A STUDY OF DEAF PEOPLE'S INCLUSION IN THE GENERAL SOCIAL MAJORITY THROUGH FLEXIBLE PERFORMING ART PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Since Sign Language has been generalized as a standard communication vehicle between deaf communities, sociability and quality of life development of deaf citizens have been observed. The upgrade of signing postures to an official sign language (national or international) forced deaf population to a higher intelligence status than the lower usual. Thus, in contemporary societies, where deaf communities share an official and standardized sign language system, they have –at least- a sufficient quality level of life. Nevertheless, there are still important social disconnections concerning deaf and hearing people's integration and mutual development. The current paper examined the possibility of a successful deaf and hearing people's cooperation through art making and the sociability of deaf to commit and fulfill an art-project. **Purpose:** Examination of the sociability to commit and fulfill an art project (for deaf and hearing audience) with or without hearing people synergy. **Method:** In the present study participated 24 deaf young people for a two month period, three times weekly. They have been challenged to participate by volunteering in two groups: (A) Deaf and Hearing Artists and (B) Deaf Amateur Artists. Traditional teaching applications were used. **Results:** According to results, Deaf people had weak duty commitment and short term intrinsic motivation, leading to demi-professional/ low-quality productions. Moreover, they were hesitant as far as it concerns in deaf and hearing people's cooperation. **Conclusions:** Possible dysfunctional social patterns that could explain current data are discussed, as socioeconomic factors, educational background and traditional behavioral patterns in deaf communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Deaf community is a -common in past- social minority (Branson & Miller, 2002). In ancient Greece, Jewish and Roman Societies, as well as in Resonance, Deaf citizens have been politically and socially accepted, followed by a special law system on behalf of being supported by their social inclusion. Since the15[th] century there are many reports concerning deaf citizens implicated systematically in business and professional occupation (Cleve, 1999; Davis, 2006; Ladd, 2006; Sutton-Spence, 2006). Industrial Revolution enhanced deaf community's aggregation in city-centers boosted their social and political activity, as well as their succession in large and popular urban centers (Desloges 1979 as cited in Sutton-Spence, 2006; Davis, 2006). After the19[th] century, multi-dynamic social minorities were established, and constructed a peculiar subculture as a result of deaf citizen's convolution and rapid integration in typical social environments and activities (Davis, 2006; Ladd, 2006; Sutton-Spence, 2006). Through the development of social entertainment, sport and cultural activities, deaf social media and special education, deaf community has gradually become a well-structured independent minority, socially active in contemporary societies (Siple, 1994; Bowe, 2002, Ladd, 2006, Sutton-Spence, 2006; Marschark & Spencer, 2010; Gerich & Fellinger, 2012).

The deaf community aggregation evoked the need of a standard and common communication across deaf communities. Gradually, deaf individuals started standardizing their miming, signing and face postures and gestures. As the social needs and demands on deaf societies, were becoming higher the signing lectures have been initialized. In developed nations and wherever deaf people where turning to closed communities, the hand-made symbols became signed movements, signing dialects and more rarely, signing languages (Cleve, 1999; Marschark & Spencer, 2010; Kavazidou, 2012).

Through sign language (SL) the deaf had an ease to their in-between communication. Moreover, the adding value could be reflected to the general personal and social development. Specifically, there is research evidence that SL enhances and facilitates a) brain structure differentiation, which in turn, contributes to positive particularities in movement & visual perception, fine motor skillfulness, orientation, peripheral visual control, differences in memorizing types & qualities and in other cognitive abilities; b) the development of all types of intelligence; and c) the quality of life and health status: social, emotional, mental, physical (Hickok, Bellugi & Klima, 2002; Vernon, 2005; Samar & Parasnis, 2007; Emmorey & McCullough, 2008; MacSweeney et al., 2008; Kavazidou, 2012).

Even if deaf people have commonly a normal IQ, physical, mental or emotional impairments in deaf population could exist, whenever the social environment is stated as insufficient (Kavazidou, 2012). Currently, the social inclusion of deaf communities is more evident when social justice and communication accessibility between deaf and hearing citizens is supported by welfare, health & social services, education, business, mass media and entertainment (Freire, 2009; Gerich & Fellinger, 2012). In general, whenever the social formations are eligible to deaf communities, social inclusion and quality of life of deaf citizens are probable (Branson & Miller, 2002; Gerich & Fellinger, 2012).

Nowdays, in the developed European countries, the social status, educational level as well as entertainment opportunities of deaf citizens are reported from satisfying to very good, in contrast to their occupational profile (MacLeod-Gallinger, 1992; Rogers, Muir & Evenson, 2003). The reasoning of the high percentage of unemployed deaf citizens is multi-complex and probably, related not only to

available social services and job opportunities, but also, to the life ideology and self-motivations of a deaf individual to be involved actively in the larger social community, away from the safe *deaf-community* environments (Rogers, Muir & Evenson, 2003; Kavazidou, 2012).

In the current research project, a pilot study has beenconducted, concerning a deaf citizens commitment on an Art-Occupation, the occupation of an actor. Theater is a common and the most favorite performing art activity in Schools of the deaf. Also, theater is strongly connected to deaf history and is characterized as the "pride and treasure of the deaf community". During a theatrical act, deaf people prefer to implicate in the scenarios their central concern of the "inability of the majority hearing culture to accept the fact that the deaf minority is different". Also, deaf theater is a performing art that brings forth the beauty and artistic uses of SL (Kilpatrick, 2007).

Thus, the *Acting* procedure has a multifaceted impact on a deaf person, through a) enhancing emotional health, b) providing the artistic beauty of SL, the main accessibility vehicle of deaf, c) supporting the SL propagation across normal population and d) being an easy task for the deaf, while being a familiar activity from school and other community activity resources (Kilpatrick, 2007).

Concerning career orientation and the emergence of deaf people's special professional qualifications in between typical and special population available studies in sustain exist (MacLeod-Gallinger, 1992; Rawlings, 1995; Buchanan, 1999; Rogers, Muir & Evenson, 2003). From the other side, the wittingly social isolation of deaf community hinders the reasoning of professional downgrade of the deaf, which is inconsistent with the quality of education and the social accessibility services (Buchanan, 1999; Rogers, Muir & Evenson, 2003; Kavazidou, 2012). Another interesting topic concerning the career education and professional success of deaf individuals, is the inconsistent relation between "available tools for social accessibility" and the "unavailable population to commit in access". In fact, deaf are being selectively socialized, probably with responsible reasoning (Buchannan, 1999; Branson & Miller, 2002). Finally, even though SL has been passed through education and research in typical population as a kind of foreign language or foreign dialect professional qualification, the social problematic of social inclusion of deaf community is not yet resolved (Schroedel, 1992; Branson & Miller, 2002; Fellinger et al., 2005; Fellinger, Holzinger, & Pollard, 2012).

The present study has been an attempt to examine some behavioral factors that could contribute to the explanation and reasoning of the deaf community's social isolation, even if accessibility in social life is feasible. A professional occupation challenge, an important life event (strongly related to the instinct of survival) has been selected for ensuring interest and participation of deaf.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the current study was the examination of the sociability of deaf individuals to commit and fulfill an art project (suitable for deaf and hearing audience) with or without hearing people's synergy. The aims of the study concerned the estimation and evaluation of a) the ability of deaf population to be professionally committed to art-making procedures and performances and b) the interest and the ability of deaf population to be integrated with hearing population under professional environments.

METHOD

Participants

In the present study participated 24 deaf young people, aged between 20-30 years old for a two month period, three times per week in a theater performance. All participants were members of a local deaf-theater company. They have been challenged to participate by volunteering in two groups: (A) Deaf and Hearing Artists, (B) Deaf Amateur Artists, where traditional teaching applications were applied.

Instruments
The current study was a pilot one and   strict procedures were not given concerning evaluation of the study, on behalf of establishing trusty environments and massive participation. Thus, as far as it concerns evaluative toolsobservation, noting and interviews were used..

Procedure
Twenty four members of a deaf theater company accepted to cooperate in an art project with hearing individuals. For two months, two times weekly, a very strict timeline and timezone program has been applied. The half deaf group was implicated in an art-project performed by deaf, and the other half group, in an art-project performed by half deaf and half hearing individuals. The supervisor of the procedure was the director of the theater. An interpreter and a choreographer were also participating in the group supervision.
The integration between deaf and hearing individuals started up with body exercises. Gradually two tasks were added: The deaf were learning the script of signing to hearing individuals and the hearing individuals were supporting deaf in time synchronization during oral speech and signing matching procedures. Several time breaks and free enterprise in task accomplishment were given. At the end of the project a performance has been presented in a youth festival with open access to everyone.

RESULTS
According to results, the number of deaf participants has been gradually decreased dramatically in the mixed group, in comparison to the group of deaf. According to interviews and rehearsal notes, in the mixed group, the deaf individuals were showing behavioral inhibition to cooperating with hearing individuals through making often a) gatherings between deaf participants and b) unauthorized time breaks. In the group of deaf performers unauthorized breaks were present but not so frequent.
Furthermore, the groups of deaf were expressing the need to "go quickly further", to do less exercising and technique practice and to make many performances rather rehearsals. They felt that they were losing time through practicing in improving their acting abilities, while they were reporting as sufficient in acting abilities. On the contrary, in the mixed group it has not been reported such a need of performing or avoiding practicing, rather a gradual withdrawal from the group. The participant retirements have passed the 70% in the mixed group and only the 16% from the deaf group.
Moreover, those that were committed until the end of the project were very happy only in the beginning (first two rehearsals) and in the end (performances) of the project. They were also always expressing their feelings, independently of their positive or negative direction all along the project.
They were easily giving up any effort, when implicated with hearing dancers. Both groups had a difficulty to copy the new -sign language extension- movement patterns. The most dedicated deaf actors in work and performance have been or were employed individuals.
Finally, the performance result was more sufficient in the mixed group, where there could not be done distinction between deaf and hearing individuals by the audience. In the contrary, in the mixed group, the performance was characterized as amateur and the impairment of deaf to succeed was more prominent.

DISCUSSION
 A qualitative research with a small sample has been obtained through subjective rather objective (standardized) research tools. So, it is inappropriate to   generalize

the results of the current pilot study. According to results, the deaf individuals were much of enthusiastic only in the very beginning of the procedure and during performance procedures. Deaf individuals seemed to have weak duty commitment and short term intrinsic motivation if implicated with hearing individuals. Moreover, they seemed hesitant in deaf and hearing people's cooperation. Those deaf that were not implicated with hearing individuals have shown difficulties in following the lessons and rehearsals, being sometimes forward. Relatively with the deaf individuals who wereimplicated in the mixed group they were more emotionally restrained task-oriented and employed. According to reference, there are many factors that influence deaf people's performance in profession and career. One of the most important is the emotional and mental distress, socio-economic status and educational background (Rogers, Muir & Evenson, 2003; Foster & MacLeod, 2004; Felllinger, Holziger & Pollard, 2012).

Best performance results had to do with the mixed group, where the individual indifference was not discrepant. The performances with deaf individuals were low-quality productions. According to reference, the social integration of deaf with hearing individuals' society is much of promising for a successful career and professional occupation, if under guidance, social support and high quality special education (Schroedel, 1992; Rogers, Muir & Evenson, 2003). From the other side, the tendency of deaf to be gathered in communities, without embracing surrounding by hearing individuals, while mentally distressed if unequally integrated with hearing individuals, provokes DEAF minority isolation and social exclusion replication by choice, in the name of deaf culture survival (Ladd, 2003; Rogers, Muir & Evenson, 2003; Kavazidou, 2012).
The deaf community isolation is more obvious in families with low socio-economic status and low educational background. In such circumstances, social exclusion is maybe unpreventable because of the social isolation of deaf individuals (MacDougall, 1991; Ladd, 2003; Fellinger et al., 2005; Sparrow, 2005).

CONCLUSIONS
The present study was pilot and further research is necessary. Deaf are connected better and feel more comfortable when working together. Their involvement in different environments probably causes emotional distress and related behaviors. It should be stressed that , the possibility of succeeding and being developed is more probable in social-inclusion environments. The possible dysfunctional social patterns could be more easily explained in relation to socioeconomic factors, educational background and traditional behavioral patterns in deaf communities.

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