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TREATING CHILDREN WHO DO NOT PLAY OR TALK
Finding a Pathway to Intersubjective Relatedness

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This article explores the application of mother–infant research and systems theory in treating children whose capacity to symbolize is severely impeded. Working with children who do not play or talk involves the creation of a transitional space to foster the development of their symbolic capacities and intersubjective relatedness. The clinical material examines the unfolding of the mother–infant patterned interaction, including ruptures without repair. Therapeutic action begins with the experience of imitation, state sharing, leading to the emergence of intersubjective relatedness. Self-with-other structures shift and transform as the child is provided with the new relational experience of finding himself or herself in the mind of the other. Ideas expressed may also apply to the treatment of silent adult patients.

Analytically oriented child therapy is to some extent about constructing a language through which to make contact with a child's mind and explore his or her inner world. While some of these languages are expressed in the form of metaphor and symbolic play, there are those children who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to play or use the symbols of play and language to express their emotional experiences (Slade, 1994) . When faced with children who are unable to play or to speak as a means of expressing their inner worlds and actual life experiences, child therapists must develop alternative, nonsymbolic modes of communication. Without a language of spoken words, the primary language for

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such encounters is procedural. Communication becomes primarily a semiotic process, meaning a process dependent on nonverbal cues rather than the literal use of language (Levenson, 1972; Spiegel, 1996).

For the group of children that I will be focusing on in this article, the characteristics cited above become more prominent when these children are interacting with adults, whereas with peers there is a greater sense of spontaneity, more verbal expression, and an increased interest in social relations. With adults there is a profound dampening of arousal—a dramatic transformation in which the child becomes autistic-like, living inside of what Francis Tustin (1990) calls an "autistic shell" (see Alvarez, 1992). Susan Coates (1998) vividly describes this kind of deadness: "These children often appear devitalized, seem to have no blood in their veins, or act like automatons without an internally authorized sense of agency" (p. 124).

How can the same child behave so differently depending on whether he or she is interacting with adults or children? As the treating therapist, we are faced with this split and met with the part of the child that is massively detached—entrenched in a self-contained system devoid of mutuality. The challenge then becomes how to bring that child's sense of spontaneity that exists with peers into his or her relations with adults.

I have relied upon the contemporary mother–infant research and its clinical applications, particularly the work of Beebe, and Lachmann, Daniel Stern, and the work of various psychoanalytic theorists such as Winnicott, Ogden, and Benjamin, as a means of constructing a way of working with children whose impeded development has interfered in their ability to play or verbally express themselves in the treatment situation.

Interweaving clinical material from the treatment of Zachary, a depressed and withdrawn, selectively mute 12-year-old boy who initially was unable to play or talk with me, I first describe the development of mother–infant relational patterns that are established during the first 2 years of life. Utilizing a systems approach, I explore the evolution of the mother–child dyadic system and its relational patterns in the form of affect, vocalizations, temporal sequences, and rhythms. Second, I speculate about the meanings of Zachary's silence in our sessions in the context of the dyadic system with his mother. Third, I explore the use of imitation, a primitive form of object relatedness, and Daniel Stern's concept of state sharing, in making contact with the child's mind and in creating a nonverbal "dialogue." Here, I revisit the treatment of Zachary in more detail with attention to the re-emergence and transformation of dyadic patterns during the course of treatment that led to his movement away from isolated self-regulation to an incorporation of new ways of being with the "other."

The Nonverbal Mode of Experience and Presymbolic Patterns

Systems approaches posit that there is a dynamic, ongoing stream of activity between two people (Sander, 1983, 1985). One individual cannot be understood in isolation of the other, because both mutually and predictably influence each other on a moment-to-moment basis. Each person's behavior is contingent on the other, out of which dyadic expectancies develop. Operating within this dyadic system, infant researchers' tracking of moment-to-moment parent–infant exchanges offers us a microscopic analysis that focuses on the interactive sequences of disruption and repair (Beebe, Jaffe, & Lachmann, 1992). There is a focus on the procedural dimensions of experience involving the subtle shifts in timing, arousal, spatial organization, and affect.

During the first year of life, an infant comes to represent in presymbolic forms

interactional experiences and patterns of behavior, or recurrent sequences. These patterns of behavior between mother and infant form presymbolic representations, which precede symbolic forms of self–object representations (Beebe, Lachmann, & Jaffe, 1997; Seligman, 1999). Thus, we can think of these presymbolic patterns and the infant's subsequent self-with-other representations as having developed out of the sensory world, the nonverbal mode that exists in the form of sounds, rhythms, temporal patterns, space, arousal, smells, and affect (facial and vocal; Beebe & Lachmann, 1988, 1994; Beebe & Stern, 1977; Bucci, 1985; Silverman, 1992).

Brief History

Zachary was first taken away from his mother at the age of 3 years and placed in a foster care home, apparently because his mother suffered from bipolar mood disturbance and was too depressed to care for him. Before placement, he had been severely neglected by his mother, often left unattended for long periods of time. Around the time that he was first removed from his home, his father, who was separated from his mother and whom Zachary had never met, was killed in an automobile accident. His mother was traumatized by the loss of her former husband. She experienced frequent "breakdowns," during which she would cry uncontrollably and find herself completely unable to care for Zachary.

In his first foster care placement from the ages of 3–5 years, Zachary was placed with a woman who, on at least one occasion, held his face down in a steaming hot plate cf food. Zachary returned to live with his mother at the age of 5 years and remained with her until the age of 8 years, at which time he was taken from her for a second time after running away from her in the midst of one of her breakdowns. He was placed in a stable foster care home, where he has been ever since and where he has managed to develop a "good enough" relationship with his foster mother.

Prior to his therapy with me, Zachary had been in treatment once before for approximately 1 year, until it abruptly ended due to unforeseen circumstances concerning the clinic. A report describing this treatment was littered with words such as "depressed, quiet, withdrawn, unresponsive, and bored." At the time that he began therapy with me, Zachary's foster mother reported that she was concerned about the severity of his "depression." He had recent bouts of encopresis, was unresponsive with her, and had very few friends, spending the majority of his time numbed in front of the television. In school, he was reported to be a bright student who, while not a behavioral problem, was unfocused and rarely performed to his potential. There was no formal diagnosis of a learning disability or pervasive developmental delays.

While the years following Zachary's first removal from his mother at the age of 3 years were filled with traumatic separations and abuse and lend themselves to an understanding of his intractable depression and traumatization, for the purposes of this article I will be speculating about the development and impact of pervasive patterns in the dyadic system between Zachary and his mother. My concern here is with the interiors of the psychic space and the interactional field that developed between Zachary and his mother during the first 2 years of his life. My focus is on understanding how the dyadic interaction became the foundation of Zachary's object world and how it emerged in the treatment with me and in his relations with others. While one cannot necessarily trace pathology back to early mother–infant interactions, the dyadic relational patterns formed during early life do exist as a substratum that become an integral part of a child's interpersonal relatedness and character structure (Pantone, 2000).

Zachary was seen in once-a-week psychoanalytically oriented treatment with occasional mother–child sessions (the birth mother lived far away from the foster parent, which limited the opportunity of treating the birth mother–child dyad). At the time that Zachary began therapy with me, he was living with his foster mother and had supervised visits with his birth mother at the foster care agency in preparation for reunification with her. It seemed that this was a significant time in his life and that there were a range of feelings about returning to live with his mother as well as leaving his foster mother. However, with Zachary, it seemed as though a freezing over had occurred very early in his life and, therefore, the subsequent traumatic separations from his mother were a recapitulation of the model scene (Lachmann & Lichtenberg, 1992), one that would be recreated in the nonverbal dialogue between Zachary and me.

Zachary and His Mother: An Interactional Template

In beginning to understand the relational context of Zachary's shutdown and avoidance of contact, consider this interaction between Zachary and his birth mother as observed early on in the treatment:

Zachary sits in a chair across from his mother with his face turned toward the floor, flicking the zipper of his bag back and forth with his finger. His mother quickly scans him, and then proceeds to ask him a few questions about his day at school and "jokes" with him about the dollhouse that sits off to the side (the joking here appears to be an attempt to cajole him out of his preoccupied state). Her voice becomes louder as she tries to get Zachary to join her in laughing about the color of the dollhouse, periodically moving her head close to his so as to make some sort of eye contact. Zachary resists her invitation. He continues to sit with his head turned away from his mother, flicking the zipper. After this exchange repeats itself several times, he eventually mumbles a barely audible "Yes" to her question. His mother appears to hear this, but complains of Zachary's unresponsiveness and her irritation with his lack of communication about the daily happenings of his life. She turns her back to him and begins talking about the train ride over to my office. She expresses frustration with the length of the commute from her place of work to my office and resents having to travel such a long distance. With her back to Zachary, she begins to cry. He peeks up to glance at his mother, then again casts his face towards the floor.

In the exchange between Zachary and his mother, we are witness to the nonverbal contours of their relationship, which provide a flavor of the interactional dissynchrony. He is cautious and inhibited with his mother, unresponsive to her attempt to engage him. He becomes increasingly withdrawn and deadened in response to his mother's pursuit of him. With his mother determined and persistent to reach him, he becomes more closed off from her. Feeling rebuffed, his mother becomes angry and resentful. This sequence carries with it particular relational expectancies, contingencies, and shared "procedural rules" (Lyons-Ruth et al., 1998, as cited in Seligman, 1999) that organize Zachary's internalized representations and his interactions with parental figures. These patterns of behavior are automatic and prereflective (Stolorow, Atwood, & Brandchaft, 1994), rather than narratively coherent verbal forms (Seligman, 1999). The procedural rules and expectancies that create these patterns function outside of awareness and are involved in the negotiation and defining of the intersubjective environment with others (Stern et al., 1998).

From a dyadic system's perspective, Zachary's limp, withdrawn state when with adult figures may have developed in relation to his mother, who experienced sudden and unpredictable changes in her mood, alternating between a preoccupied, depressed state

and an intrusive, labile one. This emotional whirlwind precipitated his retreat inward as an attempt to shield himself. His mother, in turn, often felt rejected and frustrated with Zachary's withdrawal in response to her "breakdowns." With his mother under the sway of her frequent mood changes, combined with her inability to either "read" or tolerate his affect state, Zachary developed expectancies of rupture and mismatch and a strategy of avoidance as a way to maintain self-organization. Attachment theorists would refer to Zachary's attachment style as insecure–avoidant (Main, 1995). According to Fonagy and Target's (1998) work on mentalization, Zachary could not find his own mind when with the parental figure, as his mother lacked the capacity to hold him in mind—she was unable to reflect on or imagine his thoughts or feelings. In such instances, he defensively retreated into a schizoid withdrawal to avoid incorporation into the mind of the other. Despite this forced adaptation, his mother continued to exist as an "alien presence" inside of him that left him feeling estranged from his own self.

A striking disparity existed in Zachary's relational world, namely that while he was practically mute with adults, he was observed to be quite talkative and gregarious with other children. His foster mother noted that she often did not recognize his loud voice in overhearing him playing with other kids in the neighborhood, as it was so unfamiliar to her. One way to understand this difference is beginning to think of how what I am referring to as the interactional template between Zachary and his mother comes to permeate his interactions with other authority figures such as myself. With his peers, this system was not as relevant as he was able to maintain a sense of agency with them.

Psychic Deadness and the Solitary Self: The Reemergence of the Mother–Child Dyadic System

Zachary entered the therapy office, head down and silent, a coat pulled protectively over his shoulders. In first meeting him, I was immediately struck by a sense of deadness. When asked questions or invited to participate in any kind of verbal exchange, he barely uttered a response, leaving me feeling as though my words were empty and useless. He wore a despairing expression on his face, and a feeling of dark hopelessness permeated the atmosphere—a sense that he had given up on people and even life itself. When with Zachary, I experienced the space in my office and the physical objects inhabiting it as void of vitality or any kind of symbolizing potential; the toys were scraps of metal and plastic—dull and uninteresting. It was as though any sense of curiosity or wonderment in Zachary had been numbed.

At the start of each session, Zachary reluctantly dragged himself into the office, walking as if an external force controlled his movements. He slumped in a chair across from mine, keeping his coat on and waiting for the time to pass in a stony silence with his head flopped down on the table, or staring at the floor, zoned out. If I eyed the toys or suggested a game, he seemed oblivious to my overtures. He uttered inaudible, monosyllabic responses to my questions. The statement, "I don't know," either mumbled or handwritten, accompanied by the shrugging of his shoulders, became a default response that I repeatedly bumped up against. "I don't know," as though the ability to think or reflect had been strangled by the cumulative trauma of his life. He sat limply through sessions, with his head hanging toward the ground. He occasionally mustered the energy to look up at me or scan the room before slumping down again. He engaged in routinized behavior with objects—tapping a pencil against the desk or bouncing the strap of his bag back and forth with his hand. With paper and drawing utensils, he often drew a single line or a stick figure with his arms raised up in the air, as though he was set adrift.

It felt that, just as Zachary had been betrayed and abandoned by others throughout his life (i.e., his mother, his mother's boyfriend who had become a paternal figure, and multiple caseworkers and therapists), I, as his most recent therapist, was just another person who would inevitably leave him. Zachary felt the necessity to shut me out, so as to preserve his own construction of reality at the expense of blocking out other realities that automatically threatened his own. There was a constriction of agency and a constriction of the ability to generate new meaning (Modell, 1993).

Over time, a sequence emerged between us. In reaction to Zachary's unresponsiveness, I often became more active, suggesting things for us to do together or placing particular games or art materials on the table prior to the session with the hope he might show some interest in these (this kind of activity was unusual for me, as I generally experience myself as taking more of a back seat). Any kind of assertion of my own agency in the form of questions, invitations to engage, or inquiry only served to crowd him out. I came to notice that Zachary's silence elicited in me a desire to pursue him with questions or invitations to engage. My activity could also take the form of making interpretations about his body language and feeling states, or "reading" his silence. I found myself desperately trying anything that might spark his curiosity, inviting him to take notice of the world around him. Zachary drifted farther away, and my zealous invitations seemed to crowd him out even more and thwart any morsel of will on his part. His avoidance and my pursuit began to suggest a sequence akin to the "chase-and-dodge" dance (Beebe & Stern, 1977). If I happened to take notice of my overactivity in the moment and make a conscious effort to sit in silence with Zachary, waiting for him to show signs of breathing, the room became transformed into a burial ground, as if we were laying the therapy "to rest." We were two people in a room where our physical presences were the only confirmation of living existence.

Although we often do not have access to the "data" from early life, it may be intuited from the experience of being with the child. In the treatment presented here, there was a re-emergence of the mother–child dyadic system with Zachary, similar to what Stern refers to as "representations of interactions that have been generalized" (RIGS; Stern, 1985). A decoding of the nonverbal communication began to gradually shed light on patterns of interaction originating from Zachary's relationship with his mother that were now part of his shared implicit relationship with others (Stern et al., 1998).

The mother–child dyadic system in this case refers to the chase-and-dodge dance: expectancies organized around ruptures without repair, Zachary's self-preoccupation, my pursuit, and a generally imbalanced interaction devoid of mutuality. A decoding of the nonverbal patterns such as these can begin the process of "thinking" about the child's needs, mood, and gestures that have not been translated into words, thus verbally representing what the child could not "speak" as an infant and what the mother was unable to respond to (Bollas, 1987).

Zachary's Silence

How can we begin to understand Zachary's silence, or refusal to engage? In addition to viewing it in relation to patterned interactions with his mother as described above, what else might he be conveying in his silence, and what functions does it serve in his interaction with others? Perhaps Zachary's self-containment and unavailability conveyed underlying anger toward adults, stemming from the profound disruption he had experienced over the course of his life (Winnicott, 1950–1955/1975). His inert, depressive state was

partially a defense, or adaptation, that he had mobilized in response to the unbearable disappointments he had experienced. It was also a means to exert control over his inner world of badness and persecution. Paradoxically, his silence was both part of the dynamic system with his mother and also an attempt to free himself from its grip (Stern, 1997)—a kind of protest in which he constructed a "wall of silence" to ward off others in his refusal to engage. Zachary's silence was an assertion of his will, a form of self-determination that allowed him to feel his own edges and provide a sense of grounding within his body. In his silence he could preserve a sense of bodily and psychic integrity rather than face losing himself in the other. He struggled in sustaining the tension between experiencing himself in the mind of the other and experiencing himself as a separate other, the two attributes of an intersubjective system (Modell, 1993). Or, in other words, he was unable to hold the tension between the simultaneous experience of intimacy and separateness. For Zachary, both could not yet coexist. Rather, one inevitably prevailed over the other so that he either gravitated toward extreme avoidance or felt swallowed up in an undifferentiated state.

In Zachary's silence I was faced without words or any sort of play. At times, I felt imprisoned, caught in a bind in response to Zachary's reliance on extreme avoidance to maintain an illusion of separateness in the face of my presence. I had to rely on the nonverbal field and sensory modalities in order to maintain my own sense of aliveness and to derive a sense of meaning from our interaction. Throughout the treatment, I found myself working hard to get a "sense" of the interactional flow, becoming more aware of particular sensory modalities than I probably would have otherwise had Zachary communicated or expressed his inner world through play or speech. His movement, or lack thereof, our breathing, its rate and rhythm, my experience of my body's physiological activity in relation to his, and our negotiation of space gradually came into focus over time.

Imitation: Bridging Internal and External Reality—The Co-Creation of a Transitional Space Within the Mother–Child System

In addition to becoming oriented to the contours of the mother–child system, treatment with children who are paradoxically "living" in a state of deadness involves the creation of a transitional space (Winnicott, 1953/1971b), one that evolves from rudimentary imitation through state sharing to intersubjective relatedness. By transitional space, I mean the intermediate area of experience between the internal world and the "real" other as well as that area of experience that allows for the emergence of internalized patterns of relatedness. Expanding on the notion of transitional space, I would add that the developmental objective becomes one of creating an "intersubjective space" as defined by Benjamin (1990), a space that hosts the meeting of two subjective worlds so that one's subjectivity becomes more known through participation in the other's subjectivity. Drawing on the notion of intersubjectivity introduced by Atwood and Stolorow (1984; Stolorow, Brandchaft, & Atwood, 1987), Benjamin states,

> Intersubjective theory postulates that the other must be recognized as another subject in order for the self to fully experience his or her subjectivity in the other's presence. This means, first, that we have a need for recognition, and second a capacity to recognize others in return—mutual recognition. (p. 186)

The creation of a space between two subjects allows for shifts and changes in embedded patterns of relating rooted in the form of subject—object paradigms.

Expanding on Winnicott's concept of "potential space," Ogden describes a potential space as one where a sense of "I-ness" emerges in which, Ogden (1986) states, "experience is subtly endowed with the quality that one is thinking one's thoughts and feeling one's feelings as opposed to living in a state of reflexive reactivity" (p. 209). In the treatment of Zachary, something even more rudimentary and basic was required to promote the emergence of such an intermediate area of experience.

Winnicott (as cited in Ogden, 1989) wrote in a letter to Michael Fordham about the role of imitation in the treatment of an autistic boy. Comparing the treatment done by two different analysts with this boy, Winnicott describes the first analyst as establishing a "communication where by doing everything that this boy did. He would sit still for a quarter of an hour and then move his foot a little; she would move her foot. Out of these beginnings, everything showed signs of developing until she (analyst) died" (Ogden, 1989, pp. 150–151). Winnicott makes mention of the second analyst as intent on making "clever interpretations" and bemoans,

> If I could have got the clever therapist to join on to all this I think we might by now have had something like a cure instead of having to put up with one of those maddening cases where a lot of good work has been done and everybody is very pleased but the child is not satisfactory. (Ogden, 1989, p. 76)

During the first few months of my work with Zachary, my "spontaneous" and desperate attempt to "make something happen" led me to try out the idea of merely copying Zachary's body language and his physical movements. If he sat with his head flat on the table, I did the same. If he picked up a pencil and tapped it once against the chair, I did the same with my own pencil. To my surprise, this rudimentary form of communication had the effect of somehow generating activity and recognition in him. For the first time, he exhibited a slight interest and awareness of my presence in the room as it reflected his own. It was as if my own subjectively generated activity had to become organized around Zachary's in order for him to apprehend some kind of self-definition that then allowed him to engage with his environment. Zachary could only define himself in relation to negating my own individuality, with me becoming a mirror of some kind for him to locate himself (Kohut, 1977; Hegel, as cited in Modell, 1993). I surrendered to his control and domination in a way, perhaps something that was required of me in order to "pass his test" (Weiss, Sampson, & the Mount Zion Psychotherapy Research Group, 1986).

"Breaking" the Silence: A Moment of State Sharing

Over time, imitation evolved into a form of attunement, where the focus was now on Zachary's inner state, particularly his feeling state, as well as his outward behavior. Features or dimensions such as intensity, timing, shape, and rhythm were incorporated into my matching (Stern, 1985).

In one session, Zachary dispiritedly dragged himself into the office with a tired, depleted expression on his face. With his head flopped down on the table, he mustered up the energy to reach for the bottle cap that lay beside him. With his face pressed against the tabletop, he began rubbing the cap against the table in a random, haphazard fashion. In response, I grabbed the closest object that resembled this bottle cap and attempted to make a similar noise against the table. As this continued, the sounds seemed to be something that Zachary was hearing and responding to. In continuing to do this, what developed was a rudimentary, sensory form of communication. Zachary was approaching

the discovery of sameness and difference, the idea that separate minds can share a similar state—what Stern (1985) refers to as, "state sharing." This gradually developed during the course of the session as he increasingly varied the rhythms of the cap, with his actions becoming more deliberate and intentional, an intentionality that began the process of shifting the predominant mother–child systemic patterns. This version of a shared experience and ones that were to follow prevented him from retreating into the confines of his solitary enclave.

"Breaking the silence" with Zachary, paradoxically, took place without words, but rather through a dialogue of shared sounds and body movements, a musical interlude of sorts. The sounds provided him with a shape and sense of boundedness so that he could feel his own edges and not meld into the other. The experience of his intentions, perceptions, and sensations being shared by an other allowed him to begin to differentiate and apprehend a self. The sounds served as our first link; my imitation of his movements reflected enough of a self-representation for him to locate a self in relation to the other.

Movement From Self to Self-With-Other: "Introducing" Ourselves

Over time, our dialog expanded and became more playful. I began to inject my own personal version of his movements. In a session during the first year of treatment, Zachary entered the office and sat in a chair across from me, face down, making no eye contact. Unwittingly participating in yet another "game" of chase-and-dodge, in an attempt to engage him, I suggested that we pick out an activity from the toy chest. He shrugged his shoulders and sat in silence. After several minutes of silence, he moved his chair next to the analytic couch and laid his cheek on the seat, tapping his finger on the back of the couch. In response, I moved my chair beside the couch and laid my cheek on the seat facing him. As I made these movements, it was unclear to me whether Zachary was aware of my physical presence in the room. While at the time my attempt to "trace" his movements felt forced and not convincingly therapeutic (let alone analytic), in retrospect the motivation was primarily driven by a search for aliveness.

With his head resting on the couch, Zachary rubbed his finger on the upholstery, back and forth, making a distinct sound. In response to the pattern of his sounds, I began tapping my finger against the surface across from him, altering the rate of my tapping and its intensity according to his chosen pace. At this point, Zachary glanced at my rolling fingers, continuing to lie with his cheek against the couch. Aware of my attempt to trace his tapping, his actions increased in speed, and a more pronounced sound gradually emerged. He glanced up at me in the midst of this exchange and a look of pleasure crossed his face, as if to say "ok, see if you can catch me." He then quickly turned back to the upholstery and proceeded to "draw" various shapes and designs with his finger.

With the increased complexity of the activity, I made an effort to both learn and follow his movements. This involved "reading" the rhythm and tones of his finger drumming. He rapidly shifted the direction of his finger, up and down, back and forth, sideways, often leaving me one step behind him. He began to use several of his fingers as if "playing the piano" on the cloth while peeking up to catch glimpses of my efforts to "learn the song." While initially this sort of pantomime felt forced and contrived, what developed was a language of sounds from the mutual finger rubbing and finger tapping—a shared sensory experience. Our dialog expanded from the bottle cap sequence that took place before in that a playfulness had emerged. He had become more spontaneous and exhibited a greater tolerance of my own agency in relation to his own. For Zachary, there was a more coherent self-representation that he could then expand on, drawing from his own volition.

Following this musical improvisation, there was an interesting shift. Zachary sat straight up in his chair, made prolonged eye contact for the first time in the session, and then proceeded to unveil three identification cards (such as his "YMCA card") from his jacket pocket. In response to his invitation, I took out my wallet and removed three identification cards of my own. As if we were starting a game of poker, Zachary initially "played his cards faced down," while rapidly reading the words on the cards under his breath. Motioning for an exchange of cards, Zachary dealt me one of the three by tossing it onto the couch. Picking it up, I offered one of my own in exchange. With a fresh set of cards, he garbled the various words on each of the cards, with the exception of my full name as the only audible sound that I could discern. In turn, I quickly read over the words on Zachary's cards and made a deliberate effort to only fully enunciate his name. This exchange progressed to the point where Zachary and I were each holding all of the other's identification cards.

In the exchange described above, Zachary had moved from a more frozen state and asymmetrical interaction with me to a greater sense of mutual regulation and symmetry. A space had been created for Zachary and me to relate to each other as two separate subjects (as perhaps highlighted by the identification cards), while simultaneously providing Zachary with a mirror of some kind to locate himself. While the chase-and-dodge template moved into the background, Zachary broke through a relational constriction that had become cemented into the relationship with his mother and generalized with others. In contrast to the way that the predominant relational patterns between Zachary and his mother robbed him of his own agency, here there was an extending of his own agency through the construction of something new. An interactional synchrony unfolded in which Zachary was able to stay engaged while maintaining a sense of himself as separate. He did not have to resort to a silent withdrawal to maintain a sense of self-determination. Rather, it could begin to exist in relation to others. In Stern's language, Zachary and I had moved from self and other to self-with-other (Stern, 1983). I also had the feeling that I had somehow "passed the test" by enough of a margin that allowed for his greater engagement and receptivity.

Guess What I'm Thinking? The Emergence of Subjectivity and Mutual Recognition; Becoming the "Master" of the Other's Mind

Toward the end of the first year of treatment, Zachary began expressing curiosity about my thoughts and feelings. He was now not only able to tolerate the existence of a separate subjectivity, but wanted to know more about it. This curiosity was expressed through a series of games (such as "Master Mind" and "Hangman") chosen by Zachary, games which all shared the theme of "reading" the other's mind, trying to "break the code," or possibly "master," or locate, one's own mind through intuiting the mind of the other.

In these games, Zachary took great pleasure in detecting the clues and moving closer to figuring out my sequence of colors, as in Master Mind, or my three-syllable words in "hangman." He gathered clues from any pattern or sequences that emerged from previous guesses or veered away from the board and scanned my face, examining my expression for cues as if he might "peek inside my mind." In hangman, our exchange of written words or phrases created a space for Zachary and myself to establish another mode of communication. These words or phrases referred to significant people from Zachary's life or traumatic events from his past such as being taken away from his mother by the police and not knowing whether he would see her again. He came up with words such as "police" or

the name of his foster brother, offering clues to direct my train of thought while also conveying his eagerness for me to figure out what he was thinking. On one occasion, he came up with a poignant phrase for me to guess. The phrase "almost there," he explained in his own unspoken way through written notes, referred to the arduous struggle that had led up to the possible return to live with his birth mother. In addition to his references to significant people and events in his life, Zachary also drew on his interest in basketball, using hangman to test my knowledge of common nicknames for the star players, names such as "the mailman" (Karl Malone). He alternated between the names of veterans and rookie basketball players, possibly alluding to his "father hunger" (Herzog, 2001) and his longing for more male parental involvement in his life, something he had shared with his surrogate father and that he was now beginning to allow himself to experience with me.

The idea that these guesses were taking place in the context of the game "hangman" spoke to, among many possible meanings, the fury at being misunderstood or overlooked—a fury so great that it could result in being hung if I was unable to trace the answer. In these written exchanges I was generally able to guess what he was thinking despite the fact that these people or events had not been directly mentioned before—an "implicit knowing" derived from our earlier modes of relating (his mother had provided me with some history, but much of it was vague and lacking in detail).

While verbal dialogue was still generally absent from the interaction, there was an unspoken quest to make contact with the mind of the other and, simultaneously, to make oneself known to the other. The chase-and-dodge template had been transformed into "Chase and Found." In this intersubjective exchange, the idea of trying to read the other's mind, as in Fonagy and Target's (1998) notion of reflective self-functioning, was also Zachary's attempt to find himself in the mind of the other and to begin laying the groundwork for constructing a representation of himself, as someone with intentions, feelings, thoughts. There was movement from object relating to object usage (Winnicott, 1969), meaning I was becoming an object through which Zachary could begin to explore his own mind within a shared reality and where there was an acceptance of the other as an independent or separate person (Winnicott, 1971a). Having access to another's subjectivity for a child such as Zachary was a novel experience, given that his mother's mind was either inaccessible or too chaotic to know about.

Over the several months following the portion of the treatment described here, Zachary became more engaged and spontaneous with both his birth mother and foster mother. He developed an interest in various activities that are meaningful to him and from which he derives a sense of pleasure and attachment. In our recent work together, sessions appear strung together with an underlying sense of continuity. In spite of the asymmetries in our relationship, he has begun to create a voice for feelings that had been silenced—feelings related to the absence of his "real" father, anger toward his mother for her abandonment and toward the "people" responsible for snatching him away from her. There is competition and aggression in relation to me, in which Hangman sometimes becomes "hang-You-man."

Concluding Remarks

A stage of basic recognition was achieved with Zachary—one that began with a primitive form of communication in the form of imitation then gradually gave way to affect sharing; this was followed by the interaction of our selves as both separate and shared in the context of guessing games.

Utilizing contemporary infant research, I have tried to explore the use of the nonverbal mode of experience in treating children who are unable to engage in symbolic play and have limited verbal expression. Although beyond the scope of this article, much of what has been discussed with regard to children may be applied to the treatment of adult patients as well. With patients such as Zachary, treatment involves developing alternative, nonsymbolic modes of communication that evolve out of the sensory field with the child. The mother–child dyadic system pervades the child's relationships with other adult figures, as in the case of Zachary and myself. For Zachary, the chase-and-dodge sequence came to infiltrate his interactions with parental figures, so that silence was both a means of avoidance in the face of feeling incorporated into the other as well as a form of self-determination to preserve a sense of psychic and bodily integrity. These "relational formats" (Seligman, 1999) derived from co-constructed mother–infant patterning such as the chase-and-dodge sequence, may be more easily observed when working with children who do not play or talk as a means of expressing their inner worlds. In this kind of situation, we are pushed into a nonverbal mode of communication, where the sounds, smells, rhythms, and arousal level shape the interactional field. It is through an examination of the nonverbal realm of experience that we are able to make contact with the child.

In child treatment, it becomes important to create an "open space" (Stern et al., 1998) that may allow for shifts in the relational patterning. With Zachary, imitation was initially a mode of making contact with him, and what followed from this was a playfulness and forms of "state sharing" that deviated from the cemented patterns in his relations with adults. Through these relational points of contact, a greater balance between self and mutual regulation developed, as Zachary gained the ability to experience himself as simultaneously separate from and participating in the subjectivity of the other.

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