

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND DEAFNESS: SINGULARITIES OF THE SUBJECTIVE CONSTITUTION

PSICANÁLISE E SURDEZ: SINGULARIDADES DA CONSTITUIÇÃO SUBJETIVA

PSICOANÁLISIS Y SORDERA: SINGULARIDADES DE LA CONSTITUCIÓN SUBJETIVA

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the singularities of the subjective constitution of deaf children born to hearing parents. In order to reflect on this subject matter, I have described a scene from a short film called “Crisálida” and then analyzed the singularities of the psychological constitution of deaf people, based on the following categories: psychological symptoms; interactions between hearing parents and deaf children, and the modes of language acquisition, based on research conducted by psychoanalysts, as well as researchers who base themselves on psychoanalysis. As a result, I have pointed out the fact that communication difficulties between family members do not prevent the establishment of affective bonds, but they might hinder negotiations over social rules, which creates conflicts in this relationship. Besides, the advent of sign language in the family context appears to serve as a narcissistic rescue to the parents in relation to the child.

KEYWORDS: Psychoanalysis. Deafness. Sign language.

RESUMO: *Este artigo tem como objetivo promover uma reflexão sobre as singularidades da constituição subjetiva da criança surda filha de pais ouvintes. Para essa reflexão, descrevo uma cena do curta-metragem “Crisálida” e, em seguida, analiso as singularidades da constituição psíquica da pessoa surda, a partir das seguintes categorias: Sintomas psíquicos; Interações entre pais ouvintes e filhos surdos e modos de apreensão das línguas, a partir de pesquisas de psicanalistas ou pesquisadores que se fundamentam na psicanálise. Como resultado, aponto o fato de que a dificuldade de comunicação entre os membros destas famílias não impede a construção de laços afetivos, porém pode dificultar a negociação de regras sociais, gerando conflitos nesta relação. Ademais, a entrada da língua de sinais no contexto familiar parece funcionar para os pais como um resgate narcísico em relação ao filho.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Psicanálise. Surdez. Língua de sinais.*

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RESUMEN: Este artículo pretende promover una reflexión sobre las singularidades de la constitución subjetiva del niño sordo hijo de padres oyentes. Para esta reflexión, describo una escena del cortometraje "Crisálida" y seguidamente, analizo las singularidades de la constitución psíquica de la persona sorda, a partir de las siguientes categorías: Síntomas psíquicos; Interacciones entre padres oyentes e hijos sordos y modos de aprehensión de los lenguajes, a partir investigaciones de psicoanalistas o investigadores que se basan en el psicoanálisis. Como resultado, apunto al hecho de que la dificultad de comunicación entre los miembros de estas familias no impide la construcción de vínculos afectivos, pero puede dificultar la negociación de las reglas sociales, generando conflictos en este relacionamiento. Además, la introducción de la lengua de señas en el contexto familiar parece funcionar para los padres como un recurso narcísico en relación al niño.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Psicoanálisis. Sordera. Lengua de señas.

Introduction

This article seeks to reflect on the singularities of the psychic constitution of deaf children born to hearing parents. In the relationship of these deaf children with their parents, communication may be compromised, since the oral language is not fully accessed by the children. I speak of children with profound deafness, congenital or acquired before one year of age. For the deaf person, the apprehension of the world takes place in a very different way than for the listener, as it is carried out exclusively or mainly through visibility. "For those who experience the deaf condition, the visual sense occupies a central place in the relational process of creation, interaction and insertion in the world" (LUZ, 2013, p. 18, our translation). In addition, the representation of the world also occurs through a visual-gestural language, when the deaf person is exposed to sign language, which greatly differs from the way of representation of hearing people, who do it through an oral language. This article, therefore, deals with profoundly deaf children who are immersed in hearing families, who speak a language that they cannot fully grasp. What I question in this article is: How is a deaf child subjectively constituted? How do parents interact with their non-hearing baby? How does the diagnosis of deafness impact parents and what psychic marks do this impact cause on the child's constitution? When analyzing deaf people who, at some point in their lives, acquire sign language and assume it as their mother language, I agree with Luz, the idea that: "This type of deafness is extremely relevant to understanding the sensorial, linguistic and relationship of their psychic constitution and the ways in which the deaf happen as someone in the world" (LUZ, 2013, p. 18, our translation).

In order to reflect on the subjective constitution of deaf children, I analyzed some scenes from the short film "Crisálida" (Chrysalis) (CRISÁLIDA, 2016) and then outlined

some categories of analysis based on publications by psychoanalysts who work with deaf people, as well as other researchers based on psychoanalysis to understand the phenomenon of deafness as a mark of subjectivation.

Art imitates life: Chrysalis

The short film *Crisálida*, available on YouTube (CRISÁLIDA, 2016), shows the story of the adolescent character Rubens, who is deaf and has hearing parents. Parents opted for oralization of their son, who had no contact with sign language in childhood.

The scene I highlight is a moment between father, Mário, and his teenage son, Rubens. Mário is a carpenter and works building boats. In the scene (CRISÁLIDA, 2016), Mário sands a piece of wood and says to Rubens: - *It's pretty, isn't it? Look how beautiful it is!* The father runs his hand over the wood and the boy repeats the movement. And continues: *Why? Can't get any splinter.* Then the father shows the sandpaper (*lixa*, in Portuguese) and articulates syllabically: *Li - xa*. Rubens repeats with an articulation close to that of his father, but without phonetic precision. The father shows the screwdriver (*chave de fenda*, in Portuguese) and pronounces it syllabically again: *cha-ve de fen-da*. Again, Rubens tries to repeat words with imprecise articulation.

The scene of about 2 minutes portrays the relationship between the hearing father and the deaf son. Although Rubens does not use oral language precisely, nor Mário uses sign language with his son, there is a visual communication, which reveals an identification of the son with the father. The boy is attentive to his father's activity, looks with admiration, repeats his father's actions and speech, which demonstrates that he seeks recognition from his father. On the need for recognition, Fink (2018, p. 58, author's emphasis, our translation) states:

During early childhood, our primary caregivers are of immense importance to us, as our lives are closely intertwined with theirs. We make requests of them; *they, in turn, ask that we behave in certain ways rather than others, and that we learn many things: to speak their language (using words, expressions, and grammar not created by us)* and to regulate our needs for food, warmth, excretion etc. according to their schedules. These people are our primary source of attention and affection, and we often try to win their approval and love by conforming to their wishes.

As Fink (2018) states, every child seeks to satisfy the demand of their parents, as they know that the better they do, the greater the probability of being accepted, loved and approved. One of the demands of parents on children is that they learn their language. However, the deaf child, due to his sensory deprivation, is not able to spontaneously fully

appropriate the language spoken by hearing family members. In the short film “Crisálida”, there is a pressing conflict: the father is vehemently opposed to his son learning Libras (Brazilian Sign Language); the mother, on the other hand, seeing her son's failure to speak, is willing to learn Libras. The story lived by many families composed of deaf children and hearing parents is similar to the one reported in the short film, the conflict involves more than a communication difficulty, it denotes a frustration of the parents for not being able to bequeath to their children the language that they belong to, and on the other hand, a feeling of failure of the children for not being able to adapt to a demand from their parents, that of speaking their language, which reveals a parental narcissistic wound.

The subjective constitution of the deaf child

Profoundly deaf people, in contact with their hearing family members, experience a social context in which an oral language mostly circulates. They apprehend aspects of the listening culture through the visual marks of this language (observe lip movements, facial expressions, perceive that there is communication when people speak). In this way, they subjectively symbolize and signify the marks of oral language that emerge in their families and in society in general.

However, although deaf children are an integral part of a social group in which the communicating subjects (parents or caregivers) use an oral language, there is a particularity in the way of inserting themselves in the culture, since the language that, in general, speak their parents is not fully acquired by social interaction. Although they can see the lip movements and facial expressions of those who speak to them, these marks are often insufficient to create full communication. I reiterate the idea that I am talking about children with profound deafness, who were born deaf or acquired deafness before the acquisition of oral language and who have hearing parents.

In order to describe and analyze, therefore, the singularities in the subjective constitution of deaf people, I list three categories: Psychic symptoms; interactions between hearing parents and deaf children; ways of apprehending languages.

About each category, I bring contributions from researchers and psychoanalysts to weave, from them, some reflections.

Psychic symptoms

This category is based on the characterization of symptoms presented by deaf subjects. For Freud (1916/1990), symptoms are commitment formations, that is, conciliations between a repressed desire and its fulfillment. In the text *The meaning of symptoms*, he states that the symptomatic manifestation is rich in meaning, and that the meanings, which can only be revealed by the subject himself, are related to the experiences he has lived. Although the subject does not know anything about the meaning of his symptom, since he is unconscious, the symptom says something about the truth of this subject.

There is no difference in the types of symptoms presented by deaf and hearing people, nor a higher prevalence of psychic disorders in deaf people. The symptoms that, in general, deaf people present are the psychic marks that deafness promotes in the subjects. These marks are not of biological deafness, that is, of hearing deprivation, but are consequences of being in the world as a subject who differs from most others, from his primary group, in which he is a subject.

Virole and Ibad-Ramos (2003) describe data from a psychiatric clinic specializing in deaf children and young people in France over a period of 20 years. The authors state that deafness in children, by itself, is not a causal factor for psychiatric disorders, but it is a risk factor. The authors affirm the existence of a “pseudo-psychosis” in many deaf children and young people and report that two or three cases of children presented as psychotic are attended by the clinic every year. The symptoms of these children are strange contact and rejection of the educational process. The authors, psychiatrists at the clinic, found that they underwent oral rehabilitation from an early age, and their parents and professionals involved in their education did not use sign language in interacting with them. Therefore, they concluded that the purely oral educational method promoted the child's psychic manifestations. Symptoms were removed when parents accepted the change in educational method and started using sign language with their deaf child.

Virole and Ibad-Ramos (2003) also report that childhood depression in deaf children is very common. These are cases in which the child appears sad and tries to avoid the adult educators. Because it is related to educational situations, the authors call this manifestation “school depression”, which is often a consequence of a non-consonance between the educational method and the needs of the child. For the authors, “The sociocultural dimension inherent to deafness is a dimension of main understanding of the psychopathology of the deaf” (VIROLE; IBAD-RAMOS, 2003, p. 9, our translation).

Bremm and Bisol (2008) analyzed narratives of deaf adolescents, seeking to understand the meanings attributed to adolescence and deaf coexistence. Psychically, any person, in their adolescence, is faced with the need for a new identity construction. The subject ceases to identify with the family references, especially with the parents, with whom he had a close identification, to assume new values. For the deaf youth, the deaf community occupies this place of reference, and with it, sign language. The authors were able to perceive that, in adolescence, sign language acquires a specific connotation: it ceases to be just a natural language of communication and becomes an important identity element, as “it allows him to feel like a member of a different culture and have the deaf community as one of the main references” (BREMM; BISOL, 2008, p. 274, our translation).

For Silva (2007), the feeling of loneliness and foreignness is also the trait of suffering most pointed out by the deaf people analyzed by her. According to the author, this feeling is related to the impossibility of establishing identifications with the parents, since "the family's desiring pre-history does not manage to build a consistent identification space, insofar as it is not fully decoded by the subject" (SILVA, 2007, n/p, our translation). As the deaf child does not have access to the language that circulates in the family environment, there is a difficulty in understanding the demands of the parents, which generates great anguish.

Loneliness is again mentioned as the feeling experienced by deaf people who seek analysis among the interviewees of Neves (2018). The researcher interviewed six psychoanalysts who assist deaf people with a hearing aid in Libras. Most of them mentioned that these analysts complained of pain resulting from communication difficulties, which made them feel lonely and foreign. They also very often reported feelings of sadness, depression and melancholy (NEVES, 2018).

The symptoms or psychic suffering that deaf people report are not a consequence of sensory deprivation of hearing, but of the impossibility or difficulty of expressing themselves and understanding the demand of the Other. As an interviewee from Neves (2018, p. 45, our translation) stated, “their suffering is not due to not listening. However, some pain may be due to communication difficulties. For not finding someone who speaks the language, they feel lonely”.

Interactions between hearing parents and deaf children

The subjective constitution of any person occurs by identification with their caregivers and other people with whom they live. At the beginning of life, children establish identifications, mainly in the interaction with their parents, which occurs through the look, the touch, the smells and, essentially, the language.

Every baby is born immersed in language. He is symbolized and idealized before he is born and, upon entering the world, he is surrounded by speakers of a language who welcome him and introduce him to that language and, in this way, also make him human. At birth, it is the mother who gives the baby the necessary conditions for survival, but, unlike animals, the human mother not only takes care of the survival of her offspring – more than that, but she also gives him a symbolic status. That is, every human being who is born is not a baby, but “the baby”, a special subject for the parental couple who receives a name and has a range of expectations, desires and dreams deposited upon them. There is a desire that precedes the baby.

There is, however, a different situation: the case of the deaf baby, who, although immersed in a family where everyone speaks, cannot apprehend the meanings of the language that circulates in the environment. When the child is diagnosed with deafness, the entire imaginary of the parents dissolves, as the real child does not correspond to the idealized baby during pregnancy. The deaf baby does not find a desire referred to him as singular, as it differs from the expected child. A re-edition of childhood itself occurs when a woman brings a baby into the world, which happens through a process of psychic regression of the mother and her identification with the baby. This maternal identification is essential for the formation of the subjectivity of this new being, and is manifested through the essential care for him, in breastfeeding, in hygiene, in touching, in holding him, in affectionate speech with the baby. The mother invests the baby with hope, makes him an idealization. She imagines that this new being she has generated can cure all the frustrations she has experienced. The child is a kind of hallucinatory evocation of something lost in her own childhood (the mother's). When the parents receive the diagnosis of their child's deafness, all idealization collapses, the deaf baby, in general, brings immense pain to hearing parents. The diagnosis of deafness can cause a narcissistic breakdown, jeopardizing the establishment of the maternal role and negatively interfering with the relationship with the child (SOLÉ, 2005).

Solé (2005) traces some characteristics of the interactions of deaf babies with their mothers. In the case of hearing babies, the mother's voice has the ability to restore relief to the

baby in moments of anguish and to give meaning to the baby's sensory experience, such as when he feels hungry or in pain. The mother talks to him and calms him down, naming his sensations. And, even when she is out of his visual field, the baby hears his mother talking to him or her approaching noises, and this reassures him. The deaf baby, on the other hand, for not hearing the mother's voice, is deprived of this stimulus that organizes the senses (SOLÉ, 2005). Therefore, the integration of the deaf baby's body occurs exclusively via look, smell and facial expressions, and he needs a greater effort to carry it out, since he is deprived of the auditory sensation of the mother's voice. Solé compares that, in hearing babies, hearing the mother's voice while she is out of the visual field makes the absence more bearable, whereas, for deaf babies, this is not possible.

For the deaf baby, moments of maternal absence can be excessive, considering that out of sight the mother disappears; the lack of hearing does not allow the deaf baby to anticipate the mother's presence and reduce the moments of absence and abandonment. This abandonment can be meant as lack of love and be one of the causes of perceived depressive traits (SOLÉ, 2005, p. 106, our translation).

The depressive traits referred to by Solé (2005) were observed by her in her adult deaf analysands, whose causes the author sought in the baby's first experiences in his “psychic cradle”. Likewise, Dalcin (2006) also sought to understand how the symptoms of loneliness, dependence and social difficulties of young deaf people whom she interviewed in her research were linked to early childhood. The author attributes many of these psychic characteristics to precarious communication.

Silva (2007) is a psychoanalyst and performs clinical care for profoundly deaf people born in hearing families. For her, the main issue in the subjective constitution of the deaf child is the fact that the hearing loss does not allow him to learn the mother tongue (oral language), therefore, this language is not useful for his socialization. The language that allows the child's socialization is sign language, which appears at a late age and is acquired in interaction with adult subjects through a professional rather than family bias. Even if something maternal goes beyond the child, allowing a primary level of subjectivation, this something is linked to the perceptual field (what the child can capture from the visible reality), and not to the symbolic field (being able to communicate something outside the perceptual field). And sign language, which will allow access to the symbolic, is not acquired through identification in the family environment, but through third parties, in general, at school.

For Bisol and Sperb (2010), the question of the impact of the diagnosis of deafness can be extremely traumatizing for parents: “The deaf child cannot occupy the place that his

parents (if the parents are hearing) imagined he would occupy” (BISOL; SPERB, 2010, p. 10). This impossibility of occupying the imagined place affects early affective relationships. Therefore, the authors assert that deafness calls for other means for the psychic constitution of the subject to take place. The most significant identifications occur outside the family environment, as in the case of the research they carried out with deaf adolescents, in which they could see that these identifications happened in contact with other deaf people, in the deaf community.

Virole and Ibad-Ramos (2003) also state that there may be a loss of the mother's natural feeling, who, upon learning that her child is deaf, assumes a rehabilitative posture (as if she were responsible for “training” the baby's speech). The mother may also become aggressive towards the deaf baby, which represents her failure to produce a healthy child.

It is also common for hearing parents to have difficulty setting limits for their deaf children, due to the little communication that occurs between them. The deaf child is not able to understand the parents' oral language and, therefore, their demands. This communicative difficulty can produce a fragility in the paternal function and in the establishment of the “law”.

Modes of apprehending language(s)

For psychoanalysis, the constitution of a subject necessarily involves insertion in language. Mannoni (1977) asserts that the birth of a subject is related to the imaginary absence of an object and with the significant mark that marks its absence. This means that the establishment of signs (signifiers that express absent objects) configures a child's entry into language and his birth as a subject. It is “this entry in the signifying chain that converts the child into a subject” (MANNONI, 1977, p. 45, our translation). It can be said that the formation of the psyche is historical and linguistic, instituted by lived experiences and by language, in which the child is immersed. For the baby to constitute itself as a subject, it is not enough to be fed and cleaned. To constitute a subject, the presence of the adult has the effect of modeling the subjective characteristics of the child.

It is for this reason that there is a singularity in the psychic constitution of the deaf child, because the way in which language is established in the relationship between the hearing family and the deaf child is quite peculiar. In this relationship, since the child does not hear the mother's voice, language occurs in a different way: by looking, touching, smelling, mouth movements. The deaf baby builds an image of himself as separated from the adult by

this visual language, by touch, but, unlike hearing children, the transition to the symbolic, the entry into the mother tongue is fragile.

The language is maternal because it makes us born as subjects, it is maternal because it welcomes the baby and inserts him in the culture. Most mothers (and in some cases, fathers) of deaf children, being hearing, establish a form of communication with their children using gestures created from the concrete needs experienced within the home. It is clear that, if the gestures created in this relationship between the hearing family and the deaf child allow communication, we can say that there is a precarious language there. However, this communication is restricted to the elements present in the situation experienced and does not work outside the family environment.

Called “homemade signs” (ADRIANO, 2010), this form of communication proves to be precarious and insufficient. “[...] they are extremely restricted in their vocabulary repertoire and can communicate facts only at the moment of their occurrence, making it difficult to report past events and/or subjects that involve levels of abstraction” (ADRIANO, 2010, p. 34, our translation).

With this precarious communication, it is not possible to name, even in the space restricted to the family, feelings (affections, disaffections, fears, anguish, uncertainties), since these gestures do not allow evaluating objects or experiences, saying the qualities or defects of what was seen or experienced. Maybe they make it possible to agree only on signs of good and bad, with the thumbs up or down gestures, but not other adjectives, such as: soft, delicate, rough, fun, excited, happy, difficult, easy, intelligent, interesting, beautiful, ugly and many others. They also do not allow talking about time (yesterday, today, tomorrow, past, present, future, birthday, week, month, year), nor explain to the child the degrees of kinship, much less the absence of loved ones, especially "death".

About the use of homemade signs, Dalcin (2006, p. 2012, our translation) states: “The mothering function and the homemade signs guarantee a precarious entry into the symbolic, but do not allow them to slip in the signifying chain and, consequently, the interaction with their linguistic-socio-cultural environment”.

Therefore, these gestures have only communicational value (in a very restricted way), but not expressive. Because it is restricted to the family environment, most of the time, just the child with the mother, it is a language that is not universalized and does not allow the deaf to “speak themselves”.

Bremm and Bisol (2008) state that the lack of a shared language marks the relationship between hearing parents and deaf children. Poor communication in the first years of life and,

sometimes, throughout life within the family produces significant marks on their subjectivity. The subjects interviewed by these authors sought, in adolescence, other identifications with the deaf community, which became stronger than those made with family members.

The child's entry into a school where sign language circulates and coexistence with other deaf people marks, for many profoundly deaf children, the beginning of language acquisition and insertion into the culture, often at a very different age than when it occurs with hearing children.

Although it occurs late, the acquisition of sign language positively marks the lives of deaf people and their parents, allowing communication at school and in the family. Living in a bilingual school contributes to the development of a feeling of self-worth. When parents are willing to learn Sign Language, it brings relief, because by being able to communicate with their child, they rescue their possibility of negotiating social rules with them, passing on information, talking about feelings, and not just using gestures for concrete, everyday things.

Interweaving the categories to the short film

Returning to the short film, I looked for scenes in which the three categories - psychic symptoms; interactions between hearing parents and deaf children; ways of apprehending languages - are made explicit.

Category 1: psychological symptoms. Rubem, the deaf protagonist of the short film, does not have a mental disorder, but it is possible to observe Rubem's suffering at school due to receiving hostile treatment from his classmates. The interaction is permeated by teasing, contempt, imitations, light physical violence. The colleagues, for not understanding the situation of deafness, consider Rubem to be disabled. It is possible to observe this situation in the scene where, in the physical education class, for the formation of soccer teams, two boys choose the players. The boys leave Rubem last, saying he is "weak" (scene starts at 11min5s). During the game, it is noticed that Rubem performs well in soccer, but his ability is not recognized by the group.

In a case study, the psychoanalyst Gladis Dalcin (2006) presents the narrative of three young deaf children of hearing parents, who were born with profound deafness and had contact with sign language only in adolescence. The author states that the linguistic-socio-cultural restrictions caused serious difficulties in the subjectivation process of these subjects: "These conditions determine a subjective stagnation and a linguistic exclusion that leave them marginalized, without conditions of insertion and appropriation of the culture of their

surroundings, the family culture” (DALCIN, 2006, p. 193, our translation). The main sufferings that these three deaf people mention in the interviews are the “isolation” and “alienation” they experienced during the period when they interacted only with hearing people. Their family members used only oral language, which made them feel like “foreigners” in their own home. The author states that “these deaf people remain in a position of exclusion from language (oral and sign) and, consequently, from culture (hearing and deaf). Deprived of resources, they are unable to interpret, being interpreted by the other” (DALCIN, 2006, p. 212, our translation).

The feeling of loneliness experienced by the deaf is also described by Solé (2005), a psychoanalyst who works with young people and deaf adults. “It's being in the world in a glass dome, not only because of the transparency of the glass, but because of the metaphorical use of this expression: overprotection and excessive care that lead to isolation” (SOLÉ, 2005, p. 17, our translation). This is what happens with the character Rubem, he feels alone at school, as he has no friendship ties with his classmates.

Category 2: interactions between hearing parents and deaf children: In the short film, it is possible to verify that Rubem's mother has an extremely protective attitude towards her son. Despite being around 12 or 13 years old, his mother takes him into the school, holding him by the arm (the scene starts at 1min24s).

Solé (2005) states that this excess of care, in addition to an impossibility of insertion in the symbolic through the parents' language (oral language), promoted what the author called a “prolonged adolescence” or, at worst, a “prolonged childhood”.

The psychic symptoms that Solé (2005) found as a demand of these young people and deaf adults in his analytical listening were: 1. Difficulty entering adult life, breaking the bond or moving away from parents; 2. Impossibility of dealing with the most common losses and with one's own failures; 3. Ashamed of themselves and their voice when they try to speak; 4. Inability to socialize; 5. Dependence on a family listener (usually the mother) to carry out everyday activities outside the context of the house.

The third and final category is language learning modes. In the short film, we observe that up to the age of 13, parents opt for Rubem's oralization, through speech therapy. Rubem's father, despite the speech therapist's assertion that the boy is not developing his speech (scene at 6min29s), insists that he should continue with this rehabilitation approach. The mother, on the other hand, when realizing Rubem's admiration for Libras, when meeting a group of deaf young people, realizes that this could be a path for his development. The mother accepts Libras because she realizes that Rubem feels welcomed by the deaf community. There is no

common understanding between the parents about Rubem's inclusion in the deaf community, which generates a fight between them (scene starts in 15 min).

Dalcin (2006) when narrating about young deaf people assisted in psychoanalytic therapy, states that it was the encounter with the deaf community that allowed them to have a name (sign by which they were baptized) and that, by acquiring sign language, they began to understand many things they did not understand before. They left isolation and gained a “new family”. This rebirth is observed in the character Rubem, who feels he belongs to the deaf community and declares to his parents that he “wants to learn Libras”. Many stories like Rubens' are repeated in the daily lives of deaf people. This encounter with the deaf community, even when late in the life of the deaf person, gives him the “possibility of hooking up in the symbolic chain and his subjectivity becomes marked by the quality of being deaf” (DALCIN, 2006, p. 206, our translation).

Final considerations

In this article, researchers' reflections on the singularities of the subjective constitution of deaf children born to hearing parents were presented. The authors are unanimous in stating that the main characteristic of this subjective constitution is the impasse that occurs in the relationship between hearing parents and their deaf children due to the impossibility of a fully shareable language. For this reason, identification becomes fragile, since, the parents cannot communicate with their children, they cannot transmit their language, which generates many conflicts. Attempts to use “home signs” allow for very precarious communication and allow solving the child's daily needs, but home signs do not make it possible to establish a language in which the child can “speak himself”.

Some authors point to the occurrence of outsourcing of the child's insertion in the language, not because of disdain from the parents, but because of a perception that this is the only possible way to guarantee communication and the child's development. It is in a school where sign language circulates that the child begins to live with a language with which he can psychically organize himself, understand the world and, finally, express himself. It is also the school that, most of the time, enables parents to learn sign language.

When the child acquires sign language, he has access to a language of signification with which he can make loops and slide in the signifying chain. It also allows hearing parents to appropriate this language, when they accept it as the language of meaning for their children, and, through it, communicate with them, ascend to the condition of paternal tutors,

which was often removed with the narcissistic impact of the diagnosis. Sign language allows for more than family-to-family communication, it allows parents to see their children as children, not as someone to be normalized, reformed, fixed. Then, there is a narcissistic recovery of the parents in relation to the deaf child.

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