Case Study Narrative
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I observed a four and half year-old little boy named JM in his home Meadowbrook where he lives with his brother, B, his dad, and his mom. My first observation was on October 2, 2014, from 6:00-7:30 pm, and I was interested in the progression of his fine motor and language skills. When I walked through the door to JM’s house, he rushed up to greet me. He excitedly jumped up and down, showing me his Star Wars Lego toys.

The Legos that JM had put together were quite detailed, and I expressed surprise that he did all this by himself. He tried to tell me about the pictures that show him what to do, but he had trouble explaining what he meant because he kept saying, “Daddy ‘pf-ed’ it.” (I learned later that it was a ‘pdf’ file that they loaded onto the television for him to see.) He suddenly called out for his mom and ran out to the kitchen to ask her to “put the pictures” on the TV. As he ran back into the living room, he tripped over a puzzle on the floor and fell down. After a moment or two of examining his injuries (a toe and his elbow), he rubbed them, and bounced back to his feet. He came sliding over to me, sat down next to me, and gathered up his Lego figurines.

Once the directions were on the TV, he carefully took apart a blue, brown, and white figurine. Some of the little pieces were connected so tightly that he grunted and made faces as he strained to pry them apart. Some pieces popped off easily and scattered on the hardwood floor. He tracked the pieces down almost every time—except for once when it flew under the train set
and he couldn’t find it. I helped him locate the little block, and he continued until he had all the pieces apart.

He patiently put the pieces together- turning them this way and that way as he lined up the holes and nubs. He examined each shape and color to see if it matched the picture on the TV and carefully fit them together. In between putting them together, JM wandered up to the TV screen and studied the picture directions, and then he plopped back down next to me and continued. He was very intense in his concentration, and when I asked him questions, he was not paying attention to me. Sometimes he answered, but mostly he ignored me or just nodded. He would occasionally get his dad to stop playing his video game to come in and help him figure out a piece if he got stuck. He told me very matter-of-factly, “Daddy helps me.” For the most part, however, JM worked at his own pace, using his own ingenuity. Other than the occasional comment about what he was building, or to ask for help, or to shoo away his little brother, JM was very quiet and focused as he lounged on the floor with all his little Lego pieces.

When JM’s mom offered him a snack, he just shook his head. She gave him an apple juice box instead. At first he ignored it, but after about three or four minutes, he absently picked it up to drink. He had to try twice to get the straw into his mouth because he didn’t take his eyes off the figurine right away.

He suddenly seemed to notice that his mom gave B a snack, and he decided he wanted cookies, too. He gave me the figurine and yelled, “I want cookies, too, Mommy!” He dragged out a chair from the dining room table and clambered up onto the seat. He kneeled on the seat and leaned his elbows up on the table while he patted his hand on the table as he waited. He laughed and rolled the Oreos around his plate that his mom handed him. He used his fingers to
pry his cookies halves apart, and scraped the icing off with his teeth. He was more interested in crumbling the cookies parts, however than in eating them. His mom tried to get him to drink some milk, but he refused by crossing his arms and turning his head to ignore her and the milk. She gave up and urged him to finish his cookies so he could get his bath.

He argued, “No! I don’t want to bath! B want a bath!” He slid off his chair, under the table, closed his eyes and covered his ears with his fists. His mom laughed and said in a very bright voice, “Hey, JM, remember the new starfish, … and octopus, … and sand shark that MeMe gave you? I bet they would like a bath. Do you want to help them get a bath and swim with them?”

At first JM was hesitant, but after she pulled them out of the closet, he cooperated with getting his hands and face wiped. He then demanded to carry them to the bathtub by himself.

His mom broke his focus on the bath toys and reminded him to say, “Please.” Then she urged him to say “Good night” to me. He was still fiddling with the toys, but he came over and gave me a quick hug and kiss, then hurried upstairs to the bathroom with the sea creatures clutched tightly in his hands.

On Saturday, October 18th, 2014, I observed JM for the second time from 4:00 to 10:30 pm at his home in Meadowbrook. On this occasion, his grandmother and various aunts, uncles, and cousins were also present with his parents and sibling to celebrate some family birthdays.

The family was planning to light a fire in a fire pit outside and make s’mores after eating supper. JM ran past me, and I asked him, “What do you have there?”

He replied, “A marshmallow!” He held it up for me to see.
I asked, “Do you like marshmallows?”

He replied, “Yeah, ha, ha!” as he spun off giggling and licking the soggy, sticky marshmallow in his hand. His father warned him not to put the whole thing in his mouth or he would choke on it- he tried anyway. His mother threatened to take the marshmallow away, but he seemed to forget about the marshmallow for a second when he saw his cousin go in the downstairs bathroom. He suddenly cried out, “Why did you have to go in there? I have to go!” He set his marshmallow on a table and ran to the upstairs bathroom. He would not go in however, and timidly called out, “Daddy, it’s dark in there!” His dad went up to help him.

JM entered the living room by running back downstairs yelling, “Can I play? Can I play?” to his cousins who were in the process of setting up the Wi game system. His dad asked him where the fourth controller was, but he shrugged and yelled, “Yoshi! Yoshi!” Jumping up and down in front of the television, he exclaimed, “I’m Yoshi! Yoshi! Yoshi!” His dad located the fourth remote and finished getting the system up and running. JM spun holding his controller over his head and standing on tippy toes looking up at his cousins, T (12), R (11), and C (7). He looked back over at the TV and called out the number on the screen, “10, and 10.” He continued to sing, “Hey, I’m Yoshi! I’m the one!” He jumped and danced on one foot in a little circle, then switched back to two feet. He continued to chant, “Yoshi! Yoshi! I’m King Boo!” then he called out the numbers 3 and 4 when he saw them on the screen. He picked up a pair of safety glasses that his father placed for him on the table and put them on as he juggled his controller.

He danced as he celebrated and said, “I’m in first! Boo, hoo, boo!”

His dad called out, “JM what did I say about gloating?” JM sunk to the floor for a moment in response to his dad’s correction, but bounced up and leaned against the table, his eyes
glued on the next game. He was excited when he got a star. “I got a star!” His cousins congratulated him.

They moved on to whack a mole. JM bounced up and down on the couch as he whacked his controller up and down. He jumped off between games, but hopped right back up on the couch cushions when it started again. He was very intent on chasing the little moles around the farmer’s garden on the screen. His cousins who were not familiar with the game asked, “Why aren’t they coming out?”

He gave them physical and verbal instruction, “You’re supposed to press A. No, you aren’t pressing it.” Then he said, “Yes, you did it.” When he lost, however he suddenly blurted, “I don’t like you guys because you won!” He quickly forgot when the next phase of the game started. He instructed his cousins not to go that way because “you will get knocked down.”

His older cousin, K (15) came in with his grandmother’s cane. She was bent over and teased them, “You kids! Stop playing those games! Go read a book!” She pretended to chase them with while brandishing the cane. He laughed and ran away. She chased him and he exclaimed, “You’re scary!” Then he ran back to the TV with his controller, while she tried to get one of her cousins or her sister to let her take a turn with their controller.

He wiggled and jumped, waggled his butt and kicked his legs out to the side as he danced back and forth. Out of the blue, he walked over to K, who is waiting to play, and suddenly handed his remote to her. “You can be Yoshi,” he told her.

K was stunned because none of the older children were willing to share, and JM never even seemed to register that she had asked the other kids for a turn. She held out her arms and exclaimed, “You’re the best, JM! Can I have a hug?”
He sweetly hugged her then pointed out matter-of-factly, “Go, you’re getting hit in the head.” He exclaimed when she got a star, and offered her his safety glasses. She laughed and tried to put them on with little success. He announced, “They don’t fit you,” as he took them and set them on the table.

He shoved his hands in his pockets and jumped up and down. “I have four stars!” He watched K play and said, “So, we’re on the same team!” He got excited and jumped around the living room, saying, “Run and jump! Run and jump!” He watched his cousins play in between spinning and singing in circles around them and commented, “I’m Yoshi.” K lost the game, and he crossed his arms then said through his teeth, “I wish you won, K!” K assured him they would win next time.

He giggled and laughed as K made comments about how their team was doing. He sidled up next to her, leaned on her leg, and pointed out a symbol on the screen, telling her that it would help her. K wasn’t sure if she had to use it right then, so JM told her, “Yeah, you can use it later.” He told her how to get it, and then directed her to ‘go that way.’ She commented when she was eaten by a flower, but he was quick to point out, “That is not a flower. It’s a fly eater!” He then warned her to watch out for the penguins. “They’re scary!” he said very dramatically. He ran around and pretended to fart on his cousins. When all they said was, “Eww!” he laughed and said, “I don’t really fart.” When his younger cousin was stepped on, he told the others, “Whoa! She’s just a little lizard.”

K jumped up and yelled, “JM, we won!” He launched off the couch next to me and ran to high-five K, and then he waggled his buns in front of his cousins’ faces. He started making
elephant noises in his cousins’ ears and he bounced and danced with his hands in his pockets. He spun as he chanted, “I’m gonna’ transfer to a different world!”

I told K that she needed to give JM his controller back so he had a turn to play. He came over to me and said, “No, I want she to play!”

I said, “Oh, you do?” JM nodded and spun off as his mom came into the room to sit on the couch with his little brother, B. He continued to play, and then he decided to arbitrarily attack his cousin, K. He tackled her and wrapped his arms around her neck. After she shook him off, he then sat in R’s lap. He became exuberant watching his older cousins wrestle, so he banged his head into the rug. His mom ordered, “JM, don’t do that! You will break your neck!”

He giggled, and then distracted by the game, he jumped up yelling, “Turn the crank! Turn the crank, like this!” He led his cousins in swinging their arms in circles. “We won! We won!” he yelled and jumped into K’s arms. She swung him around in circles as he hugged her neck and squealed.

He chased his mom as she headed into the kitchen and demanded, “Where is my marshmallow?!”

His mom replied, “Why are you screaming?”

He ignored the question and repeated, “Where’s my marshmallow?!”

“Why are you screaming?” she patiently replied.

“Please, where is my marshmallow?” he finally asked a little more calmly.
“That’s better. I will get you one in a minute,” JM’s mom responded. When she handed it to him, he marched off triumphantly licking it. He told his uncles who had just entered the room from being out at the fire pit, “They’re in the kitchen if you want one.” He was politely referring to the marshmallows.

He walked up to his uncle C and said, as he licked his marshmallow, “There’s a lot of leaves outside.” He pointed with his mangled marshmallow at the window.

Uncle C looked out the window and replied, “Yes, there are.”

JM agreed, “Yep,” then wandered off to continue playing with his cousins.

I observed JM for a third time on Saturday, November 8, 2014, around 1:30 in the afternoon. JM’s little brother, B, cousin, T, and mother were present at his house.

I asked JM if he wanted to draw some pictures for me. He was excited at the idea of getting to use the pack of paper, markers, crayons, and colored pencils that I had brought and laid out on the Little Tykes table in his living room. He and his little two year-old brother rushed to pull out the little chairs, and we sat down to examine the supplies.

The first thing he did was grab a gray marker and draw a big M. He put it right back, because the marker was dried out and picked out a new one. He was very focused as he drew large letters: M, E, and M across the middle of the paper. He then asked me how to draw a heart. I asked him if he knew what one looked like, and he nodded; so I encouraged him to try it on his own first. He drew one half-circle and looked to me to see if he was on the right track. I beamed encouragingly and prompted him to connect it to another half circle. He did and drew a straight
line across the bottom. He was quite proud of himself as he smiled and touched it with his finger before he put the cap back on the marker.

I asked him if he could tell me what it said, and he replied simply, “MeMe.” This is what he calls his dad’s mom who was a former kindergarten teacher and watches him and his brother three days of the week. He picked out a yellow marker and spent some time intently streaking yellow lines over the E and in random places on the paper. He followed the yellow up with some shades of green. I commented that those were some nice colors, and he informed me that, “MeMe likes yellow and green.”

I had prepared a paper with the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and six lower case letters while he was engaged in exploring the art supplies, opening the bags and boxes, and trying out the various art instruments on a piece of paper. As he began some free drawing activities, I watched, commented, and asked questions, but mainly observed what he chose to do with the tools offered to him. I then, when he was getting ready to transition to a new piece of paper, pushed forward the paper I had prepared and asked him, “JM, can you tell me which letter this is?” I pointed to the A. He turned his attention to it, and nodded, saying, “A.” I didn’t even have to ask him to draw one for me, because he immediately traced it with the yellow marker he had in his hand. He instantly pointed out that the blue was turning green when he traced it with yellow, but he was quite perturbed by the fact that the darker color was transferring onto his lighter color marker tip. He showed it to me, and told me, “It’s sticking.” He then very deliberately drew a concentrated yellow oval within the O, as he informed me that this way it wouldn’t ‘get on’ his marker.
Deciding to abandon the yellow marker, JM picked out the dark greenish teal color. He really like this color, and said it was his favorite. He asked me if it was blue or green, then he carefully colored over the bottom left curve of the G to see if it would cover the blue marker. Satisfied that it covered and didn’t transfer to the teal marker, he then traced the Q. I asked him if he could say the letters for me. He had no trouble going line by line with his index finger and pointing at each as he said it. He did initially say S for the Z, but he quickly self-corrected and continued with no hesitation through the letters I had drawn. He ended back at the top and decided to draw another big A with the teal marker in a huge slash diagonally across the paper. When he crossed the A he added a second parallel line. When I asked him what it represented, he just shrugged and carefully replaced the cap. He picked up a gray crayon and traced the Z. Since he had skipped the B, I asked him, “Don’t you want to make a B?” He smiled up at me and made his own B over the J. Again he abandoned the gray crayon and found a black pen mixed in with the markers that he wanted to try. He used it to trace the E. Losing interest in the pen, he put the cap back on and traced the H with the cap of the pen before putting it away. He picked up a purple thin tip marker and traced the R with it before losing interest altogether in tracing letters.

After he lost interest in tracing the letters, he grabbed a new sheet of paper. Using the same purple marker that he had finished tracing the R in, he noticed the letter directly below the R was an X, so he drew a huge purple X across the paper. He then laughed and said, “See, I made my own X!” He decided to switch back to his ‘favorite’ color, the teal marker.

I asked him as he pulled off the cap, “Would you like to draw a square for me?” He very seriously nodded and carefully drew a square. He took great pains to make sure the sides matched up. I told him what a great job and then prompted him to draw a circle.
“That’s easy,” he said. He quickly made one to the right of the square, but after he finished, he told me, “It really’s not a circle. It’s a oval.”

I told him, “I think you are right.” Immediately he shifted down to the right and attempted to draw a circle a second time. This time, he seemed happier with his effort, as he nodded his head, and said, “Yep, see.”

Next I asked him if he could draw another shape. He pulled the paper closer, and drew a triangle to the left of the second circle. He started with a large inverted V. When he finished it, he paused to ponder it and quickly crossed the center of it to make an A. He giggled to himself and then carefully put the bottom stroke across the base of the triangle to close the shape. As he finished connecting the two legs he pronounced it, “A triangle!” It almost seemed as if he realized that his statement included both the shape and the letter, because he looked at me closely to see if I would get it. I quickly laughed. He seemed satisfied with my reaction as he asked me how to draw a heart. He handed me the purple marker and watched closely while I drew one for him. He then asked me to make a house. After I put the door and windows on, he wanted the marker back and placed a triangle between the two square windows and another rectangular mark on the top portion under the roof. I then asked him if he wanted to draw a house. He said, “Yes,” then proceeded to draw a long skinny rectangular shape. When he finished, he very decisively pulled the cap off the end and placed it over the tip of his marker then banged it on the table to close the lid. He looked at me and said, “It’s a rectangle!”

JM’s development with regards to the physical domain is largely on target. Throughout this observation I noticed that JM exhibited excellent fine motor skills evidenced by his ability to manipulate small Legos skillfully. JM uses the proper pencil grip and is able to control the
writing instrument with little trouble, further indicating his well-developed fine motor skills. His hand-eye coordination skills are advanced, as he has no trouble opening and replacing caps on markers or pens, manipulating tiny Lego pieces, and aiming his Wi controller with accuracy. He was very comfortable and careful using the markers, as he did not get any marker on his hands, clothes, or table. His ability to manipulate and utilize the various writing utensils and their caps showcase his fine motor skills, as well as his hand and eye coordination. I noticed that JM’s grip on the writing implements, which were of varying widths: thin fine-tip markers, crayon and colored pencil-size diameters, and thicker broad-line Crayola markers, was not affected. He is able to hold a pencil, crayon, or stylus correctly, manipulate his tiny legos, use his utensils with good success, and latch his Velcro shoes with great accuracy. He was using a proper pincer-grip and able to quite accurately remove and replace the marker caps with little trouble or attention, fitting together intricate Lego pieces according to directions, and manipulating a Wi remote, proving his fine motor skills are advanced for his age of 4 years 10 months. One intervention that would further enhance his fine motor skills would be to introduce scissors and present opportunities for JM to practice cutting and pasting. He has not had this activity introduced in his environment, but with some incorporated cutting activities, he would quickly acquire this missing element of his fine motor skills.

He exhibits excellent gross motor skills when he runs, jumps, climbs, hops on one or two feet, skips, puts together puzzles, and somersaults. Starting and stopping is easily accomplished by JM as well. While he is able to throw a ball with little trouble, he still needs to work on the ability to catch a ball. He tends to take his eyes off it and therefore is unable to successfully catch it with accuracy. Because he does not play outdoors very often, he also needs to work on kicking a ball. His parents are not that into sports, so he does not get the opportunity to play catch or kick
a ball very often. If these active motor play abilities were incorporated into his playtime activities, he would progress quite quickly and master these skills. Games would be most effective in enticing him to routinely exercise these skills, also providing opportunities for him to play catch and kickball with his peers would further benefit him.

Another area in this domain in which I noticed some challenges was that JM consumes snacks high in sugar in place of nutritious ones that would better enhance, improve, or stabilize his growth, energy level, and future good health. He is also a poor sleeper. He is an extremely picky eater and rarely eats what his parents have made for supper or lunch, but instead nibbles at fast-food hamburgers, chicken nuggets, and fries that his parents make a special trip to buy for him each day. He drinks many apple juice boxes and refuses water and milk when offered. His poor diet deprives him of nutrient rich nutrition that could potentially address his poor self-regulation, lack of focus, and impulsiveness. Creating a meal plan that addresses the gaps in his diet and eliminating the foods of poor nutritional value from his daily diet would be advisable. Potentially taking him to the grocery store and allowing him to choose a fruit or vegetable that he would like to try might encourage him to try new things. Another suggestion would be to include fruits, vegetables, proteins, and healthy grains in some foods that he eats by pureeing them, so he is not aware of them as a distinct ingredient would be worth exploring. He is very particular about textures, so by changing the texture and appearance of the healthier, more nutritious ingredients and incorporating them into his limited diet, he might not notice. Every effort should be taken to expand his very limited list of likes. JM should be encouraged and expected to at least try new things as often as possible. Another facet of the physical domain is his poor sleeping habits. He is a very early riser and has not taken a nap in over a year and half. He seems to run on very little sleep or food.
In the language domain, I noticed several strengths. One that I observed in JM was excellent communication skills that allow him to successfully communicate with those around him. He uses fairly complex language skills, such as contractions, common expressions, morphemes, and fairly decent subject/verb agreement. He has a strong receptive or referential vocabulary and was able to properly identify each of his letters: all uppercase and six lower case. When I first began writing them out, he looked over curiously and asked me, “What word is that?” This illustrates that his early literacy skills are developing, and he is ready to begin building on them in kindergarten next year. Additionally, his communication skills are developmentally appropriate. He is able to ask questions, answer questions, focus on a task that interests him, and explain what he is creating using at least six or more words per sentence within the confines of his increasing vocabulary. His communication skills are displayed when he understands what I am asking him to do, as well as when he explains to me what he is doing, and the fact that he verbally corrects himself and communicates both through expression, gestures, and body language. His verbal corrections are examples of self-directed speech which Vygotsky proposed helps children think at higher levels (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 254) and is supported by sociocultural theory (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 58). His expressive language and well-developed communication skills cause him to be able to communicate and use full sentences fairly well.

JM’s weaknesses in this domain were few. He does have trouble with socially appropriate uses of language, as he sometimes does not want to take turns, listen to others’ opinions, or simply talks too much. He seems to lack a filter that would allow him to realize when he is monopolizing the conversation or is rudely ignoring those around him. Informational processing theory would emphasize providing opportunities for JM to engage in play and social interaction,
including natural conversation, which would actively help him construct meaning from the world around him (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 61). These would be very beneficial to JM’s future development of positive language uses in social situations (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 309). He also struggles to express his frustrations, and feelings, so these strategies, enhanced by focused peer and social interaction, would additionally be beneficial to him developing positive interactions with peers and others in social situations.

The cognitive domain is also an area of much strength for JM. His memory allows him to recall stories and parts of games with enough accuracy that he can make predictions and suggestions about cause and effect outcomes—especially in the Wi games. The fact that he associated the penguins in the Wi game with being scary indicates that he is able to remember his feelings and recognize the source of his feeling scared. He was able to properly identify each of his letters: all uppercase and six lower case. He is cognitively prepared for kindergarten with the skills to recognize all 26 letters of the alphabet, the numbers 0-10, the primary and secondary colors, all eight of the major shapes, predicts patterns, and compares sets of items using more or less. His ability to correctly interpret shapes and name them with no templates, as well as his merging of letters with his shapes and his verbal and mental recognition of that fact are all indicative of his strong cognitive function. Symbolic thought (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 248) is further shown as JM was also able to use the Wi remote symbolically as a paint brush, mallet, wand, lever, and so on. Many of the games he was familiar with, so he understood the motion in relationship to the symbol or object; but those that were new, he quickly assimilated and mimicked, further indicating his strong cognitive abilities.

Of the various pictures he drew for me, the two Qualitative ones were the two he concentrated most intently on. He liked being able to explore and express himself without any
directions or attempts at controlling his creativity. He was especially focused on creating the spirals of the shell of Gary the Snail from SpongeBob and displayed great focus.

JM used his pictures and drawings to communicate to me what colors, patterns, strokes, and games he liked. He ended up making a tic-tac-toe grid and asking me to play with him. He had no problem initiating the game by drawing the first X in the center of the grid. He was so excited when he had two in a row that he lost focus of the goal of the game and instead wasted turn after turn just thwarting me and laughing at my dramatic expressions. I eventually reminded him that he was really close to winning, and he suddenly recalled that he had two in a row and skipped turns to quickly draw his X in that space.

He was very curious about the various shades of blue and green and the different size lines on the paper that they created. He also was careful to keep the marker from going off the edges of the paper and onto the table. It was obvious that he had used markers before. He would even shake them if they seemed dried out, and try them again before announcing to me, “It doesn’t work anymore.”

A cognitive weakness that I noticed was that he needs encouragement to stick with a picture. He wanted to devote his time to his vision, and once it was on the paper, he was finished with it. I think he needs some help developing his pictures and taking time to work out details in his pictures. He is capable of adding more details and colors, yet he just seemed to want to race through the stack of paper to get color on each piece. If I asked him targeted questions, such as does the girl have eyes, he is able to accurately show me where to place them in the drawing; however, I realized when I flipped the picture to look at it, making it upside down for him, that he was unable to flip it in his mind’s eye. When he went to draw yellow hair on the head, he
drew it from where the ears would be around to the chin (the top of her head from his perspective) and actually left the very top of her head bald (where her neck would be from his perspective). It was an amusing picture, but it illustrated his inability to accurately reverse and interpret an upside-down picture. This showed me that, as Piaget would say, he is developmentally not able to understand this concept yet (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 245).

JM does have trouble staying focused on tasks that do not interest him, further indicative of his egocentrism (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 245). He is very intelligent, yet he is difficult to keep on task. By developing a theory of the mind, JM would potentially benefit from the preschool model, Tools of the Mind, in which he would be encouraged to plan and regulate his own play activities to help promote inhibitory control and regulate behaviors and emotions (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 262). He often is much more compliant if allowed to follow his own agenda, but when asked to deviate or come back to an activity, he does not readily comply. I had to work hard to cajole him into beginning to trace the second line of letters, because he had lost interest in the idea of tracing them. I wonder if I erred in offering the free drawing first, then trying to focus him into a constructive activity second. I realize now that I would have been better off beginning with the quantitative element then segued into the free associative, qualitative section.

JM’s largest cognitive weakness is his inability to interpret the feelings or thoughts of others. He will sometimes act in surprising and aggressive ways. For example he pushed his little brother over and when he cried, he did not seem to register that he had hurt him. Even when prompted to think about it and apologize, he was unable to empathize or care. However, he can be thoughtful, such as when he altruistically shared the Wi remote with his cousin K. This behavior stunned her partly because it was so unlike JM. I believe that incorporating Tools of the
Mind curriculum with more social interaction and pretend play that presents positive role playing opportunities and activities that emphasize his thoughtful and caring behaviors will help JM begin to develop stronger problem solving skills concerning others’ feelings and how to react to them (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 262). Neuroscience supports the information processing theory by indicating that children’s adaptable brains can allow their ability to connect and recall emotions and social situations through engaging activities that help them have positive relationships with others (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 70). By increasing his cognitive problem solving with relation to his ability to interpret the feelings, motives, and thoughts of others, he will hopefully begin to exhibit greater empathy and caring for others, especially those younger than him.

A great strength of JM’s concerning the social/emotional domain is he does exhibit great analytical problem solving skills in which he had the ability to look and study the directions and Lego parts with little distraction. Additionally, he is able to trouble shoot when he helps his cousins figure out which way to go, what buttons to push, and which characters are safe or dangerous in the game. This skill needs to be further developed to help him apply that same skill set to his social interactions with those around him. By utilizing the cognitive-developmental theory, JM’s parents and caregivers can help him notice the reactions and consequences of his negative social behaviors so he can begin to make the connection (Trawick-Smith, 2014). Then they could introduce better conflict resolution skills and practice kind, prosocial responses through make-believe role-playing (Trawick-Smith, 2014).

JM’s self-help skills could be further enhanced by allowing him to take charge of the simple tasks that he is more than capable of doing for himself. He depends on his parents to dress and undress him rather than attempting to try it himself. He is capable of physically
dressing himself, however he needs to be encouraged to take the initiative to perform the tasks for himself. He also can be timid and fearful of a wide variety of things, from the ocean to shadows, using the bathroom by himself to hats, someone speaking in a strange, weird voice to dogs and other animals. He would benefit from being reassured there is nothing to fear and encouraged to conquer the fear through graded challenges representing varying degrees of comfort (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 266). By desensitizing him to these situations, he would develop a healthier sense of acceptance, confidence, and curiosity about new things.

Another weakness that I discovered in the social/emotional domain during my observations of JM was that he tends to be impulsive as he yells, runs, jumps, and bounces almost constantly and will randomly throw himself at his cousins and brother. He struggles to self-regulate when he wants something, is embarrassed, or upset. Dealing with these emotions can make him act aggressively. JM often plays poorly or roughly with his little brother because he knocks him down for touching his toys and yells in his face. During one of the observations, JM was initially ready to share with his brother, yet once his brother invaded the box of markers that JM had pulled over to his corner of the table, he was hesitant to let B choose. He made the decision and handed B one of JM’s choosing. Although B was satisfied with the choice being made for him, when JM enters kindergarten, his unwillingness to share, potential aggressiveness, and his poor self-regulation will become an issue for him. The cognitive-developmental theory would support active problem solving, and social interactions (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 54); therefore interventions should be made to help improve and support healthy development of JM’s social/emotional skills. Tools of the Mind curriculum and process-oriented experiences would be beneficial to JM’s future development. Activities such as creative expression in the form of art, sociodramatic play, and open-ended motor play, coupled with monitored risk taking,
informal social interactions with peers, and warm, responsive interactions with his caregivers would all enhance JM’s social and emotional domain (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 343). Utilizing social learning theory, which believes that children learn new behaviors by imitating the people around them, additional thought should be given to providing real life interventions that provide opportunities to teach important social skills such as conflict resolution, how to enter a play group, and positive ways of getting peers’ attention (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 48).

In conclusion, JM is an intelligent nearly five-year-old boy who is developing appropriately across the physical, social/emotional, language, and cognitive domains. During my observations, I noticed strengths that indicate he is progressing at or above his preschool age level, but some weaknesses concerning his appropriate development were also noted. To restate, some of my recommendations to address his weaknesses and further enhance JM’s development are as follows:

- In order to further enhance his fine motor skills JM should be introduced to scissors and presented with opportunities for practice in cutting and pasting. With some incorporated cutting activities, he would quickly acquire this missing element of his fine motor skills.
- Active motor play abilities should be incorporated into his playtime activities. Games that exercise his weaker skills would provide opportunities for him to play catch and kickball with his peers and benefit him in other domains as well.
- Creating a meal plan that addresses the gaps in his diet and eliminating the foods of poor nutritional value from his daily diet would be advisable. Potentially taking him to the grocery store and allowing him to choose a fruit or vegetable that he would like to try might encourage him to try new things. Another suggestion
worth exploring would be to include fruits, vegetables, proteins, and healthy grains into some foods that he eats by pureeing them, so he is not aware of them as a distinct ingredient. He is very particular about textures, so by changing the texture and appearance of the healthier, more nutritious ingredients and incorporating them into his limited diet, he might not notice. Every effort should be taken to expand his very limited list of likes. JM should be encouraged and expected to at least try new things as often as possible.

- Opportunities should be provided for JM to engage in play and social interaction, including natural conversation, which would actively help him construct meaning from the world around him (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 61). These would be very beneficial to JM’s future development of positive language uses in social situations (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 309).

- Encourage JM to plan and regulate his own play activities to help promote inhibitory control and regulate behaviors and emotions

- Try incorporating Tools of the Mind curriculum with more social interaction and pretend play that presents positive role playing opportunities and activities that emphasize his thoughtful and caring behaviors will help JM begin to develop stronger problem solving skills concerning others’ feelings and how to react to them (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 262). Neuroscience supports the information processing theory by indicating that children’s adaptable brains can allow their ability to connect and recall emotions and social situations through engaging activities that help them have positive relationships with others (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 70). By increasing his cognitive problem solving with relation to his
ability to interpret the feelings, motives, and thoughts of others, he will hopefully begin to exhibit greater empathy and caring for others, especially those younger than him.

- JM’s parents and caregivers can help him notice the reactions and consequences of his negative social behaviors so he can begin to make the connection (Trawick-Smith, 2014). They could introduce better conflict resolution skills and practice kind, prosocial responses through make-believe role-playing and games.

- JM’s self-help skills could be further enhanced by allowing him to take charge of the simple tasks that he is more than capable of doing for himself. He needs to be encouraged to take the initiative to perform the tasks for himself. He would benefit from being reassured there is nothing to fear and encouraged to conquer the fear through graded challenges representing varying degrees of comfort (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 266). By desensitizing him to these situations, he would develop a healthier sense of acceptance, confidence, and curiosity about new things.

- Active problem solving and social interactions interventions should be made to help improve and support healthy development of JM’s social/emotional skills. Tools of the Mind curriculum and process-oriented experiences would be beneficial to JM’s future development. Activities such as creative expression in the form of art, sociodramatic play, and open-ended motor play, coupled with monitored risk taking, informal social interactions with peers, and warm, responsive interactions with his caregivers would all enhance JM’s social and emotional domain (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 343). Additional thought should be
given to providing real life interventions that provide opportunities to teach important social skills such as conflict resolution, how to enter a play group, and positive ways of getting peers’ attention
Works Cited