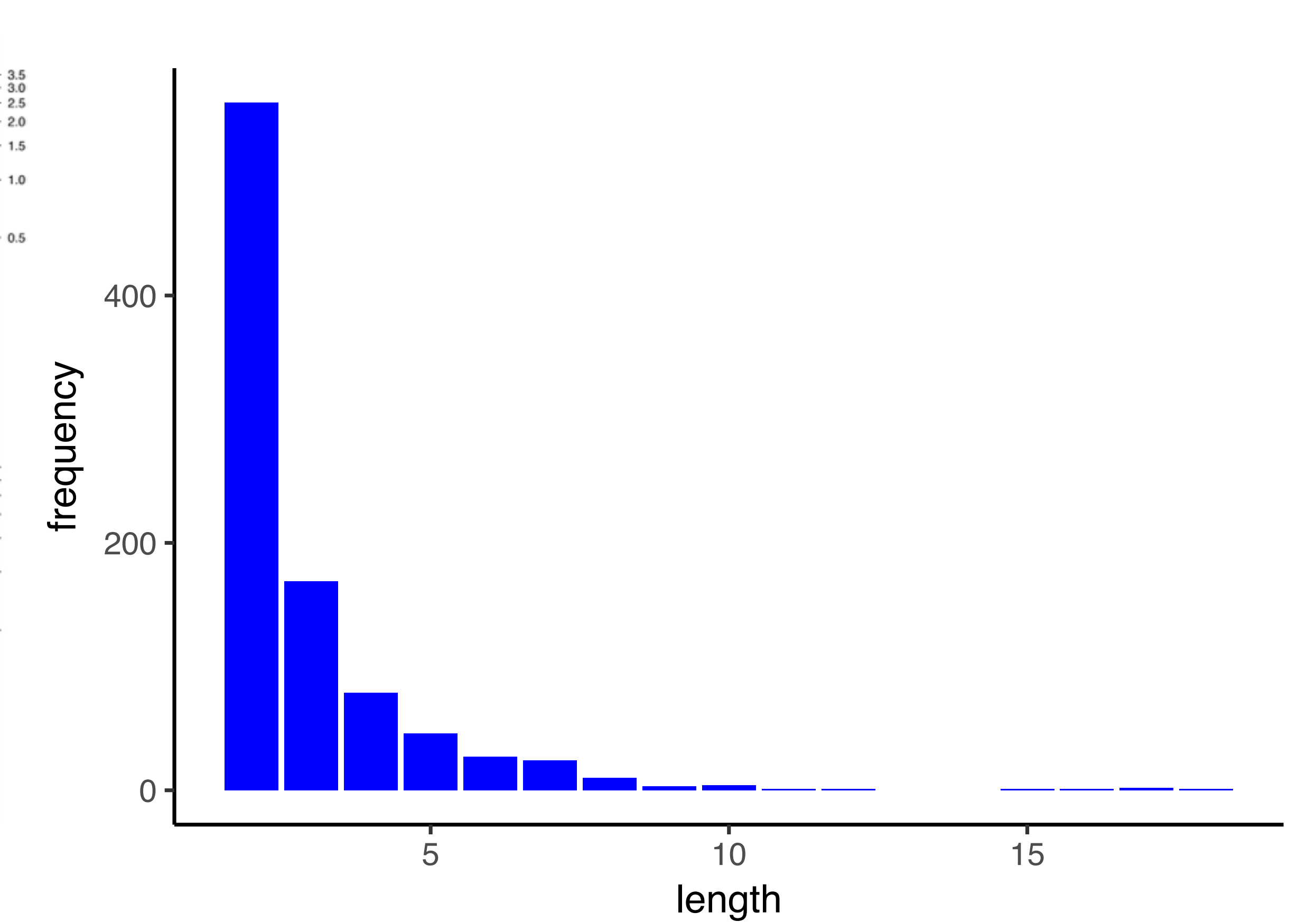
All children engaged in repetitive actions.



Repetition occurred across all contexts, but was not distributed evenly.



Younger children engaged in more motor repetition.



Repetitive bouts were short rather than long.



### CONCLUSIONS

- Children spontaneously engage in motor repetition across all contexts, as Montessori claimed, suggesting it is a natural tendency.
- Some forms of play are more likely to include repetitive bouts than others, however, suggesting context modulates children's repetitive tendencies.
- Repetitive bouts are shorter than Montessori described, and do not suggest the intense focus and concentration she emphasized.
- Naturalistic studies like these can contribute to a well-grounded scientific rationale for educational practices both within and outside Montessori programs.