



Recognizing Potential: Insights From Black Caregivers on Children's Play Skills in Head Start

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Aim 1

Empirically identify latent profiles of parent-reported interactive play in the home and neighborhood

Peer Play Skills – Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale



Interactive Peer Play



Disruptive Peer Play



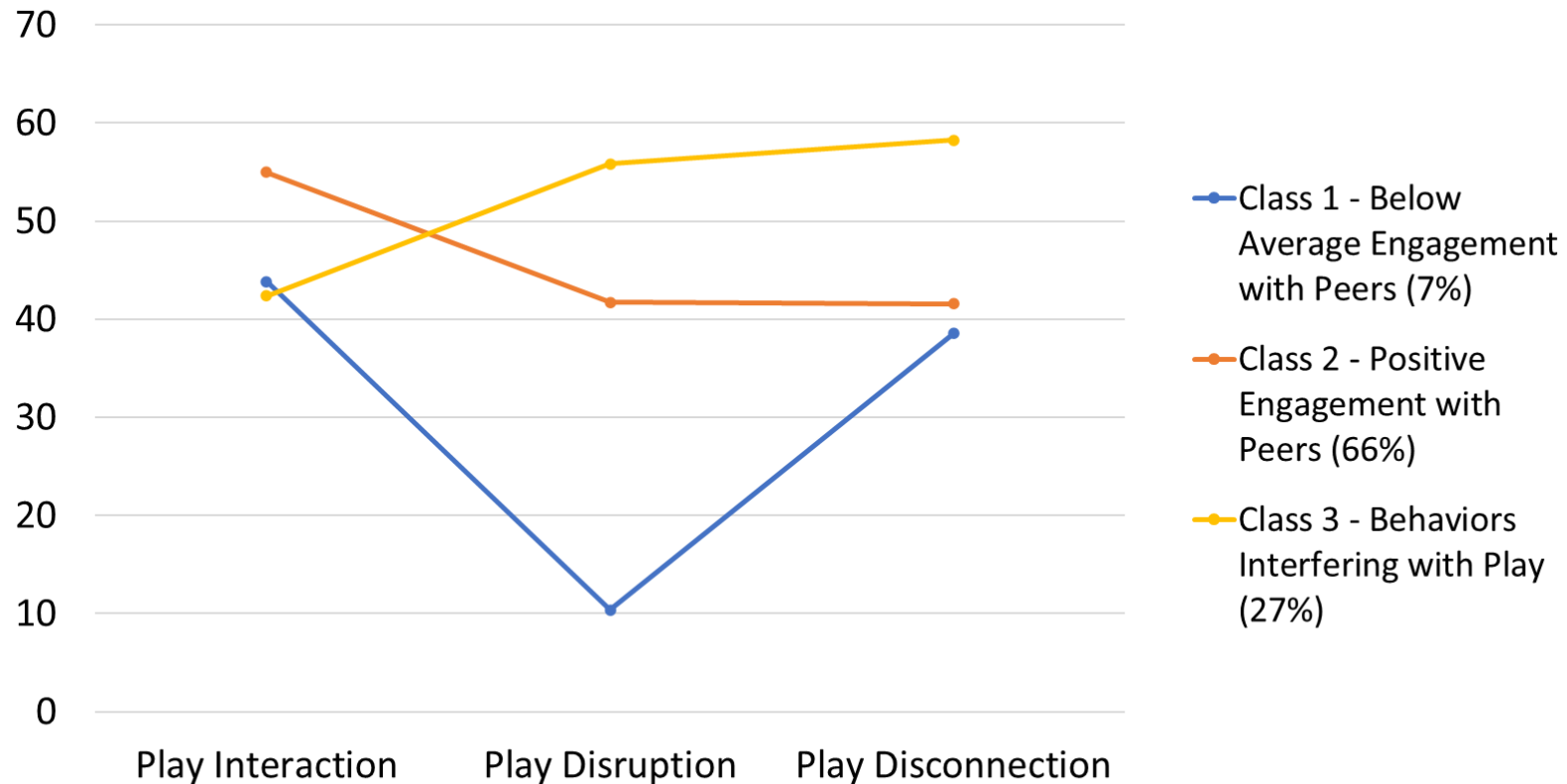
Disconnected Peer Play



Participants

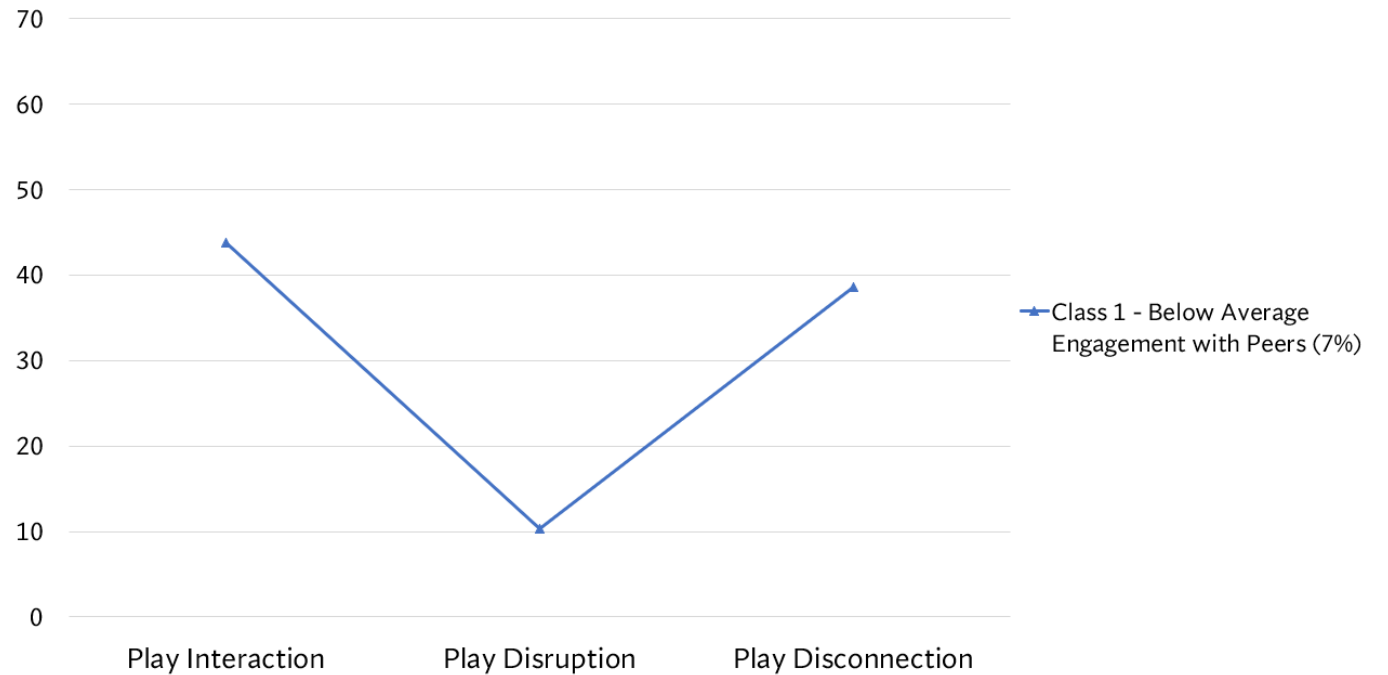
- 209 Head Start Children
- 96% Black
- M age = 48.86 months (SD=6.73)
- 53% Girls

Profiles of Children's Play Behaviors in the Home



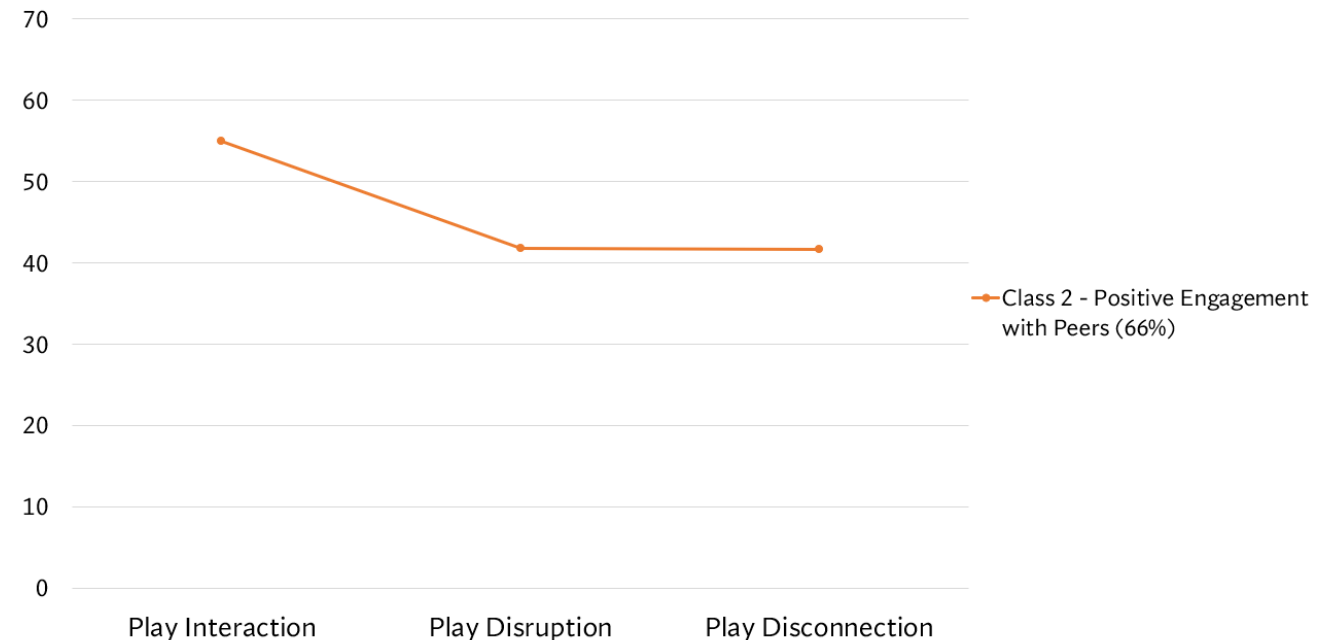
Profile 1: Below Average Engagement

- 7 % of children
- Overall lower levels of Interactive, Disruptive, and Disconnected Peer Play behaviors



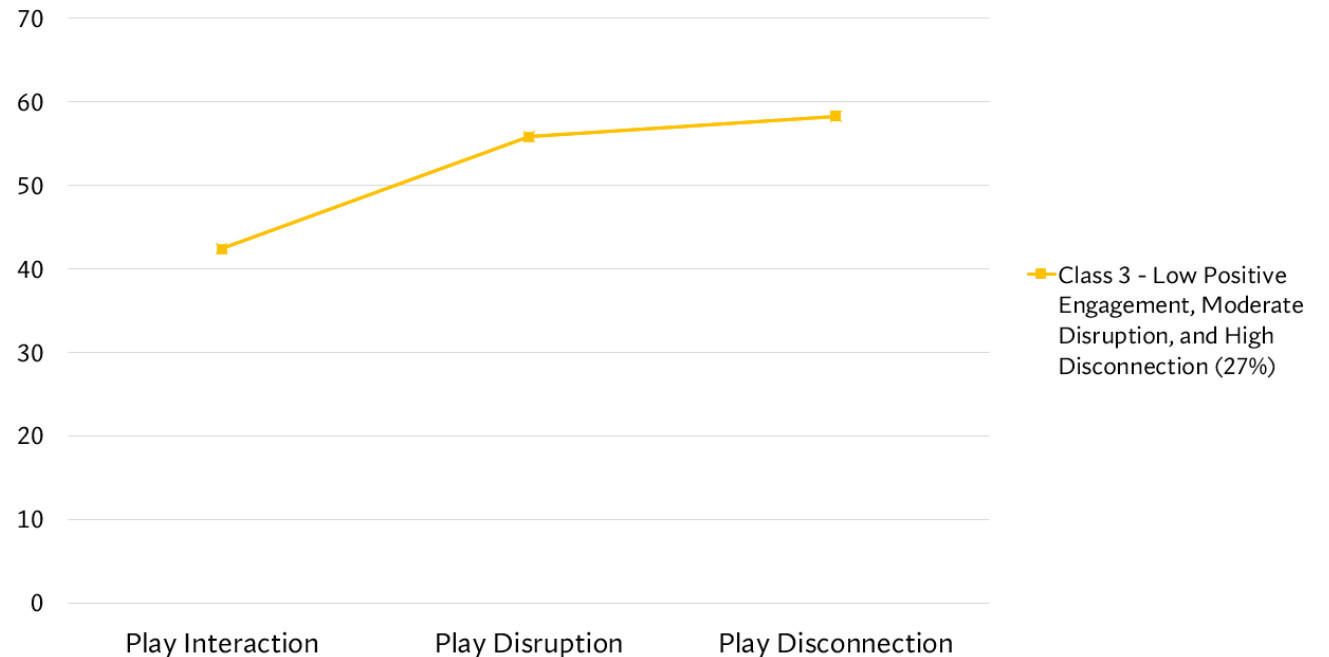
Profile 2: Positive Engagement

- 66% of children
- Overall higher Interactive Peer Play behaviors and lower levels of Disruptive and Disconnected Peer Play behaviors



Profile 3: Behaviors Interfering with Play

- 27% of children
- Moderately high levels of Disruptive Peer Play behaviors and high levels of Disconnected Peer Play behaviors



Aim 2



Obtain qualitative feedback from families about their views about play in the home and their own experiences with play to understand what kinds of skills they believe can be gained through play

Participants

Caregiver	Relationship to Child	Child's Age (months)	Child's Sex	Child's Profile Group
C1	Mother	46	Male	Low Positive Engagement, Moderate Disruption, and High Disconnection
C2	Mother	38	Male	Positive Engagement with Peers
C3	Mother	37	Male	Positive Engagement with Peers
C4	Mother	45	Female	Positive Engagement with Peers
C5	Grandmother	47	Male	Positive Engagement with Peers
C6	Mother	41	Male	Low Positive Engagement, Moderate Disruption, and High Disconnection
C7	Mother	44	Female	Positive Engagement with Peers
C8	Mother	42	Female	Positive Engagement with Peers



Method and Procedure

- Grounded theory approach
- Creation of interview guide
- Explanatory mixed-method design used
- Open coded transcripts, analyzed, and examined emerged themes

Play as a Vivid Memory

"My grandma didn't allow us to be outside. Being with anyone. So, when we went to school, we had to remember that we had to go back home. So, we had to remember that no, we couldn't have friends." (C6)



"She takes authority, she knows how to take authority. So that's something I was big on, like, I always wanted to be the leader. I always had to be the teacher. When we're teaching. I always had to be [...], the one giving instructions, or I mean, even today. I still feel like I could take that role if they came to it. So that's something I see that's common between us." (C8)

"Yeah, I played with my siblings and cousins that was around my age. And it was a great experience. I had a good childhood. We would go to the playground. Get on the swings and all the little toys that used to be out there, go skating, riding bikes, basketball, football, all of it." (C5)



Versatility in Play

"He doesn't want to share, everything is, 'I want to play by myself. If you want to participate, I don't mind but, this is my stuff, not your stuff.'" (C6)



"But she pretty much played the same [...] she doesn't have a problem like playing with others, but she does know how to play by herself. So, it wasn't as if it was like a big difference of her being with a kid or without a kid." (C4)



Play Coexists with Technology:

"Um, if they're not watching YouTube. They're learning a dance routine on TikTok. She's a dancer. [...] She loves to dance." (C7)



Playing is Learning

"You don't have to share at home. I'm not going to play with his toys. His brother's not going to, but when he gets to school his other kids his age that wants the toy he wants, you know, that wants to play with it. So, I'll say that getting to [...] play, you know, it teaches them things. It teaches them to share. It teaches them friendship." (C2)

"Yea, they can learn their left or right, colors, numbers, because, [...], mostly when kids play, they count things, they pay attention. [...], they point out colors, different things like that. Yeah, they learn different things, like different variety of things. Because kids can look at the stop sign and be like, that's an octagon." (C5)



Pride in Play Prodigies and Personas

"You know how they say you know your child supposed to look up to you, but I look up to my son, you know, because of how independent he is as a four-year-old. As a four-year-old he could sit and tell someone how he really feels you know, even adults now at this age don't even tell people how they're feeling." (C2)

"Yeah, he's very antisocial. Everything is- no- he has like an anger problem. So, everything is, 'No. Leave me alone,' you know, stuff like that." (C6)







Value Black Caregiver Voices

Parents have valuable information to share about their children's strengths and needs

Head Start's Family Engagement Framework should consider interventions to improve the quality of family-teacher partnerships



**Play is not just about
having fun but about
taking risks,
experimenting, and
testing boundaries.**



Thank you!
Questions?
