

# **Silent Punishment: The Experiences of d/Deaf Prisoners**

**By**

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## ABSTRACT

While studies about minority group prisoners are becoming more commonplace in prison research, knowledge about the experiences of hard of hearing (HoH) and d/Deaf prisoners remains limited. A primary aim of this thesis is to provide a more comprehensive understanding about the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people in prisons throughout England and Wales than what is already available, and to explore existing claims that d/Deaf prisoners suffer disproportionately whilst in custody. In order to do this a qualitative methodology is adopted, with semi-structured interviews being carried out with HoH, severely deaf and profoundly Deaf prisoners, and staff members across seven prisons in England, and observations being made at each establishment.

This thesis shows that in an environment like prison, those who are seen as 'different' often become institutionally deficient. While this could apply to many different subsections of prison populations, findings presented throughout show that the difference of d/Deafness is unique because sound rules in prison, with penal regimes being reliant on sound in order to run. However, d/Deafness, it is shown, is not merely a lack of hearing, and on the contrary there are different levels and layers of d/Deafness. Consequently, how a d/Deaf person experiences prison depends strongly on the way in which they identify with their d/Deafness and the way their d/Deafness is viewed by the prison. Despite such differences, findings suggest that there is little room for either deafness or Deafness in prison, with HoH/deaf and particularly Deaf prisoners often experiencing the pains of imprisonment more severely than their hearing peers as a result the Prison Service's inability to accommodate such difference.

This thesis makes an original and significant contribution to existing knowledge for a myriad of reasons. Firstly, it fuses together the fields of Deaf Studies and prison studies in a way that has not been done before, and considers d/Deafness on both an audiological *and* cultural level. In doing this, it notes the similarities and differences between the experiences of those who are HoH, those who are severely deaf, and

those who are culturally and linguistically Deaf; giving meaningful consideration to the role of imported identity in prison. Secondly, excluding small-scale unpublished undergraduate dissertations, it is the first empirical study about d/Deaf prisoners in England and Wales to carry out face-to-face interviews with these prisoners. Finally, as the most in-depth research yet to be carried out about HoH/d/Deaf prisoners in England and Wales, this thesis provides a level of insight which has not been available previously.

# Table of Contents

Student Declaration Form .....	1
ABSTRACT .....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	8
ABBREVIATIONS.....	10
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....	11
Background .....	11
Thesis and Research Questions.....	15
Blurring the Lines between Prison Studies and Deaf Studies .....	16
The Importance of this Research, and Statement of Originality.....	18
Chapter Outlines .....	20
CHAPTER TWO: THE EXPERIENCES OF PRISONERS – A LITERATURE REVIEW .....	27
Prison is a Painful Place.....	28
The Changing Face of Prison's Pains .....	37
The Prison as a Total Institution .....	41
Responses to the Prison Environment .....	45
Conclusion .....	52
CHAPTER THREE: d/DEAF LIFE – A LITERATURE REVIEW .....	54
The Spectrum of d/Deafness.....	56
Life Growing Up d/Deaf.....	62
d/Deaf Identities .....	72
Being a d/Deaf Adult in a Hearing World .....	77
Conclusion .....	80
CHAPTER FOUR: d/DEAFNESS IN PRISON - A LITERATURE REVIEW .....	82

Legislation .....	83
The Disproportionate Pains of d/Deaf Prisoners .....	89
Inability to understand the prison regime .....	89
Access to prison services and resources .....	92
The role of staff members .....	95
Relationships with fellow prisoners .....	96
Impact upon d/Deaf Prisoners .....	98
Conclusion .....	100
CHAPTER FIVE: THE TWISTING TALE OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS.....	102
Methodological Approach.....	103
Sample.....	105
Access.....	106
The Interviews.....	115
Interview schedule .....	115
Duration .....	119
Location .....	120
Communication .....	121
The role of the researcher.....	123
Recording.....	125
Transcription and Data Analysis .....	127
Ethics .....	130
Protecting Against Subjectivity .....	133
Conclusion .....	138
CHAPTER SIX: PRISON IS WHERE THE PRISONERS ARE .....	140
The Prison Environment.....	140

The Prison as a Total Institution .....	146
The Pains of All Prisoners .....	152
'Difference' in Prison .....	159
Sounding Out d/Deafness .....	165
Conclusion .....	169
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE EXPERIENCES OF dEAF PRISONERS.....	171
Little d deaf Perceptions .....	173
Responses to Hearing Loss in Prison .....	177
The Pains of deaf/HoH Prisoners .....	183
There is No Room for deafness in Prison .....	192
Conclusion .....	196
CHAPTER EIGHT: THE EXPERIENCES OF DEAF PRISONERS .....	199
Big D Deaf Perceptions .....	200
Responses to Deafness in Prison.....	205
Prison is deafening for Deaf Prisoners .....	207
Being the only Deaf person in a 'hearing' prison.....	208
Being Deaf in the 'Deaf prison' .....	209
A lack of resources .....	217
Communication with Staff Members .....	221
The Distinct Pains of Deaf Prisoners .....	227
There is No Room for Deafness in prison.....	238
Conclusion .....	242
CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION .....	245
Overarching Findings.....	247
Theoretical Implications.....	254

Recommendations for the Prison Service .....	258
Limitations of this Study, and Ideas for Future Research.....	263
Final Thoughts .....	265
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	266
Legislation .....	296
APPENDICES .....	297
Appendix A: Interview Schedules.....	297
Interview Schedule for Prisoners .....	298
Interview Schedule for Staff Members .....	301
Appendix B: Information About the Prisons Included in the Study.....	303
Appendix C: Letters to Prisons .....	304
Letter to Prisons Listed on my NOMS Application as Holding a d/Deaf Prisoner in the 12 Months Prior to the Application Date.....	305
Letter to Remaining Prisons in England and Wales.....	307
Appendix D: Information Sheets and Consent Forms .....	309
Information Sheet for Prisoners.....	310
Information Sheet for Staff Members.....	312
Consent Form for Prisoners.....	314
Consent Form for Staff Members.....	316

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

BSL – British Sign Language

DLO – Disability Liaison Officer

HoH – Hard of hearing

HMIP – Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons

HMP - Her Majesty's Prison

HMPS – Her Majesty's Prison Service

IPP - Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection

MOJ – Ministry of Justice

NOMIS - National Offender Management Information System

NOMS – National Offender Management Service

NRC – National Research Committee

NRCPD - National Registers of Communication Professionals working with  
Deaf and Deaf Blind People

PSI – Prison Service Instruction

SBC - NOMS Specification, Benchmarking and Costing programme

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## Background

Imprisonment is one of the most dominant forms of punishment in use in western societies today, and while many other forms of sentence are also available, the sanctioning of custody is more popular than ever, with the prison population in England and Wales being subject to a steady increase over the past two decades and now sitting at 84967 (Howard League, 2016a). The fact that prison as an institution is designed to punish and constrain (Crewe, 2011), and is largely hidden from the public eye means that it presents somewhat of an enigma to the majority of those who have not been confined within its walls (Sparks et al, 1996). In order to unravel some of the mystery surrounding the realities of prison life, in recent decades there has been a surge in prison research, with significant attention being given to gaining an understanding about what it is really like to be in prison (see, for example Sykes, 1958, Cohen and Taylor, 1972), and how prisoners respond and adapt to the nature of the penal environment (see, for example Crewe, 2009, Schmidt, 2016).

When considering prisoners' responses to the prison environment, researchers have been divided about whether they are derived from the unique structure of the environment itself (see, for example Sykes, 1958, Goffman, 1961), or if they are in fact moulded by an individual's 'imported' characteristics and perceptions (see, for example Irwin, 1970). The former position is underpinned by what is known as the deprivation model, and the latter the importation model, with the tensions between the two being referred to as the importation versus deprivation debate (Dhami et al, 2007). The dichotomy between the two models is pertinent throughout this research, as, although contemporary researchers contend that the realities of prisoners are in fact an outcome of a combination of the models (see, for example Crewe, 2009), it remains unclear how the "individual biography intertwines with the structural environment of the prison" (Schmidt, 2016: 65).

While the majority of existing prison research has been focused upon the type of prisoner that prison was initially designed for and continues primarily to contain; the young able bodied lower class male (Cheney, 2005), increasing attention is now being given to individuals who do not fit this mould, including female, older and foreign national prisoners (see, for example, Scott and Codd, 2010, Philips, 2012, Moore and Scraton, 2013, Mann, 2016). As a result of this, it has become apparent that these prisoners experience prison differently and often feel the pains of imprisonment more intensely than their peers, despite being theoretically protected by the Equality Act 2010 which places a duty upon public bodies such as the Prison Service to exercise their functions in a way that is designed to reduce inequality. Although the experiences of certain minority groups in prison have already been examined at length, this research is important as in-depth consideration is yet to be given to the lived realities of d/Deaf<sup>1</sup> and hard of hearing (HoH) people in prisons throughout England and Wales. Whilst previous research has considered the experiences of these groups, research about HoH/d/Deaf prisoners has been limited because it is largely anecdotal, small scale, and often based upon either American prisons or accounts of ex-prisoners (O'Rourke and Reed, 2007). This research aims to address this research gap by offering a more detailed and rigorous study of the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people in prison than what is currently available.

Despite being limited, there is a consensus in previous literature that d/Deaf<sup>2</sup> prisoners suffer disproportionately as a direct result of their d/Deafness, with communication barriers, resource issues and a lack of d/Deaf awareness being cited as key causes of this (Fisken, 1994, Royal National Institute for the Deaf, 1995, Ackerman, 1998, Gerrard, 2001, Izycky and Gahir, 2007, McCulloch, 2010, 2012). Research carried out in England and Wales suggests that the Prison Service is ill-equipped to meet the needs of d/Deaf prisoners, with McCulloch (2010, 2012) arguing that their treatment equates to a violation of the Equality Act 2010. This claim is explored further during Chapters

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<sup>1</sup> The capital D here is adopted, and will be used throughout to refer to members of the sign language using cultural minority group, following a convention proposed by James Woodward (1972), and developed by Carol Padden (1980).

<sup>2</sup> HoH is not alluded to here as existing sources make little reference to these prisoners.

Six, Seven and Eight of this thesis, and is important as the Equality Act 2010 legally classifies d/Deaf people as disabled (irrespective of their own views), which means that public bodies such as the Prison Service are legally obligated to make changes to their services to avoid discriminating against them. Consequentially, if the Prison Service fails to meet the duty imposed by this legislation, it is in fact acting illegally<sup>3</sup>. Although existing literature does not draw connections between the experiences of d/Deaf people inside and outside of prison, a number of the issues it raises have also been shown to affect d/Deaf people more broadly (Ladd, 1991, Moore and Levitan, 1998, Lane et al, 2001, Leigh, 2009). This suggests therefore that the experiences of d/Deaf people in prison are influenced by issues and inequalities that are present in wider society, as will be considered throughout the duration of the thesis.

A central reason for the lack of availability of relevant empirical research about d/Deaf prisoners in England and Wales is the fact that there is currently no official Home Office policy in place to make it obligatory for establishments to keep records of their numbers (Rickford and Edgar, 2005, McCulloch, 2012). Without this it is difficult to locate potential research participants, to carry out any larger scale research, or to even know how many d/Deaf people are currently serving custodial sentences in prisons throughout England and Wales. This ambiguity regarding statistics is highlighted by the fact that different sources provide differing estimations for the numbers of these prisoners. Although an official report published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) (2009: 17) estimated that there were around 400 prisoners with some form of hearing loss in England and Wales, other sources suggest that the d/Deaf prisoner population may be much higher (see, for example NOMS, 2014a)<sup>4</sup>.

Existing estimates of d/Deaf prisoner numbers are problematic because they fail to recognise the complexity of d/Deafness or to differentiate between numbers of prisoners who are mildly HoH, severely deaf or culturally and linguistically Deaf. This is also a limitation of existing literature relating to d/Deaf prisoners, with even the most

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<sup>3</sup> Further detail about the Equality Act 2010 is provided in Chapter Four of this thesis.

<sup>4</sup> I refer to such issues further in Chapter Five when considering my journey to gaining access to my interviewees, and again in Chapter Nine when considering the policy implications of this research.

recent and comprehensive sources (McCulloch, 2010, 2012) grouping the experiences of deaf and Deaf prisoners together. Such oversimplification is arguably a consequence of broader societal perceptions about d/Deafness, with many hearing people viewing those who are d/Deaf as simply having the misfortune to live in a world without sound (Lane et al, 1996, Ladd, 2003). However, d/Deafness is in fact much more complex than this; the extent to which a person is deaf varies significantly from those whose hearing is only slightly impaired, to individuals who are severely deaf, and finally to those who are Deaf. Although there are different ways of categorising these levels of d/Deafness, for the purposes of this research HoH refers to individuals with mild to moderate hearing loss who may have difficulty following speech without the use of hearing aids. Severely deaf includes those who have little or no functional hearing, who usually need to rely on lip reading even with hearing aids, and Deaf refers to individuals who identify as being culturally and linguistically Deaf, and commonly use British Sign Language (BSL) to communicate.

The lives of those who are d/Deaf have been studied at length within the academic discipline of Deaf Studies, where individuals who identify as being deaf (but not Deaf) are commonly shown to view their deafness negatively (Higgins, 1980), and where Deaf people are seen as being part of a distinct group known as the Deaf Community which is comprised of people who are proud to be Deaf and share the same language, values and life experiences (Baker and Padden, 1978, Higgins, 2002). Therefore, by grouping the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners together existing literature fails to sufficiently consider whether the experiences of deaf prisoners differ from those who are Deaf, and whether their imported<sup>6</sup> characteristics alter the trajectory of their prison experience. This research aims to address this limitation by acknowledging the complexity of d/Deafness, and exploring how it impacts upon the way an individual

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<sup>5</sup> A hearing aid is a small battery operated electronic device worn by individuals with hearing loss, which amplifies certain types of sound. There are numerous types of hearing aids including those that sit behind the ear, those that fit in the shell of the ear, and those that sit inside the ear canal (National Health Service, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> The term 'imported' is used here and throughout in reference to the importation model, as will become clear during the remainder of the thesis.

experiences prison. In doing this, key similarities and differences between the experiences of individuals who are deaf and those who are Deaf are noted throughout.

## **Thesis and Research Questions**

This thesis carries out a critical interrogation of the lived realities of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners in England and Wales by fusing together the field of Deaf Studies with classic and contemporary prison studies, and as such aims to answer one overall research question, which is 'What are the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf people who find themselves in penal establishments throughout England and Wales?'. In order to answer this broad question, this thesis addresses the following component questions:

- Do HoH/d/Deaf prisoners experience prison in the same way as other prisoners?
- How do staff members respond to prisoners who are HoH/d/Deaf?
- Does an individual's d/Deafness affect their experience of prison?
- How does prison impact upon the identity of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?
- Is the Prison Service able to meet the needs of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?
- Are there any overlaps between the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people inside and outside of prison?

In the interest of addressing these questions, 27 semi-structured interviews were carried out across seven male prisons throughout England, 10 of which were with staff members who had worked with d/Deaf prisoners, seven with profoundly Deaf prisoners, five with severely deaf prisoners and five with HoH prisoners. In addition to this, a further group interview was carried out with four profoundly Deaf prisoners at HMP Bowdon<sup>7</sup>, and observations were made and recorded in a fieldwork journal at all of the establishments entered.

By answering the overarching research question and smaller component questions, this thesis shows that the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners are aligned with those

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<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of anonymity all prison names have been given pseudonyms, as is discussed further in Chapter Five.

of other prisoners on some levels. However, it also demonstrates that the regimented nature of the prison environment combined with a lack of resources and awareness means that being 'different' in prison often means being deficient. While this could apply to many different subsections of prison populations, it is argued that the difference of d/Deafness is unique because sound rules in prison. Deafness, it is shown, is not merely a lack of hearing, and on the contrary there are different levels and layers of d/Deafness. Consequently, how a d/Deaf person experiences prison depends strongly on the way in which they identify with their d/Deafness and the way their d/Deafness is viewed by the prison.

### **Blurring the Lines between Prison Studies and Deaf Studies**

In order to address the questions outlined above, this thesis forges together the distinct fields of Deaf Studies and prison studies in a bid to see what happens when the two worlds collide, and a d/Deaf person enters prison. The most prominent theoretical ideas used throughout are Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment framework, Goffman's (1961) total institution paradigm, ideas from the academic discipline of Deaf Studies, and finally, the respective deprivation and importation models.

Gresham Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment framework as outlined in his study of a maximum security prison titled *The Society of Captives*, is used throughout the thesis, as despite being over half a century old it remains at the core of the academic understanding about the lived realities of prisoners (Simon, 2000, Reisig, 2001, Liebling and Maruna, 2005, Harvey, 2012, Crewe, 2016). Sykes (1958) found that there were five intrinsic pains of imprisonment that defined the prison experience and structured prison culture and life, and believed that although prison was no longer intended to be physically painful, the psychological effect that these pains could have upon prisoners was just as damaging. While the applicability of Sykes' framework has been considered with regards to other prison groups (see, for example Jones, 2007), it's relevance to the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners remains unknown. By applying this framework to this particular subsection of prisoners, this research is able to examine whether these general pains are relevant to them, and to explore whether their

experiences are in fact being structured by the nature of the prison environment in the way Sykes expected. As will be seen in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, while there are indeed certain overlaps with the experiences of other prisoners, HoH/d/Deaf prisoners experience the pains of imprisonment both differently and more intensely than their hearing peers as a result of both their imported characteristics and the fact that the Prison Service is unable to adapt to such profound difference.

Goffman's (1961) total institution framework as outlined in his classic text *Asylums*, which looks at the structure of totalising environments such as secure mental institutes, boarding schools and prisons (amongst others), is also used throughout. Goffman's framework is apt, firstly because of the connections it makes with Sykes' (1958) work, and the extent to which it uses his pains of imprisonment framework to understand environments like prison (see Goffman, 1961: footnote 11 for clarification). Secondly, like Sykes, it continues to be central for scholars attempting to understand the prison world (Harvey, 2012). Throughout *Asylums* Goffman (1961) focuses upon ideas relating to similarity, and argues that in total institutions inmates (in this context, prisoners) are expected to behave in a certain way, to conform to a certain role and exist as part of a "batch" (ibid: 17). He also maintains that those who are confined inside such an institution commonly adapt in a number of standardised ways, and take on their designated role to such an extent that it can profoundly alter their identities<sup>8</sup>. These ideas are used in Chapter Six, where the applicability of Goffman's framework to the establishments entered is examined. After establishing that they are indeed designed for a certain type of person who is expected to be able to automatically adjust to the regime, consideration is then given in Chapters Seven and Eight as to what happens when individuals (in this case those who are HoH/d/Deaf) are unable to adjust to standardised living.

In order to fully consider the complexity of d/Deafness and to fully explore to the role of imported identity in prison, this thesis engages deeply with Deaf Studies literature,

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<sup>8</sup> It must be acknowledged that after initially positing that those confined within total institutions are expected to adhere to "batch living" (Goffman, 1961: 17) and to comply with pre-prescribed roles, later in *Asylums* Goffman (1961) goes on to discuss some of the complexities associated with this. These nuances will be considered further in Chapter Two.

particularly that which is focused upon the distinctions between deafness and Deafness. Deaf Studies literature is also used as a lens through which to consider the overlaps between the lived realities of d/Deaf people inside and outside of prison, and to explore whether the issues that they commonly face in the hearing world also impact upon their experience of custody. Engagement with Deaf Studies literature is central to the thesis, and helps to show that d/Deafness is a lot more than a mere inability to hear. On the contrary, as will be shown in Chapters Seven and Eight, the way an individual identifies with their d/Deafness has a significant impact upon the way they experience prison.

The final theoretical tools used throughout the thesis are the respective importation and deprivation models which were introduced earlier in this chapter. While Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) both put forward frameworks that sit in line with the deprivation model by arguing that the experiences of prisoners are largely structured by the nature of the environment (Crewe, 2016), other sources counter this and pose that it is in fact the imported characteristics of individual prisoners that mould their lived realities (Irwin and Cressey, 1962, Irwin, 1970, Jacobs, 1977). Although recent sources have concluded that both models are relevant to the experiences of prisoners (see, for example Crewe, 2009), their applicability has yet to be considered with relation to the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners specifically. With this in mind, this thesis examines the relevance of the models in this particular context, and in doing this considers how the imported characteristics of HoH/d/Deaf people intertwine with the structural qualities of imprisonment. It is demonstrated throughout that the two models are indeed applicable, and that their interrelationship is complex. Such complexity is shown in Chapters Seven and Eight where findings are presented which suggest that the nature of the prison environment itself often dictates against the types of characteristics imported by HoH/deaf, and particularly Deaf prisoners.

### **The Importance of this Research, and Statement of Originality**

This research is important because it provides a much more in-depth and comprehensive understanding about the lived realities of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners in

England and Wales than what is currently available, and examines the differences between the experiences of those who are deaf and those who are Deaf. As will become apparent throughout this thesis, such consideration is vital because HoH/deaf and particularly Deaf prisoners often experience severe difficulties in prison as a result of the Prison Service's inability to accommodate such difference, or meet their unique needs. Consequently, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight, Deaf prisoners are often forced to exist in almost complete isolation, both from the regime and other prisoners, which it is argued, undoubtedly equates to a violation of their legal rights under the Equality Act 2010. This research gives these individuals the opportunity to provide an insight into their lives in prison in a way that is not usually possible due to the communication difficulties they face. It draws attention to the significant issues currently being faced by d/Deaf people in prison, and in Chapter Nine provides a number of recommendations for the Prison Service which could help to combat these issues going forwards.

This thesis makes an original contribution to existing research for a myriad of reasons, the first being that it is the most comprehensive qualitative study yet to be carried out about HoH/d/Deaf prisoners in England and Wales, and provides a level of insight that is not currently available. Particularly important here is the acknowledgement of the complexity of d/Deafness, and the recognition of the differences between the experiences of those who are deaf and those who are Deaf. Secondly, it is the first British study to include HoH, deaf and Deaf interviewees in its sample, and excluding small-scale unpublished undergraduate dissertations, is the only empirical research to be carried out using face to face semi-structured interviews with Deaf prisoners in England and Wales<sup>9</sup>. Finally, the fact that this research fuses together the fields of Deaf Studies and prison studies is also unique, as it intertwines classic and contemporary prison research with Deaf Studies literature in a way that has not been done before, and considers d/Deafness in prison on a cultural as well as audiological basis.

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<sup>9</sup> Prior to this the most comprehensive study was carried out by McCulloch (2010, 2012), who used letters to communicate with the sample rather than interviews.

## Chapter Outlines

Following this introductory chapter, the thesis is set out in eight further chapters.

Chapter Two provides an overview of relevant existing literature relating to the prison as an establishment and the experiences of those confined within its walls. While the critique of the prison is both widespread and multifaceted (Cavadino et al, 2013), for the purposes of this chapter particular emphasis is placed upon the lived realities of prisoners. Within this, consideration is given to the pain that prison causes them, the extent to which it affects their identities and the way they respond and adapt to the prison environment, with Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment framework and Goffman's (1961) connected work in *Asylums* both being key. Such exploration is essential in terms of answering the component question 'Do HoH/d/Deaf prisoners experience prison in the same way as other prisoners?', as it provides a base line understanding of some common prisoner experiences, which then allows for comparisons to be drawn with the lives of the HoH/d/Deaf prisoners. The current economic and political climate within which the prison service is situated is also examined, and the influence that such a climate is having upon the prison regime and the lives of prisoners is explored.

Chapter Three focuses on the lived realities of d/Deaf people, and engages with relevant Deaf Studies and Disability Studies literature. During this chapter, consideration is given to the way that d/Deaf individuals identify with their d/Deafness and the complexities of such identification, with distinctions being made between the perceptions and life experiences of those who are deaf and those who are Deaf. This provides an indication of some of the characteristics and perceptions that d/Deaf prisoners may import into the prison environment, which is important for addressing the component question 'Does an individual's d/Deafness affect their experience of prison?'. The position of the Deaf world within wider society is then discussed, with particular attention being given to the extent to which the norms and principles of the Deaf world are misaligned with those of the hearing world. Although many Deaf people wish to live autonomously from the hearing world, they inevitably exist inside

it, and because the power differentials between the two worlds are so unbalanced their principles often become obscured by those of the dominant hearing agenda<sup>10</sup> (Lane et al, 1996). This is key to the thesis as it becomes apparent that despite being closed off from the general public, the prison as an institution remains part of the hearing world. Therefore, in order to understand the position of HoH/d/Deaf (particularly Deaf) people in the prison world, and to address the component question 'Are there any overlaps between the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people inside and outside of prison?' an understanding is needed first of all about their position within the hearing world more broadly.

Chapter Four brings together the available literature about d/Deaf prisoners in order to provide an outline of what is currently known about the experiences of these prisoners. Because the availability of relevant UK based academic research is limited, reference is also made to American studies, charity-based documents and unpublished dissertations as these also help to shed light on the topic. The chapter considers issues such as communication, access to resources and relationships, as these subjects arise most often in existing literature. Reference is also made to the Equality Act 2010 as the influence of such legislation has been a topic of consideration within a number of the available sources (see, for example McCulloch, 2012). This chapter is important as although much of the available literature is anecdotal and small scale, it has shaped the research and provided an indication of the position of d/Deaf prisoners within the prison world, with the findings presented throughout being relevant to all six component questions.

Chapter Five provides an account of the research design and methodology adopted in the research, exploring the finer details of the research process including information about the research sample, the format of the interview schedules, the method of recording and analysing the data (including the use of interpreters) and ethical considerations. As well as engaging extensively with existing prison literature

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<sup>10</sup> The term 'hearing agenda' refers to individuals who exist as part of the hearing world and have little conception of the notion of cultural Deafness. This will be expanded upon in Chapter Two.

throughout, I also provide a reflexive account of my pathway through the research, which was fraught with an array of complicated obstacles. I discuss gaining access, issues with subjectivity, difficulties with culture, language and communication, and the impact that the research process had upon me as an individual; using extracts from my fieldwork journals to illustrate these points. This chapter is important because it provides an explanation as to how I went about addressing the overarching research question and smaller component questions, and outlines comprehensively what became an extremely complex journey.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight present the findings from the data collected, with each chapter having a distinct purpose in the thesis, and addressing the component questions in a different way. Chapter Six looks at the nature of the prison environments included in the research, considers the relevance of the literature discussed in Chapter Two to the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, and examines the applicability of the frameworks put forward by Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) respectively. Such findings provide answers to the component question 'Do HoH/d/Deaf prisoners experience prison in the same way as other prisoners?' and show that prisoners are prisoners, irrespective of whether they are HoH/d/Deaf or not. I begin the chapter by setting the scene and outline some of the key features of the prisons I entered, including, most importantly the role of sound<sup>11</sup>. Goffman's (1961) total institution framework is then used to show that prison is designed for similarity, with the notion of "batch living" (Ibid: 22), the necessity to comply with designated roles, and the presence of a divide between staff members and prisoners all being important parts of prison life. From this, findings are presented which highlight the applicability of the deprivation model, and show that the experiences of the d/Deaf prisoners included in the research were to some extent being moulded by the nature of the environment, with Sykes' (1961) pains of imprisonment framework, as well as other more contemporary research, being used to highlight this.

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<sup>11</sup> The use of 'I' here is purposeful, as much of this section of the chapter is reflexive, and incorporates observations made in my fieldwork journals.

In the latter part of the chapter the role of difference in prison is introduced, and the way that the Prison Service responds to prisoners who do not necessarily fit the mould of 'normal' or 'usual' in prison is explored. Findings are presented which show that in an environment designed for similarity, a lack of awareness, resources and time means that appropriate adjustments are not consistently made to allow such individuals to adapt to prison life. The chapter draws to a close by beginning to 'sound out d/Deafness', and shows that staff members generally view deafness as a stigmatizing feature, and have little conception of Deafness. The purpose of this is to set the scene for Chapters Seven and Eight, where consideration is given to the impact that such perceptions have upon the lived realities of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, given the extent of the staff-prisoner power imbalance present in penal establishments<sup>12</sup>. The findings explored in the latter part of the chapter begin to address the component questions 'How do staff members respond to prisoners who are HoH/d/Deaf?' and 'Is the Prison Service able to meet the needs of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?'

Chapters Seven and Eight examine the effect that the imported pre-prison characteristics of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners have on their penal reality, and present findings which highlight the distinctiveness of their lived realities. Rather than exploring the experiences of HoH/deaf and Deaf prisoners together, a decision was made to separate them; Chapter Seven considers the lived realities of the deaf/HoH prisoners included in the sample, and Chapter Eight looks at those who are profoundly Deaf. By doing this, this thesis is able to look at d/Deafness on a continuum and to consider whether the experiences of deaf prisoners differ from those who are Deaf, thus exploring the component question 'Does an individual's d/Deafness affect their experience of prison?'

In Chapter Seven findings are presented which show that despite overlapping with the experiences of other prisoners on some levels, the lived realities of HoH/deaf prisoners also differ in a variety of ways. The chapter opens by considering the circumstances in

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<sup>12</sup> When discussing the power imbalance that exists between staff members and prisoners, this thesis is referring simply to the broad power differentials that exist between the two groups due to the very nature of their roles (Crewe, 2009), as to be discussed further in coming chapters.

which these prisoners lost their hearing and the way they view their deafness, and draws links with Chapter Three in order to do so. After demonstrating that all of deaf/HoH interviewees viewed their deafness negatively and felt stigmatized by it, such perceptions are then shown to have a drastic impact on their behaviour in prison, with individuals striving to be seen as 'normal' and attempting to combat such stigma by behaving as though they could hear, either through methods of concealment or via the use of hearing aids.

Although these findings highlight the applicability of the importation model to the experiences of HoH/deaf prisoners, data is then presented which shows that their attempts to behave as such are thwarted by an inability to adapt on both an individual and institutional level; institutionally because the prisons were for the most part failing to provide adequate hearing aids, and individually because interviewees were unable to behave as hearing or to conceal their deafness in an environment like prison, where sound is so important. The role of sound is key to this chapter, where it is demonstrated that establishments are reliant on sound in order to run, and that prisoners require access to it in order to adhere to the conditions of their role. Findings are presented which show that the deaf/HoH interviewees were often existing largely separately from the "batch" (Goffman, 1961: 17) of other prisoners, and had difficulty becoming fully integrated in to the penal regime without access to sound. At this point the frameworks of Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) are critiqued for paying insufficient attention to the complexity of the prisoner experience. In order to substantiate this critique, findings are presented which show that deaf/HoH prisoners experience a number of the pains of imprisonment both differently and more intensely than inferred by Sykes (1958), thus suggesting that even if an environment is indeed designed for similarity, this does not mean that all those confined within it possess the faculties necessary to behave in such a way. It is then posed that the lives of deaf/HoH prisoners are often instead derived largely from the fact that the structure of the penal environment is not designed to accommodate an imported characteristic such as deafness, and therefore become characterised by isolation and separation, an

argument which works to answer the component question 'Is the Prison Service able to meet the needs of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?'

In Chapter Eight the lived realities of the Deaf prisoners interviewed are examined, with consideration being given to how this type of audiological *and* cultural difference impacts upon the experiences of these prisoners, both in terms of how establishments adapt to this type of difference, and how the prisoners themselves respond to the prison environment. As in Chapter Seven, the chapter begins by exploring the manner in which these prisoners identify with their Deafness, and show that they all viewed it positively, preferred to communicate in BSL and to associate with other Deaf people. Again, it is shown that the way that these prisoners identified with their Deafness had a profound impact upon the way they behaved in prison, with all of the Deaf prisoners attempting to maintain their cultural and linguistic Deaf identity. While this goes some way to addressing the component question 'How does prison impact upon the identity of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?', findings are then presented which reveal that there is little room for such profound difference in an environment like prison, where in addition to sound, verbal communication is also key. Throughout this chapter it becomes clear that prison is deafening for Deaf prisoners as although they often view their Deafness positively, the fact that there was little conception of this institutionally means that their imported Deaf characteristics are often overridden by the structure of the environment due to the extent of the power imbalance in prison. An array of reasons for this are outlined, including being the only Deaf person at an establishment, having little or no access to necessary resources, and there being a general lack of Deaf awareness on the part of staff members, with this final point linking back to the component question 'How do staff members respond to prisoners who are HoH/d/Deaf?'

From this, a picture is painted of a group of individuals who are subordinated, isolated, frustrated and confused, and forced to exist largely separately from the prison regime. The Prison Service is shown to be ill-equipped to manage the needs of Deaf people in prison, with a myriad of reasons being outlined to show why this then results in them

suffering disproportionately whilst in custody. As well as experiencing a number of the same issues as the deaf/HoH prisoners due to their lack of ability to hear, this chapter shows that their cultural difference intensifies the pains of imprisonment further and often equates to an experience which undoubtedly violates the stipulations of the Equality Act 2010, thus addressing the component question 'Is the Prison Service able to meet the needs of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?'. Throughout both Chapters Seven and Eight links are drawn between being d/Deaf both inside and outside of prison, with it being shown that the problems faced by d/Deaf prisoners are not necessarily unique to the prison environment, but rather exacerbated by its nature. This is important as it works to address the question 'Are there any overlaps between the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people inside and outside of prison?'.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis and draws together the arguments made throughout, whilst demonstrating how this research has made an original and significant contribution to existing literature. After exploring the theoretical implications of the research, a number of practical recommendations are put forward for the Prison Service, with the aim of improving the lives of d/Deaf prisoners. Finally, the limitations of the research are acknowledged, and a selection of suggestions for further research are provided.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE EXPERIENCES OF PRISONERS – A LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides an outline of the relevant literature relating to the experiences of prisoners, with particular emphasis being placed on the classic works of Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961), as well as other more contemporary prison research (for example, Crewe, 2009). Consideration is given firstly to the pain that prison causes prisoners, with Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment framework being used as the basis for discussion, and findings from newer studies being referred to in order to provide current context. By doing this, the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners can be compared and contrasted with the experiences of other prisoners in coming chapters. After finding that Sykes' (1958) ideas do indeed remain relevant to the experiences of prisoners, consideration is then given to the ways in which the pains of imprisonment have evolved since his writings, with the increasingly important role played by the concept of risk being discussed, as well as the impact of recent political and economic changes.

Ideas presented by Goffman (1961) in his classic text *Asylums* are also explored during this chapter, where consideration is given to some of the features that he deemed as being key to total institutions. This is important as Goffman's framework is used throughout this thesis to show that while an environment such as prison may be designed for a certain way of living, this does not mean that all those confined within it (in this instance, d/Deaf prisoners) are able to behave as would be expected. From this, the final section of this chapter explores literature relating to the way that prisoners respond and adapt to prison life, as in the context of this research it is necessary to consider the way that HoH/d/Deaf prisoners respond to the penal environment.

The relevant literature is explored with an awareness of the deprivation versus importation debate, as sources have been divided as to whether an individual's experience of prison is contingent upon the structure of the penal environment itself, or is instead shaped by their imported characteristics (or indeed, is a combination of

the two) (Thomas, 1977, Hochstetler and DeLisi, 2005, Dhimi et al, 2007, Schmidt, 2016). Much of the literature discussed in this chapter is underpinned by the deprivation model and specifies that the experiences of prisoners are generated by the environment they are in. However, the importation model which is often used to critique the validity of the deprivation approach is also introduced briefly, in order to prepare the reader for a fuller discussion in Chapter Three where some of the experiences and characteristics that a HoH/d/Deaf person may 'import' to prison that could subsequently influence their penal experience are explored.

### **Prison is a Painful Place**

Consideration is given firstly to the idea that prison is structured by the pain it causes prisoners, with Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment framework being used as the foundation for discussion, and findings from other more recent studies being used to provide current context. This is important as in the context of this research it is necessary to consider whether the lived realities of Hoh/d/Deaf prisoners align with those of other prisoners, and to explore whether the pains of imprisonment as outlined by Sykes (1958) structure their lives in the way that he anticipated.

Although official statements relating to the Prison Service may create a positive impression of it as a method of crime control, and construct a picture of prison as a well ordered, humane, useful and protective institution (Ministry of Justice, 2016a), findings from existing literature lie in stark contrast to this. Central to the widespread critique of prison is the fact that it has been found to have a negative impact on the vast majority of individuals who are incarcerated within its walls (see, for example Matheisen, 1990, Sim, 2009, Scott and Codd, 2010), with Sim (2010: vii) describing incarceration as being “Psychologically corrosive, culturally toxic, institutionally mendacious [and] materially desperate” for prisoners<sup>13</sup>. The extent of the damage that prison can cause is highlighted by Singleton et al (1998: 23) who found that over 90% of prisoners in England and Wales had at least one mental health condition. This is

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<sup>13</sup> However, it is important to acknowledge that for some prisoners, life in prison may actually be less painful than their pre-prison existence (See Drake, 2012:83-84)

furthered by Hawton et al (2013: 1) who reported that male prisoners are five times more likely to commit suicide than non-prisoners, as well as a statistical bulletin from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) (2016b: 6) which showed that in the 12 months preceding March 2016 there had been 34,586 incidents of self-harm in prisons in England and Wales. Although the pervasiveness of mental health issues in prison can, to some extent, be attributed to the fact that prisoners are more likely to have mental health problems than other members of society, irrespective of whether they are in prison or not<sup>14</sup> (The Offender Health Research Network, 2010), it has been argued that this alone does not act as a sufficient explanation for the issue. On the contrary, research has indicated that life in prison has the propensity to create new mental health issues and exacerbate existing ones (Morris and Morris, 1963, Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Singleton et al, 1998, Scott and Codd, 2010, Liebling and Ludlow, 2016, Mills and Kendall, 2016), with Liebling (1992, 2001a) finding that those who commit suicide in prison are less likely to have a history of mental health problems than those who commit suicide in wider society.

The focus on the pain that is caused by imprisonment arguably began with Sykes (1958) who, as stated in Chapter One, outlined five intrinsic pains of imprisonment which, to him, defined the prison experience and structured prison culture and life. According to Sykes (1958) the most immediately obvious pain to arise out of imprisonment was its intended outcome; the deprivation of liberty, which he argues is problematic because it restricts the movements of each individual, and cuts them off from wider society. He argues that the severing of the connection between a prisoner and the outside world can be perceived as a “deliberate moral rejection of the criminal by free society”, and can subsequently act as a daily reminder that it has been necessary to set them apart from 'decent' people (Sykes, 1958: 65). The impact that this can have has been highlighted more recently by Coyle (1994: 27) who argues that “losing one's liberty is one of the most traumatic experiences any individual is likely ever to undergo”, and Drake (2012: 86) who states that “Many of the ancillary

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<sup>14</sup> This is highlighted by the MOJ (2013) which showed that 21% of male prisoners and 46% of female prisoners attempted suicide at some point in their lives, in comparison to approximately 6% of the general population.

consequences of the experience of imprisonment are directly associated with the loss of liberty”.

Since Sykes, it has been found that being deprived of their freedom can be particularly stressful for prisoners, given that it separates them from their significant others and family (Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Cooke et al, 1990, Coyle, 1994, Jewkes, 2002, Codd, 2008). Such restrictions can lead to a lack of stable emotional support, which can be damaging to prisoners as it can cause them to be “less able to feel for themselves or others” (Johnson and Toch, 1982: 19), as shown below:

I feel very diminished as a human being at the moment... Over the years I've become emotionally stunted... I do have emotions it's a very narrow range, I think... You can literally go for months without touching a human being, and it's just something you get used to (Prisoner, cited in Jewkes, 2012a: 41)

This separation can also lead to what Gibbs (1982: 102) describes as a “crisis of abandonment”, as without the support of their families, prisoners may become fearful that their relationships have been irrevocably lost. Such fears have been said to trigger aggressive and violent behaviour, as well as suicidal tendencies (Scott and Codd, 2010), as highlighted by one prisoner (cited in Liebling, 2001a: 37) who states that:

[When I attempted suicide] I was thinking all about the family and what was going on all around me, and with me not having any letters for a week or two, I just thought, well there's no point in me being here, no-one cares about me.

Salmon (2007: 14) showed that such fears are not always unfounded, and in evidence presented to the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee indicated that prison is the catalyst for the breakdown of the relationships of many of those in custody. As part of this evidence she stated that 45% of prisoners lose contact with their families during custody, and 22% of married prisoners separate from or divorcing their partner whilst in prison.

Another of Sykes' (1958; 70) pains associated with being separated from wider society relates to what he calls the "deprivation of heterosexual relations". As well as being frustrating in terms of a lack of sexual relations (see also, Cohen and Taylor, 1972), Sykes argues that this deprivation can also be damaging to a prisoner's perceptions of self, and their feelings of masculinity. The justification for this argument relies upon the notion that an individual's identity is the outcome of both internal and external factors (Mead, 1934, Blumer, 1969)<sup>15</sup>, as Sykes poses that as a consequence of being unable to mix with women during their time in custody, the self-image of prisoners can become fractured (see also, Jewkes, 2002). However, this pain of imprisonment has since been criticised for being applicable only to prisoners who are heterosexual and male, with Sykes' failure here to consider any diversity within the prison population raising doubts as to whether his ideas can in fact be applied to the experiences of all prisoners (Crewe, 2006, Crewe 2016), something which is important in this thesis and will be discussed further in coming chapters.

Sykes (1958: 77) then argues that the pain that individuals feel as a result of separation from family and friends is exacerbated by the fact that they are forced into "prolonged intimacy" with other criminals who often have extensive criminal records and impulsive or violent tendencies. According to Sykes (1958: 76), this enforced closeness with unsavoury characters can then contribute to what he calls the "deprivation of security", and can cause individuals to experience feelings of insecurity, and fears about their safety. While the extent of such feelings is dependent on a number of factors (as to be discussed later in the chapter), Sykes' argument has been substantiated by a number of more contemporary researchers who believe that the volatility of the

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<sup>15</sup> This is contingent with the theory of Symbolic Interactionism, for which Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969) were the founders. Symbolic Interactionism is described by Prus (1996: 19) as being "the study of the ways in which people make sense of their life situations and the ways in which they go about their daily activities in conjunction with others, on a day to day basis". As a theory it rests upon the idea that that human behaviour is a product of the ways in which people interpret their world; as people move through their everyday lives, they continually engage in a process of interpretation of the objects and people that they come across, and their interpretations provide the basis for their behaviour in any particular context (Foster, 1989). This is important here as these ideas influenced the work of Goffman (1959, 1961, 1963) who is central to this thesis.

environment means that most prisoners are likely to feel isolated, suspicious and vulnerable to some extent during their sentence (Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Gibbs, 1982, Jones and Schmid, 2000, Medicott, 2001, Jewkes, 2002, Crewe, 2012).

Furthermore, the fact that many prisoners are potentially dangerous, particularly when placed within a criminogenic environment (Killias et al, 2010), means that the insecurities of some individuals will in fact be realised and they will become a victim of assault, abuse or exploitation whilst in custody (Scruton et al, 1991, James, 2003, Durcan, 2008, Scott and Codd, 2010). The dangerous nature of the prison environment was recently highlighted by Inquest (2016) which reported there to have been eight homicides in prisons in England and Wales during 2015; the highest number since they began collating figures in 1990. Although murders in custody may be unusual, violence is much more common place (Scruton et al, 1991, Edgar et al, 2014), with 18874 assaults, and 4568 assaults against prison staff being recorded throughout prisons in England and Wales in 2015 (Bowcott, 2016: Unpaginated). This is important as it has been suggested that the deprivation of security may be exacerbated for those who are victimised in prison, which can in turn create longer term issues for prisoners who may consequently go on to withdraw from prison life (Bowker, 1982, Scott and Codd, 2010, Edgar et al, 2014). As well as inhibiting positive reform and exacerbating isolation, such withdrawal can also have official repercussions, in that if an individual was to miss rehabilitative courses, they may then violate the terms of their sentence plan, thus affecting their eligibility for parole and potentially lengthening their custodial sentence (Bowker, 1982).

Another of Sykes' (1958: 67) pains of imprisonment relates to what is known as the "deprivation of goods and services". He argues that despite having their "basic material needs" met (Ibid: 68), the fact that their access to other desired items such as alcohol, personal belongings and cigarettes is restricted is also problematic given that "in modern Western culture, material possessions are so large a part of the individual's conception of himself that to be stripped of them is to be attacked at the deepest layers of personality" (Ibid: 69). However, it is important to acknowledge that this pain of imprisonment has since evolved and is now less restrictive, given that, in the words

of Crewe (2009: 100) there have been “long term improvements in material decency across the prison system”. He attributes greater quality of food, cleanliness and comfort to these improvements, as well as the introduction of items such as phones and televisions (Ibid). In spite of such improvements, this pain of imprisonment continues to remain relevant as the availability of goods and services are still heavily regulated in prison, with prisoners continuing to be stripped of their clothes and provided with prison owned substitutes upon entry to an establishment for example (Coyle, 1994).

A further key pain associated with imprisonment relates to the extent that it disempowers its detainees and deprives them of their autonomy. Although the deprivation of autonomy was again initially discussed by Sykes (1958), it has since been widely acknowledged that the sheer amount of orders and rules that prisoners are required to follow profoundly affects their experiences of prison, with even the smallest details of their behaviour being regulated by officers and dictated by the penal regime (Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Cooke et al, 1990, Coyle, 1994, James, 2003, Irwin and Owen, 2005). Subsequently, it has been found that such levels of control can cause individuals to feel hostile, frustrated, and disillusioned, as shown in the following quote:

It’s hellish... I feel pressurized. Like I’m very limited in the things I can do, and like I’m, how could I say, robotised, yeah, like they’re trying to control me with a joy pad or something, that’s how it feels... [It] would send some people crazy (Prisoner, cited in Liebling et al, 2011: 20).

By enforcing such a level of control over prisoners, Sykes (1958: 76) argues that prison re-imposes “the subservience of youth” and disrupts what is taken as a given for adults in contemporary society: the freedom of action and choice (see also, Goffman, 1961). This reversion to a child-like state is one that is unnatural for an adult, and can subsequently provoke what is described by Goffman (1961: 43) as feelings of terror about being “radically demoted in the age grading system”.

This lack of autonomy and loss of control also includes an inability for prisoners to regulate the release of information about them, or to choose how they present themselves to others (Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Wacquant, 2002), with prisoners speaking about having their private internal self “stripped” from them and staff failing to understand the significance of the information they know about them (Rowe, 2011: 575). This is reflected in the following quote from a prisoner who was sentenced for manslaughter, who, in this statement is discussing her anguish at the fact her crime was being joked about by prison officials:

At the minute some of the officers go round calling me the Lambrini killer... It's like, 'Watch out for that bottle! It's coming!'...They are just trying to have a laugh and a joke... with me, but it's personal, you know? It's a little bit private and can be upsetting, like now [she is weeping slightly] (cited in Rowe, 2011: 577)

Another consequence of being over-regulated by an arduous and highly controlled regime relates to monotony, as shown by Medicott (2001: 131) who argues that the prison regime is both “So mundane, yet so hard to bear”. Prison has been found to be profoundly contradictory because it is simultaneously highly regulated and meaningless (Drake, 2012), with prisoners often adhering to the regime because they have to, not because they ascribe any value or positive meaning to it (Scott and Codd, 2010). As a result of this individuals are said to commonly feel as though their life is wasting away, with one prisoner speaking of feeling as though he was “rotting” in prison (Gibbs, 1982: 104), and another stating that “I haven't got a day older since being in prison. I'm still thirty. I forget that I'm really sixty odd” (Jewkes, 2002: 82). In line with this, a largely static, unchanging institutional regime can be an acute source of suffering for prisoners because it can cause them to become hyper aware of the concept of time and to feel as though they are continually reliving the same day (Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Medicott, 2001, Newburn and Hayman, 2002). This is highlighted in the following quote from Serge (1970: 56):

The unreality of time is palpable. Each second falls slowly. What a measureless gap from one hour to the next When you tell

yourself in advance that six months – or six years – are to pass like this, you feel the terror of facing an abyss.

This monotony and over-awareness of time has been said to cause many prisoners to unwillingly ruminate upon distressing events from their past, which can in turn inhibit their ability to move towards positive reform, and can consequentially exacerbate recognition of other prison pains (Medlicott, 2001). Schneider and Sales (2004: 82) argue that such monotony, when combined with a lack of autonomy can represent a serious threat to an individual's self-worth, which can lead to anxiety, depression, paranoia and “A host of schizophrenic-like responses”.

Another feature of imprisonment that has been found to influence the experiences of prisoners is their relationship with prison staff. Although Sykes (1958) did not outline this as one of the intrinsic environment structuring pains of imprisonment, he did argue that the nature of the relationship could profoundly alter the way an individual responds to prison. The role and influence of prison officers has since become key in prison research, with literature indicating that the nature of staff-prisoner relations and the way that prison officials utilise their authority, has a disproportionate influence upon prisoner wellbeing and their evaluations of perceived safety and fairness (Goffman, 1961, Genders and Player, 1989, Reuss, 2000, Crawley, 2004, Drake, 2012, Tait, 2012, Schmidt, 2016). This is shown by Liebling (2011) who found that custody is more painful in situations where staff members display punitive outlooks and behaviours, and Bottoms and Rose (1998: 227) who believe that “staff embody, in prisoners' eyes, the regime of a prison, and its fairness”.

While prison officers were traditionally viewed as being hostile and controlling (Tait, 2012) it has since been found that the relationships between staff members and prison officers are complex and difficult to understand, with Crawley (2004) outlining a variety of factors that influence relations between the two groups. These include the previous experiences of the official, the prison type, the offence committed by the prisoner, and the culture of the establishment that they are in (Ibid). The extent of this variation

means that officers often have differing ideas about the 'right' way to treat a prisoner, with preferred approaches ranging from being friendly and supportive, to being formal and distant, to being intimidating, coercive and even abusive (see, for example Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Genders and Player, 1989, Liebling and Price, 2001, Crawley, 2004, Crewe, 2009, Drake, 2012, Tait, 2012, Schmidt, 2016).

Although the relationships between prisoners and staff members are varied, the fact that violence, aggression and intimidation have been found to be built into the core "logic of the system" (Crewe, 2011: 511) indicates that such qualities will inevitably influence staff behaviour. This is again illustrated by Crawley (2004: 70) to whom staff members reported being taught to be militaristic and abusive by their trainers, as well as being told to develop a suspicious outlook, and to "never to trust the bastards [the prisoners]". Findings from a prison review undertaken by HMIP (2009: 35) revealed that such behaviour was not limited to the training environment, with 24% of prisoners reporting being victimised by a member of staff, and 21% reporting feeling threatened or intimidated by a prison official. While these findings relate specifically to the threat of violence, other sources suggest that it is also common for staff members to treat prisoners with a lack of respect (see, for example Stern, 1987), as shown by Drake (2012) who discussed an instance where staff members withheld a prisoner's meal simply because they took too long to vacate their cell at a meal time.

Instances where staff mistreat prisoners have been shown to generate a number of painful emotions for them, which Liebling (2011) argues can be particularly problematic given that many prisoners are vulnerable. She contends that without recognition and respect from staff members, the pains of imprisonment can be exacerbated for these individuals, and rehabilitation can be more difficult (Ibid). However, even in instances where staff-prisoner relations are positive (see, for example Liebling, 2011, Drake, 2012, HMIP, 2015), it has been suggested that prisoners may still view officials negatively because of the nature of their role, with one individual stating that "They [prison staff] are part of the punishment...it's hard to forget that" (Durcan,

2008: 48). The polarisation between the two groups is discussed further later in the chapter when considering Goffman's (1961) total institution framework. This is important to this research as during the research process it became apparent that the way that the d/Deaf/HoH prisoners experienced prison was influenced by their relationships with, and perceptions of staff members.

This section of the chapter has intertwined Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment framework with findings from more contemporary research, and in doing this has highlighted a number of key reasons why prison remains so painful for prisoners. The fact that Sykes' five key pains have, for the most part, been substantiated by other sources is important as it highlights the continued relevance of his classic deprivation focused framework, and suggests that establishments in England and Wales remain structured in the way he anticipated, at least to some degree. With this in mind, the relevance of the findings presented thus far to the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners will be explored in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

### **The Changing Face of Prison's Pains**

The literature reviewed so far has indicated that the pains of imprisonment as outlined by Sykes (1958) are still very much alive in prisons throughout England and Wales. However, it is also important to acknowledge the array of literature which suggests that the pains generated by prison have evolved in line with changes to the Prison Service, as this may have altered the way that HoH/d/Deaf people experience prison. It has been argued that the increasing priority given by the government to the notion of risk has pervaded the penal regime, where it is now seen as necessary to continually assess the risk that a prisoner poses to society (Crewe, 2009, Liebling, 2011). Crewe (2011: 524) argues that this fixation upon the concept of risk has created a whole new set of pains for prisoners, and states that “The carceral experience is less directly oppressive, but more gripping – lighter but tighter. Instead of brutalizing, destroying and denying the self, it grips, harnesses and appropriates it for its own project”. The behaviours and character of individual prisoners are now subjected to continual analysis by a

standardised set of risk factors (Conway, 2014), which, according to Crewe (2011: 517), leaves them feeling that “they and their problems are fed into the institutional machinery, subsumed into its discourse and transformed into risk”.

Consequently, many prisoners have now been found to feel as though they will never successfully prove that they are not a risk to society, either because they perceive their release conditions to be overly demanding, or because they feel that that small mistakes are disproportionately influential (Jewkes, 2002, Crewe, 2011). This is problematic because it can cause them to feel more helpless than in previous decades, with prisoners feeling afraid to voice their views for fear of being branded as a risk, as highlighted by one prisoner (cited in Liebling, 2011: 536) who states that “it's not your own life...You can't speak out. It's too big a risk”. The extent to which this can affect an individual's sense of identity is shown in the findings of Crewe (2011: 516) to whom prisoners spoke of having to create a “penal avatar” who behaves in passively and submissively at all times in order to appear low risk to staff members.

As a result of this increased focus upon risk, in 2003, under the Criminal Justice Act, the government introduced a new form of penal sanction: The Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection (IPP). These sentences were given to offenders when it was perceived that there was a serious risk that they would cause further harm to the public (Rozenberg, 2014), and allowed the Prison Service to detain prisoners indefinitely even after they had completed the minimum term set by the judge (Durcan, 2008). Their release was subject to assessments from the Parole Board, where it was decided whether they still posed a risk to the public or whether they were sufficiently reformed (Conway, 2014). IPP sentences have since been abolished, because it was found that it was almost impossible for any individual prisoner to prove that they no longer pose a risk to the public, and as a result meant that judges were given the power to legitimately hand out long term sentences to fairly low level offenders. Since their abolition, the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett (cited in Conway, 2014: Unpaginated) conceded that the government “Certainly got the implementation wrong... [and] the consequence of bringing in the act has led...to an injustice and I regret that”.

In line with this it has been found that for those sentenced to IPPs, the prison experience often becomes characterised by high levels of stress because there is so much uncertainty surrounding the trajectory of their future (Howard League, 2007, Crewe, 2011). While fixed sentence prisoners generally have a clear guide of their route to freedom, those serving IPPs are left feeling confused about when they will be released, and how they can show the Parole Board that they are not a risk (Howard League, 2007, Crewe, 2011). This has led to IPPs being coined as “Life trashing sentences” (Liebling, 2011: 540), which make meaning and identity “extremely difficult to create or sustain” (Ibid)<sup>16</sup>.

Despite being abolished, due to backlogs and resource issues there were still 4113 prisoners serving IPPs in June 2016, with approximately 80% of those being over-tariff (Prison Reform Trust, 2016: Unpaginated). Findings suggest that these individuals are being released at an approximate rate of 400 people per year, which means that some prisoners may continue to suffer from exacerbated pains for another decade (Conway, 2014: Unpaginated). Furthermore, the government is still insisting that those serving IPP sentences should remain in custody until they can convince a Parole Board that the risk they pose has sufficiently diminished (Rozenburg, 2015). Such findings are relevant to this research as a number of individuals included in the research sample were in fact serving IPP sentences, therefore making it necessary to consider how an IPP sentence can affect the experience of prison for HoH/d/Deaf people.

Consideration is now given to the impact that recent political and economic changes have had on the Prison service, the penal regime and the way prisoners experience the prison world. A central change to the Prison Service came in the form of benchmarking; in line with broader budget cuts implemented across public services by the coalition government, in 2011 the NOMS Specification, Benchmarking and Costing programme (SBC) was introduced. The aim of the SBC was to ensure that public sector prisons were being run as efficiently as possible, with its creation acting as an attempt to align the

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<sup>16</sup> In Drake's (2012: 92) study, she presented findings which indicated that prisoners serving life sentences experienced similar issues, and stated that “Their uncertainty about their futures and whether they would ever be recategorised to a lower-security status or progress towards eventual release added significant weight to all other aspects of their experiences as a Category A prisoner”.

costs of these prisons with those owned by the private sector, which at the time were significantly cheaper (Mulholland, 2013). Documents were introduced that outlined the “Minimum legal and safe requirements for services delivered by prisons” (National Audit Office, 2012: 30), and subsequently between 2011 and 2014 the costs generated by public sector prisons were cut by £263 million (NOMS, 2014b).

In order to achieve such significant savings, cuts were made throughout different areas of the Prison Service, with the budget allocation for resources, recreational equipment and staffing all being heavily reduced. While such savings have inevitably been painted in a positive light within official rhetoric (see, for example NOMS, 2014b), the findings from independent sources indicate otherwise, with HMIP (2015) showing prisons to be at their worst in a decade. Although the cuts have been found to be problematic for a myriad of reasons, sheer levels of staff cuts<sup>17</sup> appear to have created the most issues, and according to multiple sources have contributed significantly to the deterioration of the standards of penal regimes (Howard League, 2014a, Howard League, 2014b, HMIP, 2015 Howard League, 2016b). This is shown in the following quote from the House of Commons Justice Committee (2015, 48):

We believe that the key explanatory factor for the obvious deterioration in standards over the last year is that a significant number of prisons have been operating at staffing levels below what is necessary to maintain reasonable, safe and rehabilitative regimes.

This is important to this study as recent bench marking and subsequent budget cuts have contributed to drastic changes across the prison estate, including more violent incidents, greater feelings of unsafety, deteriorating prison conditions, increased levels of self-harm and suicide, and prisoners being forced to spend longer in their cells due to less staff availability (Howard League, 2014a, Howard League, 2014b, HMIP, 2015, Bowcott, 2016, Howard League, 2016b). Therefore it is necessary to reflect on whether such changes have had an impact upon the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, and

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<sup>17</sup> According to the Howard League (2014b: Unpaginated) the number of officers at public-sector prisons in England and Wales was cut by 41% between 2011 and 2014.

whether they have in any way compromised compliance with the stipulations of the relevant legislation<sup>18</sup>.

## **The Prison as a Total Institution**

Consideration is now given to ideas put forward by Goffman (1961) in his classic text *Asylums*. This is important as although Goffman's ideas have been since been criticised by supporters of the importation model (see, for example Irwin, 1970), the concept of the total institution outlined within *Asylums* continues to act as a central framework for scholars attempting to understand the prison world (see, for example Harvey, 2012), and is used throughout this thesis when seeking to understand the position of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners within the prison world.

As stated in Chapter One, Goffman (1961) made strong connections with the work of Sykes (1958) when discussing the characteristics of 'total institutions' such as prisons, boarding schools and secure mental institutes. He defined total institutions as being “Places of residence and work where a large number of like situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (Goffman, 1961: 11). It is the barrier that these institutions place between their inmates and the outside world which Goffman (1961) believed gave them this totalising character; to him, by existing separately from wider society, total institutions were able to enforce a way of life which sat at odds with it. He argued that once an individual enters a total institution, their pre-prison identity and conception of self becomes largely irrelevant, beginning upon admission where they are stripped of their possessions, given an identity number and provided with clothing which belongs to the institution. It is here, Goffman (1961: 26) contends, that the process of shaping an inmate into an “object that can be fed into the administrative machinery of the establishment, to be worked on smoothly by routine operations” begins. From this point, rather than being treated as individuals, inmates (in this context, prisoners) are “collectively regimented” and exist as part of a “batch of similar

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<sup>18</sup> Findings from HMIP (2015) indicated that the nationwide benchmarking had had a negative impact upon the implementation of the Care Act 2014.

others” (Ibid: 17-18) who are treated alike and required to adhere to the same schedule.

Goffman (1961: 18) argued that there is a “basic split between a large managed group, conveniently called inmates, and a small supervisory staff” in total institutions, with the staff members being employed to act as the face of the institution for inmates, and to enforce its regime. Just like Sykes (1958) and more recent studies such as Crewe (2009), Goffman (1961) viewed the relations between the two groups as being at the heart of such places, as shown here:

There are grounds then, for claiming that one of the main accomplishments of total institutions is staging a difference between two constructed categories of persons – a difference in social quality and moral character, a difference in perceptions of self and other... between an official and a convict (Ibid: 111-112)

He saw staff members and inmates as each having different pre-prescribed roles and different worlds, and often viewing each other with hostility because of the dichotomy they are forced into; essentially, the managers versus the managed. To Goffman (1961), a key function of staff members in total institutions is to ensure that inmates behave in accordance with the conditions of their role, and in doing this, they must ensure that they prevent individuals from forming their own sub-batches or creating their own worlds. He argues that if staff members “feel that solidarity among sets of inmates can provide the base for concerted activity forbidden by the rules, and... may consciously try to hinder primary group formation” (Ibid: 60).

While this role dichotomy initially appears relatively straightforward, later in the text when discussing the staff world, Goffman (1961) concedes that in practice it can be difficult to maintain such a clear cut divide given that, for staff in total institutions, the object of their work is people. He argues that although this role dichotomy is central in such institutions, it can at times conceal important facts because in reality neither group is “homogenous” (Ibid: 116). When discussing the complications associated with

this, he remarks that:

The role of staff and the role of inmate cover every aspect of life. But these fully rounded characterizations must be played by civilians already deeply trained in other roles and other possibilities of relationship. The more the institution encourages the assumption that staff and inmate are of profoundly different human types... the more incompatible the show becomes with the civilian repertoire of the players (Ibid: 111)

He discusses the messiness of people work and states that staff members may feel torn between “institutional efficiency” (Ibid: 78) and ensuring that inmates (in this instance, prisoners) are being treated humanely. From this he outlines a myriad of contexts within which the boundaries between the two groups can become blurred, such as staff members seeing beyond the label of ‘inmate’ and viewing individuals sympathetically. While he provides this as an example, Goffman (1961: 93) then clarifies that such a viewpoint is not common-place in total institutions due to their very nature, and states that “when unusual intimacies do occur across the staff inmate line ... all kinds of awkward reverberations are likely to occur”.

Throughout his work in *Asylums*, Goffman (1961) details numerous indignities that are imposed on inmates contained in total institutions as a consequence of their role, and states that “Whatever the form or the source of these various indignities, the individual has to engage in activity whose symbolic implications are incompatible with his conception of self” (Ibid: 31). He relies heavily on Sykes’ (1958) pains of imprisonment framework when discussing these indignities, and argues that in consequence of being deprived of their autonomy, their possessions, their individuality and their freedom (amongst other things), inmates in total institutions can become institutionalised to such an extent that their identity is “mortified”, as outlined in the following quote:

The recruit comes in to the establishment with a conception of himself made possible by certain stable social arrangements in his home world. Upon entrance he is immediately stripped of the support provided by these arrangements. In the accurate language of some of our oldest total institutions, he begins a

series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self. His self is systematically, if often unintentionally mortified (Goffman, 1961: 24)

He argues that this 'mortification' is a by-product of efforts to "manage the daily activity of a large number of persons in a restricted space with a small expenditure of resources" (Ibid: 46-47). As part of the mortification process he posits that the identities of inmates (in this instance, prisoners) are then reorganised, and commonly become focused around the privilege system, something which he deems as being central to the running of such places.

While this suggests a standardised identity shift for all inmates as a consequence of the dehumanising and totalising nature of the environment in total institutions, Goffman (1961) later goes on to discuss the complexities of the process, and states that there are a number of ways that an inmate can avoid/limit the damaging effects of their confinement. As part of this he contends that inmates develop a social system where they "fraternise" and develop social bonds with others, and commonly engage with practices that enable them to gain access to restricted or forbidden items (Ibid: 56). It is argued that participation in such a system allows them to feel as though they have at least some autonomy over their own lives, and enables an individual "to reject his rejecters rather than himself" (Ibid: 58). From this Goffman then goes on to outline a number of methods of adaptation that inmates can employ in order to further avoid the mortification process, as to be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Furthermore, while Goffman groups the institutions discussed throughout *Asylums* together based on their totalising nature, on a number of occasions as the text goes on he then acknowledges their inevitable permeability, and states that "regardless of how radical and militant a total institution appears to be, there will always be some limits to its reshuffling tendencies and some use made of social distinctions already established

in the environing society” (Ibid: 122)<sup>19</sup>. He acknowledges the existence of tensions “between the home world and institutional world” (Ibid: 65), and laments that different types of total institutions vary in the degree to which “the social standards maintained within the institution and the social standards maintained in the environing society have influenced each other” (Ibid: 119).

In Chapter Six the applicability of Goffman's total institution framework to the regimes of the prisons entered as part of this research is examined. Within this certain key features of total institutions are explored, including the extent to which prisoners are expected to exist as part of a “batch” (Goffman, 1961: 17), the existence of a hostile divide between prisoners and staff members, and the pertinence of pre-defined roles. After finding that such features are indeed present in at these establishments, Chapters Seven and Eight explore how they impact upon the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners. While this section of the chapter has examined some intrinsic features that Goffman (1961) attributed to total institutions and some of the nuances associated with them, what follows now is a consideration of his ideas about how inmates adapt to their role in order to combat the process of mortification. As part of this final section, the ideas of a variety of other scholars are also outlined.

## **Responses to the Prison Environment**

Consideration is now given to literature that examines the ways in which prisoners respond to the prison environment. This topic has been discussed widely in existing literature, with scholars suggesting that prisoners employ a variety of strategies in order to counteract the pains of imprisonment, including (but not limited to) adaptation, participation in a form of prison society, and resistance (see, for example Sykes, 1958, Goffman, 1961, Irwin, 1970, Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Sparks, 1996, Crewe 2009, Schmidt, 2016). While there is insufficient space to cover this topic in-depth, its inclusion in the chapter is important because in order to fully address the overarching

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<sup>19</sup> In order to illustrate his point, Goffman (1961) states that strong religious or political beliefs can prevent an individual from becoming vulnerable to the process of mortification.

research question outlined in Chapter One it is necessary to consider the manner that d/Deaf people respond to imprisonment, and the reasons for such responses.

In *Society of Captives*, Sykes (1958: 82) argues that prisoners can do one of two things to combat the pains associated with imprisonment; either attempt to bind themselves to their peers, or to enter in to what he describes as a “war of all against all”. He then concludes that in reality prisoners participate in a form of society which “lies balanced in an uneasy compromise” between the two (Ibid: 83). When discussing this prison society Sykes built upon the ideas of Clemmer (1940: 299) who argued that just as there is a culture among those living in wider society, a distinct culture also exists inside prisons, in which prisoners take on “The folkways...customs, and general culture of the penitentiary”, and McCorkle and Korn (1954: 88) who felt that:

In many ways the inmate social system may be viewed as providing a way of life which enables the inmate to avoid the devastating psychological effects of internalizing and converting social rejection in to self-rejection. In effect it permits the inmate to reject his rejecters rather than himself.

Sykes (1958) argued that the existence of an inmate code was central to prison culture, and saw this code as consisting of a variety of often unspoken rules, including not to inform or grass on each other to a prison official, not stealing from other prisoners and not to show weakness or vulnerability. He believed that if they were to follow the code, individuals would be able to combat the pains of imprisonment (Sykes and Messinger, 1960). However, he also acknowledged that, in reality, prisoners did not necessarily follow the code but, rather, paid lip service to it. He then argued that there are a number of distinctive prisoner roles within the prison society, most of which deviated from the inmate code in different ways, with such deviation often being for the purpose of penal survival (Sykes, 1958). These groups included “gorillas”; prisoners who use force to get what they want, “merchants”; prisoners who sell things instead of giving them; “weaklings”; prisoners who submit to others, and “real men”; prisoners who are admired by their peers for enduring the pains of imprisonment with dignity and integrity (Ibid: 90-102).

Sykes (1958) argued that these groups made up a prison hierarchy, in which social relationships are formed between prisoners who are seen as being at similar levels within the hierarchy. He viewed these relationships as being important to prisoners and stated that “If the rigors of confinement cannot be completely removed, they can at least be mitigated by the patterns of social interaction established among the inmates themselves” (Ibid: 82). Since Sykes' writings it has been argued that these relationships can help individuals to cope during their time in prison, as well as aiding the establishment of a sense of belonging and counteracting the deprivation of security by acting as protection from abuse from other groups of prisoners (see, for example Goffman, 1961, Gibbs, 1982, Matheisen, 1990, Schneider and Sales, 2004, Crewe, 2009, 2012, Harvey, 2012).

Despite continuing to be viewed as pivotal to the study of prisons, Sykes' study (1958) has since been criticised for attributing the cultural norms of one institution to all prisons without sufficient evidence for doing so (Dilulio, 1987, Simon, 2000). In contrast, it has been argued that although prison studies that are based on a single or small number of prisons can indeed provide an overview of those particular establishments, they cannot act as confirmation of a pervasive systematic prison culture (Dilulio, 1987, Genders and Player, 1989, Sparks et al, 1996, Martin, 2000, Crewe, 2009, Liebling, 2011, Drake, 2012, Stevens, 2013). With this in mind, this thesis recognises that variations between the cultures and regimes at the seven prisons entered during the fieldwork are likely to be inevitable.

Whilst Sykes' ideas of adaptation to the prison regime were collective in nature (Crewe, 2016), Goffman (1961: 61-63) argued that in total institutions, inmates (in this case prisoners) adapted individually, and outlined four main methods of adaptation. These included withdrawal; where an individual chooses to focus solely upon events “immediately around his body”, colonization; whereby individuals attempt to build “a stable relatively contented existence”, conversion; during which prisoners take over the official view of themselves, and finally the intransigent line of adaptation; where individuals rebel against the system and “refuse to cooperate” (Goffman, 1961: 61-63). He believed that if an individual were to interact socially whilst adopting one or more

of these methods of adaptation they could counteract the mortification process, and would have a “Maximum chance...of eventually getting out physically and psychologically undamaged” (Ibid: 65).

Although Goffman's (1961) study remains influential, his ideas about adaptation have provoked a variety of critiques, with Irwin (1970) arguing that they do not necessarily incorporate the behaviours of prisoners who cannot cope with the prison environment, and Cohen and Taylor (1972) and Sparks et al (1996) believing that he had not sufficiently recognised the prominence of prisoners who resist the penal regime rather than adapting to it. At this point, perhaps the most important critique of Goffman (1961) and indeed Sykes (1958) becomes relevant, which relates to the fact that both scholars located “the resources for adjustment as lying inside the institution” (Crewe, 2016: 81). While he did to some extent acknowledge the permeability of total institutions and remarked that that the inmate group was not completely homogenous, Goffman (1961) was still largely of the assumption that the responses of individuals were derived from the environment itself. Consequently, neither he nor Sykes gave meaningful consideration to the extent of the influence that an individual's pre-prison characteristics could have upon their behaviour inside prison<sup>20</sup>, or the way they adapted to their role (Crewe, 2016)<sup>21</sup>.

The works of Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) have also been criticised for failing to give sufficient consideration to the fact that social interaction and participation in prison life is not necessarily a given. Clemmer (1940: 123) for example, found that “The

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<sup>20</sup> This is not to say that no consideration at all was given to the impact of imported characteristics, as, for example Goffman (1961) does briefly acknowledge the impact that imported socio economic status can have upon the way an individual experiences a total institution. He states that “When an ordinary inmate is locked in his cell, he may suffer the deprivation that management anticipates; but for an upper-middle-class Englishman, thrust among the lower oddments of British society, solitary confinement may have an unanticipated meaning” (Ibid: 184). However, what he does not do is explore this at length, or consider what happens when somebody enters prison who cannot adapt to the regime. This also applies on some levels to Sykes, who did concede that the role a prisoner adopts within the inmate hierarchy can be influenced by their personality. However, as outlined by Crewe (2009:150), what he did not do was “attempt to elucidate how individual traits or cultural dispositions might influence prison conduct or might shape how particular positions within the inmate community could be consciously adopted”.

<sup>21</sup> It must be acknowledged that while Goffman's (1961) assumption that the majority of prisoners would respond and adapt to the penal environment in similar ways has been criticised, other scholars agree that “a number of basic adaptive styles can be identified” (Crewe, 2009: 151) even when taking into consideration an individual's pre-prison characteristics, due to the fact that “the conditions of imprisonment do make certain positions more likely” (Ibid: 151-152).

majority of inmates do not share the rather common impression that consensus in groups is strong”, and Matheisen (1965: 122-123), in his study of a Norwegian prison, observed that “A surprisingly large number of inmates appeared to live in relative isolation from others”. This is further illustrated by Crewe (2009: 301-302), who, in his prison study, found that:

Almost all prisoners described an environment that was low in trust and emotionally alienating, where the risks of personal disclosure and obstacles to friendship formation were significant, and where alliances were shaped by complex continuities and disconnections between the prison and the outside community

Findings from multiple sources (see, for example Cheney, 2005, Scott and Codd, 2010, Crewe, 2012) have also suggested social integration may be much more difficult for some prisoners than others, with prisoners being shown to judge each other on a range of complex factors, ranging from the type of crime an individual has committed, to their perceived dangerousness. In terms of dangerousness, Crewe (2012: 33) found that while “carrying a credible threat of violence...helps to protect a prisoner from being exploited”, prisoners who are seen as “weak, unintelligent, immature or mentally ill” are often ridiculed, stigmatised and may even be excluded from mainstream prison society (Ibid). It has been found that minority groups, such as disabled, elderly, ethnic minority and foreign national prisoners often experience such issues (Genders and Player, 1989, Liebling and Maruna, 2005, HMIP, 2006, Crawley, 2007, Durcan, 2008, Scott and Codd, 2010, Philips, 2012), with Cheney (2005: 555) arguing that these groups regularly suffer “double incapacitation” during their time in custody.

A contributing factor to this “double incapacitation” (Ibid) is that these groups usually make up a very small proportion of the prison population (Leech, 2014). As a consequence of this their social group is unlikely to be adequately represented in prison, which can mean that they may have no-one with whom they can identify (Cheney, 2005). This can not only lead to loneliness, depression and isolation, but being perceived as vulnerable can also lead to ridicule, physical brutality, sexual dominance

and bullying (James, 2003, Schneider and Sales, 2004, Durcan, 2008). With this in mind, this thesis considers whether such issues apply to the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners, as they too are a minority group in prison.

Further to this, Cheney (2005) suggests that the fact that prison was initially designed for young, able-bodied, English speaking men (Cheney, 2005), means that minority group prisoners inevitably experience prison life differently because they deviate from this mould. While this thesis does not discuss the experiences of minority group prisoners (beyond d/Deaf prisoners that is) in any depth, it is important to acknowledge that existing literature recognises these experiential variations, with it being widely found that the pains of minority group prisoners often vary because the prison environment is not equipped to suit their distinct needs (see, for example Fox, 1982, Carlen, 1990, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2006, Home Office, 2007, Crawley, 2007, Liebling, 2007, Medlicott, 2007, Durcan, 2008, Prison Reform Trust, 2008, Rowe, 2011, Scott and Codd, 2010, Mann, 2016). Such findings show therefore that these individuals do not necessarily respond to, or experience prison in the way that Sykes (1958) or Goffman (1961) anticipated, something which is considered in relation to the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners throughout this thesis.

At this point it is important to examine the importation versus deprivation debate, as it has become apparent throughout this section of the chapter that, in reality, the way an individual experiences prison depends on a myriad of variables. This is where the importation model which poses that “Adaptation to the prison environment is largely imported and reflects the lifestyles and other pre-prison characteristics of prisoners” (Dhami et al, 2007: 1087) becomes relevant. In contrast to Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) whose frameworks largely align with the deprivation model, multiple sources (for example, Irwin and Cressey, 1962, Irwin, 1970, Jacobs, 1977) are of the view that the way a prisoner experiences prison is contingent upon imported cultures and behaviours, and even Clemmer (1940) from whom Sykes had sourced many of his ideas, acknowledged that prisoner behaviour was also affected by outside influences. In his study about the goings on at HMP Wellingborough Ben Crewe (2009: 7) considers the debate between the two models and in his own words explores:

How the behaviour of individual prisoners is shaped both by institutional imperatives and by the values and orientations that they carry in to the sentence. It shows how, with the terms delimited by the institution, prisoners reflect on their circumstances, evaluate their options, and make decisions about how to 'do time' in ways that relate to their pre prison characteristics.

He talks extensively about adaptation and argues that the reasons why prisoners choose to comply with the expectations of the prison environment vary based upon "a range of factors that they import into the environment" (Crewe, 2009: 92). Throughout *The Prisoner Society* he explores how "structural, institutional and external determinants interrelate in practice" (Ibid: 8), and posits that different prisoners experience prison differently based on the nature of their imported characteristics. He outlines an array of methods of adaptation undertaken by prisoners at HMP Wellingborough which are said to arise as an outcome of these interrelating internal and external factors (Ibid)<sup>22</sup>. Such findings are important to this study as they show that the importation model *and* the deprivation model are both relevant to the experiences of prisoners, something which has been substantiated further by other contemporary prison researchers such as Harvey (2012) and Schmidt (2016).

The validity of both models has been tested by a variety of scholars, who have considered the merits and limitations of both as standalone concepts (see, for example Finn, 1995, McCorkle et al, 1995, DeLisi et al, 2004, Dhami et al, 2007). Although sources such as Crewe (2009) have concluded that the reality of prison life is in fact be a product of a combination of the two models, rather than either on its own, Dhami et al (2007: 1088) have argued that "To date, no one has explicitly examined the relative and interactive effects of both approaches on a variety of responses to imprisonment in a single study". This argument is backed up by Schmidt (2016: 65) who remarked that:

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<sup>22</sup> Despite conceding that not all prisoners at the establishment adapted in such ways, Crewe (2009) laments that most did.

Although it is widely recognised that imprisonment is not a uniform experience and feelings of injustice are ultimately subjective, less effort, however, has been made to show how the individual biography intertwines with the structural environment of the prison.

The ongoing debate between the deprivation and importation models is relevant to this research as in order to fully address the component questions it is necessary to examine how the models apply to the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, and how the characteristics that these prisoners import interact with the structural qualities of imprisonment.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the findings from relevant literature relating to the experiences of prisoners, and has shown that, despite being over half a century old, Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment framework continues to be at the core of the academic understanding about the lived realities of prisoners. With this in mind, in the context of this research Sykes' framework is used as a reference point from which to refer when exploring the way HoH/d/Deaf prisoners experience prison. However, it has also been recognised that although Sykes' pains of imprisonment remain relevant, the nature of prison's pains have inevitably evolved in more recent times. Particular attention has been given to the increasing focus upon the concept of risk, and the influence of recent budget cuts upon the penal regime, with the impact of both upon the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners being considered in this research.

Sykes' ideas have been explored in parallel with Goffman's (1961) total institution paradigm. In doing this it has become clear that both scholars have put forward arguments that are underpinned by the deprivation model, and imply that the experiences of prisoners are largely dictated by the structure of the penal environment. In Chapters Six, Seven and Eight the extent to which the systemic frameworks of both scholars can indeed be applied to a group of individuals for whom the penal experience is not necessarily designed to accommodate is examined. When

doing this the relevance of their respective ideas about the existence of a pervasive prison culture and the notion of there being standardised ways of adapting to such a culture are explored, as it is evident that although still influential, these ideas have in fact been criticised. These criticisms are important as d/Deaf prisoners inevitably do not fit the criteria of a 'normal' or 'expected' prisoner and therefore consideration must be given to their position within an environment designed, as Goffman (1961: 22) puts it, for “batch living”.

In line with this, the fact that the experiences of minority group prisoners have been found to deviate from those of the 'average' prisoner indicates that for those who are 'different', prison is different. With this in mind, Chapters Seven and Eight consider whether such difference applies to HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, whilst also exploring the reasons for such experiential deviations. When doing this thought is given to whether these deviations are in fact a consequence of a fixed unmalleable penal regime suitable only for those whom it was intended, or rather an outcome of an individual's distinct imported characteristics. While this chapter has been largely focused around ideas that are underpinned by the deprivation model, the importation model has also been introduced, with it becoming clear that the debate between the two differing conceptual models and their relevance to the penal experience remains ongoing. As alluded to throughout, an awareness of the relationship between the two models is vital to this research, where consideration is given to how they apply to the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, and how the characteristics that these prisoners import interact with the structural qualities of imprisonment.

After focusing upon relevant literature regarding the experiences of prisoners throughout this chapter, Chapter Three now goes on to explore some of the experiences and characteristics that a d/Deaf person may 'import' to prison that could subsequently influence their penal experience. It also considers some of the discrepancies that exist between the hearing agenda and the Deaf world, and the problems that this can create for Deaf people. This is important as despite being largely autonomous, findings presented throughout this thesis show that the prison estate still

remains a part of wider society, thus meaning that the norms and values embedded in to the outside world inevitably remain relevant inside the prison world.

## CHAPTER THREE: d/DEAF LIFE – A LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the lived realities of d/Deaf people, and engages with relevant Deaf Studies and Disability Studies literature throughout in order to do so.

Consideration is given to the way that d/Deaf individuals identify with their d/Deafness and the complexities of such identification, with distinctions being made between the perceptions and life experiences of those who are deaf and those who are culturally and linguistically Deaf. When exploring their life experiences, attention is focused upon their lives growing up in a largely hearing world, with detailed references being made to their home lives and their education, as it is in these arenas that a child's identity is developed (Leigh, 2009). This is important within the context of this research, as, in order to give meaningful consideration to the role of imported identity in prison, an understanding of a d/Deaf individual's pre-prison characteristics is necessary first of all. This will then allow for examination in coming chapters as to how these imported identities interrelate with the structural qualities of the prison environment, and whether the behaviours of d/Deaf people sit at odds with the expectations of the prison regime.

Also of consideration within this chapter is the position of the Deaf world within wider society, and the extent to which the norms and principles of the Deaf world are misaligned with those of the hearing world (Lane et al, 1996). This is important as although many Deaf people wish to live autonomously from the hearing world, they inevitably exist inside it, and because the power differentials between the two worlds are so unbalanced their principles often become obscured by those of the dominant hearing agenda (Ladd, 2003). This is central to this thesis as despite being closed off from the general public, it becomes apparent that the prison as an institution remains part of the hearing world. Therefore, in order to understand the position of HoH/d/Deaf (particularly Deaf) people within the prison world, their position within the hearing world more broadly must also be considered.

## **The Spectrum of d/Deafness**

Statistics show that over 11 million people in the United Kingdom have some form of hearing loss (Action on Hearing Loss, 2015). This figure incorporates all those who sit anywhere on the spectrum of d/Deafness, from people with mild to moderate hearing loss (Otherwise known as HoH), to those who are severely deaf, and finally to individuals who are culturally and linguistically Deaf (World Health Organization, 2015). Those classed as HoH make up the majority of the figure, with approximately only 900 thousand individuals in the United Kingdom being either severely or profoundly d/Deaf, and just 24 thousand of those declaring that sign language is their preferred language (Action on Hearing Loss, 2015).

In the context of this research it is important to explore the perceptions and life experiences of those with different levels of hearing loss or cultural affiliation, as the research sample incorporates individuals who sit at a variety of positions on the spectrum of d/Deafness. Turning firstly then to individuals who are HoH/deaf; for these individuals, generally the deafer somebody is, the more it is seen to disrupt their everyday life in which the conception of sound is key (Higgins, 1980). While individuals with mild hearing loss are largely able to function as though they were hearing unless the surrounding environment is noisy, those who are severely deaf are forced to rely on their ability to lip read, even when wearing hearing aids, and can subsequently experience difficulties in public arenas, such as their workplace (Action on Hearing Loss, 2016).

The vast majority of deaf/HoH individuals are born hearing and go on to become HoH/deaf either as part of the ageing process or as a result of an accident or illness during adulthood (Action on Hearing Loss, 2016). This is relevant as it has been found that the age at which somebody loses their hearing has a significant impact upon the way they respond to it, as shown by Higgins (1980: 76) who states that:

I met no one nor heard of any member of the [Deaf] community who lost their hearing after they were 20. Though such members surely exist, there are few. The identity of those who lose their hearing after adolescence is already fully established as a hearing person. Entrance to the deaf community is usually not sought.

This notion of an individual's identity being already established as hearing, relates to what was referred to in Chapter One as the hearing agenda, which, as argued by Lane et al (2001: 365) is “constructed on the principle that members of the Deaf world have a disability”. Because hearing individuals often have little or no knowledge about the existence of a Deaf world, they seek to understand d/Deafness by simply imagining themselves without hearing (Lane et al, 1996, Moore and Levitan, 1998, Ladd, 2003). Subsequently, being deaf is often viewed as a terrifying prospect categorised by both isolation and social disorientation (Lane, 1993), and as a medical problem which requires pity and sympathy (Ladd, 2003). The hearing agenda is underpinned by what is known in Disability Studies as the *medical model of disability*, within which perceived disability is viewed as “An individual defect lodged in the person, a defect that must be cured or eliminated if the person is to achieve full capacity as a human being” (Siebers, 2008: 3). With this in mind, this research examines whether the Prison Service is organised via the medical model of disability, and considers if this in turn impacts upon the lived realities of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners.

Returning now to the earlier quote from Higgins (1980: 76); because most deaf/HoH people have already developed an identity that sits in line with the hearing agenda and the medical model of disability prior to losing their hearing, they continue to view d/Deafness in this way afterwards. As a result of this they usually view their lack of hearing as an affliction, and feel stigmatised by it (Lane et al, 1996). When discussing the lives of deaf/HoH people, Higgins (1980: 123- 145) makes connections to Goffman's (1963) writings on the topic of stigma, and argues that Goffman's ideas very much align with the perceptions of those who become deaf/HoH as adults. Goffman (1963) maintains that people develop ideas of what 'normal' ought to be, and

subsequently view those who do not fit this mould as having a stigmatised identity. He suggests that these stigmatised individuals then become “Reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Ibid: 13), and lists three different types of stigma; stigma arising out of physical deformities, deformities of character, and finally protected characteristics such as race or religion (Ibid: 14).

Higgins (1980) argues that this stigmatisation can be difficult for individuals who lose their hearing (to different degrees) as adults, because despite acquiring a stigmatising characteristic, the way they perceive this characteristic (their hearing loss) often remains static. This is again discussed by Goffman (1963: 47-48) who goes on to state that because such individuals have already established an understanding about what being “normal” or “stigmatised” means from the position of a “normal” person, they then have to undertake a process of re-identification after becoming stigmatised themselves. He argues that this process of re-identification can be particularly challenging for these individuals who he thinks have a “Special likelihood of developing disapproval of self” (Ibid). This lack of re-identification is highlighted in the following quote from a HoH person (cited in Higgins, 1980: 40):

In everyday life I consider myself a hearing person. I usually forget it that I have a hearing problem. Sometimes I'm so lost [absorbed] in the hearing world, I mean I don't even realize I have a hearing problem... I don't feel hearing impaired not even if I have a hard time to understand somebody...I was deaf for a few days. My ears blocked up. That was a scary moment for me. I was completely deaf. I was walking and it was all completely quiet... My wife used to call me and I didn't hear her call me. Nothing! I could talk and that's why I was still hearing. I could talk even if I couldn't hear a thing.

This quote shows that despite being HoH, this individual continued to identify as being a hearing person, and wished to remain part of the hearing world. Higgins (1980) argues that this may be less difficult for deaf individuals than those with other stigmatising features, because hearing loss is not likely to be immediately apparent to

others. He contends that this invisibility allows deaf/HoH people to “blend in to the hearing world” if they so wish (Ibid), and states that because of this they are “discreditable... [but] not yet discredited” (Ibid). This suggests therefore that if an individual feels as though they may be able to hide a stigmatising feature, this can alter the way they respond to it, something which is also discussed by Goffman (1963), as shown below:

Where the stigma is nicely invisible and known only to the person who possesses it, who tells no one, then here again is a matter of minor concern in the study of passing... Because of the great rewards in being considered normal, almost all persons who are in a position to pass will do so on some occasion by intent (Ibid: 93-95).

While 'passing' can have a variety of purposes (O'Brien and Harris, 1999), in this context the concept of 'passing' refers to concealing one's stigma in order to avoid being vilified or viewed as a lesser person (see Garfinkel, 1967 for more information on passing). This notion of passing is relevant to individuals who lose their hearing during adulthood as findings from Action on Hearing Loss (2015) show that it takes an average of ten years for an individual to address their hearing loss, with millions being found to refuse the option of wearing hearing aids, despite being told that they need them. Goffman (1963) outlines a number of ways that individuals may seek to hide their stigma, including rejecting what he called the “stigma symbol” (Ibid: 155); any visible evidence that could be attributed to the stigmatising characteristic, which, in the case of d/Deaf people, could be items such as a cochlear implant<sup>23</sup> or hearing aid. He also stated the individuals may “Attempt to correct [their]... condition indirectly by devoting much private effort the mastery of areas of activity” (Ibid: 20), which, as acknowledged by Higgins (1980), would for a d/Deaf person be by learning skills such as lip reading. Goffman (1963) also argues that individuals may avoid people in a bid to avoid revealing their stigma, or will attempt to correct it via methods such as surgery or

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<sup>23</sup> A cochlear implant is an electronic device that “replaces the function of the damaged inner ear”, and sends sound signals to the brain (Cochlear UK, 2016: Unpaginated). It has both internal and external parts, with the internal part being surgically implanted inside the ear, and the external part consisting of a microphone and speech processor which sits on the side of the head (Action on Hearing Loss, N.D).

medical treatment (Ibid).

Goffman (1963: 105) suggests that a desire to conceal one's stigma via the above techniques can be problematic and can "Give rise to hurt feelings and misunderstandings on the part of others, [as] his effort to conceal incapacities may cause him to display other ones to give the appearance of doing so". Higgins (1980: 125) goes on to argue that "in a world of sounds" it can be extremely difficult for deaf people to conceal their hearing loss, thus meaning that they must inevitably disclose their stigma, which can in turn cause them to feel as though they have failed to be 'normal'. With this in mind, this research examines how deaf/HoH prisoners respond to their hearing loss in the penal environment, and whether their perceptions of stigma alter the trajectory of their experience.

However, when examining literature relating to the lives of profoundly Deaf people who use BSL to communicate, it becomes apparent that many of the issues discussed thus far are not relevant<sup>24</sup>. As mentioned in Chapter One, academic literature indicates that those who are Deaf see themselves as being part of the culturally distinct Deaf community (Woodward, 1972, Padden, 1980, Lane et al, 1996), which is comprised of those who are proud to be Deaf and share the same language, values and life experiences, amongst other things (Baker and Padden, 1978). Deaf people are said to place great value in their Deaf identity (Ladd, 2003), with 90% of Deaf people marrying another Deaf person (Lane et al, 1996), and Deaf couples commonly wishing to have Deaf children (Corker, 1996, Ladd, 2003). Such Deaf identification sits at odds with those who are deaf/HoH, as well as the hearing agenda more broadly (Lane et al, 1996), with their perceptions commonly sitting in accordance with what is known as the *social model of disability*. This model was created by disabled people as a critique of the medical model of disability and views disability "not as an individual defect but

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<sup>24</sup> It is important to acknowledge that although this thesis makes clear distinctions between those who are HoH/deaf and those who are culturally and linguistically Deaf, these categories do not exist completely exclusively of each other. For example, it is possible for somebody to be HoH, yet to identify as being culturally Deaf (Lane et al, 1996).

as the product of social injustice, one that requires not the cure or elimination of the defective person but significant changes in the social and built environment” (Siebers: 2008: 3). As Deaf people do not necessarily view their inability to hear as a defect or stigma, this means that many of Goffman's (1963) ideas about concealment and inferiority do not necessarily apply to them. Rather, it is the following extract from his 1963 writings that correlates most notably:

Also it seems possible for an individual to fail to live up to what we effectively demand of him, and yet be relatively untouched by this failure; insulated by his alienation, protected by identity beliefs of his own, he feels that he is a fully fledged normal human being, and that we are the ones who are not quite human. He bears a stigma but does not seem to be impressed or repentant about doing so (Ibid: 17).

Although individuals who are Deaf may reject the stigma associated with their Deafness, the fact that their perceptions differ so profoundly from those of the hearing world, means that an inevitable ideological collision occurs (Lane et al, 1996). However, because members of the hearing world are said to hold the majority of the decision making power in society, this means that this collision can be catastrophic for Deaf people, who can subsequently feel as though they are being oppressed, or even controlled by those whose ideas are underpinned by a model of disability with which they disagree (Ladd, 2003). This is highlighted by one Deaf person (cited in Lane et al, 1996: 375) who stated that “My problem about hearing people in the Deaf world has nothing to do with whether they're hearing or not, or welcome or not. It has to do with them thinking they can come in and take control of our lives”.

Historically, there are many examples of Deaf oppression, the most extreme of which began in Milan in 1880, when, during an international conference of deaf educators it was declared that oral education was superior to the sign language equivalent. This subsequently led to a resolution being passed banning sign language in schools (Lane, 1993, Lane et al, 1996), which was then rolled out throughout Europe. The proceedings

of the conference were followed closely in the UK, particularly by the London Times, who at the end declared that “Deafness is abolished” (Ladd, 2003: 28). While the existence of a Deaf culture has since become much more widely accepted<sup>25</sup>, numerous sources argue that the hearing and Deaf worlds remain misaligned, and that the medical model of disability continues to prevail (Kittel, 1991, Lane et al, 1996, Ladd, 2003). The responses of medical professionals to children who are deaf is used by Lane et al (1996) and Ladd (2003) to illustrate this, with both sources indicating that when a child is diagnosed as being severely deaf, their parents are presented with a variety of options to 'cure' their child's deafness. It has been found that these professionals often view deafness as a stigma that ought to be hidden or removed (Kittel, 1991), as shown here by a parent of a deaf child (cited in Ladd, 1991: 89) who reported being told by a doctor “Your son is not really deaf. He is a normal person who cannot hear very well. If he is to be normal, he must use his hearing aid well, or else you will lose your son to deafness”.

The continued dominance of the medical model of disability and the collision between the Deaf and hearing worlds is alluded to throughout the remainder of the chapter. This is important within the context of this research as despite being largely separate from the rest of society, it becomes apparent that the prison estate in England and Wales remains part of the hearing world, thus making it necessary to consider whether the misalignment of the agendas impacts upon the lived realities of Deaf prisoners.

### **Life Growing Up d/Deaf**

Consideration is now given to the lived realities of those who are born deaf or become deaf at a young age, and then go on to grow up in a largely hearing world. Unlike those who experience hearing loss after adolescence, it has been found that for many of these individuals their identity and perceptions of self are often shaped by and subsequently become focused around their deafness (with many later going on to become culturally and linguistically Deaf) (Corker, 1996, Lane et al, 1996, Ladd, 2003,

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<sup>25</sup> This is highlighted by the fact that since 2003 BSL has been recognised by the government as an official language for the first time (Sign Community, 2013).

Marschark, 2009). Central to this is the fact that being deaf can have a profound impact on a child's home life and experience of education, which are both central arenas in terms of identity formation (Leigh, 2009). This is important within the context of this research because eight of the research participants were deaf from birth/a very young age, which therefore makes it necessary to consider their life experiences as children. Only by doing this can the applicability of the importation model to the lives of these prisoners be explored, and the extent to which a d/Deaf individual's identity does in fact influence the way that they respond to the penal environment be fully considered.

Attention is firstly given to the home lives of people who grow up being d/Deaf, as an individual's family life has been found to play a critical role in paving the way to a healthy identity (Corker, 1996). All children, whether hearing or d/Deaf require emotional and practical support from their parents (or guardians), and while this support is of course important for those who are hearing, Marschark (2009: 1) argues that it is imperative for deaf children given that they must develop the "emotional strength and resources to handle a world that is not entirely able to deal with them". It is argued that effective communication between a child and their parents is necessary if the support provided is to be sufficient, with it being found that deaf children who can communicate easily with their parents from an early age generally tend to be well adjusted emotionally (Leigh, 1990), to have high self-esteem (Ritter-Brinton, 1993), and to be competent socially (Lane et al, 1996). Marschark (2009: 5) argues that proficient parent-child communication early on "is easily the best single predictor of success in virtually all areas of deaf children's development".

In line with this, it has been found that deaf children who are born to Deaf parents tend to pass through most developmental stages of childhood at the same or a similar rate to their hearing peers because their parents generally begin communicating with them visually almost as soon as they are born (Lane et al, 1996, Leigh, 2009, Marschark, 2009). Furthermore, because Deaf parents usually have a competent awareness of the communication needs of their deaf child, they are likely to be well

attuned to their visual signals, as well as being able to utilise visual strategies to gain their child's attention (Mohay et al, 1998). These parents usually pass their Deaf culture and the norms that go with it along to their children, which means that being part of the Deaf community is likely to feel completely natural to them from a very young age (Leigh, 2009). This is reflected by Meadow (1969) who when comparing the identities of a group of deaf children of Deaf parents, and a group of deaf children of hearing parents, found that the children of Deaf parents were more likely to have a positive self-image, and to view their Deafness as a good thing, as well as demonstrating a greater understanding of the Deaf world and the opportunities that it can bring.

However, because 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents (Lane et al, 1996) this does not accurately represent the average life experiences of a deaf child at home, and on the contrary it has been found that those who are severely deaf from birth commonly have difficult, isolated childhoods (Ladd, 1991, Lane et al, 1996, Moore and Levitan, 1998, Lane et al, 2001, Ladd, 2003). Central to this is the fact that the perceptions of hearing parents are usually aligned with the hearing agenda and the medical model of disability, which therefore means that they perceive deafness as a disabling affliction, and react very negatively to their deaf child's diagnosis (Ladd, 2003). This is reflected in the following quote from a Deaf person:

[After my diagnosis] My parents were broken apart. My mother and father were crying – I'd never seen them do that before. A child of one or two usually makes their parents happy, but they were crying. I remember feeling that awful sinking feeling inside because I didn't know what I'd done... I didn't understand. I thought I was responsible for their tears and I was very worried... I was just watching the shock on people's faces and feeling very unhappy (cited in Corker, 1996: 69)

In line with the ideas of Goffman (1963), Leigh (2009: 65) argues that deaf children often internalise these negative feelings, and subsequently go on to develop a “stigmatized identity”. This is highlighted in an earlier study carried out by Gregory et al

(1995) who found that out of 71 deaf young people in hearing families, 97% described wanting to be hearing in childhood, with a primary reason for this desire being to avoid being seen as 'different'. The impact that the responses of others can have upon d/Deaf children (and adults) is discussed in more depth throughout the remainder of the chapter.

However, even in instances where hearing families respond positively to their child being diagnosed as deaf, literature indicates that they are usually unprepared to deal with the practical and emotional issues that run alongside it (Marschark, 2009). As alluded to earlier, such issues commonly begin to arise from the moment their child is diagnosed, with parents often being given misguided information by medical professionals, who advise them to continue treating their deaf child as though they are hearing, instead of providing them with information about Deaf culture and BSL (Kittel, 1991, Ladd, 2003). Although, and again sitting synonymously with arguments put forward by Goffman (1963), even if they were to be given information about the Deaf world, literature indicates that many hearing parents would remain eager for their deaf child to act and look as 'normal' as possible, and would subsequently encourage them to speak (Marschark, 2009). A number of reasons are attributed to this response including embarrassment (Gregory et al, 1995), fear that allowing their child to sign would impede their speech (Marschark, 2009), anxiety that if their child learns to sign they will lose them to the Deaf community (Leigh, 2009), and worry that they would not be able to survive in a hearing world if they were openly deaf (Corker, 1996).

Furthermore, it has been found that interaction between a hearing parent and their child is likely to be limited and disjointed, even in the context of the most supportive of families (Lane et al, 1996, Ladd, 2003). Subsequently, it is argued that this inevitable communication gap means that deaf children can reach the age of reason without any vehicle for communication or complex thought (Lawson, 2002). Without the availability of a common language (or indeed any language) a deaf child's life at home can become very difficult (Harris, 1995), with d/Deaf people recalling feelings of total isolation,

alienation, fear, confusion, loneliness and frustration as a result of this (Harris, 1995, Lane et al, 1996). This is illustrated in the following quote from a Deaf person (cited in Corker, 1996: 76):

At home my family used to sit down round the table and talk...but I couldn't be a part of that, and I could feel my emotions churning up and then I would just explode: 'What are you talking about? What about me? You never think about me!'. And they would apologise and try for five minutes, and then forget again...These kinds of situations affected my feelings about my identity very much. I often felt as if I was not there.

Literature suggests that, as well as negatively affecting a deaf child's self-esteem and perceptions of self, a lack of common fluent language between parent and child can also hinder the development of attributes that are vital for their successful social integration in to wider society (Corker, 1996). Without effective methods of communication, deaf children are often not provided explanations as to why people behave in the way that they do, and are less likely than their hearing peers to understand the context behind people's behaviours or the consequences of unfavourable actions (Corker, 1996, Marschark, 2009). This can be socially debilitating for deaf children, who can be ill-equipped to socialise appropriately, can have difficulties judging other people's behaviour in terms of their intentions, and can remain unaware of the norms and values that they are expected to abide by (Corker, 1996, Lane et al, 1996, Marschark, 2009). As a result of this it has been found that individuals with limited language development tend to exhibit more acting out behaviour due to their confusion about their internal sense of self<sup>26</sup> (Leigh, 2009).

Furthermore, because hearing parents often lack the communicative skill and relevant knowledge to deal with their deaf child's behaviour they have commonly been found to

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<sup>26</sup> While not a focus of this research, it has been found that these issues can also increase the likelihood of an individual becoming involved in criminal behaviour, with studies about the motives of Deaf sex offenders indicating that on some occasions their offending behaviour is the outcome of a lack a basic understanding of appropriate sexual norms (Iqbal, 2004, Bramley, 2007 Glickman et al, 2013).

become overprotective, and more controlling of their actions than parents of hearing children (Ladd, 1991, Lane et al, 1996). These actions can be problematic for deaf children as they can further curtail their ability to develop social independence, and can exacerbate any problems with social immaturity (Marschark, 2009). In addition to this, because the views of hearing parents are often aligned with the medical model of disability, they can often presume that their child's deafness is much more disabling than it actually is. According to Marschark (2009: 20) this can be problematic because eventually “the assumed inability becomes a real inability because the child does not have the opportunity to practice tasks and develop new levels of expertise”. Research has also indicated that a lack of ability to manage the behaviour of a deaf child can cause hearing parents to become dependent on utilising physical means of control to restrain their child, with Marschark (2009: 103) remarking that “Apparently when communication fails, punishment is a handy alternative”.

Thus far it has become clear that the home lives of many deaf children are littered with problems which largely stem from issues with communication and a lack of awareness on the part of their parents or medical professionals, whose understanding of deafness is commonly underpinned by the medical model of disability. While this has been found to have a profound impact on the formation of their identities, it is also important to consider their lives in education, as daily school interactions involving teachers and peers are shown to act as powerful forces in the shaping and sustaining of identities as well (Ladd, 2003, Leigh, 2009). As with the trajectory of their home life, the nature of a d/Deaf child's education experience is largely contingent upon whether they attend a school which is run based around the medical or social model of disability, and whether the use of sign language or spoken language is most prominent (Lane et al, 1996).

While most deaf children attend mainstream schools, a small percentage are enrolled at Deaf schools (Ladd, 2003), with this often being seen as a natural transition for those who are born to Deaf parents, as it is viewed as the next step in becoming a fully

participating member of the Deaf community (Lane et al, 1996). Although these children often view their attendance at such a school as a continuation and extension of their home lives, for deaf children of hearing parents, exposure to this type of establishment can be profoundly influential, as reflected in the following quote (Deaf person, cited in Corker, 1996: 85):

Those years were some of the best years of my life because they brought me out of my shell. My personality, everything about me changed in a big way... the main difference was that before Deaf school, I was very withdrawn and apart from everything, but as a result of going there I developed self-confidence and learned more language because I had access to both BSL and English.

The positive reaction to Deaf schooling seen above is substantiated by Mcilroy and Storbeck (2011) who found that after attending such a school, the d/Deaf children that they interviewed began to feel proud of their d/Deafness, and to subsequently discredit any previous stigmatised identity associated with being deaf. This complements Goffman's (1963: 17) argument that some individuals develop alternative identities that allow them to reject the stigma associated with a 'discrediting' characteristic.

Furthermore, it has been found that active participation in the back and forth of classroom discussions and debates is vital if any child is to reach their full educational capacity (Ladd, 2003), with such interaction allowing those enrolled at Deaf schools to acquire social and academic problem solving skills, as well as learning new vocabulary, and beginning to understand that there are other ways to look at things outside of their own perspective (Marschark, 1993). In addition to this, the presence of Deaf adults in Deaf schools is seen as being particularly beneficial as they can act as models for the development and learning of appropriate social behaviour and moral reasoning, both being things that a d/Deaf child may not have developed at home (Marschark, 2009).

Although attendance at a Deaf school has an overwhelmingly positive impact upon the lives of many deaf children<sup>27</sup>, such an experience again does not reflect that of the average deaf child, with the majority of deaf children from hearing families attending mainstream hearing schools (Lane et al, 1996). A deaf child's experience at this type of school is said to be largely dependent upon the perceptions and language capacity of their teachers, and while some are undoubtedly well-equipped, literature indicates that for the most part teachers are unable to ensure the full inclusion of a deaf child (Ladd, 1991, Ladd, 2003, Leigh, 2009), with Lane et al (1996: 411) arguing that “deaf children are drowning in mainstream schools”. When considering the impact that attending a mainstream school had upon his own life as a deaf child, Ladd (1991: 88) argues that “My experience of mainstreaming in England... leads me to believe that it is the most dangerous move yet against the early development of a deaf person's character, self-confidence and basic sense of identity”.

The primary reason that deaf children have such difficulty at mainstream schools again relates to an inability to communicate meaningfully with others (Lane, 1984, Ladd, 2003), with this continued lack of common language meaning that deaf children from hearing families can be deprived of any meaningful social interaction for most of their childhood (Lane et al, 1996, Sacks, 2009). Not only does this often prevent them from developing many important life skills (that they were also unable to develop at home), but it has been found that their educational achievements inevitably suffer as well, with the average academic level of a deaf school leaver being equivalent to that of an eight year old (Ladd, 2003). As well as making social exclusion and a lack of future opportunity more likely, struggling at school due to their inability to hear is often seen by the individual as being a “subtle devaluator” of Deaf identity and capability (Leigh,

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<sup>27</sup> While these positive experiences are said to have become common place for those attending Deaf schools in recent decades, the history of d/Deaf education has been much more turbulent. Central to this was the aforementioned international conference of deaf educators held in Milan in 1880 which had a profound influence on d/Deaf education. For the 100 years following this, oral methods of teaching became pervasive, and consequently, the lives of the children attending these schools were often difficult, and their educational attainments low (Gillard, 2011). As will be seen throughout the remainder of the chapter, such experiences mirror those of many deaf children who attend mainstream schools as in both instances the educations of these children are organised around the hearing agenda, and the medical model of deafness.

2009: 97), with deaf students at mainstream schools often speaking of feeling 'stupid', 'slow' and 'ashamed' (Ladd, 1991, Ladd, 2003, Leigh, 2009).

Furthermore, it has been argued that for a child to be totally integrated into school life they need total access to other children, and while deaf children who attend a Deaf school often have this access, the communication barriers faced by mainstream school attendees commonly make it difficult, as shown by Lane et al (1996) who found that hearing children often communicate with their deaf peers in a similar way to their pets. In addition to this, literature indicates that many deaf people in mainstream schools become victims of bullying by other students, who, in line with the hearing agenda and the principles of the medical model of disability, hold a stigmatised view of 'deafness' (Leigh, 2009), and do not fully understand why it is that the deaf child may struggle to participate in class, answer questions or follow conversations (Ladd, 2003). This is highlighted by Ladd (1991: 91) who, in his biographical account recalls statements such as "He has a hearing aid so he can hear normally can't he?" being made about him, as well as being met with cries of "Oh sir don't put me with him" when his peers were paired with him.

As a result of this, the lives of deaf children who are born into hearing families and attend mainstream schools can become characterised by large amounts of stress, anxiety and frustration as a result of the fact that their whole existence lies within the realms of the hearing world (Leigh, 2009, Sacks, 2009). Ladd (1991: 94) again alluded to this when discussing the sheer intensity of the pressure he felt to lead what others thought of as a 'normal' life, and made a list of all the things that he had difficulty doing as a teenager to illustrate his point, as outlined below:

TV – lip reading strain. Talking – ditto. Lectures... - ditto. Music – ditto. Radio ditto. Sports? The game is fine but what do you do when all the lads head for the pavilion afterwards? Be a bore and drop out. Or sit there pretending to laugh and smile, trying to drink yourself out of the dull ache of boredom, with no place to relax on a Saturday night when everyone else is

relaxing? So ditto. Theatre ditto. Telephone ditto. Politics ditto.  
Concerts ditto. Sex and romance ditto.

Upon examining the lived realities of deaf children it has become clear that their experiences growing up in a hearing world can be difficult and isolated, with individuals often being faced with an array of issues that can drastically affect their social abilities and perceptions of self. The fact that their young lives are commonly spent with hearing people who view deafness as a defect means that they often appear to internalise stigmatised identities, as well as being unable to participate actively in either home or school life. These findings are important to this study, as it has been argued that core parts of an individual's identity are formed throughout their childhood, with Deaf adults commonly being shown to become resentful of hearing people as a result of their experiences with them growing up (Ladd, 1991). Therefore, in order to gain an accurate understanding about the lived realities of d/Deaf prisoners and to sufficiently explore the role of imported identity in prison, this thesis considers their lives as children, with questions about these experiences being incorporated into the interview schedule<sup>28</sup>.

When considering the way d/Deaf people experience school, Goffman's (1961) total institution framework again becomes relevant, as alongside prisons he also placed schools (specifically boarding schools) on the total institution continuum, and felt that in this type of environment, despite being less intense, pupils are still expected to behave as part of a "batch" (Ibid: 17). More recently it has been argued that schools, colleges and universities more broadly ought to be included within the framework as they too are seen to enforce an alternative culture upon students (to some extent), and, like other total institutions, present unity, compliance and conformity as goals (Fitz-Gibbon, Canterbury and Litten, 1999). With this in mind it is therefore important to consider whether the experiences of d/Deaf people in prison mirror their experiences of school (particularly if they attended a mainstream school), as it could be suggested that for individuals who do not necessarily fit the mould of what is expected

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<sup>28</sup> See Chapter Five for further information about this.

in either establishment, their experiences of the two may not be so dissimilar.

## **d/Deaf Identities**

So far this chapter has explored the research pertaining to the lived realities of d/Deaf children who often grow up in a hearing world, and the impact which their experiences can have on their identities. From this, the circumstances within which deaf people become aware of the existence of a Deaf culture are now discussed, along with a consideration of the adult lives of d/Deaf people and the complexities of their identities. This is important in the context of this research as seven of the prisoners interviewed identified as being culturally and linguistically Deaf, which therefore means that in order to meaningfully consider the role of their imported identities in prison, the relevant literature must be examined.

The fact that the lives of d/Deaf children are so varied means that the point at which they become aware of the existence of a Deaf culture also varies. Whilst those who have Deaf parents or attend Deaf schools often learn BSL and identify as being Deaf from a young age (Lane et al, 1996), children from hearing families who attend mainstream schools often do not learn about such things until much later in their lives (Ladd, 2003)<sup>29</sup>. Literature indicates that this new found comprehension often causes individuals to feel angry and resentful; angry at their parents for depriving them of the opportunity to participate in the Deaf world, angry at their doctors for misinforming them, angry at their peers for making them feel inferior, and also angry for themselves for being forced to spend many years feeling like an outsider when an alternative was available (Ladd, 1991, Corker, 1996). The resentment felt towards those who deprived them of such knowledge often goes on to extend to a resentment of the hearing world as a whole, with such resentment commonly being found to form a core part of the identities of Deaf people, many of whom perceive themselves as being profoundly different from those who are hearing, and wish to live separately from them (Lane et al, 1996). With this in mind, this research considers whether such resentment impacts

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<sup>29</sup> These individuals commonly learn about the Deaf world and the existence of the social model of disability after coming into contact with Deaf people, attending Deaf clubs or pubs, or via the internet (Leigh, 2009).

upon the way that Deaf people behave in a controlled environment like prison that is mainly composed of hearing people.

After learning about the existence of a Deaf culture, many deaf people begin to socialise with Deaf people and learn to communicate in BSL, with such activities commonly being found to allow individuals to move on from being outcast and isolated to instead feeling 'normal' and 'accepted', in ways that they did not feel possible (Lane et al, 1996). As a result of learning to use BSL, individuals report feeling a great sense of relief at being able to express themselves to those who can relate to their life histories and lived realities (Ladd, 1991). Furthermore, exposure to the Deaf world reveals to individuals that it is possible to live full lives without sound, and subsequently introduces them to visual and tactile ways of behaving, including using touch to express warmth and friendliness, and for getting people's attention (Corker, 1996, Leigh, 2009). Individuals also commonly become aware of the availability of specialised equipment that can help them to live without sound during their day to day lives such as vibrating alarm clocks, flashing fire alarms, and minicom<sup>30</sup> (McCulloch, 2010).

Literature suggests that an individual's life can be transformed as a result of this exposure to Deaf life, which can subsequently alter their perceptions about d/Deafness, as shown here by Ladd (1991: 95):

That's it...I'm Deaf. What does it mean now? It means something good at last...So *this* is what it means to be Deaf! It means to have a language you can relax and communicate easily in. Just as others speak and listen and relax... I can sign and watch and relax. And I can learn things far more easily too! ... Yes, that's it, I'm a Deaf person. I am an ordinary person. But I am a Deaf person too. Deaf people *are* normal people. They just have a language of their own like any group of people.

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<sup>30</sup> A minicom is a telephone that uses written text as the mode of communication. It is also known as a text phone and has a keyboard attached, which enables text to be transmitted down the phone line. Minicomms can be used to communicate with other minicom users, and can also be used to communicate with a person who prefers to converse in spoken word. In the latter instance a text relay service must be used which transfers text in to spoken word, and vice versa (The National Deaf Children's Society, 2016).

After beginning to identify as being Deaf, individuals often go on to value their Deafness to such an extent that they view the 'Deaf community' as their extended family (see, for example Ladd, 2003), as shown by one Deaf person (cited in Ladd, 2003: 361) who stated that "I think of the Deaf club as my home – it's where I grew up. And the people there are my family. But recently some of them have died – It's really broken my heart because they are part of me". The strength of this identification emphasises the extent to which the Deaf community is valued by Deaf people, and highlights the fact that profoundly Deaf people have created a unique and complex visual culture for themselves that allows them to thrive within a society from which they are largely isolated. Such findings make it necessary to consider whether it is possible for Deaf people to form a Deaf culture or indeed act as culturally Deaf in an enclosed environment like prison.

Thus far it has been indicated that deaf people begin to flourish once they enter the Deaf world. However, it is important to avoid over romanticising the lives of these individuals as literature also indicates that in reality many Deaf people continue to struggle with their perceptions of self even after becoming integrated into Deaf life (Corker, 1996). Such struggles are seen to be particularly prominent for Deaf people who come from hearing families or attended mainstream schools (or both), because their 'new' identity often clashes profoundly with their life-long perceptions and experiences (Turner, 1994a). These individuals often discuss trying to 'reprogramme' themselves to be Deaf whilst attempting to disengage from the stigma that they had previously internalised (Leigh, 2009). Identity confusion can also be a problem for those who have identified as being Deaf from a young age because despite having its own distinct cultural ways, the Deaf world remains a subgroup of wider society, where the hearing agenda prevails (Turner, 1994a). This means that in their day to day lives Deaf people are unavoidably part of the hearing world, and can subsequently report feeling stuck between the hearing and Deaf worlds, whilst not feeling fully part of either. This is reflected in the following quote from a Deaf person (cited in Corker, 1996:

107):

I get a picture of myself in the after stage as being more like a chameleon... a creature that changes colour to merge with its surroundings. For the chameleon it is a defence mechanism and it sets out to confuse – to protect it from predators and to hide from its prey.

This draws on the notion of 'passing' discussed by Goffman (1963) as this individual is indicating that they adjust their identity based upon the context of the situation they are in, thus showing that identifying as Deaf does not necessarily protect an individual from being affected by the stigma others assign to d/Deafness. In line with this, it has been found that such identity confusion can cause anxiety for many Deaf people, who often report feeling torn between being who they want to be, and who society expects them to be, thus insinuating that although being Deaf may help an individual to overcome certain issues, the misalignment between the Deaf world and hearing worlds, means that they may become faced with a new set of problems (Marshcark, 2009). With this in mind, this thesis considers whether the dominant perceptions inside penal establishments alter the way in which Deaf prisoners respond to and experience their environment.

Furthermore, although Deaf Studies literature often focuses primarily on the role of d/Deafness within an individual's identity, it has also been acknowledged that d/Deaf people are just as complex as hearing people, and as such, their identities are made up of a multitude of different components, including gender, sexuality, ethnicity and educational status, which means that while d/Deafness is likely to shape an individual's existence to some extent, it is not always a defining characteristic (Mcilroy and Storbeck, 2011). Taking this into consideration, this research acknowledges that an individual's d/Deafness is not the only part of their identity that could influence the way they experience prison, and rather that their lived realities could indeed be moulded by an array of identity components. However, equally important is the fact that such complexity is largely overlooked by members of the hearing world, who, in line with the principles of the medical model of disability, often fail to sufficiently

consider the intersectionality of those they view as 'disabled' and instead tend to equate disability with 'similarity' (Leigh, 2009). Therefore, because the prison estate is shown to exist inside the boundaries of the hearing world, it is necessary to explore whether these values impact upon the prison regime and the behaviours of staff members, and whether this in turn affects the lived realities of d/Deaf prisoners.

In terms of the denial of identity complexity, this issue has also been applied to the widely used definitions of d/Deafness which imply that only two identities are possible for deaf people; being either Deaf or deaf (Mcilroy and Storbeck, 2011). It is argued that constructing such clear and defined meanings of d/Deafness undermines the complexity of people's experience of it, as although people may have many similar experiences, each individual views life through their own unique biographical lens (Corker, 1996, Sacks, 2009). Furthermore, the implication that members of the Deaf world are united as one and adhere to them same norms and values, have also been subject to criticism, with it being argued that d/Deaf identities are in fact fluid, with individuals shaping their identities in their own unique ways (Bahan, 1994, Turner, 1994a). This is reflected by Montgomery (1994: 261) who believes that "definitions are for dictionaries, and... do... not accord with complex reality in the outer world at large". This is illustrated further in the following quote from a deaf person:

Quite frankly I have had enough of people talking glibly about "Deaf culture" and "Deaf identity" – trendy terms devoid of meaning, catering more to facile expressions of self-deluding fantasy than might seem excusable in the more open and equal society we are all supposed to be striving for. I am sorry, but I term ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt and China "cultures"; not the mere chance of being born hearing impaired or acquiring it in later life... Personally, I hate being deaf... I cope but that is without bigoted deaf snobs telling me "how deafness is enjoyable and something to be proud of (See Hear, April 1994: 25 cited in Turner, 1994b: 337).

Therefore, when exploring the lived realities of d/Deaf prisoners it is essential to

remain aware of these complexities, as in line with the principles of the importation model the nature of an individual's identity may indeed mould their experience of prison.

### **Being a d/Deaf Adult in a Hearing World**

As noted throughout this chapter, while Deaf people may perceive themselves as being inherently different to members of the hearing world (Ladd, 2003), they, along with deaf/HoH people inevitably and unavoidably exist inside of it. With this in mind, the lived realities of d/Deaf adults will now be explored, along with a consideration of the extent that the misalignment of the Deaf and hearing worlds impacts upon them. This is important as in Chapters Six and Eight consideration is given as to whether the issues that they face as a consequence of such misalignment also affect their experience of prison.

The fact that the Deaf world does not exist autonomously from the hearing world means that d/Deaf adults are usually required to spend significant periods of time in places where sound and verbal communication are key, which in turn means that activities ranging from employment, to being hospitalised to simply going shopping can become difficult (Ladd, 2003). Although much of this chapter has been focused upon the lives of Deaf people, it is important to acknowledge that deaf/HoH people may also experience such issues as a consequence of the fact that they do not have access to a key part of the hearing world; sound, and therefore, depending upon how they respond to their hearing loss<sup>31</sup>, they often experience a variety of practical issues in hearing oriented arenas (Higgins, 1980). Hence it must be considered whether sound plays an important role in prison, and if the experiences of deaf/HoH prisoners are altered by their hearing issues; this will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

With regards to the lives of Deaf adults, a lack of capacity to hear combined with language barriers and cultural difference can contribute to further difficulties within

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<sup>31</sup> i.e. whether they opt to wear hearing aids or instead choose to conceal it.

hearing oriented places. Deaf individuals commonly continue to experience many of the same issues that deaf children experience, throughout adulthood, as discussed by one Deaf person (Cited in Higgins, 2002: 27) who states that “Hearing people are lost in the Deaf world, just as Deaf people are lost in the hearing world”. Although a Deaf person may view their Deafness culturally rather than medically, and reject being labelled as disabled, it has been argued that such rejection is often redundant, and gets overridden in environments where the hearing agenda is dominant (Leigh, 2009). Leigh (2009) illustrates this argument by stating that while a Deaf person would not be seen as disabled whilst at the theatre if they were able to follow the play by using text captions and therefore had access to the same information, if the same person was at an airport and missed their flight because they could not hear an audio based announcement which informed passengers of its departure, then in this instance their deafness would indeed be disabling. This indicates that d/Deafness can be disabling irrespective of how an individual identifies with it, thus raising questions as to whether d/Deafness is a disabling characteristic in the prison environment, and whether this in-turn impacts upon the way d/Deaf people experience prison.

When considering the lives of d/Deaf adults, their experiences of employment are key, as it has been argued that an individual's job is a critical identity determinant and can be influential in terms of their self-image (Leigh, 2009). Like the experiences of d/Deaf children in a mainstream school environment, Deaf adults often struggle at their workplace, with language barriers making it difficult to participate in meetings or training events, to pick up on unofficial but important information that other people find out through 'informal chit chat', to gain a solid grasp of the working culture and norms of their colleagues, or to access opportunities for career development (Dickinson, 2009)<sup>32</sup>. While Goffman (1961) does not specifically include the workplace in his definition of total institutions, it could be argued that because the way Deaf people experience the workplace appears to very much mirror many deaf children's

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<sup>32</sup> While this is being discussed in the context of the workplace, it is important to acknowledge that it also applies to other hearing oriented places, such as children's parent's evenings, educational study and involvement in sports teams (Lane et al, 1996).

experience of school (which Fitz-Gibbon et al (1999) argue represents a form of total institution), the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners may also to some extent mirror their experiences at work, as it represents another regulated arena with its own culture that is usually organised around the hearing agenda.

As well as facing practical issues relating to language difference and conception of sound, d/Deaf people may be met with further challenges in the workplace (and other hearing oriented arenas) due to the perceptions of their employer/peers, which again often sit in accordance with the medical model of disability (Ladd, 1991, Leigh, 2009). Consequently, it has been found that many d/Deaf people are either not being hired or being denied opportunities for advancement as a result of such attitudinal barriers, with a survey conducted by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf<sup>33</sup> (2006) reporting that over half of their respondents rated their employers attitudes as being the most important barrier to employment that they faced. It is argued that by subscribing to stereotypical perceptions of d/Deaf people as being less capable and less intelligent, hearing employers often presume that they will be unable to fulfil the expectations of the job (Leigh, 2009). As a result of this d/Deaf people often report feeling as though they must go the extra mile to demonstrate their adequacy, despite illusions of equality (Ibid), as shown in the following extract from Ladd's (1991: 94-95) biographical account:

Work with deaf children? Yes, why not give it a try? He gets letters from teacher training colleges in London, Oxford, Manchester, saying no – he cannot teach deaf children because he is deaf. The ultimate blow! Tears of rage, tears of grief. Not much has ever hurt like this. He says to himself, 'How can they reject me without meeting me? I can pass for normal amongst hearing people, so I could even fool them in the interview'

This quote illustrates the extent to which being stigmatised by hearing people can impact upon the feelings of wellbeing of a d/Deaf person, and shows that Ladd was still to some extent associating his d/Deafness with stigma despite identifying as being

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<sup>33</sup> Now known as Action on Hearing Loss.

Deaf. This was shown via his willingness to conceal his d/Deafness and to attempt to 'pass' as hearing in a bid to appear as he puts it, "normal", thus again highlighting the complexity of the identities of those who are d/Deaf, and making it necessary to consider whether the d/Deaf prisoners interviewed as part of this research responded to their d/Deafness in prison by attempting to conceal it, and if so, how this impacted upon their lived realities.

A final point to make when considering the misalignment of the Deaf and hearing worlds relates to the fact that those who identify as being culturally Deaf also commonly engage in a number of Deaf behaviours, including the use of touch, animated gesticulation and prolonged eye contact (Ladd, 2003). Although these behaviours are seen by many Deaf people as being important tools for expression (Lane et al, 1996), they have been found to exacerbate the difficulties that they experience in hearing oriented environments. Such issues are particularly prominent with regards to the use of touch, with excessive touching being found to provoke negative responses from hearing people, who often view it as inappropriate because it contravenes their cultural norms (Corker, 1996: 104). The fact that certain Deaf norms are not reciprocated or understood by the hearing world is something is important to this thesis, and in Chapter Eight consideration is given as to whether Deaf prisoners utilise such behaviours in prison, and if so how their peers/staff members who are likely to be hearing, respond.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the lived realities of d/Deaf people and has considered the complexity of d/Deafness. Distinctions have been made throughout between the perceptions and values of those who are deaf and those who identify as being culturally Deaf. The dichotomy between Deafness and deafness is used throughout the thesis when exploring the experiences of Deaf prisoners and deaf prisoners respectively, with consideration being given as to whether the way an individual identifies with their d/Deafness impacts upon the way they experience prison, and

indeed if the pre-prison characteristics imported into prison by d/Deaf people go on to mould their penal reality.

In spite of the fact that deafness and Deafness are often presented as being distinct identity categories it has become apparent that in reality there is no one size fits all model to explain d/Deaf identities and, rather, just like the identities of hearing people, they are made up of a wide array of components, and are shaped by each individual's life histories and perceptions. This chapter has shown that despite identifying with their Deafness differently, the experiences of Deaf individuals often overlap with those of HoH/deaf people because of the labels assigned to them by wider society. Because the norms and principles of the Deaf world are so misaligned with those of the dominant hearing world, Deaf values often become obscured, with Deaf people commonly being stigmatised and excluded in the home, school and workplace. Chapter Eight explores whether such value clashes also impact upon the experiences of Deaf prisoners, and if the lived realities of Deaf people in prison echo their experiences in other hearing oriented arenas elsewhere in society. Attention is also given to whether HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, with their lack of hearing and/or cultural difference can adapt to the penal regime, as well as whether the penal regime can indeed be adapted to meet their unique needs. Alongside this, the extent to which the models put forward by Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) and their later interpreters, can be applied to the experiences of prisoners who are as 'different' as those who are d/Deaf is also examined.

After considering the relevant prison studies and Deaf Studies literature in the previous two chapters, Chapter four explores findings from the existing literature relating to the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners specifically. Although this literature is limited, its consideration is necessary as it provides an overview of what is currently known about the imprisonment of d/Deaf people, which is then built upon in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight respectively.

## CHAPTER FOUR: d/DEAFNESS IN PRISON - A LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an outline of what is currently known about the lived realities of d/Deaf<sup>34</sup> prisoners in England and Wales, and engages with existing literature in order to do so. Because the availability of published empirical academic literature about d/Deaf prisoners in England and Wales specifically is so sparse (Ackerman, 1998, McCulloch, 2010, Gahir et al, 2011), the scope is extended to include relevant American findings<sup>35</sup>, as well as a variety of other types of sources, such as policy documents, case studies, reports produced by charities, and unpublished dissertations. As stated in Chapter One, there is a consensus in existing literature that d/Deaf prisoners suffer disproportionately whilst they are incarcerated, with sources attributing issues such as communication barriers, relationships with peers and staff members, and a lack of availability of resources as being central to this. These findings are examined throughout the chapter, and are important to the thesis as they provided an indication of some of the issues that the prisoners included in the research sample may be facing.

Within this chapter consideration is also given to the role of the Equality Act 2010, as this legal framework outlines principles which theoretically ought to protect HoH/d/Deaf prisoners from being discriminated against as a direct result of their d/Deafness. As well as providing an outline of the applicable sections of the Act, some of the criticisms that have arisen in terms of its effectiveness are also examined. The exploration of such findings is vital to this research as in order to fully address the component question 'Is the prison service able to meet the needs of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?' it is necessary to consider whether the rights of the d/Deaf prisoners included in the research sample are being sufficiently protected by the aforementioned

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<sup>34</sup> HoH prisoners are not mentioned here, as their experiences are not meaningfully considered in existing literature.

<sup>35</sup> While this does mean that such research is not necessarily completely contextually relevant, the inclusion of American literature was deemed as appropriate because many of the themes discussed do in fact align with the literature about d/Deaf prisoners from England and Wales.

legislation, and if the Prison Service are in turn acting legally.

This chapter was initially drafted at the beginning of my PhD journey, before I had become fully aware of the differences between Deafness and deafness. When I came back to edit it, I noticed that my differentiation between the two types of d/Deafness was inconsistent throughout. In a bid to present the information as accurately as possible, I went back to each relevant source to confirm whether it was indeed written about deaf or Deaf prisoners (or both). However, when doing this it became clear that inconsistency was a broader problem, and although certain sources did differentiate between the two sufficiently (Young et al, 2000, Gerrard, 2001), others failed to do so in any consistent way (McCulloch, 2010, 2012, Gahir, et al, 2011). With this in mind, throughout this chapter the term d/Deaf is used in all instances where it was not possible to decipher whether the information provided related to deaf or Deaf prisoners, or both<sup>36</sup>.

## **Legislation**

First of all, it is necessary to provide an outline of the applicable elements of the relevant legislation, as, theoretically, this ought to mould the way d/Deaf prisoners experience the penal environment (McCulloch, 2012). As stated in Chapter One, the primary legal framework in place to protect the rights of d/Deaf prisoners is the Equality Act 2010 which defines unlawful discrimination as treating someone worse than others because of a protected characteristic. The Act outlines nine of such characteristics, including age, sexuality and disability, with the rights of those who are d/Deaf being protected under the characteristic of disability, which is defined as “A physical or mental impairment... [that] has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities” (Equality Act, 2010: 6.1). While the existence of such legislation is seen as a step in the right direction with

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<sup>36</sup> Given the nature of the research it would have been beneficial to split the chapter into two sections; one about the experiences of deaf prisoners and the other about the culturally unique experiences of Deaf prisoners, however the ambiguity within existing literature meant that again, this was not possible, and therefore instead both levels of d/Deafness are referred to throughout.

regards to the rights of disabled people, it has been argued that the above definition remains problematic because it is underpinned by the medical model of disability, and suggests that disabled people are not capable of that which is 'normal' (Barnes, 1991, Barnes et al, 2002)<sup>37</sup>. Deaf advocates often see the Act as undermining the existence of the Deaf world, and argue that a lack of acknowledgement of the social model of disability means that Deaf people have little choice but to accept a label with which they do not identify if they are to be protected under the Act (Oliver and Barnes, 2011), thus furthering discussions from Chapter Three regarding the consequences of the misalignment of Deaf life with the dominant hearing world. This is important within the context of this research as it indicates that because the Prison Service is required to adhere with the principles set out by the Act, it too is therefore organised via the medical model of disability, as to be explored further in Chapter Six.

With regards to the conditions implemented by the Act, it stipulates that, as far as is reasonable, service providers must make 'reasonable adjustments' to the service to ensure equality for all groups, and specifies that that such adjustments must be made for disabled people under three main circumstances. The first where a service provider has a provision, policy or criterion that places a disabled person at a "substantial disadvantage" in comparison to those who are not disabled, the second where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to a non-disabled person, and finally:

Where a disabled person would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to provide the auxiliary aid (Equality Act, 2010: 20.5).

In terms of the application of these principles to the Prison Service specifically, in 2011

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<sup>37</sup> Although the sources cited here were published prior to the implementation of the Equality Act 2010, their critiques of disability legislation remain relevant.

a Prison Service Instruction (PSI) titled 'Ensuring Equality' was introduced which provided some further detail, and stated that governors must consider what prisoners with a disability might reasonably need and ensure that reasonable adjustments are made for them. The document stipulated that if an establishment is unable to make the necessary adjustments, then they must transfer such prisoners to another establishment in a timely fashion (MOJ, 2011a: 6)<sup>38</sup>.

However, even with such clarifications the Act has been criticised for failing to provide a specific definition of what would be classed as 'reasonable'. McCulloch (2010, 2012) argues that this ambiguity is problematic because it gives service providers the power to interpret what is 'reasonable' based upon their own subjective perceptions, thus undermining their accountability. In the context of the Prison Service, the aforementioned PSI (MOJ, 2011a: 21) attempts to provide some clarity by stating that “a reasonable adjustment should enable a disabled prisoner to take full part in the normal life of the establishment”. However, this is again problematic as it also goes on to say that “The law does not specify what factors you should take into account when considering what is ‘reasonable’. In the event of any legal action, reasonableness is determined by the courts on an individual basis” (Ibid).

McCulloch (2010, 2012) argues that the impact of the Act across the Prison Service is also undermined by the fact that services such as education, health care and certain rehabilitative courses are commonly provided by external agencies, as this blurs the boundaries of responsibility in terms of who is required to ensure that reasonable adjustments are being made. He argues that this gives the government and prison officials an opportunity to shift the blame about the lack of available provisions on to external agencies (Ibid). This is shown in the following quote from Maria Eagle (2010: Unpaginated), the then Minister of State for Prisons and Probation, who in a letter to the Howard League for Penal Reform about d/Deaf prisoners stated that:

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<sup>38</sup> However, the PSI (2011a: 6) also states that delays are acceptable in instances where the proposed receiving establishment cannot provide appropriate facilities

Education and other courses are provided by specialist providers such as the local education authority and we would expect the provider to consider the delivery of courses or education classes to those prisoners with hearing impairments.

When considering the application of the Equality Act 2010 to d/Deaf people in prison, there is consensus within existing literature that neither it, nor the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 which preceded it and enforced similar conditions, sufficiently protect their rights (Izycky and Gahir, 2007, Leigh, Francis and Co, 2008, McCulloch, 2010, 2012). These sources present findings which suggest that d/Deaf prisoners suffer disproportionately as a consequence of this, with Izycky and Gahir (2007) and McCulloch (2010, 2012) arguing that such treatment can even equate to a violation of a their Human Rights, as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998<sup>39</sup>. A lack of resource allocation is cited in most existing sources (including those which do not actually discuss legislation) as being a primary reason for this disproportionate suffering, with it being widely argued that the lives of d/Deaf prisoners become littered with 'extra' issues because the Prison Service is not equipped to make adjustments to meet their needs (Fisken, 1994, Ackerman, 1998, Gibbs and Ackerman, 1999, Young et al, 2000, Gerrard, 2001, McCulloch, 2010, 2012).

With regards to resource allocation, existing literature indicates that, as in wider society, sound and spoken word are both central in prison, and therefore in order to be able to participate fully in prison life, individuals who cannot hear require access to specialist equipment such as vibrating alarm clocks, hearing aids, visual fire alarms, minicoms, subtitled enabled televisions, and hearing loop systems<sup>40</sup> (Fisken, 1994,

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<sup>39</sup> As part of these arguments four of the 16 fundamental Human Rights outlined by the Act are questioned; *Article 3*: No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, *Article 5*: The right to liberty and security of person, *Article 8*: The right to respect for private and family life, and, *Article 14*: The rights and freedoms set out should be secured without discrimination on any grounds

<sup>40</sup> Hearing loop systems are a type of sound system used by people with hearing aids for the purpose of assisting them to hear in certain, often noisy environments. They consist of a physical wire that is placed around the perimeter of a particular environment, which produces a magnetic field that is picked up by hearing aids when they are on a particular setting. The signals emitted from the magnetic field are then transferred back into audio, which minimises unwanted background noise, and maximises the quality of the sound for the hearing aid user (Hearing Link, N.D).

Ackerman, 1998, McCulloch, 2010, 2012). Despite this, sources suggest that such provision in prisons is limited, with a HM Prison Service (HMPS) survey revealing that in 1996 no prisons had teletext TV and only 3 out of 118 had a hearing loop system, and a more recent review carried out by HMIP in 2009 showing that although provision had improved somewhat, it was still minimal with only 17% prisons having hearing loops, and only 15% being able to provide teletext TVs, vibrating clocks or hearing aids (Ibid: 29).

Furthermore, the fact that Deaf people commonly communicate in BSL means that as well as access to specialised equipment, they also need access to other people who can use sign language whilst in prison. While there are currently no accurate figures available regarding the numbers of d/Deaf people in prison across England and Wales (McCulloch, 2010), existing sources estimate that there are very few individuals who are profoundly Deaf (Gerrard, 2001, Gahir et al, 2011). As a result of this it is believed that the majority of such individuals are likely to spend their sentence without the presence of anyone else who is able to use BSL (Gerrard, 2001, HMIP, 2009, McCulloch, 2010, 2012). In the absence of staff members or peers who can sign, access to a BSL interpreter would allow Deaf prisoners to overcome obstacles relating to communication, however, it has been reported that interpreters are not readily available in prisons in England and Wales, and when they are provision is often erratic, and not always suitable (Fisken, 1994, Gerrard, 2001, Izycky and Gahir, 2007, Churchill, 2008, McCulloch, 2010, 2012). Although, it is important to acknowledge that there do appear to be some examples of good practice in terms of the treatment of Deaf prisoners in England and Wales, with one prison being commended for its attempts to make provisions for Deaf prisoners (Butler Trust, 2016). Central to this was their creation of a Deaf sex offender training programme which has been tailored to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of Deaf people in prison, and uses multiple BSL interpreters to overcome communication barriers (Payne and O'Connor, 2013).

As well as requiring access to specialised equipment and/or BSL interpreters, it is

argued that for a d/Deaf prisoner to participate fully in prison life, surrounding staff members generally need to partake in training programmes in order to understand what support they need (Gerrard, 2001, McCulloch, 2010, 2012). However, the availability of such training opportunities appears to be sparse, with sources showing that staff members commonly treat d/Deaf prisoners differently because they do not know how to meet their needs (HMIP, 2009, McCulloch, 2010, 2012). With regards to training opportunities, perhaps the most important change in recent years came in 2006 when every prison governor in England and Wales was mandated to appoint a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO), whose job it was to assess each prisoner's needs, and to link them to the appropriate support whilst in the facility (HMIP, 2009). Whilst such an addition to each prison was intended to improve lives of 'disabled' prisoners, findings from HMIP (2009: 39) showed that only 11% of DLOs received any formal training in regards to their role, and in contrast reported a number of frustrations including a lack of training, time, funding and support. The review also revealed that there was no standardised disability training available to prison staff more broadly, with only 19% of DLOs reporting that they felt completely capable of meeting the needs of prisoners with a hearing impairment (Ibid). Such findings are supported by a number of d/Deaf prisoners in McCulloch's (2010: 51) study who suggested that "although there were good intentions from the DLO [available at their prison] they had been unable to help... because there was no BSL interpreter available in the prison"<sup>41</sup>.

Findings presented throughout this section of the chapter suggest that reasonable adjustments are not being made for d/Deaf people in prison on any consistent basis with regards to staff training, specialised equipment or access to BSL interpreters. This indicates that the Prison service is not necessarily able to meet the needs of a group of prisoners who are as 'different' as those who are d/Deaf, and may consequently be violating the legal duty imposed by the Equality Act 2010. Although many of the sources cited were published prior to the Equality Act 2010, findings from McCulloch

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<sup>41</sup> The presence of a DLO is no longer mandatory in England and Wales

(2012) suggest that reasonable adjustments are still not being made even after the implementation of the Act. With this in mind, Chapters Six, Seven and Eight explore whether the rights of the d/Deaf prisoners included in the research sample are indeed being sufficiently protected by the Act, as well as how the staff members interviewed interpret and implement it<sup>42</sup>.

## **The Disproportionate Pains of d/Deaf Prisoners**

Consideration is now given to the reasons why d/Deaf prisoners are said to suffer disproportionately during their time in custody without access to specialist equipment/BSL interpreters, with the most prominent themes from existing sources being outlined as follows.

### Inability to understand the prison regime

Without access to the necessary equipment, d/Deaf prisoners have been found to have difficulties understanding the penal regime, or what is expected of them as a 'prisoner'. In his unpublished dissertation Fiske (1994) argues that for Deaf prisoners who cannot comprehend written English, this difficulty often begins as soon as they enter prison as they may not understand the contents of the written information pack which is provided to every prisoner upon admission. This is supported by Gerrard (2001: 20), who, in a report conducted on behalf of BID<sup>43</sup> which collated information gathered from the Deaf prison project<sup>44</sup>, found that 83% of the Deaf prisoners included in the

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<sup>42</sup> It is important to acknowledge that in April 2015, The Care Act 2014 was implemented nationwide, which introduced a statutory framework for the delivery of social care in prisons. The Act places responsibility for adult social care of prisoners with the local authority in whose area the prison is located, which in theory means that where adults in prison have care and support needs, they should have their needs assessed by local authorities. The Act states that when a prisoner meets the eligibility criteria, they should have services provided by the local authority in question, and when they do not meet the threshold for support they must have their needs met by prison staff as part of their duty of care responsibilities. While the Act may indeed alter the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, it was not implemented until almost all of the fieldwork had been carried out, and therefore will not be a focus of this research.

<sup>43</sup> BID is a registered charity that works in partnership with individuals who have what they call a "sensory impairment". It focuses particularly on Deaf awareness and culture, and aims to help Deaf people "achieve greater control over their lives" (BID, N.D: Unpaginated)

<sup>44</sup> This was a pilot that took place with Deaf prisoners in Birmingham which aimed to identify Deaf prisoners, assess their needs and to help to improve their access to necessary resources and services whilst in prison (Gerrard, 2001).

project who received an information pack, did not understand it. This is problematic as it means that they are deprived of information which explains what to expect while they are there, their rights, and the rules and regulations that they must follow whilst in prison.

Fisken (1994) goes on to argue that whilst an inability to comprehend the information pack may not be so detrimental to hearing prisoners who are able to pick up on such information through informal communication with their peers, it is for Deaf prisoners, who he believes due to a lack of common language are often unable to engage with such communication. Findings from McCulloch (2010, 2012) substantiate this argument for two reasons, the first being that all of the d/Deaf prisoners included in his study stated that they had issues understanding the penal regime, and the second being highlighted below in a quote from a representative of a charity involved in working with members of the Deaf community who was also included in his study:

Whilst prison is a new environment for everyone, for Deaf prisoners this is even more so. For hearing prisoners we can observe and pick up on things through a process similar to osmosis, for Deaf people that simply is not there and having to learn a completely new culture is much more difficult. It would take much longer to have similar processes take place, and to understand the rules and adjust to them, unless such rules are explained in BSL (cited in McCulloch, 2010: 54).

McCulloch (2010, 2012) argues that a lack of understanding of the prison rules can be problematic, as it can cause misunderstandings to occur between the d/Deaf individual and other prisoners/staff members. His findings indicate that d/Deaf prisoners can be disciplined as a result of such misunderstandings, with one d/Deaf prisoner included in his study stating, "I get... something wrong and I get told off as I cannot hear and understand and misread or miss something" (McCulloch, 2012: 19). While this is the only study to report such findings in England and Wales, a number of American studies have painted a similar picture, with Tucker (1988) reporting that one Deaf prisoner was

constantly in trouble with the prison authorities for being unable to understand the procedures, and Vernon (2010) speaking of outcomes such as solitary confinement, a loss of privileges or even being transferred to another facility for those d/Deaf prisoners who regularly made mistakes. These observations suggest that being d/Deaf does not necessarily fit the remit of being a prisoner, and that there is little room for d/Deafness in an environment like prison.

Literature also draws attention to another reason why deaf and Deaf prisoners often struggle to understand the prison regime without access to specialised equipment; many aspects of the penal regime are based around the dynamic of sound, with the fact that officers generally give their orders by spoken voice, and that prisons normally use a buzzer or loudspeaker for announcements being provided as examples of this (Gibbs and Ackerman, 1999). Although he does not write about the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners, the work of Wacquant (2002: 373) is also relevant here, as in his writings about prison ethnography he alludes to the importance of sound, as shown in the following quote:

What grabs you immediately and before all else upon penetrating into this humongous human storehouse is the deafening and disorienting noise: doors banging, bolts opening and closing, keys jangling, feet shuffling, shrill shouts, blunt orders, and tattered shreds of conversations that rustle, ripple and resound in a high-density sonic mishmash unlike any other.

When discussing the role of sound in prison, Rice (2016: 6) makes similar observations, and argues that “Sound is an important aspect of the materiality and physicality of prisons. Prison officers address prisoners in loud “gruff” and “authoritative” voices. They “shout”, “bellow” and “bark” instructions. These sounds reflect and embody “the harsh realities of incarceration””.

Findings from an American study carried out by Glasner and Miller (2010) showed that in consequence of having limited access to sound, d/Deaf prisoners reported having to

resort to following other prisoners whenever they started to move in order to avoid missing important events such as meal times. Other American studies have shown that when d/Deaf prisoners fail to respond quickly to sound based orders or signals, they are disciplined, which implies that in these instances staff members had not received adequate d/Deaf awareness training (Tucker, 1988, Miller, 2001, Vernon and Miller, 2005). Finally, this lack of conception of sound is also problematic for d/Deaf prisoners in that it can undermine their safety, as without access to specialist equipment they may not be alerted to noises such as fire alarms, as highlighted by McCulloch (2010), to whom numerous d/Deaf prisoners reported having no access to flashing fire alarms, and subsequently feeling anxious about their safety in the event of a fire. Such findings are important as they indicate that the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners are inherently different from those of other prisoners because they cannot hear in an environment where sound appears to be so central, with the role played by sound being a key consideration throughout the remainder of the thesis.

#### Access to prison services and resources

It has been found that without access to specialist equipment or BSL interpreters, d/Deaf prisoners have difficulty accessing an array of prison services, ranging from education, employment and rehabilitative programmes, to medical services, dental services and legal aid (Gerrard, 2001, Rickford and Edgar, 2005, Gahir et al, 2011, McCulloch, 2012, Howard League, 2016c). In this context the literature appears to indicate that individuals who are profoundly Deaf are affected more severely than those who are deaf due to the fact that the majority of the aforementioned services are run based around verbal communication, and therefore without an interpreter Deaf prisoners may have difficulty accessing them. Vernon (2010) argues that the most immediately concerning consequence of this lack of access to services is if communication barriers make it impossible for Deaf prisoners to seek medical advice. The validity of such concerns is highlighted by Gerrard (2001: 18) who reported that a number of the Deaf prisoners included in the Deaf prisoner project complained of being misunderstood when trying to request medical services, and also that “One

[Deaf prisoner who] ... suffered from high blood pressure and needed to be monitored could not make himself understood to the doctor and therefore did not receive the necessary treatment”.

While Gerrard’s (2001) findings relate to Deaf prisoners, recent findings from the Howard League (2016c) show that their inability to hear can also make it difficult for deaf prisoners to access important services in prison. In her blog, the Chief Executive of the penal reform charity Frances Crook made reference to a deaf prisoner who had not had a functioning hearing aid for around half a year. She stated that the charity had been forced to issue a judicial review on behalf of this individual, who without his hearing aid was “unable to communicate with the lawyers in his criminal case or participate in prison life”, which she argued resulted in him being “doubly punished” in prison (Howard League, 2016c: Unpaginated).

When considering their access to education, training and offending behaviour courses, Gerrard (2001: 21) found that 30% of the Deaf prisoners asked expressed an interest in taking part in such classes, but felt that such access would not be possible. Such findings have since been built upon by McCulloch (2010: 21) who stated that the majority of the d/Deaf prisoners involved in his study cited an inability to participate in such courses as being a major issue for them, with the level of such deprivation ranging from having no access at all to classes, to having some access but no communication support, to having been “promised interpreters for classes to no avail”. While such findings relate primarily to the experiences of Deaf prisoners, other sources indicate that those who are deaf can also face obstacles, with one deaf individual reporting being stopped from attending education class because his hearing difficulty was seen to disrupt other class members (Makoff, 2011).

An inability to participate in education, offending behaviour classes or employment is seen to be problematic for a variety of reasons, the first being because it can affect an individual's ability to fulfil the requirements of parole, with literature indicating that

when a Parole Board is met with evidence of a lack of attendance and participation in courses, they often presume that the offender in question is not committed to a crime free existence (Tucker, 1988, Gerrard, 2001, Churchill, 2008). According to a representative of a Deaf charity (cited in McCulloch, 2010), if a d/Deaf individual is denied access to parole through no fault of their own this equates to a violation of their intrinsic rights as a prisoner serving a sentence in England and Wales.

The second primary reason that a lack of access to certain programmes in prison is viewed as problematic is that it can prevent an individual from developing the skills that they may require in order to desist from crime on a long term basis (Brynnner and Parsons, 2002). As well as being detrimental to the individual themselves, this also undermines one of the core aims of the Prison Service; to reduce rates of recidivism (Gerrard, 2001). It is argued that if the Prison service fails to provide d/Deaf prisoners with access to education, employment or offending behaviour classes this could contribute to higher than necessary reoffending rates, which could in turn compromise the safety of members of the public, as shown in the following quote from Gerrard (2001: 21):

It became apparent that some prisoners detained for serious offences such as murder, manslaughter or rape have not obtained access to rehabilitative courses and have been released in to the community, some with minimal supervision, posing a further risk to society.

In summary, existing sources suggest that prison establishments may not necessarily be able to manage the needs of a d/Deaf prisoner, and consequently such individuals can become largely isolated from the penal regime. The applicability of these findings to the experiences of the d/Deaf prisoners included in this research is a key consideration in following chapters, as is the extent to which the Equality Act 2010 is effective in ensuring that d/Deaf people are indeed able to “take full part in the normal life of the establishment” (MOJ, 2011a: 21).

## The role of staff members

As discussed in Chapter Two, a prisoner's relationships with staff members often shape the way they experience prison life, with those who have positive relationships commonly perceiving prison to be less painful than others (Liebling, 2011). This is important with regards to the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners (particularly those who are Deaf), as it is suggested that a lack of ability to hear and/or common language means that they can become isolated from surrounding staff members, thus making it difficult to forge positive connections (McCulloch, 2010, 2012). Although findings from a survey carried out by Gahir et al (2011) indicated that prison staff commonly showed great interest in improving their facilities for d/Deaf prisoners, other studies counteract this, with Gerrard (2001) finding that instead of attempting to overcome communication issues, some officers actually tend to taunt Deaf prisoners by deliberately speaking quickly to confuse them. This is supported by McCulloch (2012: 21) who reported that d/Deaf prisoners commonly felt that officers saw their d/Deafness as an inconvenience, with one stating that "he [the staff member] was red and furious at me because I am a deaf person".

Furthermore, numerous sources indicate that the extent of the communication barriers which can exist between Deaf prisoners and staff members can make their relationships particularly problematic, with an example of this being provided by Ackerman (1998) who found that a Deaf prisoner was placed on a hospital wing because prison staff were unable to communicate with him to find out the source of his angry and irritable behaviour. Further instances of such treatment come from Izycky and Gahir (2007) who reported that the Deaf prisoner involved in their case study<sup>45</sup> had been placed in solitary confinement for 15 months because staff members could not address his conduct as they would a hearing prisoner, and finally, Churchill (2008) who found that one Deaf prisoner had been placed into solitary confinement upon admission because staff members could not communicate with him.

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<sup>45</sup> This individual was a Deaf person who had previously been in prison and had since been transferred to Rampton high security psychiatric hospital, where the case study was being carried out.

Issues faced by Deaf prisoners often appear to be compounded by the fact that, as discussed earlier, staff members do not appear to receive Deaf awareness training on any consistent basis (HMIP, 2009). This has been found to be problematic as it can mean that prison officials may misinterpret the Deaf behaviour of a Deaf prisoner and discipline them unnecessarily (Gerrard, 2001). The tensions that are seen to exist between staff members and Deaf prisoners to some extent appear to echo findings from Chapter Three relating to relationships between d/Deaf people and hearing people more broadly, particularly with regards to their experiences at school and work. This overlap indicates that their experience of prison may indeed replicate their experiences in wider society, instead of merely being an outcome of a structured set of deprivations as argued by advocates of the deprivation model. However, the information provided also suggests that it may be more difficult to behave as culturally Deaf in prison than in wider society due to the extent of the power imbalance that exists between staff members and prisoners. This implies therefore that the lives of Deaf prisoners do not necessarily represent a mere continuation of their experiences in wider society, and are also affected by the unique nature of the environment in prison.

#### Relationships with fellow prisoners

The development of peer relationships between d/Deaf and hearing prisoners is complicated by communication difficulties which make it harder for them to create meaningful relationships with other prisoners. In an American study, Tucker (1988) reported that although a small number of hearing prisoners may attempt to overcome communication barriers by passing notes with d/Deaf prisoners or learning to finger spell, individuals often become frustrated at the laboriousness of the process and cease to attempt such contact. Schneider and Sales (2004) build upon this by suggesting that hearing prisoners may actually attempt to avoid d/Deaf prisoners because they are seen to slow down routine prison procedures because they cannot understand what is going on. They also argue a lack of d/Deaf awareness on the part of hearing prisoners can commonly mean that they do not understand why a d/Deaf

prisoner may require more contact with officials than other prisoners, and will therefore view this suspiciously, and label them as a 'rat' or 'grass', who befriends prison staff and reports suspicious behaviour of other prisoners in return for privileges (Schneider and Sales, 2004). Such findings again mirror those discussed in Chapter Three with regards to the way that hearing people (whose perceptions are often aligned with the medical model of disability) respond to d/Deaf people more broadly, thus indicating that the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners exist on an institutional and social continuum of difference, which is explored throughout the thesis.

Furthermore, following literature discussed in Chapter Two relating to the experiences of minority group prisoners, sources indicate that other prisoners may see an individual's d/Deafness as a form of weakness, which can subsequently lead to bullying or ridicule (Tucker, 1988, Gerrard, 2001, Schneider and Sales, 2004, McCulloch, 2010, 2012). While there is limited empirical information about the commonality of such issues for d/Deaf prisoners specifically, in the HMIP review (2009: 35) it was reported that over a third of 'disabled' prisoners from 82 prisons in England and Wales had been victimised by another prisoner, and 36% reported feeling threatened by their peers, which was significantly higher than their non-disabled counterparts<sup>46</sup>. Indeed, d/Deaf prisoners themselves have argued that being deaf in prison exacerbates their vulnerability to personal attacks because they cannot hear people approaching them, and cannot identify potentially dangerous interactions (Vernon and Miller, 2005, McCulloch, 2010, 2012).

While such findings are problematic in and of themselves, communication barriers have been seen to compound these issues further, as a lack of access to sound and/or common language can mean that d/Deaf individuals may have difficulty discussing unfair treatment with prison officials, or submitting a written complaint form about an incident (Vernon, 2010), which further indicates that prisons may not necessarily be equipped to manage the needs of d/Deaf prisoners.

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<sup>46</sup> d/Deaf prisoners were included in this definition of disabled.

## Impact upon d/Deaf Prisoners

The final consideration within this chapter is the impact that the experiences and issues discussed throughout can have upon the d/Deaf individuals themselves. The literature indicates that it is the issues relating to communication that d/Deaf prisoners find most difficult, as shown by Gerrard (2001: 20), who found that 38% of the Deaf prisoners included in the project viewed having no one to communicate with in BSL as the most frustrating issue they faced in prison. She also found that 37% of such prisoners felt that a lack of access to other Deaf people actually led to a “loss of identity, Deaf culture and language” (Ibid), which is backed up by Sales and Schneider (2004: 81) who, in an American study found that:

Simply going to prison places deaf or hard of hearing offenders at high risk of emotional harm because they are isolated from their protective sense of community....when a deaf...inmate enters prison, the community and its pervasive acceptance and tolerance ceases to exist<sup>47</sup>.

These findings have been mirrored in a number of other studies, where it is reported that being deprived of access to other Deaf people and being unable to communicate fully causes Deaf prisoners to feel alienated, isolated, frustrated and in fear of the unknown (Fisken, 1994, Ackerman, 1998, Young et al, 2000, Rickford and Edgar, 2005, Vernon and Miller, 2005, Churchill, 2008, McCulloch, 2010, 2012, Ridgeway, 2012). Such feelings are aligned with many of the broader experiences of d/Deaf people discussed in Chapter three, which, to reiterate, indicates that a Deaf person’s experience of prison may indeed mirror their experiences in wider society.

As well as having problems communicating with people inside prison, d/Deaf people can also have difficulty communicating with family and friends outside of prison. The fact that they do not have access to sound means that d/Deaf individuals require access to specialist equipment in order to make phone calls (Fisken, 1994). However,

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<sup>47</sup> This quote highlights my earlier point about inconsistencies in the use of deaf and Deaf within existing literature

because the provision of such equipment is minimal (HMIP, 2009) this means that contacting members of the outside world via phone becomes difficult, if not impossible. Such issues have again been found to be compounded for Deaf prisoners because, as discussed in Chapter Three, many culturally and linguistically Deaf people are unable to read or write at any meaningful level (Ladd, 2003), thus making communication via letter problematic as well (Sales and Schneider, 2004). While there is minimal empirical evidence available to show the impact that such communication obstacles can have upon the relationships of d/Deaf prisoners, findings from a case study completed by Izycky and Gahir (2007) showed that for one individual an inability to communicate with his family and friends whilst in prison had contributed to the complete cessation of visits and eventual end of such relationships. While other prisoners are often able to utilise prison resources such as televisions and radios in order to distract themselves from the fact that they are being deprived of contact with family members, for d/Deaf prisoners this can also be difficult, and can subsequently exacerbate feelings of isolation and frustration (Bone, 1998). This is reflected in the following quote from Tucker (1988: 11):

Because the television in the prisoners' rec room was not equipped with a decoder, [the deaf prisoner] ... was unable to watch TV. Obviously he was unable to listen to the radio. Thus [his] ... days were spent in total boredom and frustration.

Numerous sources have argued that an inability to communicate with people either inside or outside of prison increases the likelihood that d/Deaf prisoners will experience mental health issues whilst incarcerated (Ackerman, 1998, Izycky and Gahir, 2007), as shown by Young et al (2000: 560) who state that the usual experience for a d/Deaf prisoner in England and Wales is:

An experience of severe communication deprivation within an enclosed and isolated environment. Consequently, circumstances such as these are unlikely to be supportive of good mental health among d/Deaf prisoners.

This is supported by Schneider and Sales (2004: 82) who argue that d/Deaf prisoners may actually be at risk of “psychological breakdown” whilst incarcerated, and is also reflected by Izycky and Gahir (2007) who, in their case study found that without the ability to communicate meaningfully the Deaf prisoner in question reported feeling depressed and paranoid, and began to self-harm, however, once moved to another facility where he was able to communicate in BSL, his feelings of depression lessened and the desire to self-harm ceased altogether. Such findings are furthered by Churchill (2008) who, in her unpublished dissertation interviewed two Deaf ex-prisoners and found that both had attempted to commit suicide because they were so isolated in prison. These findings are important as they indicate that the pains of imprisonment may indeed be exacerbated for d/Deaf prisoners, something which is explored further throughout the remainder of the thesis.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the available literature regarding the lived realities of d/Deaf prisoners, and has explored a number of key issues which are seen to contribute to an experience of exacerbated pain. Findings from existing sources paint a picture of d/Deaf prisoners (particularly those who are Deaf) as being individuals who are largely cut off from prison life due to a lack of access to sound, meaningful communication, or facilities that would allow them to adapt to the regime. This is relevant to this research as it indicates that the Prison Service may not necessarily be able to meet the needs of prisoners who are d/Deaf, because they differ so profoundly from the average prisoner, as to be discussed further Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. However, it is important to acknowledge that while existing literature does indeed allude to a number of issues that are expanded upon throughout this thesis, the fact that the majority of the sources utilised present evidence that is either anecdotal, based upon extremely small sample sizes, focused around American prisons or carried out before the introduction of the Equality Act 2010, means that it does not necessarily paint an accurate picture of the lived realities of d/Deaf prisoners who are currently incarcerated in prisons across England and Wales, thus making it necessary to consider

its relevance to the experiences of such prisoners within this research.

When examining relevant literature, it has become clear that links can be made to the findings presented in both Chapter two and Chapter Three, thus highlighting the relevance of both the deprivation and importation model to the lives of d/Deaf prisoners. On numerous occasions throughout the chapter the findings relating to Deaf prisoners appeared to echo the experiences of Deaf people more broadly in the wider hearing world, thus suggesting that their experience of prison may not necessarily be so different to their experience of wider society. While existing sources did at times allude to the differences between the experiences of deaf and Deaf prisoners, such differentiation was sparse, and consistent with the argument presented in Chapter Three that the complexities of the identities of d/Deaf people are often overlooked, there was a lack of sufficient consideration as to whether the lived realities of the two groups vary based upon the way they identify with their d/Deafness, something which is also a core consideration in this study.

After examining the necessary literature over the past three chapters, Chapter Five outlines the research design and methodology adopted in the research, whilst providing a reflexive account of my pathway through the research which was challenging and fraught with complications.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE TWISTING TALE OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This chapter provides an account of the research design and methodology adopted in the research, exploring the finer details of the research process including information about the research sample, the format of the interview schedules, the method of recording and analysing the data, and ethical considerations. The information provided throughout is important as it shows how I went about fully addressing the overarching research question and smaller component questions, in a way that I believed to be as authentic and true to the participants as possible.

Significant attention is given to the pathway of progression through the research which, reflecting the experiences of other prison researchers, was complicated and fraught with obstacles. Although a large amount of time was spent studying the reflexive accounts of existing prison researchers (see, for example Morris and Morris, 1963, Cohen and Taylor, 1972, King and Elliott, 1977, Genders and Player, 1989, Gelsthorpe, 1990, Sim, 1990, King and McDermott, 1995, Genders and Player, 1995, Sparks et al, 1996, Liebling, 1999, Morgan, 1999, Reuss, 2000, Jewkes, 2002, Crawley, 2004, Bosworth et al, 2005, Scott, 2006, Hucklesby and Wincup, 2007, King and Liebling, 2008, Crewe, 2009, Drake, 2012, Jewkes, 2012b, Phillips, 2012, Stevens, 2013, Moore and Scraton, 2013, Earle, 2014, Rowe, 2014, Scott, 2015b<sup>48</sup>) before beginning to collect the data in a bid to avoid some of the “methodological landmines” (Schlosser, 2008: 1501) they experienced, in reality the unique nature of the prison environment - a highly secure place designed to punish and constrain (Crewe, 2011), meant that some of those landmines were unavoidable. This chapter explains the process of gaining access to research subjects, operational difficulties experienced once access was secured, problems associated with researcher-participant language barriers, and the inevitable impact that the researcher has upon the research. Within this consideration is also given to the role that emotions play in the research

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<sup>48</sup> Although I had already begun my fieldwork when the work of Scott (2015b) was published, I had obtained a proof copy from David Scott in 2014, and had therefore read it before entering any prisons.

process as, again reflecting the experiences of existing prison researchers (Crewe, 2009, Stevens, 2013, Phillips, 2012, Jewkes, 2012b, Crewe, 2014, Rowe 2014), I found the research to be very challenging emotionally, as to be discussed throughout.

## **Methodological Approach**

This study has been conducted using a qualitative research approach, which is a form of research concerned primarily with gaining an understanding of people's subjective opinions and beliefs, and investigating the 'why' and 'how' individuals feel the way they do (Matthews and Ross, 2010). The utilisation of such an approach is common within prison research because it allows researchers to gain an insight into the enigmatic and largely hidden world of the prison, and the experiences of those situated within it. Within this research this was important because it enabled an in-depth understanding to be gained about the experiences and perceptions of the participants, and allowed for the production of large amounts of rich data from only a small number of participants (Mason, 2002).

In a similar vein to numerous other prison researchers (see, for example Genders and Player, 1995, Morgan, 1999, Jewkes, 2002, Scott, 2006, Phillips, 2012) the majority of the data were collected via the use of face to face semi-structured individual interviews, which took place with Deaf prisoners, deaf prisoners, HoH prisoners and staff members<sup>49</sup>. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed me to maintain a level of consistency within the findings (Scott, 2006), and helped to prevent me from becoming overwhelmed during the interviews (Sparks et al, 1996), something which proved to be important as at times I did find the prison environment to be daunting and unnerving.

Although a common set of topics were discussed in each interview, the majority of the questions asked were open ended and enabled participants to express their opinions in their own way. I considered it crucial to avoid constraining interviewees with a strict interview structure, and in line with the beliefs of Cohen and Taylor (1972) was mindful

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<sup>49</sup> A BSL interpreter was present in instances where an interviewee's preferred method of communication was BSL.

that I, an individual with no direct experience of the prison environment should be giving those with such experience the opportunity to discuss their insights with only a certain level of steering. While the extent to which such steering was necessary differed drastically based upon a number of factors such as attitude, personality and experience of prison, overall the interviewees appeared to be comfortable with a loose interview structure as it enabled a conversational exchange to take place.

Furthermore, the fact that I was not bound by a strict interview schedule (see Appendix A for interview schedules) allowed me to probe more into certain responses, and was useful in terms of both clarification and elaboration (Liebling, 1999, May, 2001). The necessity for clarification was particularly important during the interviews where the presence a BSL interpreter was necessary, as, in line with the findings of Murray and Wynne (2001: 18), these interviewees often misinterpreted the question that was being asked, and would subsequently provide confusing responses that required further probing.

While it was anticipated that all of the interviews would be carried out on an individual basis, during my visit to HMP Bowdon on the 19/02/15 it became clear that a number of the Deaf interviewees had been under the impression that they were going to be interviewed as a group, and were eager for a group discussion to take place so that they could use each other to recall further issues. The staff member who was present during the individual interviews then advised that she could organise this if I so wished<sup>50</sup>, and after considering this offer over lunch I decided to accept. The group interview with four Deaf prisoners that then took place in the afternoon proved to be invaluable, as the interviewees were much more comfortable discussing their experience at the prison while they were together, and often reminded each other of things that had not been mentioned within individual interviews (see also Matthews and Ross, 2010, Bryman, 2012 for further information about the benefits of group interviews).

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<sup>50</sup> Discussions regarding the impact that the presence of a staff member had upon prisoner interviews take place later in the chapter.

The other research method utilised when collecting the data was observation. Throughout my time in each prison I carefully observed the environment I was in, and the interactions that took place in my presence. Despite only entering penal establishments for a day at a time and therefore not getting to see the reality of prison life in any depth, in a number of prisons the staff members who were in charge of looking after me did provide me with the opportunity to gain some small glimpses of the prison world. This was offered in a number of ways, including being able to walk around the wings whilst the prisoners' cells were open, being given the chance to go for lunch with the prison staff, and being able to sit in staff offices while they were carrying out their daily tasks. In line with both existing research methods literature (May, 2001, Matthews and Ross, 2010, Bryman, 2012) and the perceptions of other prison researchers (Gelsthorpe, 1990, Sparks et al, 1996, Scott, 2006, Crewe, 2009, Jewkes, 2012b, Stevens, 2013), I felt that this ability to observe during these periods enhanced the quality of my research and created a richer understanding of prison life, which proved to be invaluable when considering where d/Deaf prisoners fit within such an environment<sup>51</sup>.

In order to keep track of my observations I kept fieldwork journals throughout the fieldwork process which provided an account of my time at each prison. Extracts from these journals are included throughout this chapter and the following three data chapters, and for the purposes of clarity when such extracts are used the name of the anonymised establishment and the date the extract was written will also be included.

## **Sample**

A purposive sampling frame was adopted during the research, which is defined as “A form of non-probability sample in which the researcher aims to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed” (Bryman, 2012: 714). This approach was

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<sup>51</sup> It is important to point out that this was not the case in all of the prisons visited, and rather the level of access given in some establishments was extremely restricted. For example, at HMP Wilmslow I was taken straight to a room and locked in until the interviewee arrived. Once the interview was over and I was escorted back to the gate.

deemed as being the most appropriate because it enabled me to remain focused upon the lynch pin of the research; HoH/d/Deaf prisoners. The suitability of this sampling frame in the context of this research is backed up by Richie et al (2003: 79) who argue that a purposive sampling frame ought to be used when carrying out studies that are small scale and in-depth because it allows for the detailed investigation of a particular social phenomenon.

The final sample was made up of 27 participants<sup>52</sup> which included seven culturally and linguistically Deaf prisoners, five severely deaf prisoners, five HoH prisoners, and 10 staff members who had experience of working with such prisoners<sup>53</sup>. Participants were located within seven male prisons across England, five of which were Category B security prisons and two being Category C. In line with the conditions of the NOMS clearance awarded, for the purposes of anonymity the names of all of the establishments included in the research have been changed, with each prison being given a pseudonym. The pseudonyms used are HMP Hale, HMP Sale, HMP Bowdon, HMP Altrincham, HMP Cheadle, HMP Denton and HMP Wilmslow (see Appendix B for information about individual prisons). The names of participants have also been changed based upon their location, their position within the prison<sup>54</sup> and the order they were interviewed. For example, the first prisoner interviewed at HMP Bowdon was given the label P1B, and the first staff member interviewed was labelled SM1B and so on. Furthermore, all third-party names mentioned during interviews have also been anonymised.

## **Access**

Gaining access to the research sample was perhaps the most complex “methodological landmine” (Schlosser, 2008: 1501) that I faced when carrying out the research.

Although I did have some prior experience of carrying out prison research and had

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<sup>52</sup> Including the group interview that took place at HMP Bowdon the total number of interviews was 28.

<sup>53</sup> Out of the ten staff members interviewed, five were prison officers, three were part of the psychology department at HMP Bowdon, one was an equality officer, and the staff member interviewed at HMP Altrincham was running a horticulture course for prisoners.

<sup>54</sup> i.e. whether they were a staff member or a prisoner

engaged with relevant literature, in reality the intricacy of the process transcended my expectations<sup>55</sup>.

In order to gain access to the research sample I was required to go through a centralised NOMS application process, which began with the submission of a lengthy application form<sup>56</sup> along with a copy of my CV, ethical clearance from the University of Central Lancashire<sup>57</sup> and drafted consent forms and information sheets to the National Research Committee (NRC)<sup>58</sup>. When completing the application, I was conscious that the approval process for prison researchers is rarely straight forward (for further discussions see Martin, 2000, King and Liebling, 2008, Stevens, 2013), and was aware of the importance of submitting an application that would highlight my research as being both important and beneficial to the Prison Service. In order to do this I made contact with Jamie Bennett, the governor of HMP Grendon who agreed to look over a first draft of my application and provide feedback<sup>59</sup>.

Despite proving to be beneficial, certain aspects of the application form remained difficult simply because I was not able to provide the information that was being requested. This related primarily to questions about the proposed methodology of the research, as within this there was a requirement to discuss the size of the research sample, and to provide a list of the establishments that I would be entering. In the context of this research this was particularly challenging given that there is currently no legal requirement for the Prison Service to keep records of numbers and/or

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<sup>55</sup> While Sloan and Wright, (2015) discuss access issues in depth, their work was not published until access had already been negotiated. Otherwise, their discussions about the experiences of first time prison researchers would have been very useful.

<sup>56</sup> Within the application form I was required to supply information about the aims of the project, the benefits that it would have for the Prison Service, whether it would add to existing literature, its methodology and any ethical issues (amongst other things).

<sup>57</sup> Inclusion of ethical approval was problematic as the University of Central Lancashire were unwilling to provide ethical approval until I could provide evidence of approval from NOMs. In order to overcome this issue, I applied for ethical approval in principle which The University of Central Lancashire agreed to grant on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2014. Once NOMS clearance had been given, I then re-applied to the ethics committee for full approval, which was then provided on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

<sup>58</sup> The NRC is a subsection of NOMS that assess research applications based upon a number of criteria, including, the extent to which the proposed research fits with NOMS priorities, the applicant's research experience and the demand that the research will have upon prison resources.

<sup>59</sup> Jamie Bennett was an independent reviewer of the bursary for this thesis, and had agreed to help with the inception of the PhD in 2012. I was made aware of his support for the project via my supervisors, who also gave me his contact details.

locations of d/Deaf prisoners, as this meant that I was unable to stipulate with any certainty how many people I wanted to interview, or where such interviews would take place. Although this could have been overcome by contacting prisons individually and requesting the information, without NOMS approval establishments were often unwilling to respond in any meaningful way.

In order to overcome this obstacle I used information provided by contacts that I had made throughout the first year of the PhD<sup>60</sup>, and collated a list of establishments within which, according to this information, one or more d/Deaf prisoners had resided in the preceding year<sup>61</sup>. I also provided a predicted sample size of a minimum of eight HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, and stated that I would be interviewing staff members but that I was unable to provide specific numbers. Aware of the vagueness of this estimation, I then advised that once clearance had been gained, letters would be sent to the governor of every prison establishment in England and Wales to confirm whether there were any HoH/d/Deaf prisoners there.

The completed application and supporting evidence was then sent to the NRC in May 2014, and on July 14<sup>th</sup> 2014 the research was approved 'subject to modifications', with the primary condition of the approval being the clarification of sample sizes. In order to gain such clarity a letter requesting information about HoH/d/Deaf prisoner numbers was then sent to the governor of every establishment in England and Wales<sup>62</sup>. Two types of letters were sent, the first going to the prisons that I had indicated on the NOMS application as holding a d/Deaf prisoner in the preceding 12 months<sup>63</sup>, and the second being sent to the remaining 100 prisons (see Appendix C for copies of letters). Although both letters contained proof of the approval with modifications from the NRC, when I began to receive responses it became clear that many prisons were unwilling to provide any information without full approval. This was

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<sup>60</sup> These included individual prison staff members, information from charities, and other researchers.

<sup>61</sup> Of this list, HMP Bowdon and HMP Denton were the only establishments included in the final sample.

<sup>62</sup> The 'Prison Finder' tool on the MOJ website was used in order to gain information regarding names and addresses of governors and prisons

<sup>63</sup> A slightly more detailed version of the letter was sent to HMP Bowdon due to the fact that staff members at the establishment were already aware of my research before the letter was sent. However, I have chosen not to include this letter in the thesis because the level of detail provided could undermine the anonymity of the establishment.

problematic as I could not obtain full approval without a clearer conception of sample sizes, and the only way I could get such information was from the prisons themselves. On 12<sup>th</sup> September 2014 I then received an email from NOMS which stated that they had received correspondence from institutions that were not included in my proposed sample, and if I wished to add them in to the sample I would need to amend my application. Furthermore, despite the fact that the initial application had indicated that letters would be sent to all prisons, they then suggested that I ought to stop sending letters and rather to make contact with prisons via them going forwards.

At this point they then made me aware of the National Offender Management Information System (NOMIS) which is described as the “Operational database used in prisons for the management of offenders” (MOJ, N.D). This was relevant to the research as although there was no legal obligation to record numbers of d/Deaf prisoners, I was advised that NOMIS is used to record figures of prisoners who had self-declared as having disabilities (amongst other things). I was advised that from then on I ought to utilise figures available via NOMIS in order to locate my sample. However this proved to be problematic as there is no category for d/Deafness on the system, but rather just “Hearing Difficulties” more broadly, which meant that I had no way of distinguishing between those who were Deaf, those who were deaf, those who were HoH and those who had a very minor hearing problem<sup>64</sup>.

Despite being told to use NOMIS from then on, because the letters had already been sent out I continued to receive responses, and although a significant percentage of establishments were unwilling to provide information until full approval had been gained, others provided the information much more readily. For the purposes of sample clarity, when a response was received the information provided was then inputted on to a spreadsheet, with separate columns being created for numbers of deaf prisoners, numbers of Deaf prisoners and numbers of HoH prisoners<sup>65</sup>. However, although certain establishments were able to provide figures for the different groups,

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<sup>64</sup> This in itself is important to the research as it highlights the extent to which the Prison Service is run based upon the medical model of disability, as there is no conception of profound Deafness within the available categories.

<sup>65</sup> When comparing these figures to those specified on NOMIS, it became clear that they did not match up, which therefore raised questions as to the accuracy of the information provided in either instance.

the majority appeared to be relying on NOMIS, and could only provide information about prisoners with hearing difficulties. This made it difficult to ascertain the locations of potential research participants, and also raised doubts as to the validity of NOMIS as a recording system for the Prison Service more broadly. Such doubts were substantiated by staff members at HMP Hale who were very open about the limitations of NOMIS and eager to tell me about the issues that it caused them, as detailed in the following extract from my fieldwork journal:

Jamie [my chaperone] discussed the fact that in order to locate the interviewees for my research, he had initially printed off the list of prisoners which on NOMIS were stated as having 'Hearing difficulties'. He then took this list around the prison and approached each of these prisoners, only to find that most only had very slight hearing problems, and would not fit the sample criteria. He advised that this then got him thinking about the ambiguity of the NOMIS categorisation, and subsequently decided to go to each wing individually and speak to all of the prisoners in order to see if any were d/Deaf. From this he then located five prisoners who were at least partially deaf and wanted to be involved in the research, none of whom were on the NOMIS system. As part of the day Jamie took me to see the equality officer who showed me the NOMIS system. When she was explaining how it worked, what immediately stood out was the fact that at HMP Hale a prisoner is only recorded as having "Hearing Difficulties" on NOMIS if they disclose this information upon arrival at the prison. She then advised that although the Equality department had been given the authority<sup>66</sup> to change this information, this was not something that they ever did, and therefore if a prisoner was to disclose a condition at any point after their arrival, the system would not be altered to indicate as such. This appeared particularly problematic as it suggested that there would be no formal record of this disclosure. (10th April 2015)

As well as being important methodologically, the limitations of NOMIS also have much wider implications in terms of the provision and support available for HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, something which is referred to again in Chapter Nine of this thesis.

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<sup>66</sup> No other staff members or departments had this authority.

Despite experiencing significant problems with regards to sample location, by October 2014 I had collected enough information about the whereabouts of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners to be able to contact NOMS with a list of prisons that I would potentially be entering, and was subsequently given full approval to carry out the research on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2014. After this date I continued to receive responses from prisons and by December 2014, 13 establishments had indicated that they were holding a d/Deaf prisoner<sup>67</sup>. While this did not guarantee access to these prisons<sup>68</sup>, it gave me the opportunity to focus my attention on a much smaller number of potential fieldwork locations. Subsequently, over a period of numerous months I liaised with each of the 13 prisons either via letter, email or telephone on an ongoing basis in a bid to negotiate access.

While the experiences of existing prison researchers (see, for example Liebling, 1999, Martin, 2000, Jewkes, 2002, King and Liebling, 2008) did enable me to foresee there being delays in the provision of access, I had not considered how lengthy the negotiation and organisation process would be. Although some establishments responded to correspondence promptly, in most instances this was not the case, with the general trend being that I would receive an email/letter, respond immediately and then wait weeks or even months to receive a response. As with the findings of Crawley (2004), staff members provided reasons such as illness, shift patterns and being understaffed to explain such delays, with access never actually being negotiated at one particular prison because the allocated contact went on long term sick, only to be replaced by a substitute contact who then also went on long term sick<sup>69</sup>.

Another reason for delayed correspondence was attributed to public sector budget cuts, and, mirroring the experiences of King and McDermott (1995) and Genders and Player (1995) whose research was affected by wider organisational changes, numerous allocated contacts advised that as a result of nationwide organisational benchmarking they were so understaffed that they did not have time to respond. Other staff

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<sup>67</sup> Two establishments indicated that they were holding a d/Deaf prisoner after full approval had been gained, and at this point I contacted NOMS via email and added those establishments to the list of prisons I may be entering.

<sup>68</sup> Access to an establishment is at the discretion of individual governors.

<sup>69</sup> By the time the substitute contact returned to work and made contact, the fieldwork had already finished.

members informed me that as a result of such benchmarking they had actually been seconded to other roles in the prison and were no longer able to maintain contact<sup>70</sup>. This raises questions as to the sufficiency of resource allocation in prisons, something which is discussed further in coming chapters, as well as highlighting the fact that prisoners are the property of the state (Cohen and Taylor, 1972), and that researchers are reliant upon the state to gain access to them.

Furthermore, the chaotic and unpredictable nature of the prison environment meant that access related issues continued to arise even after establishments had confirmed their willingness to be involved in the research, and had specified the presence of an appropriate participant. In line with the findings of Davies (2011), prior commitments on behalf of staff members often meant that it was difficult to organise a specific date for the interviews to take place. Although I knew from existing literature (Martin, 2000, Wincup and Hucklesby, 2007) that in order to complete the fieldwork successfully I would need to be flexible and willing to adapt to the daily workings and institutional timetable of each prison, in the context of this research such flexibility was often not an option. The reason for this centred around the necessity for a BSL interpreter in instances where I would be interviewing a Deaf prisoner, as although I was able to be sufficiently flexible, my interpreter<sup>71</sup> who had other commitments, was not. On some occasions this meant that I had little choice but to decline suggested interview dates with the hope that they could be rescheduled. However, in the context of HMP

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<sup>70</sup> One particular example of this came from an establishment which had responded to my letter by stating that they had a profoundly Deaf prisoner who communicated in BSL at the prison, and that they, as an institution were happy to be involved in the research. After receiving this response, I then contacted NOMS and added this establishment to the list of prisons I would like to enter, with the expectation that I would be carrying out an interview there. However, when attempting to arrange a date for the interview to take place, the allocated contact then ceased to respond. After sending numerous follow up emails over the course of three months, I then received an email stating that she was very sorry but she had been seconded to another department, and that within that time the Deaf prisoner had been transferred to another prison. She then stated that she did not know where they had been transferred to or whether there were any other d/Deaf prisoners at the establishment because she was so behind with her workload.

<sup>71</sup> My allocated interpreter was Frank Harrington, one of my PhD supervisors, who was a qualified BSL interpreter and had agreed to interpret for me in order to avoid excessive research costs. Following discussions with my supervisors it was agreed that the role of one of my supervisors as interpreter for the prison research should be clarified with the university as this raised an ethical dilemma. This issue was first raised with the head of the University of Central Lancashire ethics committee and then the university's research committee who advised that "The supervisory team interpret many aspects of a student's research – What he is doing is practical, necessary and he knows how. Unless he misinterprets the answers deliberately and mis-signs the questions – I see no issue". It was then advised that the university would also take this stance in the future.

Wilmslow my interpreter was not able to commit to attending the interview, and the prison was not able to reschedule. Therefore, in order to avoid missing out on the opportunity to interview a profoundly Deaf prisoner I used the services of a different qualified BSL interpreter.

The final hurdle to achieving access arose as a result of the fact that the penal environment, although highly structured, exists in a state of constant change (Liebling, 1999). This was problematic because it meant that in line with the findings of King and Liebling (2008) and Stevens (2013), arrangements were sometimes cancelled with very little notice because something more urgent had arisen. The most prominent example of this arose during my time at HMP Denton where I carried out my pilot interviews. As part of the pilot it had been agreed that I was going to be interviewing one Deaf prisoner and two staff members, however upon arrival at the prison I was advised that neither staff member was available because there had been a death at the establishment the night before and they were trying to manage the repercussions which had since arisen. Luckily another staff member had become available, which meant that the pilot interview was still able to take place.

Despite extensive doubts and against what I perceived to be all odds, access was negotiated at a variety of prisons, with the following interviews being carried out:

Name of prison	Date(s) of entry	Interviews carried out
HMP Denton	04/12/14 04/02/15	1 pilot deaf prisoner interview 1 pilot staff interview 1 staff member interview (SM1D)
HMP Sale	01/02/15	1 Deaf prisoner interview (P1S) 2 staff member interviews (SM1S, SM2S)
HMP Bowdon	19/02/15 16/03/15	4 individual Deaf prisoner interviews (P1B, P2B, P3B, P4B) 1 group interview with 4 Deaf prisoners (P1B, P2B, P4B, P5B) 4 staff member interviews (SM1B, SM2B, SM3B, SM4B)

		1 Deaf prisoner interview (P5B)
HMP Hale	19/03/15	1 staff member interview (SM1H) 2 deaf prisoner interviews (P1H, P2H) 3 hard of hearing prisoner interviews (P3H, P4H, P5H)
HMP Cheadle	23/03/15	1 staff member interview (SM1C) 2 deaf prisoner interviews (P1C, P2C)
HMP Altrincham	30/04/15	1 deaf prisoner interview (P1A) 2 hard of hearing prisoner interviews (P2A, P3A) 1 staff member interview (SM1A)
HMP Wilmslow	7/5/15	1 Deaf prisoner interview (P1W)

It is important to acknowledge that whilst the inclusion of HoH, severely deaf, and culturally and linguistically Deaf prisoners in the research sample proved to be advantageous in that it allowed me to explore the complexity of d/Deafness, such diversity was not initially a primary methodological objective. Rather, it was originally anticipated that the vast majority of the prisoners interviewed would be culturally and linguistically Deaf. However, in reality I did not always have the luxury to make such a decision, as although I may have specified that I was wishing to primarily interview Deaf prisoners, often my allocated contact at each prison was not sufficiently Deaf aware to be able to distinguish between those who were deaf and those who were culturally and linguistically Deaf. This was exacerbated by the limited nature of the information that was available to staff members regarding characteristics such as d/Deafness, as if they were to rely upon NOMIS there would be no formal distinction between those who were Deaf and those who were deaf, which in reality appeared to mean that the allocated contact then labelled the prisoner based upon their own understanding of deafness, which was usually underpinned by the medical model of disability (as will be discussed further in Chapter Six).

The impact of this ambiguity became apparent during the pilot prisoner interview at HMP Denton, as during prior correspondence I had been advised that the individual I was interviewing was profoundly Deaf, which meant that a BSL interpreter would be required. However, upon arrival at the prison it became apparent that the prisoner was not Deaf, and rather was deaf and had residual hearing in one ear which was amplified by a hearing aid. Furthermore, he was unable to communicate in BSL and relied upon his hearing aid and the ability to lip read when conversing. This was problematic because it meant that my interpreter had attended unnecessarily, and also that many of the questions in my pilot interview schedule were not relevant. Despite being challenging, it was also advantageous in that it made me aware that I would not necessarily be clear about how d/Deaf an interviewee would be until I actually arrived at a prison, and would therefore have to prepare for multiple possibilities.

## **The Interviews**

After access had successfully been negotiated the fieldwork period then commenced, and what followed was a stressful and intense five months during which I travelled around the country via car, train and bus, and met an array of people, all of whom provided a unique insight in to the reality of life in a prison. Although similar themes often arose, the interviews themselves were all very different, with the nature of the data collected in each interview being dependent upon many factors. This included the participant's method of communication, their role in the prison and their cultural identification, as well as more practical factors such as the extent to which the interview was private, and the institutional timetable at the establishment. Consideration is now given to these points, along with other important aspects of the interview process including the interview schedules used, the duration of the interviews and the role of the researcher.

### Interview schedule

Although the interviews generally took a conversational style format, in order to ensure a level of consistency with regards to the nature of the data collected, a paper interview schedule was taken into all interviews. Two interview schedules were created, one for prisoners and one for staff members (see Appendix A for interview schedules), with both being tested out during pilot interviews at HMP Denton on December 4<sup>th</sup> 2014. The pilot interviews proved to be useful, not only for the reasons discussed in the previous section, but also because they allowed me to see that I was relying too much on a strict and lengthy interview schedule. This overreliance inhibited the flow of the dialogue during the pilot interviews, which caused repetition to arise and hindered the development of interviewer-interviewee rapport. In order to overcome this, before carrying out the main interviews I significantly reduced the number of questions included in the interview schedules.

The interview schedule for staff members was made up of 12 questions and split into two main sections, the first of which was devoted to discussing their job role and their experience of working in prison. This was important as staff members have been shown to have a profound impact upon the way that prisoners experience prison (see, for example Genders and Player, 1989, Bottoms and Rose, 1998, Reuss, 2000, Crawley, 2004, Liebling, 2011), and therefore in order to understand why HoH/d/Deaf prisoners experience prison the way they do it was vital to consider the position and beliefs of the staff members they were surrounded by. Such questions allowed me to consider the relevance of Goffman's (1961) argument that a hostile 'Us' versus 'Them' divide often exists between staff members and prisoners in environments like prison, as well as the proposition that prisoners (and staff members) are expected to conform to a certain role whilst in custody. Another reason that I chose to include general questions about the staff members' experiences of prison was that I wanted them to feel as though their point of view was valued, and that their stories were important. This allowed me to avoid encountering the resentment experienced by other prison researchers from staff members who felt that their views were seen as being inferior to those of prisoners (see, for example Morris and Morris, 1963, Sparks et al, 1996, Liebling, 1999, Crawley, 2004, Drake, 2012, Rowe, 2014, Scott, 2015a).

The second part of the staff member interview schedule was focused around their experience of working with, and their views about d/Deaf prisoners, and included topics such as relationships, communication and access to prison resources<sup>72</sup>. The inclusion of such topics within the interview schedule allowed me to develop a more accurate understanding about the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners<sup>73</sup>, and to examine whether the establishments included in the research were able to meet their needs, thus working to address the component questions 'Do HoH/d/Deaf prisoners experience prison in the same way as other prisoners?' and 'Is the Prison Service able to meet the needs of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?'. Many of the questions asked mirrored those included in the interview schedule for prisoners, which was useful as it allowed for direct comparisons to be made between the two sets of answers. It is important to acknowledge that although none of the questions specifically focused upon their understanding about d/Deafness, certain questions were worded in such a way that all staff members interviewed opened up about this topic<sup>74</sup>. This worked to address the component question 'How do staff members respond to prisoners who are HoH/d/Deaf?', which was important as it allowed me to gain an understanding about the extent to which individuals were Deaf aware, and to consider whether their views about d/Deafness impacted upon the way they behaved towards the d/Deaf prisoners.

The interview schedule created for the interviews with prisoners was made up of a total of 18 questions, and covered five main topics; life before prison, communication, relationships, access to resources and identity. Each interview began with a discussion about the participant's d/Deafness, including when they became HoH/d/Deaf and what their life had been like prior to entering prison. This removed any ambiguity

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<sup>72</sup> When asking questions about resources a question was also asked about their awareness of the Equality Act 2010, and although Scott (2014) found that staff members became hostile when met with questions regarding prisoner welfare and rights, in the context of this research this was not the case, and on the contrary staff members were on the whole very open about the limitations of the Act.

<sup>73</sup> Staff members often provided deeper insights into the nature of situations that the d/Deaf prisoners interviewed were involved in. For example, at HMP Bowdon the Deaf prisoners discussed being angry about the fact that another Deaf prisoner (who was not interviewed) had been moved to another wing unfairly and without sufficient reason. However, during interviews with staff members it became clear that he was actually moved because of continued inappropriate sexual behaviour towards staff members. This was something that the Deaf prisoners were not aware of, and instead believed that he had been moved unfairly because he was Deaf.

<sup>74</sup> Question 8 of the staff member interview schedule which asked "Do you find that d/Deaf prisoners are the same as other prisoners?" is an example of this.

about the extent to which the individual was d/Deaf, and allowed me to gain an understanding of the way they identified with their d/Deafness. The information provided in response to these questions was important as it gave me an insight into the type of perceptions and characteristics that the participants had imported into prison, something which was essential for addressing the following component questions; 'Does an individual's d/Deafness affect their experience of prison?', 'How does prison impact upon the identity of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?' and 'Are there any overlaps between the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people inside and outside of prison?'.

Participants were then asked about their experiences in prison. This included questions relating to their relationships with others, their day to day routine and their access to resources, all being topics which featured prominently in the literature outlined in Chapter Four. The purpose of these questions was simply to gain an insight into their lives in prison, which was vital in terms of answering the overarching research question outlined in Chapter One, and helped to address all of the component questions. It also allowed me to consider the applicability of Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment to the lives of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, and to explore the extent to which their experiences are aligned with those of other prisoners. Another topic included in the interview schedule was identity, with prisoners being asked about whether they had changed since being in prison<sup>75</sup>. By asking this type of question I was able to consider the relevance of Goffman's (1961: 14) ideas relating to institutionalisation and mortification. In doing this, the component question 'How does prison impact upon the identity of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?' was addressed.

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<sup>75</sup> When creating the interview schedule, a conscious decision was made to avoid including the word "identity" in any of the questions asked. The reason for this relates to the fact that prisoners have been found to often have difficulty answering abstract questions about subjects such as this (Morris and Morris, 1963). Particularly relevant in this context is the experience of Phillips (2012) who experienced problems when questioning prisoners about their identity, and subsequently decided to change her interview schedule and ask them about different elements of identity separately. In a bid to avoid such issues I opted to take the same approach and asked more general questions such as "Are you different now to how you were before prison?" (See Appendix A interview schedule for prisoners, question 14), and gave examples such as self-esteem and confidence where necessary to clarify what I meant.

## Duration

Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and two hours, with the length of the interview being dependent upon a variety of factors, the first relating to time constraints.

Although this did not apply at all institutions, on both occasions at HMP Bowdon an interview timetable had been created by the prison with participants being allocated interview slots that corresponded with the institutional timetable (for similar experiences, see also, Martin, 2000, Wincup and Hucklesby, 2007). This was troublesome as it meant that the interviews with P1B, P2B, P3B and P4B were all cut short because they had exceeded their allocated time allowance. Another factor that contributed to disparities in interview lengths was whether a BSL interpreter was present. In line with the findings of Bragason (N.D), Almalik et al (2010) and Ingvarsdotter et al (2010), the necessity for all communication to be mediated by an interpreter often made interviews much more time consuming than they otherwise would have been.

With regards to the length of the prisoner interviews specifically, the extent to which an individual was d/Deaf/HoH was another important factor. Most of the d/Deaf prisoners interviewed engaged well during their interview, and in accordance with the findings from existing researchers (see, for example Bosworth et al, 2005, Stevens, 2013), appeared to relish the opportunity to discuss their lives, perceptions and problems with an interested outsider. This was particularly apparent with regards to the profoundly Deaf participants who, as to be discussed in Chapter Eight were often deprived of meaningful communication in prison and therefore viewed their interview as a chance to get their point of view across<sup>76</sup>. In stark contrast to this, the interviews with the HoH interviewees were much shorter in length, and proved to be difficult to conduct. This relates mainly to the HoH participants from HMP Hale, some of whom did not understand why I would want to interview them (as they were not d/Deaf), and were at times dismissive in their responses. Despite finding these interviews awkward to carry out and having difficulty building rapport with these participants, the data

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<sup>76</sup> The extent to which this was true was highlighted during my time with P1W who repeatedly emphasised how much of a relief it was to be able to communicate in BSL, before beginning to cry as a result of such relief.

produced proved to be useful, with the nature of their responses sitting completely at odds with those of the Deaf prisoners, and providing evidence to show that the way an individual views their d/Deafness has a profound impact upon the way they respond to it in prison (and in wider society).

### Location

Interviews took place in a variety of locations, including prison wings, visiting rooms, and staff offices. Although the location itself appeared to have little impact upon the openness of the interviewees, the extent to which the interview was private did (for similar findings see also, Scott, 1996, Crewe and Maruna, 2006, Hucklesby and Wincup, 2007). While all of the staff member interviews were conducted in a private location, all but three of the prisoner interviews took place in the presence of a prison official<sup>77</sup>. As well as potentially inhibiting full disclosure of information, on certain occasions this also altered the format of the interview, with present staff members becoming involved in the dialogue. This was particularly prominent in the context of the interviews with P5H and P1W, as in both instances staff members interrupted the interview to make their own comments. With regards to the interview with P1W, the staff member continually interrupted the interview when the participant was being critical of his treatment at the prison in order to provide an explanation for such treatment, which subsequently inhibited his ability to talk candidly. Although this staff member did alter the dynamic of the interview, the staff member present during the interview with P5H was much more disruptive, and on numerous occasions actually attempted to steer the discussion when he thought that the nature of the prisoner's

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<sup>77</sup> Interviews with P1H, P1C and P2C were carried out without the presence of a member of staff. While I felt reasonably relaxed about this during my time at HMP Hale, this was not the case at HMP Cheadle, as shown in the following extract from my fieldwork journal: "The officer left me in the fish bowl (a see through glass interview room in the middle of a wing) and 'kept an eye on us' from his room. I was a bit taken aback by this, as although I could have technically left the door of the fish bowl open, if I did this, the noises on the wing meant that the prisoners (neither of whom had hearing aids) could not hear me. The officer seemed unconcerned by this, which I could only assume was because he deemed both of the prisoners as low risk. I did not mind being alone with P1C because I did not find him intimidating or 'scary' in any way. However, I found the interview with P2C to be much more problematic, as although he was only serving a four-month sentence for shoplifting, being around him was very unnerving – He was on the detox wing, and was a heroin and crack user (who was also on methadone), so he was very shaky, and was looking past me rather than at me when talking to me. He also advised that he had schizophrenia, and was on medication for this. As a result of this I felt unsafe, and for the first time was uncomfortable and on edge throughout the duration of the interview" (23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2015).

comments were not appropriate/relevant. He would do this by interjecting with remarks such as “Should we get back to the deafness?” when the participant was discussing his experience of prison more generally, which then caused P5H to apologise and change the subject. This intrusion was detrimental to the quality of the data, as in these instances the prisoner was talking very frankly and providing great insight in to some of the realities of prison life.

### Communication

It became clear throughout the research process that the method of communication used within each interview had a profound impact upon the format of the interview and the extent to which I was able to build rapport with participants<sup>78</sup>. The fact that the interviews were carried out with participants across the hearing-Deaf spectrum meant that methods of communication varied from interview to interview.

Communication during the interviews with staff members, deaf/HoH prisoners who had adequate hearing aids (P1A, P1H) and prisoners who were only mildly HoH (P2A, P4H and P5H) was straight-forward because they all communicated verbally, and could hear enough to interact with relative ease.

However, in instances where individuals were more severely HoH/deaf and did not have access to adequate hearing aids (P1C, P2C, P3A, P2H and P3H), communication became much more difficult. Although the method of communication itself was the same for all of these prisoners i.e. they all communicated verbally, because they could not hear sufficiently this made our interactions more disjointed, and made rapport building more difficult. There were a number of reasons for this, with the fact that I would frequently have to repeat myself, and they would often mishear questions and provide unrelated answers both being central. This was most problematic during the interview with P2C who was severely deaf in both ears but had no access to hearing aids and had not learnt to lip read since going deaf. As a result of this I really struggled

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<sup>78</sup> Before the interviews began I was acutely aware of the importance of building rapport with participants (Gelsthorpe, 1990, Sparks et al, 1996, Scott, 2006, Jewkes, 2012b, Stevens, 2013). With this in mind, during interviews I aimed to be welcoming, to make eye contact during communication, to acknowledge any emotional reactions or nervousness in the appropriate manner, and to use supportive non-verbal cues such as nodding.

to interview this participant and felt awkward throughout the duration of our interaction<sup>79</sup>.

With regards to the Deaf participants, the fact that I was unable to utilise BSL beyond a very basic level profoundly influenced the nature of their interviews as they all preferred to communicate in this way. As a result of this, in line with the findings from numerous studies I found it extremely difficult to build rapport with a number of these interviewees (Murray and Wynne, 2001, Bragason, N.D, Almalik et al, 2010, Ingvarsdotter et al, 2010), as highlighted in the following extract from my fieldwork journal from HMP Bowdon:

It is very hard to conduct any interview with someone that doesn't speak your language, never mind when you are trying to ask somebody about their personal experiences and private emotions; You lose all the non-verbal cues and interactions and this makes the flow of the interview less conversational and more question answer question answer question answer (19<sup>th</sup> February, 2015)

Furthermore, even though participants had been made aware that an interpreter was present in order to bridge the communication barriers between interviewer and interviewee and would not be actively involved in the dialogue between the two, they often misinterpreted this. Rather, because it was the interpreter who was providing them with the information that they could understand, participants often appeared to think that the information was actually coming from them. As a result of this, on multiple occasions during the interviews at HMP Bowdon, participants attempted to communicate with the interpreter. For example, during the interview with P1B he actually focused his responses at the interpreter rather than myself and at one point asked him whether he ever went to Deaf clubs. This was highlighted further during the interview with P1W, where I had similar problems, and commented that:

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<sup>79</sup> The extent to which communication was difficult during the interviews provided an indication of the level of the issues that individuals faced within the prison environment on a daily basis, as will be discussed in coming chapters.

If anything I felt like the prisoner was warming to the interpreter because it was they who they could communicate with, rather than me even though they were my words. As a result of this I felt almost like a third wheel in my own interview (7<sup>th</sup> May, 2015).

Situations such as this were frustrating as although I attempted to build a rapport with these participants, without a common language this was very difficult.

### The role of the researcher

Before beginning the fieldwork, I was aware that the level to which a participant engages in research is contingent upon the identity they give to the researcher and what they perceive their intentions to be (see, for example Morris and Morris, 1963, Emery, 1970, Sparks et al, 1996, Crewe, 2009, Drake, 2012, Stevens, 2013, Drake and Harvey, 2014, Rowe, 2014). With this in mind my main concern was how my status as a hearing person may impact upon the way the profoundly Deaf participants would respond to me. This concern was based on advice from my supervisory team and information drawn from existing literature, both which suggested that their prior experience with hearing people may cause the Deaf participants to be suspicious of me, and unwilling to engage (see, for example Atherton, Russell and Turner, 2001, Harris, 2010, Stone and Mason, 2012). Fortunately, none of the Deaf participants involved in the research were outwardly resentful or uncooperative. Rather, it appeared that any preference for a Deaf interviewer was outweighed by a desire to get their story across to anyone who would listen, irrespective of their status.

In addition to this, I was also aware that participants often misinterpret the identity of researchers, and presume them to be something that they are not<sup>80</sup> (see, for example Morris and Morris, 1963, Emery, 1970, Sparks et al, 1996, Martin, 2000, Jewkes, 2002, Schlosser, 2008, Crewe, 2009, Phillips, 2012, Stevens, 2013, Scraton and Moore, 2013,

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<sup>80</sup> For example, staff members and prisoners often view researchers as being in some way linked with an official authority, and therefore respond to them with suspicion and hostility during the research process (Morris and Morris, 1963, Emery, 1970, Sparks et al, 1996, Stevens, 2013).

Scott, 2015a, Scott, 2015b). Therefore, in order to minimise any ambiguity about my identity I made it clear within the information sheets and consent forms (see Appendix D for copies of both), and at the beginning of each interview that I was from a University and that while my research had been approved by NOMS, it was an independent study without any underlying agenda that was aiming to contribute to making positive change.

However, even with this clarity, the fact that my sample included both prisoners and staff members meant that the process of effectively managing the perceptions of participants remained difficult, as I had to try and appear simultaneously trustworthy and 'on the side' of two distinct groups, whose values and principles are inherently conflicting (Scott, 2006, Crewe, 2009, Stevens, 2013, Rowe, 2014, Hammersley, 2015). While some prison researchers discuss having significant problems negotiating a balance between the groups (Sparks et al, 1996, Stevens, 2013 and Rowe, 2014), my experience was much more straightforward, and mirroring the experience of Crewe (2009), cooperation from both groups meant that I did not feel required to choose between the two. However, in instances where interviewees were critical of the behaviours of the other group, I was careful to be as pragmatic as possible, and in order to do this I adopted Stevens' (2012: 44) belief that it is "entirely possible to be on 'both sides' but not at the same time". I also made a continued effort to remain impartial if asked about my opinions on prison related matters, and to appear neutral even when I felt as though I was 'taking sides' internally (see also, Sykes, 1958, Crewe, 2009, Stevens, 2013).

Furthermore, even after attempting to ensure that any ambiguity about my identity was removed, my presence inevitably altered the way that participants behaved (for similar findings, see also Jewkes, 2002, Crewe, 2009, Phillips, 2012, Earle, 2014). While many prison researchers have found that their gender affected the way that participants responded to them (Morris and Morris, 1963, Gender and Players, 1989, Gelsthorpe, 1990, Liebling, 1999, Jewkes, 2002, Phillips, 2012, Stevens, 2013), in the

context of my research I did not feel as though this was the case<sup>81</sup>. However, in accordance with the findings of Sloan and Wright (2015) I did suspect that my age influenced the behaviour of certain participants, particularly staff members. The primary reason for such a perception was the fact that numerous participants asked about my age when they met me, with some also enquiring as to whether I was an undergraduate student and if the research was for my dissertation. Although this is something I have experienced in other areas of my life, at times this was frustrating as I felt as though participants were taking me less seriously than they would an older, more experienced researcher.

### Recording

For the purposes of this research all interviews were recorded with a Dictaphone<sup>82</sup>. While I was conscious of the fact that certain prison researchers believe that recording interviews can create a sense of artificiality and can inhibit the openness of the participant (Genders and Player, 1995, Reuss, 2000, Jewkes, 2002), in line with the arguments of Morgan (1999), Crewe (2009) and Stevens (2013) I felt that the use of a recording device was the only way to truly ensure authenticity.

Although this proved to be sufficient for 21 of the 28 interviews carried out, problems arose when the Dictaphone was used to record the interviews carried out with profoundly Deaf prisoners. The visual nature of BSL meant that the original data generated during these interviews was in a visual rather than verbal form, which meant that the Dictaphone recorded only the interpreter's mediated version of the

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<sup>81</sup> Although I do not feel that my gender changed the way the participants behaved towards me in any significant way, it certainly altered the dynamic of the prison environment more generally, particularly at HMP Hale and HMP Cheadle where staff members were happy for me to walk around the wings. At HMP Hale, my chaperone was very laid back and would walk ahead of me, which meant that at times I was walking through groups of prisoners (who at the time were out of their cells) on my own. I found this very disconcerting as every single prisoner just stared at me, with some making remarks or shouting comments, and by the end of the day I was so overwhelmed by this that I walked through the final wing looking down at my feet the whole time. My presence at HMP Cheadle also produced a similar response, as shown in an extract from my fieldwork journal where I say "I have begun to feel a bit like an animal in a zoo when I am in prison, and feel quite unnerved when all of the prisoners stare at me for extended periods of time. I understand why they do this: 1. I am an outsider and they want to know what I am doing there, and 2. I am an unknown female in a male prison. Although I don't really know why, this is probably the thing that scares me most about prison" (23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2015).

<sup>82</sup> Approval to record the interviews was given by NOMS, and security clearance was then obtained by each individual prison establishment before entering.

responses rather than the original responses themselves. I was conscious of this prior to applying for NOMS approval, and within my application indicated that the use of a visual recording device would be preferential, as this would ensure complete authenticity (Atherton, Russell and Turner, 2001, Stone and West, 2012). Despite this request, none of the establishments included in the research were willing to allow me to bring in a video recorder, which meant that a Dictaphone had to suffice.

While an audio recording would have been sufficient if I could have guaranteed that the interpreter was providing an exact translation of the interactions, in reality such an assurance was not possible (Roy, 1992, Wadensjö, 1998, Atherton, Russell and Turner, 2001, Harrington and Turner, 2001, Stone and West, 2012), and rather, the interpreter themselves was the only party who could understand both myself and the participant. As a result of this the extent to which the data collected was authentic hinged largely upon the interpreter's performance during the research process (Harrington and Turner, 2001, Stone and West, 2012). Therefore, in order to minimise any issues that could arise in relation to this it was important to ensure that the interpreter used was both sufficiently qualified and reputable.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, two interpreters were used during the research process, both of whom were fully qualified and registered with the *National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deaf blind People* (NRCPD)<sup>83</sup>. The fact that the primary interpreter, Frank Harrington was also one of my PhD supervisors meant that he was aware of the nature of the research and the role that he would be taking, and therefore did not need briefing prior to the interviews. However, because an external interpreter was utilised at HMP Wilmslow, it was important to ensure that she was clear about the aims of the research and the remit of her role. In order to do this, a copy of the relevant interview schedule, information

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<sup>83</sup> The NRCPD is a service which “exists to protect the public by regulating communication and language professionals who work with deaf and deafblind people” by holding registers of these people (NRCPDa, N.D: Unpaginated). In order to become registered with the NRCPD an individual must have successfully completed an approved course, must continue their professional development and must abide by the Code of Conduct as outlined by the service. This code of conduct outlines expectations for how registered professionals must behave if they are to remain on the register, and requires them to act completely impartially in all interpreting settings, translating faithfully and accurately to the best of his/her ability without adding or taking anything away from the source message (NRCPDb, N.D).

sheet and consent form was sent to the interpreter prior to the interview. I also made sure to contact her via phone and email in the days prior to interview to ensure that any queries or issues that she may have had regarding the research were resolved. She was made aware of the use of a Dictaphone, and aware that she must interpret clearly in order to ensure that her voice was decipherable on the recording. After the interview was over I then gave her the opportunity to discuss any issues that she may have had during the interview process, of which there were none.

## **Transcription and Data Analysis**

After they were completed, all of the interviews were transcribed with the aim of being as close to verbatim as possible<sup>84</sup>. Transcription proved to be helpful in terms of the quality of the research, as by transcribing the interviews I was able to examine the data more comprehensively than I otherwise would have done, and thus became more familiar with it (Bryman, 2012). Although the majority of the recordings were transcribed with relative ease, the interviews that took place with a number of the Deaf prisoners proved to be tremendously difficult to transcribe<sup>85</sup>. The reason for this related to the fact that as well as using BSL to communicate, some Deaf people choose to verbalise simultaneously<sup>86</sup>. This was problematic in terms of transcriptions because the verbalisations of a number of the participants were often unclear, and at times completely unintelligible to me. While this was not troublesome in and of itself, participants often talked over the interpreter's translation of their BSL which meant that when transcribing the data, I could not decipher what the interpreter was saying because I could only hear the verbalisations of the Deaf individual. In order to overcome this, I listened to certain extracts repeatedly at a slower speed, which although arduous did on many occasions enable me to make out what was being said. However, even with the assistance of Frank Harrington, who advised that as an

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<sup>84</sup> In order to ensure that the transcriptions were as easy to understand as possible, utterances such as "Erm" were removed (for discussions around this see Bryman, 2012).

<sup>85</sup> The interviews that proved difficult to transcribe were with P1B, P3B, P4B and also the group interview at HMP Bowdon.

<sup>86</sup> A primary reason for this is that they had been taught to speak as children in hearing schools or by hearing parents (Marschark, 2009).

interpreter he was more equipped to comprehend Deaf voices, a number of extracts remained indecipherable and therefore had to be omitted from the transcripts.

Such issues were particularly prevalent when attempting to transcribe the group interview that took place at HMP Bowdon. Because it was organised on the spur of the moment this meant that myself and Frank had not had the opportunity to discuss how to conduct a group interview with the Deaf prisoners in such a way that it would be recorded accurately. In order to avoid ambiguity when transcribing, just before the interview began we agreed that Frank would attempt to say the name of the prisoner for whom he was interpreting at the beginning of each interpretation. However, once the interview began it became clear that Frank was going to struggle to provide all the necessary translations because of the way the participants were communicating. Despite all being Deaf, each interviewee had a slightly different way of communicating, with P1B and P5B signing and speaking, P2B relying entirely on BSL, and P4B signing whilst vocalising very loudly. As a result of this the interview was comprised of extremely complex interactions which made effective and accurate interpreting difficult. For example, at one-point Frank was translating the spoken words of P1B to P2B and P4B, and while this alone may have been fine, I found P1B's voice extremely difficult to decipher and therefore was forced to say "Pardon?" whilst Frank was interpreting. At this point Frank would have to come in and translate the words for me, and therefore was simultaneously interpreting for both me and a number of the participants. Because of this, it meant that Frank had little opportunity to state the name of the prisoner at the beginning of the interpretation, and therefore when listening back when transcribing, it was difficult to decipher who was saying what. Furthermore, again the fact that a number of the participants vocalised as well as signing meant that on the recording, not only were complex and flurried interpretations taking place, but they were being obscured by the voices of the Deaf

participants. As a result of this, while most of the recording was successfully transcribed, in instances of uncertainty I was again forced to omit certain extracts<sup>87</sup>.

After transcribing the data, I then analysed it using what is known as thematic analysis, which is the primary method of data analysis for qualitative research (Gilbert, 2008) and is defined by Grbich (2007:16) as being a “Process of segmentation, categorisation and re-linking of aspects of the data prior to the final interpretation”. I used this type of analysis in order to gain an understanding of the patterns and trends within data (King and Horrocks, 2010), and split the analysis into the following three stages in order to do so:

- Stage 1 – I read through the transcripts and highlighted the relevant material, briefly commented upon it, and used the comments to create descriptive codes which included themes such as communication, resources, relationships, pains of imprisonment, and identity.
- Stage 2 – This refers to what King and Horrocks (2010: 152) describe as “interpretative coding” during which I grouped together the codes that shared a common meaning.
- Stage 3 – In the final stage the overarching themes in the data were identified, and discussed within the context of the relevant research aims.

(King and Horrocks, 2010: 152)

This form of analysis allowed me to organise large amounts of raw data<sup>88</sup>, to discover patterns that would be otherwise difficult to detect, and enabled the component questions to be explored as concisely as possible (Mason, 2002).

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<sup>87</sup> In order to avoid such issues going forward, if the option to visually record an interpreter mediated interview was not viable, an alternative option would be to use two Dictaphones. One Dictaphone would be used to record the interview and the other to record the interpreter’s dialogue during the interview. In order to do this the interpreter would need to plug a headset in to the Dictaphone (Or use a wireless equivalent), which would enable the recording to be focused around their voice, and therefore preventing any distortion.

<sup>88</sup> The interviews amounted to over 300 pages of transcripts.

## Ethics

One of the primary ethical considerations relevant to this research was the issue of consent. In order to ensure that all participants were fully informed about the nature of the research, and to avoid complaints of dishonesty or problems of attrition, an information sheet disclosing all the relevant information about the study and a consent form were sent to each establishment at least two weeks prior to my date of entrance<sup>89</sup> (see Appendix D for copies of both). The purpose of this was to allow participants to make an informed decision about their involvement in the research<sup>90</sup>. In order to ensure that the documents were accessible to the Deaf participants, visual copies were also made available, the creation of which involved Frank Harrington being videoed translating the information into BSL, whilst another person simultaneously read the contents aloud in English<sup>91</sup>. Despite this provision, HMP Wilmslow, HMP Bowdon and HMP Sale all advised that they would be unable to show the video to participants, due to either security restrictions or a lack of available facilities. As a result of this, a number the Deaf participants (those who were unable to read) were only able to give informed consent on the day of the interview when the interpreter was able to translate the necessary information in to BSL for them<sup>92</sup>.

Another primary ethical consideration was confidentiality, and in order to ensure that the privacy of the participants was not compromised, at no point were their names or the names of the establishment disclosed, even in rough interview transcripts or informal notes. During the transcription process my Dictaphone was kept in a secured safe at the University of Central Lancashire, which only those involved in the research had access to, and once the data was transcribed and sufficiently anonymised, the

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<sup>89</sup> Sending this information to establishments two weeks prior to the interviews was also important as it was a condition of the NOMS approval granted for the research.

<sup>90</sup> Two information sheets and consent forms were created; one for staff members and one for prisoners.

<sup>91</sup> The reason that the content was also verbalised was to avoid potential security issues that may arise as a result of a document entering the prison and being made available to prisoners, that staff members could not understand.

<sup>92</sup> While all of these participants were happy to be involved, the fact that the establishments were either unwilling or unable to provide them with access to the necessary documents meant that they were not complying with the conditions put in place by NOMS. This indicated that they may not be sufficiently equipped to managed the needs of somebody who is culturally and linguistically Deaf, and raised doubts as to their compliance with the Equality Act 2010, as to be discussed further in coming chapters.

Dictaphone was wiped as dictated by the NRC when the research application was approved.

While the maintenance of confidentiality is imperative, a condition of the NOMS approval was that I would disclose any information that was either against prison rules, illegal, or that indicated risk of harm to the research participant or others. In an environment like prison, such a requirement often puts researchers in a difficult position (see, for example King and Elliott, 1977, Genders and Player, 1995, Schlosser, 2008, Crewe, 2009), with Stevens (2013: 45) arguing that by enforcing limited confidentiality, NOMS “can therefore create substantial role conflict [and]... a myriad of ethical, methodological, and even legal complications” for prison researchers. In order to avoid such issues the conditions of confidentiality were outlined clearly in the information sheet and consent form given to participants, and subsequently nothing was disclosed that needed to be reported<sup>93</sup>.

Another important ethical consideration related to the welfare of participants, with it being anticipated that discussions around the pains of imprisonment may provoke feelings of distress or anxiety. In order to ensure that this was kept to a minimum, participants were advised in the information sheet and at the start of the interview that their participation was voluntary, and that the interview could be paused or terminated at any time if they so wished. This ethical consideration was most applicable to P1W, who, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, became very upset when discussing his experience in the prison. In this instance I asked the participant on multiple occasions whether he was okay, and advised that we did not have to carry on with the interview. However, despite being outwardly distressed this individual was adamant that we needed to continue because he wanted to do all he could to improve the situation for Deaf prisoners in the future<sup>94</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> Although past illicit behaviour was discussed in a variety of the interviews, this was information that the staff members were already aware of.

<sup>94</sup> Such distress was very difficult and upsetting to witness, whilst also being difficult to manage, as shown here in an extract from my fieldwork journal “I found it very difficult to know how to react without seeming insincere. I desperately wanted him to know that I did actually care about what he was saying, and that it was affecting me, but again felt helpless as to what I could do to counteract such pain” (7<sup>th</sup> May, 2015).

Also relevant to the welfare of participants was the option of aftercare for individuals who became distressed in any way during the interview. Interviewees were advised within the information sheet that I would be able to supply information regarding avenues of support if they so wished. Although this was not deemed as necessary by any of the participants at the time, six months after the fieldwork period had ended I did provide P5B with information regarding appropriate support avenues. This participant had written to me on numerous occasions after the interview<sup>95</sup>, and within his letters indicated that he felt very lonely and isolated in prison. He also wrote of having minimal contact with family members and feeling relieved that he had somebody to talk to about his life (me). Although I did respond to him on numerous occasions, I felt that I was not equipped to provide the emotional support that he was looking for, as highlighted in the following extract from my fieldwork journal:

After receiving the letter, I agonised over how best to respond; not wanting to seem offhand and uncaring, but at the same time anxious about appearing over personal or 'too friendly'. While I wanted to support this prisoner and help him through what I knew was a horrible time, within what appeared largely to be a traumatic life, I didn't want to create the wrong impression, and 'lead him on', in that I didn't want him to think it could be a friendship because that wouldn't be appropriate given the context of the situation. Or would it? I am still in a dilemma whilst writing this over a month later - I just couldn't decide what to do because this guy had had poured his heart out to me, and I felt like I wouldn't be able to give enough back<sup>96</sup> (23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015).

Therefore after discussing the situation with my supervision team, I then wrote to P5B advising him of the existence of a befriending service provided by an organisation called New Bridge, which I thought could potentially help to reduce some of the isolation he was feeling<sup>97</sup>.

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<sup>95</sup> A number of the prisoners at HMP Bowdon were concerned that they had missed things out of their interview, so I agreed with my chaperone that they could have my work address in case they wanted to tell me anything else.

<sup>96</sup> The personal dilemma that I faced as a result of this will be discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>97</sup> This is a service that allows prisoners who want someone to talk to, to write to trained volunteers who will respond to them with the view of maintaining contact via letters and visits (New Bridge Foundation, 2016)

Instances such as this provoked a feeling of moral contradiction as although I had done my utmost to avoid compromising the welfare of my participants, I felt as though involvement in my research may have had negative repercussions in the long term for P5B (for similar findings see also, Scraton and Moore, 2013, Crewe and levins, 2015). Although the interview itself was undoubtedly a positive experience for him, in the long term his involvement in the research may have actually exacerbated feelings of isolation because I was not able to maintain a meaningful relationship with him. Furthermore, although participants were made aware that I was not merely carrying out the research for the purposes of personal gain (Sparks et al, 1996), and rather was aiming to contribute to some positive change for d/Deaf prisoners going forwards, for P5B this may not have been enough make it worthwhile. In order to highlight to participants that their views were important and that I did appreciate their involvement, a synopsis of the findings along with a thank you note will be sent to each individual once the thesis has been submitted.

### **Protecting Against Subjectivity**

Before the fieldwork began I was conscious that if I wanted to address my component questions I would need to create an accurate picture of the participants' realities and responses, irrespective of whether they were positive or negative or contradicted my views and opinions (Morris and Morris, 1963, Scott, 2006, Scott, 2015a). My priority was to ensure that the views of the participants remained at the heart of the research, and that if they were to see it, the interviewees would be able to relate to the findings (Scott, 2015a). With this in mind, I feel that the standpoint taken by Crewe (2009: 488) which is outlined as follows is especially apt:

I have been reluctant to foreground myself in the analysis itself, not because I think my identity was irrelevant to the study, but because my identity was not what the study was about. To some degree... the slant of my findings and the nature of my interactions were shaped by my subjectivity and positioning, but I do not believe they were merely outcomes of these things. It is important to avoid the 'reflexive spiral' where self-examination spills over into anecdotalism and apologetic subjectivism. When undertaken carefully and critically,

qualitative research can go quite some way in uncovering the objective realities of the social world.

However, as indicated here by Crewe, although accuracy is vital if research is to be authentic, complete neutrality in qualitative social research is impossible. Rather, an individual's research is inevitably shaped by their values, attitudes and interpretations, and unavoidably considered through their own unique biographical lens (Morris and Morris, 1963, Blumer, 1969, Cohen and Taylor, 1972, King and Elliott, 1977, Genders and Player, 1995, Liebling, 1999, Scott 2006, Phillips, 2012, Scott, 2015b, Hammersley, 2015)<sup>98</sup>. This became evident during my second visit to HMP Bowdon, where I realised that my unconscious opinions regarding d/Deafness had influenced the way that I had viewed the participants during my first visit, as detailed in the following extract from my fieldwork journal:

When one of the psychology staff members spoke of P1B being very manipulative during one to one sessions with her, and crying in order to get himself 'out of trouble' I couldn't help but feel shocked, as in my head, despite consciously trying not to, I had oversimplified the characters of the Deaf prisoners I had interviewed, and found it difficult to comprehend them being manipulative or vicious purely because they were Deaf. This was extremely frustrating as it brought home to me that I am still a member of the hearing world no matter how much I try to separate myself – No matter what I do, I will never be Deaf, and am unlikely to ever be able to rid myself of these ingrained perceptions of 'deafness' and 'difference' and 'disability' (16<sup>th</sup> March, 2015)

Furthermore, despite my quest to remain impartial, I often found myself in situations with which I was morally uncomfortable, and in line with experiences of existing researchers (for example, Morris, 1967, Genders and Player, 1995, Phillips, 2012, Stevens, 2013, Jewkes, 2014, Scott, 2015b) at times found it difficult to suppress

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<sup>98</sup> One particularly useful example of the impact that an individual's biography and individual perceptions can have upon their research is highlighted in Phillips' (2012) study by Rod Earle (Earle was also a researcher on the project but is not co-authored because he was a research assistant) who stated that "Today it seems like one big group, maybe 100 prisoners, all together moving loosely. It's more tightly packed than the one I saw previously and there is less calling. Coretta [Phillips] nudges me and says, 'See, how it is grouped according to race'... Where I had been noticing a tighter knit whole group, she had seen ethnic grouping, and I wonder what is wrong with my way of looking that what leapt to her attention, leapt over my head. I look again and... It is obvious that black guys are bunched together and white...guys are also in groups" (Phillips, 2012: 57-58).

subjective reactions that may have in turn compromised the quality of the data. There were a variety of different contexts where this was the case, the first being instances where individuals were behaving in a way that I perceived as unacceptable. While almost all of the interviewees expressed opinions that I did not agree with, I knew that for the purposes of the research it was not my place to respond with my own subjective perceptions, and therefore did not find this too troublesome. However, on a number of occasions I observed behaviours and interactions whilst being guided around the establishments that I found difficult to ignore<sup>99</sup>. Despite this, in order to ensure that the research process went as smoothly as possible I adhered to what Jewkes (2014: 389) refers to as an “unwritten professional code [to]... remain silent on the matter” at all times.

Furthermore, in a similar vein to the experience of Stevens (2013), throughout the research process I found it extremely difficult to avoid becoming preoccupied with the nature of the offences committed by the participants. While I did not ask the participants about the nature of their convictions, staff members often told me before the interview started, and although a serious conviction was not a prerequisite of the research, throughout the research process it became apparent that 12 of the 17 prisoners included in the sample were either in prison for murder or sex offences, with a number of the sex offences being against children. However, because I did not ask the prisoners about their offences, for the most part I was spared the 'gory details' that other researchers discussed having to process (see, for example Genders and Player, 1995, Phillips, 2012, Stevens, 2013, Jewkes, 2014). On the contrary, what I was met with were individuals who, on face value, appeared to be fairly 'normal', and certainly not the 'monsters' that I was partially expecting. The impact that this had on me is emphasised in the following extract from my fieldwork journal from HMP Bowdon:

I found today a very surreal experience – Although I was outwardly maintaining a neutral stance, inwardly I was, and still am struggling to make sense of how or why these people would

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<sup>99</sup> This included (what I perceived to be) inappropriate staff behaviour towards prisoners.

commit a sex offence. I find it mentally disorienting when thinking about the fact that these complex human beings with thoughts and emotions who seem so 'normal' had all committed terrible offences (19<sup>th</sup> February, 2015)

Not only was this difficult mentally, but at times there was also a danger of it impacting upon the interviews themselves, as on a number of occasions I had to consciously fight the desire to question the participants about the details of their offences in a bid to gain an understanding of the motives behind them.

The fact that the prisoners often appeared so 'normal' also made the research experience more emotionally challenging than I had anticipated, because it became difficult to rationalise the pain that they were experiencing. This is shown in the following extract from my fieldwork journal from HMP Bowdon:

Again, I struggled mentally during my time with P5B. When he was discussing the problems that he had had throughout his life I just felt awful for him. I found it very sad that he spoke of always being isolated, and feeling uncomfortable in the presence of others. He was very honest during the interview and at the end he said that he had been extremely nervous before the interview and had been shaking – I couldn't help but warm to him, but then, again felt very mentally disoriented and strange because he was a repeated child sex offender. After this interview was over, I was completely exhausted, and felt depressed and upset at what the prisoner had told me (16<sup>th</sup> March, 2015).

Once I had actually experienced the prison environment for myself I began to understand why prison researchers (see, for example Fleisher, 1989, Sparks et al, 1996, Liebling, 1999, Reuss, 2000, Liebling, 2001b, Bosworth et al, 2005, Crewe, 2009, Jewkes, 2012b, Phillips, 2012, Stevens, 2013, Crewe, 2014, Drake and Harvey, 2014, Earle, 2014, Jewkes, 2014, Liebling, 2014, Hammersley, 2015, Piacentini, 2015) are now devoting increasing amounts of time to discussing the role that emotions play in the research process. I found the whole fieldwork experience to be emotionally exhausting and more mentally testing than I had ever imagined, and I would often leave interviews feeling physically sick and mentally overwhelmed. Although I was theoretically prepared for what I might see/hear in prison, in reality seeing the pains of

imprisonment through my own eyes was very different from reading about them in a book, and in hindsight I was not prepared to be exposed to real human suffering in the way that I was. This is illustrated in the following extract from my fieldwork journal from HMP Hale, within which I am discussing the interview with P5H who had been taken directly out of solitary confinement into the interview:

The prisoner made a particularly poignant comment about not wanting to die in prison, and discussed the fact that his humour was a front and that he was actually in despair and had to cover it in order to get through the daily struggle of prison. It was clear that this prisoner was afraid, he had obviously been aggressive with staff members, and was actually quite aggressive in the room, but at the root of it all seemed to be fear and anxiety and hopelessness. Again, seeing the pains of imprisonment in front of me like this was not easy to stomach, and I left the interview feeling (probably visibly) shaken. I admitted to my contact when the interview ended that I was very upset and that I know he was on a murder charge, but I couldn't shake the idea of him just being in his cell, rotting away, with all those horrible thoughts and experiences (10<sup>th</sup> April 2015).

Although experiencing such feelings was difficult, I feel as though it enhanced the quality and depth of the research (for similar findings see Sloan and Drake, 2013), and would argue that in certain instances my emotions certainly acted as what Jewkes (2012b: 66) calls an “Intellectual resource”. By being “emotionally sensitive” (Crewe, 2014: 426), I was able to empathise with the feelings of my participants in a way that helped me to gain more insight into their lived realities. However, I was also aware that emotional involvement on the part of the researcher can have the potential to undermine the authenticity of their research if it is not adequately regulated, as an individual can begin to prioritise the opinions of participants with whom they empathise with the most at the expense of others (Sparks et al, 1996, Stevens, 2013). Therefore, to ensure that the data was as accurate as possible and to avoid becoming “contaminated by sympathy” (Ruess, 2000: 40) I implemented what Crewe (2014: 394) calls “reflexive interrogation”. During this process I regularly critically reflected upon my emotions and standpoint in a variety of ways; internally, with my supervision team

and by keeping a fieldwork journal. Although it was at times difficult, through this continuous critical self-reflection I was able to keep sight of the fact that my overarching priority was to address my research question, and that although subjectivity was inevitable, and empathy was natural and even useful, I needed to maintain a professional boundary between myself and the research participants.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a comprehensive outline of my journey through the research process, and has shown how I went about addressing the overarching research question and smaller component questions outlined in Chapter One. In order to do this, I have given an account of the research design and methodology adopted throughout, including details about my chosen research sample, the format of the staff and prisoner interview schedules, the method of recording, transcribing and analysing the data, and the necessary ethical considerations. I have attempted to present my journey as transparently as possible, and have been honest and open about the wide array of challenges I faced throughout, with the aim of highlighting the messiness of prison research. While a number of the challenges that I faced were fairly commonplace in prison research, I was met with an extra level of complexity as a consequence of the fact that there is no meaningful mechanism in place for recording d/Deaf prisoner numbers, as this made it difficult to locate appropriate research participants. In addition to this, further methodological complications arose as a result of the language barriers between myself and the Deaf prisoners, with their preference for a visual language making the process of ensuring that the research was both ethical and authentic more difficult than it otherwise would have been. Such difficulties were compounded by the fact that I was not able to bring visual recording devices into establishments, nor were the Deaf participants given access to visual copies of my consent forms and information sheets, with both such restrictions raising questions about the extent that the establishments entered were Deaf aware, as with conception of Deafness comes an understanding of the importance of visual language

and provisions (Corker, 1996, Leigh, 2009), something which is explored further in Chapters Six and Eight.

Consideration has also been given to the inevitable impact that I, the researcher had on the research process, and the strategies I utilised in an attempt to avoid misconceptions arising about my identity. From this I also explored the inescapable subjectivity which comes with carrying out qualitative research, particularly with regards to the role of emotions. As shown throughout, I found the fieldwork to be very challenging emotionally and in hindsight was not sufficiently prepared for the level of pain and suffering to which I became privy, or for the mental disorientation, guiltiness and helplessness that this would provoke. Managing these feelings effectively was perhaps the aspect of the research process that I found hardest, and although I ensured that the research remained authentic through continual critical self-reflection, my time in prison continues to provoke feelings of confusion and profound sadness even now.

After outlining the research design and methodology used in this research, in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight findings are presented from the data collected. The three chapters each have a different purpose, with Chapter Six concentrating upon the key features of the establishments entered and exploring the overlaps between the experiences of the HoH/d/Deaf prisoners and those of other prisoners discussed in Chapter Two. From this, in Chapter Seven findings are presented which highlight the distinctness of the lived realities of the HoH/deaf interviewees, before looking at the experiences of the Deaf interviewees in Chapter Eight.

## **CHAPTER SIX: PRISON IS WHERE THE PRISONERS ARE**

Within this chapter consideration is given to the extent that the literature discussed in Chapter Two is relevant to the experiences of the HoH/d/Deaf prisoners included in the research. As in Chapter Two, particular attention is placed upon examining the applicability of the frameworks put forward by Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) respectively, as well as other more recent sources. This allows for the exploration of whether the lived realities of d/Deaf prisoners echo those of other prisoners, and if they are indeed moulded by the structure of the penal environment in the way that Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) anticipated. While coming chapters are focused upon exploring the distinctness of the experience of prison for a HoH/d/Deaf person, a primary aim of this chapter is to show that although they are HoH/d/Deaf, these prisoners are still prisoners, and that prison is still prison no matter who is inside it.

As well as exploring whether the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf people in prison are aligned with those of other prisoners, consideration is also given to the nature of the prison environment more broadly, which includes references to my personal observations and extracts from my fieldwork journals. This is important as in line with the findings from Chapter Three, the type of environment within which an individual is situated can drastically alter their behaviour (Lane et al, 1996, Leigh, 2009). Attention is focused on the way the Prison Service responds to prisoners who do not necessarily fit the mould of 'normal' or 'usual' in a penal institution, with consideration being given to the role of equality and diversity in the prisons visited, particularly with regards to subjects of disability and d/Deafness, as such factors were found to impact upon the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners.

### **The Prison Environment**

In this section I provide some context about the nature of the penal environments within which the research was situated, and have chosen to write in the first person throughout as much of the information provided is based upon my observations. The purpose of this scene setting is to allow the reader to gain an understanding of the

kind of environment that the d/Deaf prisoners were located in, because it became apparent that, as argued by advocates of the deprivation model, the lived realities of the research participants were moulded at least to some extent by the environment that they were in.

The level of access that I was given at each institution inevitably had a great impact on the way I perceived it, with it being difficult to gain an understanding of the penal regime or atmosphere at HMP Wilmslow or HMP Denton because my access was so heavily restricted there. In spite of this, throughout the research process it became apparent that in line with the findings of sources such as Dilulio (1987), Genders and Player (1989) and Stevens (2013), there did not appear to be a single pervasive prison culture, and rather each penal environment was slightly, or in some cases very different from the next. Such difference was particularly prominent at HMP Altrincham which runs as a therapeutic community, and is focused around encouraging positive change in prisoners through the use of intense group therapy sessions. As the only prison in England and Wales of its type, the day to day regime at HMP Altrincham is structured very differently to that of the other establishments, and the prisoners interviewed discussed having very different lived realities there than at previous prisons.

Despite the apparent differences at each prison, I recognised one pervasive similarity; the prison gate. Contrary to my previous beliefs, an establishment's gate is not actually a gate and rather a building which anyone wishing to proceed to the main body of the prison must enter. At all of the establishments I visited the gate felt like the entrance to a different world; the prison world, with the behaviour of staff members working on the gate being very rigid and formal, and the procedures they followed very strict. As a result of this, when I walked into each gate I felt as though I was crossing a boundary between outside and inside, with the pertinence of Goffman's (1961) total institution framework immediately becoming apparent, and a message ringing clear; 'This is prison and you will do as we say no matter who you are and why you are here'.

After entering the main body of each establishment I quickly became aware of the extent to which security was paramount, with the journey from the gate to my allocated destination involving extensive locking and unlocking of a maze of doors<sup>100</sup>. The fact that the authority to unlock these doors lay in the hands of staff members meant that I was almost completely reliant upon them during my time at each institution (for similar findings, see also Wincup and Hucklesby, 2007, Drake, 2012, Stevens, 2013). This was important as it indicated that prison staff quite literally hold the keys to the prison world, and because of this they have power over most others within this world. Throughout the duration of the fieldwork it became clear that the uneven distribution of power in prison impacted significantly on the lived realities of the prisoners interviewed, as to be discussed throughout the remainder of the thesis.

Another important observation about the prison environment arose on the occasions where I was taken on to a prison wing<sup>101</sup>, and related to the role of sound. Upon entering a wing, I was immediately met with a roaring of sound; whether it be shouting, laughing, talking, tannoys, bells, alarms or cell doors, it was clear that in the prison environment *sound is key*. While other sources have alluded to the role of sound in prison (Tucker, 1988, Gibbs and Ackerman, 1999, Miller, 2001, Wacquant, 2002, Vernon and Miller, 2005, McCulloch, 2010, 2012, Rice, 2016), I develop this, and argue that the prison as an establishment relies on sound in order to run. As an outsider this was very disconcerting as I found it difficult to separate most of the sounds from each other, and was unsure about what they meant. Such an observation immediately raised questions about how individuals with limited (or no) access to sound would survive in such an environment, a point which later went on to become pivotal to the thesis, and is examined in depth in Chapter Seven.

As well as being met with sound, if the prisoners were out of their cells whilst I was on a prison wing I was also faced with a sort of unruly pandemonium. In such instances I began to understand why prison researchers so commonly describe prison as being

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<sup>100</sup> At HMP Hale I counted going through 21 locked doors between the gate and the office of my chaperone, none of which were anywhere near the vicinity of a prison wing, or area which prisoners were allowed

<sup>101</sup> I was taken on to prison wings at HMP Hale, HMP Sale, HMP Altrincham, HMP Bowdon and HMP Cheadle.

chaotic or turbulent (or other such words) (see for example, Wacquant, 2002, Cavadino et al, 2013), as reflected in the following extract from my prison journal from HMP Hale:

This wing was very much how I imagined a prison to be, scary, young looking prisoners hanging around in groups, some in cells and some out of cells – Lots of noise, lots of raised voices, no staff around – This certainly did not feel like a safe environment (10<sup>th</sup> April, 2015).

The data collected from all of the prisoners interviewed at HMP Hale echoed my sentiments, as shown by P4H who stated that “It’s like a jungle in here, a madhouse” when discussing the wing he was located on. While restrictions to my movements meant that I did not get the same opportunity to observe the environment at the other prisons I visited, the views of the participants at all seven establishments certainly appeared to indicate that violence and chaos are present throughout the prison system. This is highlighted by SM1D who stated that “Last night was chaotic here, dealing with self-harm and prisoners on the netting”, P2A who spoke of “Everyone rushing about, everyone on the go. Fights, alarms going off all the time; Its madness”, and P1A who described his previous prison as being “Just nuts! Absolutely nuts”.

In accordance with findings from existing sources (for example Sykes, 1958, Scraton et al, 1991, Edgar et al, 2014), violence also appeared to be a common feature in the prisons I visited. Although I was not privy to any acts of violence during the research process, all of the prisoners interviewed stated that violent behaviour took place regularly in prison<sup>102</sup>. This was echoed by staff members who also discussed the prevalence of gang culture, fighting and drug related violence. Although numerous quotes could be inserted here to highlight such findings, the following quote from P2C

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<sup>102</sup> The exception here was HMP Altrincham; although P1A, P2A and P3A all spoke of drugs and arguments being normal parts of the culture of the prison, they also stated that violence was not a regular occurrence. However, it is important to acknowledge that all three prisoners alleged that in all of the other prisons they had been in, violence and chaos were part of the everyday prison regime and environment.

illustrates my point, as it was delivered with complete nonchalance, which normalised the role of violence further:

I've been in the system since I was 9; the fights I've had in the system, that's what that scar is there, from when someone rammed a dinner tray in my face. I was on the servery at the time, and I whacked him with a fish slicer and he had to get his ear sewn back on as well because it was hanging off.

Although the above statement may have been shocking as a standalone remark, it sat in line with my observations in that, when I was given the opportunity to enter prison wings I felt as though I could feel the tense and aggressive atmosphere pulsating around the walls. This is shown in the following extract from my fieldwork journal from HMP Cheadle:

Before I started my fieldwork I was very clear in the fact that prisoners were just normal people, but when they are in big groups and I am walking through the wings, they feel different, they seem to act in a way that you don't often see outside of the prison environment. The only similar example that I can think of is the way in which groups interact at school. I.e. The collusion between groups, the importance placed on image and respect, and the belligerent and banterish communication between prisoners (23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2015).

The fact that the prisoners were observed to have divided into smaller groups also maps onto existing research relating to prison culture and the role of prisoner relationships in such a culture, as discussed in Chapter Two. Although I am unable to say whether these groups were formulated based upon any sort of hierarchical system, there did appear to be a level of camaraderie within the groups that could indicate that social relationships may indeed help prisoners to cope with their confinement, thus echoing the findings of Sykes (1958), Goffman (1961), Gibbs (1982), Matheisen, (1990), Crewe (2012) and Harvey (2012). This observation was supported by P2H who stated that:

It's hard, very hard. I've never been in prison before in my life. Never been in trouble. It's something that I've done so I pay the price, that's how it goes. I get a lot of help from my mates [in here]; we get together and chat about it and stuff.

Such findings are important as it became apparent that the lived realities of the HoH/d/Deaf prisoners interviewed were indeed influenced by the extent to which they had formed relationships with other prisoners, a fact that is examined further in Chapters Seven and Eight.

A final key observation about the prison environment relates to the fact that, as mentioned in the extract from my prison journal from HMP Hale, prisoners appeared to be placing importance upon image and respect, and were using masculinity as a way to earn such respect. This resonated with existing arguments that prisoners avoid revealing weakness in prison in order to get through their sentence (Cheney, 2005, Durcan, 2008, Scott and Codd, 2010, Crewe, 2012), with this aversion to weakness being highlighted by P1A who argues that in most prisons "You have to wear a lot of armour all the time, and always be on guard with what you say, don't show any weakness, all that kind of stuff". Such a perception was further strengthened by a number of the other interviewees who made comments about trying to fit in and wanting to be seen as a 'normal' prisoner. Importantly, many of them also discussed how it feels if they cannot fulfil this role, which is vital in the context of this research as it raises questions about the position of prisoners who cannot perform in the manner dictated as 'normal' in prison, which is again to be considered in coming chapters.

Thus far a number of key features present in the prisons included in the research have been outlined, including sound, chaos, violence, the role of prison staff, and the perceived importance of being viewed as masculine or strong. Such features are central throughout the remainder of the thesis, as the research indicates that they have a profound impact upon the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, particularly in terms of the role of sound.

From this, the applicability of Goffman's (1961) total institution framework to the establishments entered and the individuals interviewed will now be examined, as this allows for the consideration of whether these establishments had any of the features outlined by Goffman, and also whether the interviewees were affected by such features.

### **The Prison as a Total Institution**

After outlining some of the key features of the prisons included in the research, the applicability of Goffman's (1961) total institution framework to the establishments entered is now examined. This is important as it became apparent that his classic framework was in fact relevant in a number of ways, the most prominent of which are discussed as follows.

A central theme that emerged from the data related to Goffman's (1961: 17) argument that those who reside in total institutions are "collectively regimented" and "march through the day's activities in the immediate company of a batch of similar others" (Ibid: 18). Highlighting this was the fact that the prisoners interviewed repeatedly used the term 'we' when discussing their daily activities rather than 'I', with P1C stating that "We are prisoners, they don't listen to us. It makes no difference what so ever", thus suggesting a level of consciousness that he, as a prisoner was being viewed as part of a batch instead of an individual. In line with this, staff members had a tendency to view prisoners as a single like-minded entity rather than a diverse cross section of individuals, as shown by SM1S who, when I was talking about the prisoners I had met said "If they were like your normal hard work prisoner, I bet they were horrible weren't they?" and that "Prisoners in general are more violent, less moral". This was furthered by SM2S who, when asked about whether staff attempt to meet the needs of d/Deaf prisoners, stated that "Staff is staff...Some staff don't care. He's a prisoner". This perception of prisoners as being a batch of delinquent duplicates maps onto Goffman's (1961) claim that an 'Us' and 'Them' divide exists between staff

members and inmates in total institutions, as it shows staff to be viewing prisoners as a singular 'Them'.

However, a number of the prison officials interviewed did accept that not all prisoners are the same, and in doing this made comments which showed that the dichotomy between the two groups is not always that straightforward. This is shown by SM1S who argued that "Some are worse than others. Some are moaners and yeah, we have got a couple at the minute now that we want to get rid of", and SM1B who acknowledged diversity by stating that "They are such different people, and they've done their offences for such different reasons". Despite this, staff members also discussed feeling constrained by their role, with the data indicating that the highly regulated and strictly regimented nature of the prison environment means that in order to avoid disturbing the equilibrium, they must ensure that they do not deviate from their prescribed position within the prison. This is shown by SM4B who stated that:

Certainly working on here [the wing] you are working on your own, so you have to have a reasonable relationship with prisoners. But it has to be a professional relationship; so making sure that one, you get on with them, but also they are following the rules and you are professional enough to make sure that they continue to follow the rules. There's no slippage.

This highlights the extent to which the behaviour of individuals in prison (be it prisoners or staff members) is shaped by the nature of the penal environment, and indicates therefore that the deprivation model is certainly relevant when seeking to understand the lived realities of such people.

Furthermore, although some staff members did acknowledge diversity within the prison population, the perceptions of others sat in accordance with what Goffman (1961: 18) called "narrow hostile stereotypes", with prisoners often being seen as manipulative, immoral and dangerous. Such perceptions also echo findings from contemporary sources including Stern (1987), Crawley (2004) and Tolmaer (2006), as highlighted further the following quote from SM1C:

Most times the claims of discrimination are false, and a lot of prisoners will try and get as much as they can. Unfortunately, it is the nature of the beast, out of 100 you probably get 80 to 90 who aren't telling the whole truth. It's a challenge. Because sometimes they will try and say everything under the sun to get what they want, and you have to be very on your toes all the time. They can be very manipulative.

The prisoners interviewed also displayed a level of awareness about these negative perceptions, with P1H stating that "Every day the officers have the mind-set that every prisoner that comes to tell them something is lying for their own purpose", and P1C believing that "They think in their minds somehow that all prisoners use something to get something. I'm not using anything to get anything; it's not nice to be deaf".

Goffman's (1961) framework also proved to be relevant to the perceptions of the prisoners interviewed, with this idea of there being a hostile divide between the prisoners and staff members again emerging as a strong theme. While the majority of the prisoners discussed having a positive relationship with one or two staff members at their establishment, prison officials were for the most part viewed as being controlling, unhelpful and judgemental. This is highlighted in the following quote from P1A:

Well, you just always had to be aware that there are lines that you just can't cross and that any interaction really is kind of false. And you believe really deep down that they all think we are all just scum; No matter what face they wear to work, when the situation comes about, their true feelings come out. If someone misbehaves on the deck and all the other officers take a chance to put the boot in, and you think 'Well that's your true colours showing through there then isn't it?'

Prisoners consistently reported feeling that staff looked down on them for being prisoners, and consequently felt that they could not approach them for support, something which also maps onto findings from Stern (1987), Crawley (2004) and Drake (2012). This is illustrated by P1H who stated that "There is no consciousness in the

mind of the officers generally about just how difficult it is”, P4H who said “They don’t care do they? All they are interested in is opening the door and closing the door” and P5H who remarked “In a prison like this they just slap you and stuff. All they care about is, well they don’t care about a lot”. The data also indicated that the imbalance between the power held by staff members and prisoners further embedded the divide between the two groups, with prisoners speaking of staff being controlling and purposefully withholding information, or being unnecessarily rude to them. This is shown by P5B who stated that “When it’s the good staff, they come in and are like ‘Alright, you okay?’, and when it’s the bad staff they are like ‘Get out, we’re in here’”. Although such perceptions may not necessarily paint an accurate picture of the character of staff members, they do highlight the extent to which the two groups are divided in prison, and show that although the prisoners included in the research may indeed import distinct characteristics into prison, they still exhibit beliefs that are moulded by the unique nature of the prison environment.

Although the way that prisoners viewed staff members was largely negative, there was again some comprehension that it was not necessarily the individuals themselves that were the issue, but rather the ‘role’ that they were required to play, thus echoing the findings of Durcan (2008: 48) and again substantiating Goffman’s (1961) argument that there are prescribed roles in prison. The following quote from P5H highlights this point:

Listen I don’t hate them all, that’s a bit of a strong word. I hate that uniform; I won’t deny that. Because of everything it has done to me. And the person inside it ain’t always the bastard, but 9 times out of 10 they usually are. No one really gives a fuck in here, and it might not be down to that person being a horrible person; this job would just make you not give a fuck, and put you in a position where you can’t help people that have got genuine problems.

When considering the way that the HoH/d/Deaf prisoners were responding to the prison environment, ideas presented by Goffman (1961) (along with the findings of Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Liebling, 2001a, Rowe, 2011) are again applicable. Central to

this was the fact that all of the prisoners interviewed had become institutionalised to some extent, and had altered their behaviour to fit with the prison regime. The most immediately obvious evidence of this related to their use of what Goffman (1961: 55) describes as “institutional Lingo”, with interviewees using words such as ‘Guv’ and ‘Boss’ when talking about staff members, and using a variety of unfamiliar colloquialisms when discussing elements of the prison regime and their sentence plans. In addition to this, despite claiming to dislike being prisoners, a number of the prisoners interviewed did seem to have become used to it, with P1A saying that “I love banging up in my cell, and I mean that’s sad isn’t it, but that’s eight years jail. I love getting behind the door”, and P3A stating that he had his next Parole Board in 2019 which “was not far away”. The effects of institutionalisation were particularly clear when interviewing P3H, who believed that the lack of structure in the outside world meant that his life was going to be worse after his release from prison, and that things were going to be harder because “You are left to your own devices, and can just get up and walk wherever you know. Here you walk from here to your cell to the dining hall or whatever”.

Further to this, a number of the interviewees appeared to have taken on one of Goffman’s (1961) four main methods of adaptation in response to prison life. This was highlighted by P1C who seemed to have adapted to the prison environment through a process of “conversion”, whereby he had begun to take over the staff view of himself (Ibid: 63), as shown when he remarked that “As a prisoner I am less than everybody else”. This was built upon by SM1A, who indicated that this process of conversion was common in the prison environment, as shown here:

Some are slightly more, how do I say it. Slightly more, amicable. I always say that you can always find out how long a prisoner has gone through his sentence and learnt things in prison, by telling him ‘no’, and seeing how he reacts. If he flies off the handle, then you know he’s got a bit more work to do.

While this suggests that the longer a person is in prison the more their self is converted to that of an ‘obedient’ prisoner, P5H, who had been in prison for over a

decade appeared to have responded to imprisonment in a different way, and had taken the “intransigent line” of adaptation which involves the refusal to co-operate with the expected roles within a total institution<sup>103</sup> (Ibid: 62). Throughout the interview he was extremely resentful of the prison system and the role played by the staff, and subsequently spoke of being unwilling to behave in the way a prisoner would be expected to. He emphasised this by stating that “I don’t particularly want to conform to their regime, so I’ve told them to piss off with the work thing, to be honest”.

Although the focus of this section of the chapter is Goffman’s framework, it is also important to acknowledge that findings from the data collected also align with more recent studies about prisoner adaptation. For example, a number of the prisoners were behaving in line with Crewe’s (2009: 167) typology of a “pragmatist” which refers to individuals who “share the perception that the [prison held a virtual monopoly on power and that to resist it was either impossible or imprudent”. Such links are important as they highlight overlaps between the experiences and responses of d/Deaf prisoners and those of other prisoners.

After examining the applicability of Goffman's (1961) ideas to the establishments entered, it is clear that a number of the features he outlined as being common to total institutions were also present in the prisons included in the research, particularly with regards to the notion of “batch living” (Ibid: 22), the existence of an 'Us' versus 'Them' divide between staff members and prisoners, and the importance of roles. Such findings suggest that prisoners and staff members are expected to conform to particular roles, which implies that prisoners must be able to act in a certain manner to fulfil their role. This is important, as in coming chapters it is argued that d/Deaf prisoners are often unable to fulfil the requirements of the prisoner role due to their lack of conception of sound, and if they are Deaf, their cultural difference.

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<sup>103</sup> This also links to the argument that prisoners respond to the prison environment by resisting it, as discussed by Cohen and Taylor (1972) and Sparks et al (1996).

Although findings are to be presented in Chapters Seven and Eight which show that HoH/d/Deaf prisoners often have difficulty adjusting to the requirements of their allocated role, thus far it has been shown that in certain instances, interviewees were behaving in similar ways to other prisoners, and employing similar methods of adaptation. This is important as it indicates that, like other prisoners, the lived realities of HoH/d/Deaf people in prison are indeed derived at some level from the structure of their surroundings, and that their perceptions of self are often altered as a result of this<sup>104</sup>. With this in mind, consideration is now given to the extent that the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners correlate with existing literature relating to the lived realities of prisoners more broadly, with particular focus being given to the applicability of Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment framework (as well as other more recent sources).

### **The Pains of All Prisoners**

This section of the chapter examines the impact that the penal environment had upon the HoH/d/Deaf prisoners included in the research, and makes connections with the existing literature regarding the pains of imprisonment. By making such connections it is shown that despite being d/Deaf to some degree, the prisoners interviewed were still experiencing many of the same pains that other prisoners would, based upon the conditions of their role and the nature of the prison environment.

As alluded to in Chapter Five, many of the interviews were filled with discussions about the pains of imprisonment, with a number of the prisoners being extremely open about the impact that the penal environment was having upon their feelings of wellbeing. While significant amounts of data were collected in relation to these general pains, certain themes were much more prevalent than others, the first of which relates to Sykes' (1958) notion of the deprivation of security. This was something that all of the prisoners interviewed discussed experiencing, which, given

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<sup>104</sup>It is important to acknowledge that the experiences of deaf/HoH prisoners included in the research were much more aligned with Goffman's framework than those who were profoundly Deaf, which indicates that the lived realities of Deaf people in prison may in fact be more distinct than those who are deaf, as to be discussed further in coming chapters.

the fact that violence appeared to be a common feature in all but one of the prisons included in the research, came as little surprise. As with the findings of numerous existing sources (see, for example Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Gibbs, 1982, Jones and Schmid, 2000, Medicott, 2001), interviewees expressed fear and anxiety about being attacked in prison due to the volatility of the environment, as shown by P3B who stated that:

I never had any fights. I'm not interested in fighting. I just want to be careful of myself because some people can do you, they can stab you and I didn't want to get involved in any of that. That's why I'm frightened.

In an attempt to maintain any feelings of security that they did have, prisoners had established strategies to help them to avoid situations which they felt would put them at risk, for example P1W discussed avoiding going to the shower alone with the aim of preventing any potential sexual or physical attacks.

Further to this, P3H, P5H, P2C, P1B, P4B and P5B claimed that their insecurities had in fact gone beyond prospective fears, and had turned into reality, with these individuals stating that they had become victims of assault, abuse or exploitation during their time in prison, thus echoing the findings of Scraton et al (1991), James (2003), Durcan (2008) and Scott and Codd (2010). While other prisoners appeared to be the perpetrators in most of the scenarios discussed, P4B and P5H claimed that their feelings of security had been undermined by staff members. As alluded to in Chapter Five, P5H was extremely candid about his perceptions of the prison system during his interview, and spoke much more negatively of staff members than his peers, detailing being beaten up by multiple staff members, being transferred to other prisons for false reasons, and speaking of specific prison officials who he felt would do anything to get him in trouble, one of which he was convinced would allow prisoners to kill him and “turn a blind eye” (P5H, 2015). This is important as, irrespective of the reliability of such claims, they highlight the extent to which P5H felt deprived of security in the prison setting as a result of his relations with staff members, and that, as argued in

existing literature (Goffman, 1961, Genders and Player, 1989, Bottoms and Rose, 1998, Reuss, 2000, Crawley, 2004, Liebling, 2011) prisoner-staff relations can have a significant impact upon the way prisoners experience incarceration.

The data also indicated that the recent budget cuts and bench marking that have taken place across prisons in England and Wales (National Audit Office, 2012, NOMS, 2014b) have exacerbated the deprivation of security felt by prisoners, as shown by P5H who stated that:

They're not interested in nothing, and it's because they haven't got the time to be interested in anything. Guys who get thrown on this wing get battered in seconds because they can't do their job properly on this wing. It's shocking what goes on in here. I've been all over the system, and what they do in here is terrible; they can't control nothing.

Staff members included in the study also discussed this, and echoing the findings of HMIP (2015) and Bowcott (2016), raised a myriad of security related issues which they felt had arisen as a result of staff cuts at their establishments. This is highlighted by SM1S who stated that "But now, we are so short staffed it has gone horrendous. This wing is okay, obviously they are very very easy to work with<sup>105</sup>, but the other wings, they are like Beirut, it is actually scary" and SM1C who maintained that "At times it can be dangerous as well, because there aren't enough staff. That's just my view, because they are making cuts everywhere". This shows that recent budget cuts have altered the dynamics in prison, which has then had an impact upon the lived realities of both prisoners and staff members, as to be considered in more depth later in this chapter.

Another main theme that arose from the data that correlates with findings from existing literature (see, for example Sykes, 1958, Goffman, 1961, Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Cooke et al, 1990, Coyle, 1994, Wacquant, 2002, James, 2003, Irwin and Owen, 2005, Liebling, 2011, Rowe, 2011) relates to the fact that all of the prisoners

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<sup>105</sup> She was referring to the fact that she worked on a sex offenders wing, and that prisoners on her wing are less like 'typical' prisoners than those on other wings.

interviewed discussed feeling disempowered and deprived of their autonomy whilst in custody. Prisoners spoke of being unable to carry out the simplest tasks without permission from staff, including being unable to make phone calls or visit the prison library without having to first submit an application form to the officers, who then had to authorise it. They also discussed having no control over their own lives, with P1C who was vegan being unable to eat vegan only food, and P1H being unable to access the high fibre food that he needed in order to control stomach issues. This lack of autonomy (and expectation of “batch living” (Goffman, 1961: 22)) provoked a variety of responses from the prisoners including depression, frustration, resentment and hopelessness, with feelings of resentment being shown by P5H who felt that “Being locked somewhere...and having someone go ‘Ah you’re not doing this you’re not doing that’, I don’t like it. I’m never going to like it”. Again, the deprivation of autonomy felt by prisoners was seen to have been exacerbated by recent budget cuts, as in line with the findings from the Howard League (2014a, 2014b) and (HMIP, 2015) prisoners discussed being confined to their cells for up to 22 hours a day in recent times.

For the prisoners involved in the study, another consequence of being constantly regulated related to monotony, and echoing the findings of Gibbs (1982), Medlicott (2001) and Scott and Codd (2010), individuals reported feeling bored and frustrated by the fact that they had nothing to do, and that when they did have things to do, they were of little interest to them. This is highlighted in the following quote from P1A who was particularly open about the type of activities that he had been made to carry out in prison:

There were workshops where you had to scratch CDs with bits of sand paper to ruin them. We may as well be digging holes and filling them in again, it was just terrible. They talk about ‘Well we must give prisoners a work-ethic, and improve their self-worth’, but the idea that that kind of work could teach you anything but resentment is just ludicrous.

Furthermore, and again mirroring findings from existing literature (see, for example Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Medlicott, 2001, Jewkes, 2002, Newburn and Hayman, 2002),

a number of prisoners stated that as a direct result of such monotony they had become acutely aware that time was passing them by and discussed feeling hopeless because there was nothing that they could do to stop it, with P3B stating that:

If I am in here I don't know nothing about what's happening outside, I don't hear anything from people. There are changes out there that are going to be a shock for me. My wife says there's lots of changes out there, and I'm thinking, 'Hey, hang on, what?'

All of the prisoners interviewed reported ruminating upon past experiences or worrying about their future as a consequence of the monotonous nature of the penal regime. In order to counteract such feelings, interviewees seemed to have become reliant upon items such as books, TVs and games, with P5B saying that "It's only a PlayStation. But in here, you've got to treasure things. It's the way I time travel, to help me move on a bit". Such findings again work to show that the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf people in prison are to some extent aligned with those of other prisoners, and that, like other prisoners, their lived realities are shaped by the nature of the environment that they are confined within.

The final main similarity between the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners and other prisoners relates to their lack of access to family and friends outside of prison. While a number of the interviewees spoke of either not having any family/friends or being estranged from them, those who did have relationships with people outside of prison indicated that separation affected their feelings of wellbeing, and also negatively affected the relationships themselves, thus mirroring the findings of numerous existing sources (Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Cooke et al, 1990, Coyle, 1994, Jewkes, 2002, Salmon, 2007, Codd, 2008). One of the key issues reported was loneliness, with P1H stating that "I have lost all that support, and it frightens me... I rather suspect that I'm going to be a very very lonely person". For certain interviewees this deprivation of contact with support networks went beyond merely missing their families and actually provoked feelings of resentment and beliefs that they weren't being supportive enough to arise. This links directly to Gibbs' (1982: 102) idea that incarceration can induce a "crisis of abandonment" and is highlighted by P3B who stated that:

I say to them [my wife and mother] 'I need you to support me. There's nothing here that makes me happy, that's why I lie in bed'. And I don't think they realise. They only realise when they come and see me, and then we argue and they say...'What more do you want?'

While the quotes above from P1H and P3B showed that they wanted to be supported by their loved ones and were suffering because they were felt as though they were being deprived of such support, other prisoners were actually purposefully depriving themselves of contacting their families. Examples of this self-induced deprivation came from both interviewees at HMP Cheadle who were refusing to let their families visit them because they felt that prison wasn't a place for 'normal' people, thus furthering ideas from Sykes (1958) who talks of confinement acting as a daily reminder to prisoners that they need to be separated from the rest of society.

Although Sykes (1958: 82) and Goffman (1961: 57) both argued that prisoners can counteract the pain experienced as a result of being separated from family and friends by interacting socially in prison and forming relationships with their peers, the data suggested that this is not always the case. On the contrary, in line with findings from Clemmer (1940), Matheisen (1965) and Crewe (2009), it became apparent that while a number of the participants did indeed appear to have friends and associates in prison, they did not necessarily view these relationships as being necessary or fulfilling. This is illustrated by P5H who states that:

I know people from other prisons, but they aren't my kind of people to be honest. There are people that I sit down and talk, but most people want to whinge and whine about their predicament, and I don't do that. Whilst I may do it to you guys, I don't wanna stand out on the landing talking about crime or bitches or money and that sort of thing. I don't wanna do all that and that's what people want to do in a prison like this. So I try and keep to a select few. But I wouldn't say they are friends no. Ships in the night really.

The above sentiments were echoed by P1A who, when asked about what he missed about the outside world stated that he missed interacting with what he described as

“normal people” rather than people who come from “the bottom of the socio-economic pile”. He then went on to say that:

It can be a bit exhausting really. All they ever talk about is crimes that they have committed, and drugs. I don't know. I sound like an elitist snob. There are not many people who talk about anything interesting. If I wanted to talk about what I watched on TV last night, there's not going to be anybody else who is going to have watched what I did, because they will have watched big brother or something, and I will have watched a documentary on channel two.

This draws attention to the fact that although there may be such thing as a ‘normal’ prisoner who possesses many of the qualities that people would anticipate them to have, in reality, being incarcerated does not automatically mean that all prisoners are the same. Therefore, although the regulated nature of the regime may mean that they may begin to play the role of a ‘prisoner’, their identities are not necessarily “mortified” (Goffman, 1961: 24) to the extent that they completely disassociate from the person that they were prior to incarceration. This is again important, as it maps on to existing studies such as Schmidt (2016), which show that the lived realities of prisoners are not just derived from the structure of the penal environment, but also their pre-existing characteristics and perceptions, as to be discussed in coming chapters with regards to d/Deafness specifically.

Thus far this chapter has shown that the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners are aligned with those of other prisoners on some levels. The fact that all prisoners are placed into an environment which is organised by enforced “batch living” (Goffman, 1961: 22), where they are disempowered by their role and deprived of their freedom means that experiential overlaps are inevitable; after all, prisoners are still prisoners and prison is still prison, irrespective of the imported characteristics of those confined within its walls. Such findings map on to Crewe's (2009: 4) argument that “There is no such thing as ‘*The Prison*’ (Sparks et al, 1996), but as early theorists argued, imprisonment entails some more-or-less ‘intrinsic’ pains, deprivations and conditions”.

While these findings substantiate the applicability of the deprivation model to the lived realities of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, in coming chapters it is argued that this model alone cannot be used to understand their experiences. In chapters Seven and Eight, the applicability of existing deprivation focused frameworks to the experiences of HoH and particularly d/Deaf prisoners is critiqued, and it is argued that such frameworks do not make sufficient reference to the fact that the prison population is made up of a wide array of different types of people, who do not necessarily respond to the penal environment in the same way, and are not always able to automatically adjust to the regime. With this in mind consideration is now given to the way that people who do not necessarily fit the mould of a 'normal' or 'expected' prisoner are managed in an environment that appears to be designed for similarity. By doing this the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners can then be understood in line with a wider awareness of the way the Prison Service responds to difference in prison.

### **'Difference' in Prison**

When discussing prisoners who are 'different' reference is being made to individuals for whom prison was not necessarily originally designed to contain, which, according to Cheney (2005) includes all those who deviate from the stereotype of a young, able-bodied, man. The fact that the prison population actually represents a diverse cross section of the wider population (Leech, 2014) means that many prisoners do not fit this mould, thus raising questions as to the position of these individuals within an environment that is designed for "batch living" (Goffman, 1961: 22). With this in mind, consideration is now given to how the Prison Service responds when somebody enters prison who is not necessarily able to exist as part of the "batch" (Ibid: 17) or to automatically adjust to the prison regime. As part of this, the extent to which the Equality Act 2010 is effective in ensuring that 'reasonable adjustments' are made in order to prevent different from meaning deficient is also explored. This is important as it became apparent that the nature of such responses significantly impacted upon the lived realities of the d/Deaf prisoners included in the research.

When staff members were asked about the role of the Equality Act 2010 at their prison they often appeared to be resentful of it, as though it was making their job more difficult than it ought to be, with SM1S saying that “We are ruled by it. We have to abide by the blinking rules and regulations because, these lot know every right that they have got; some of them could be solicitors”. Most of the staff members were eager to provide assurance that the issue of equality was at the forefront of prison ideology, and on a number of occasions were indignant at even being asked about it, as though by asking I was insinuating inadequacy (see Scott, 2015a for similar findings). Despite such assurances, once the interviews progressed it became clear that although equality was a theoretical priority, in reality there were a number of practical obstacles that were preventing ideology from becoming actuality.

Issues with resources were a central obstacle discussed by the staff members interviewed, with the data indicating that recent budget cuts were in fact inhibiting the sufficient accommodation of the needs of prisoners who are ‘different’, as well as provision for prisoners more generally, thus reflecting the findings from existing sources (Howard League, 2014a, Howard League, 2014b, HMIP, 2015). In terms of general provision, staff members spoke of extensive cuts causing some resources to be removed altogether, with the most frequently discussed staff cut relating to psychology. Both prisoners and staff members talked about this issue, with P1C saying that “There’s more cut backs than ever before. I’ve got post-traumatic stress disorder and am supposed to be seeing a psychiatrist, but there’s no psychiatrist”, and SM1S stating that the Deaf prisoner at HMP Sale “Has took a real nose dive and I think the reason being, he doesn't even have now, his psychiatrist nurse, because they have took them off us”.

Staff members also argued that extensive cuts had led to a lack of consistency in job role and placement, with a number of interviewees discussing being asked to change jobs frequently. One particularly significant example came from SM4B who, despite being one of only two prison officers who could communicate in BSL at a prison with six culturally and linguistically Deaf prisoners, had been asked to move to a different prison. He did not know the reason for this request, but did acknowledge that this

would be a loss in terms of the support he could provide to the Deaf prisoners. Staff cuts also meant that there was less consistency in where prison officers were placed, as highlighted by SM1B who stated that:

Because our budget has been so restricted, it means that we have less staff, and therefore that the way that they are distributed does change a lot. They are trying to use the staff in any way they can, and spread them more widely...I will ring up the wing staff to have a bit of a chat, and probably seven, eight times out of 10 I get 'Oh I'm visiting on the wing I don't know, I'm not normally here'. So that is a big problem, it doesn't help in terms of building up a level of trust with staff.

The impact that such displacement can have upon prisoners was shown by the staff member present during the interview with P1W. In response to a remark made by P1W which indicated that he did not know what an offender supervisor was, she advised that provision of an offender supervisor is usually compulsory as it is they who manage a prisoner's sentence plan, but that in the present climate many of the offender supervisors were being cross deployed to different areas due to staff shortages, thus inhibiting provisions for prisoners.

In terms of the effect that resource issues were seen to have upon accommodating the needs of prisoners who are 'different' specifically, the data indicated that staff cuts were causing problems for equality staff, with SM1C being the only equality officer for a prison with a population of 1300 prisoners<sup>106</sup>. This lack of prioritisation was also highlighted in the data collected from HMP Sale whose only equality officer was on long term sick, and when he was in, had to split his time between equality related duties and working on the segregation wing. Furthermore, even in instances where an allocated equality officer was available, the fact that the label of 'difference' includes so many categories of people meant that the prisons included in the study were largely reactive when attempting to meet their needs. In line with this, staff members spoke of having little understanding of what 'reasonable adjustments'

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<sup>106</sup> Issues relating to cross deployment were also relevant here, as not only was he the designated equality officer, he was also carrying out the roles of foreign national officer and disability officer.

would be required for certain types of prisoners until they actually come in to contact with them. This is illustrated by SM1D who stated that:

Our health and needs assessment says we are quite reactive. You react. Because we don't know who's coming in and off that bus. It's not like you can go to a shelf and pick it off, and say this is what we did. It is anecdotal which I think is wrong.

While many of the staff members interviewed felt that being reactive to difference was somewhat inevitable, SM1S was extremely frustrated by this and felt that HMP Sale were only trying to accommodate the needs of P1S who was culturally and linguistically Deaf, to avoid being included in a legal case that he had instigated against the previous prison he was at. This idea that prisons are not only reactive, but reactive only when accountable is shown in the following quote from SM1S:

In a way that they have dumped it all on my shoulders because they don't want a court case against them, do you know what I mean? I think, initially, they were going to group us in with it as well. Until we've bucked up, and you know, in prison it is always an afterthought. They think right we have to do this now. They never do it before; they always do it afterwards.

The manner in which staff members actually respond to those who are different also emerged as a central theme within the data, and very much reflected Goffman's (1961: 22) notion of "batch living". A number of the staff members felt that in order to achieve equality in prison, consistency was vital, and that in order to treat prisoners equally they must be treated the same. Although it was clear that these interviewees genuinely felt that this was the only way to successfully achieve equality, this view fails to acknowledge the social model of disability or the fact that equality is actually sometimes more about treating people differently (Barnes, 1991, Siebers, 2008, Oliver and Barnes, 2011), as shown by SM1B:

Even the other day we had a bit of a workshop about people being treated decently, and one of the things that came out of that was about people being treated consistently. But what people here don't understand is that in order for people to

have equality and equal access, they sometimes need different things. I think they would [react negatively to treating prisoners differently] mainly because it is easier for them to enforce rules when it is a rule for everybody

All of the prisoners interviewed were conscious of this 'one size fits all' attitude in prison, with P1C saying that "Prison doesn't fit me. I don't fit the prison system. Partly because of my hearing and partly because of my age" and P5H stating "I have to adapt to other people really; it's a lot easier to do that in life than expect people to adapt to you, especially in prison". Therefore, while staff members may indeed have been aware of the importance of the Equality Act 2010, their interpretation of its stipulations appeared to suggest that in prison 'different' does often mean deficient, and that those who require assistance to adapt to the prison regime are not necessarily going to receive it.

However, even in instances where it is recognised that adjustments need to be made to meet the needs of a certain prisoner, it appeared that securing funding for such adjustments is likely to be difficult. Staff members argued that because the demand for funding in prison far outweighs the supply (HMIP, 2015), this means that the main priority is to fund resources that will benefit the most people. Therefore, because those who are 'different' often make up a minority, they are not necessarily seen as a funding priority, as highlighted below by SM4B who, when discussing attempting to create a pilot treatment programme for Deaf sex offenders, stated that:

They didn't want it. It's money, time, resources. [They said that] we can't do it. So the pilot course we actually ran in the afternoons<sup>107</sup> after running another class in the mornings. And we were working through our lunches to set it up, so that's how it came about. We wrote the session for the afternoon in our lunches.

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<sup>107</sup> Staff only usually run one class a day at HMP Bowdon, either in the morning or the afternoon.

Furthermore, the fact that prisoners who are 'different' often equate to a small fraction of the population (Leech, 2014) is also problematic because if they are a very small minority then they may not consistently form part of the prison population, thus making funding even more difficult to secure. An example of this comes from SM1C who, despite being aware of the adjustments that would need to be made for a Deaf prisoner, stated that:

It is hard to fight for things if you don't actually have it. For example, if I was to say that we need more translators and more BSL trained staff, they would be like 'Okay how many deaf people have you got in who sign?', and if I was like 'None', they would think that we didn't really need it. It is very much about budget these days unfortunately, so it is hard for me to fight that corner until there is someone who is d/Deaf.

In addition to this, the data indicates that even if funding is available, the fact that 'difference' covers so many subsections of people can mean that staff are not necessarily used to working with certain groups and are therefore unfamiliar with how to go about securing such funding. This is highlighted by SM4B in the follow quote:

I just think it is knowing what the process is. I think it is more about staff knowing that they have to contact this particular agency who will then send out an interpreter for the period of time that we anticipate they are needed for. But then it is like whose budget it comes out of, because for programmes, we have a budget. I know when some of the staff in the offender management unit have wanted to do meetings for Parole Boards or sentencing, they ask if we can book it. But we have to say no because then it will come out of our budget and it isn't our provision.

The findings from this section of the chapter have indicated that a lack of time, resources, awareness and understanding means that those who are 'different' in prison often become institutionally deficient, and in consequence it is clear that the Equality Act 2010 is limited in its practical scope. Although the Act theoretically protects the rights of minority group prisoners, in reality its stipulations do not appear to be effectively shielding prisoners who are 'different' from discrimination. This is

important to the research as it adds weight to existing arguments that the Prison Service is not necessarily equipped to manage the needs of those who do not fit the mould of an expected prisoner (see, for example HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2006, Corsten, 2007, Crawley, 2007, Liebling, 2007, Medlicott, 2007, Durcan, 2008, Rowe, 2011, Scott and Codd, 2010, Mann, 2016), and raises questions as to whether it is in fact acting illegally by failing to meet the duty imposed by the Equality Act 2010. Such findings are considered with regards to d/Deafness throughout the following two chapters.

In order to aid the examination of the distinctness of the experiences of those who are HoH/d/Deaf in coming chapters, consideration is now given to the way that the staff members included in the research viewed d/Deafness, and the way that this particular type of difference is understood within the Prison Service, as this proved to have a significant impact upon the lived realities of the prisoners interviewed.

### **Sounding Out d/Deafness**

Consideration is now given to d/Deafness specifically, and the way that this particular type of 'difference' is viewed within the prison system. By gaining an understanding of the institutional perception of d/Deafness, the experiences of the HoH/d/Deaf prisoners interviewed can then be situated within the wider context of 'prison', which is important as it allows for the exploration in coming chapters as to how such experiences are affected by the views of those that surround them in the penal environment.

While a number of the staff members interviewed were Deaf aware to a certain extent, the data indicated that prison officials commonly view d/Deafness via the medical model of disability, and present views which sit in line with the predominant societal view that deafness is an impairment that has a negative influence on an individual's life (Lane, 1993, Lane et al, 1996, Moore and Levitan, 1998, Ladd, 2003). This is illustrated by SM1A who stated that "They are no different to anybody else, they just have the misfortune to not hear", SM4C who referred to deafness as a

“Communication disability” and SM1H who, when talking about a Deaf prisoner who had previously been at HMP Hale said that:

Some days, if he was on his own I would take him over to see some of the other elderly prisoners; we’ve got a few disabled prisoners, and I would ask them to sit and have a chat with him. And they were really good with him, they would talk to him, engage him in their conversation, make him a cup of tea.

This final quote signifies a deeply entrenched perception of deafness as weakness and sits in line with Goffman’s (1963) ideas around stigma, because although SM1H appears to be implying that the Deaf prisoner was elderly, in reality he was actually in his early thirties. Such a view is further highlighted by SM1S who said that:

If you were to write a list down, and if it was an animal you would put it to sleep. He has got a mental age of 13 or something like that. He has got really bad diabetes. He has got bi polar. He is deaf, and he is dumb.

This is problematic not only because of the extent to which this staff member is viewing deafness to be an issue, but also because she is using language such as ‘deaf and dumb’ which is seen as derogatory by Deaf people, who perceive it as implying that being d/Deaf means being mentally deficient (see Ladd, 2003 for further information)<sup>108</sup>. This association between deafness and intellectual inferiority emerged as a theme within the data collected from staff members more broadly, with SM2B saying that “I don’t think they would treat them [d/Deaf prisoners] any differently to someone who has low IQ”, and SM4B stating “But I guess [prison] it is similar for people who have

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<sup>108</sup> It is important to acknowledge that SM1S had no intention of being offensive, and rather was voicing an opinion that echoes traditionally embedded views about deafness which have become ingrained in mainstream ideology (Ladd, 2003).

intellectual difficulties”<sup>109 110</sup>. These perceptions mirrored those discussed in Chapter Three where d/Deaf people were commonly found to be viewed as being less intelligent by hearing employers (Leigh, 2009), thus suggesting that the principles underpinning the medical model of disability do indeed pervade the prison system. The data showed that such views can also have practical consequences for d/Deaf people in prison, with a particularly striking example coming from SM3B, who, when discussing the approach that HMP Bowdon had had to d/Deaf prisoners in the past, stated that:

The only way that a lot of people would deal with a Deaf prisoner, was to send them to Rampton [a secure mental health institution] or something like that. They were having problems because they are d/Deaf, so we had a team of probation officers who said ‘No we can’t give them their own course, so we’ll send them to Rampton to get them assessed’. Why would you send them to Rampton? One, it’s immensely expensive to send them there. He doesn’t have mental health problems.

This highlights the extent of the real life impact that a tendency to link d/Deafness to mental impairment can have, and echoes findings from Ackerman (1998) who reported that a Deaf prisoner had been moved to a hospital wing for similar reasons. Although SM3B was certain that the provision for Deaf prisoners had moved on from this, findings from other interviewees at HMP Bowdon indicated otherwise. When talking about one particular Deaf prisoner, SM4B advised that there had been some conflicts as to the most appropriate treatment path for him. Although she believed that he ought to remain in prison for the rest of his sentence, others felt that

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<sup>109</sup> SM2B and SM4B, along with SM1B and SM3B were the only staff members interviewed who displayed a level of understanding about Deaf culture. However, these quotes show that irrespective of this, their views were still being moulded by traditional understandings of deafness.

<sup>110</sup> Some staff members spoke of Deaf prisoners doing IQ tests which confirmed their low intellectual capacity. However, as recognised by SM2B there “Aren’t any IQ assessments that have been developed that would help Deaf men yet because you would have to translate the instructions. And as soon as you don’t use the instructions how they are written it invalidates the assessment”. This therefore means that existing IQ test results for Deaf prisoners are often likely to be invalid as they are based upon questions that are created for written rather than visual responses, and therefore if the individual is unable to read or write the results will not reflect their true intellect. This is also problematic because it could further ingrain existing medical perceptions that d/Deafness is an impairment.

admission to a mental institution would be more appropriate. The details of this are discussed in the following quote:

The only criteria under which he would be sectioned would be sexual deviance due to his offence. Which now I think is a reason that a person could be sectioned, but there is no other mental health issues or disorders. Which to me seems a bit like okay he's not coping particularly well in prison, but on the other hand, sectioned under the Mental Health Act. I wanted him to be really clear in understanding about what that might mean for him, because that might be more difficult for him to be released from.

Furthermore, as in wider society (Higgins, 2002, Leigh, 2009), there was an inclination to view both deaf prisoners and Deaf prisoners through a medical lens, irrespective of the way the individuals themselves viewed it. It became apparent that this had a much more detrimental impact upon Deaf prisoners than those who were HoH/deaf as it contradicted the way they viewed their Deafness, thus linking back to discussions about the ideological collision between the Deaf and hearing worlds from Chapter Three (Lane et al, 1996)<sup>111</sup>. This was compounded by the fact that Deaf people were viewed by staff members as being more 'disabled' than deaf people, as shown by SM2S who referred to the Deaf prisoner at HMP Hale as having a "double difficulty" because he couldn't hear *or* speak, as well as SM1A who felt that one of the d/Deaf prisoners at his establishment was "doing okay" because he could talk<sup>112</sup>.

This tendency to associate Deafness with disability is arguably a by-product of a lack of Deaf awareness, with many of the staff members interviewed failing to acknowledge the existence of the Deaf community, or seeing BSL as being a 'real' alternative to spoken language. This was most evident in discussions about the creation of a d/Deaf wing within prisons, with staff members believing that this would unfairly stigmatise those who were situated within it, and, according to SM2S, would prevent them from "learning the social skills of the normal population". In coming chapters, it is to be

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<sup>111</sup> While deaf prisoners may also be affected by this medical assumption, the fact that they too view their deafness as an impairment means that they are more likely to view a focus on a medical response as a positive thing.

<sup>112</sup> As opposed to signing.

argued that these ideological collisions create an extra set of pains for Deaf prisoners due to the fact that the individuals with power in prison (staff members) generally appear to exhibit a lack of comprehension of their cultural difference, acknowledgement of the social model of disability or consideration that not all prisoners can adjust to “batch living” (Goffman, 1961: 22).

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter data has been presented which show that the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners are to some extent aligned with those of other prisoners, and that many of the core pains of imprisonment outlined in existing literature are indeed applicable to their lived realities. This gives merit to the relevance of the deprivation model as it indicates that the way a d/Deaf person experiences prison is at least partially an outcome of the unique nature of the penal environment itself, and highlights the fact that they are still prisoners, irrespective of whether they are d/Deaf or not. The relevance of Goffman's (1961) total institution framework gives further credence to this, as not only were numerous elements of his deprivation focused framework present within the prisons visited, but they were also recognised by the d/Deaf prisoners interviewed themselves when they were discussing their experiences of prison.

The data suggests that three specific aspects of Goffman's (1961) framework were particularly pertinent in the establishments visited; the idea that prisoners ought to exist as part of a “batch” (Ibid: 17), the existence of a divide between staff members, and the importance of roles in the penal environment. Such characteristics indicate that prison life is designed for similarity and that prisoners are expected to conform to particular roles, which is important in the context of this research as it leaves little room for prisoners who are different (In this case those who are HoH/d/Deaf). Subsequently, in Chapters Seven and Eight, Goffman's framework is critiqued for failing to meaningfully consider the experiences of those who are not always able to automatically adapt to the regime or to conform to “batch living” (Ibid: 21).

In terms of the way that prison establishments respond to difference in prison broadly, findings outlined throughout imply that a lack of awareness, resources and time on the part of staff members means that appropriate adjustments are not consistently made to allow such individuals to adapt to prison life, thus undermining the stipulations of the Equality Act 2010. As a result of this prisoners who are 'different' can become institutionally 'deficient', irrespective of their own personal views, something which is explored further with regards to d/Deafness in coming chapters. While consideration is yet to be given to the level of adjustments and support provided for the HoH/d/Deaf prisoners included in the research, the final part of this chapter alluded to the way that staff members understood d/Deafness, with the medical model of disability being found to underpin all of their perceptions to some degree. Such views were shown to have a significant impact upon the lives of Deaf prisoners, as they collide profoundly with those of their own, with the outcome of such a collision being considered in Chapter Eight.

After finding that the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners are to some extent aligned with those of other prisoners, in Chapters Seven and Eight the distinctness of their lived realities is examined, with the extent to which the pre-prison characteristics they import go on to mould their penal reality being explored. Consideration is also given to the way that the Prison Service responds to this specific type of difference, and whether the nature of such a response does indeed lead to institutional deficiency. As advised in Chapter One, rather than exploring the experiences of HoH/deaf and Deaf prisoners together, a decision was made to separate them, with Chapter Seven exploring the lived realities of the deaf/HoH prisoners included in the sample, and Chapter Eight looking at those who are culturally and linguistically Deaf. This separation allows for meaningful consideration to be given to the role of imported identity in the lives of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, which is important as the data indicate that the way an individual responds to their d/Deafness has a significant impact upon the way they experience the prison environment. Although neither group fits the mould of a 'normal' prisoner, the way that they respond to the difficulties associated

with this differ drastically, and create different distinct 'pains', to be discussed as follows.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: THE EXPERIENCES OF dEAF PRISONERS**

This chapter explores the experiences of the deaf and HoH prisoners included in the study, and considers the impact that this type of 'difference' has upon the way that these prisoners experience the penal environment. Links are drawn to the literature outlined in Chapter Three, with consideration being given to the context within which these individuals lost their hearing and the way they view it, and themes such as stigma, concealment and denial being central throughout. Such consideration is necessary because the data collected indicates that the way an individual identifies with their d/Deafness drastically impacts upon their lived realities both outside and inside of prison. This acknowledgement of their lives outside of prison here is important as it has become clear that because the prison environment exists as part of the hearing world, the experiences of HoH/deaf people in the two arenas align in a number of ways

Another central theme in this chapter relates to the role played by sound; as discussed in Chapter Six, sound was a key feature in all of the prisons visited, with establishments appearing to be reliant on sound in order to run. With this in mind it is argued that individuals need access to sound in order to successfully become part of the "batch" (Goffman, 1961: 17) and to exist as a 'we' in prison, which subsequently means without access to equipment that makes sound accessible, full integration in to prison life becomes difficult. As a consequence of this, HoH and particularly deaf prisoners then experience a number of the pains of imprisonment both differently and more intensely than inferred by Sykes (1958) amongst others. This is important as although findings were presented in Chapter Six which showed that overlaps between the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners and prisoners more broadly were inevitable given the nature of the environment, findings from this chapter go on to show that the way an individual experiences this environment is dependent upon the characteristics that they import into prison, the extent to which these characteristics are aligned with what is expected, and more specifically, the way they associate with their d/Deafness.

## Little d deaf Perceptions

Firstly, consideration is given to the circumstances in which the deaf and HoH prisoners interviewed lost their hearing, and the way that they then went on to view their deafness. These perceptions are explored in some depth as it became apparent that, in line with the principles of the importation model, they had a significant impact upon the way these individuals behaved in prison. In terms of the context of their deafness, out of the 10 deaf/HoH prisoners interviewed, nine had lost (or partially lost) their hearing as a result of accidents, injuries, illnesses or the ageing process, and had either been in their teenage years or adults when they had done so. The only exception to this was P1A who had been severely deaf since birth, and spoke of experiencing many of the issues growing up that were discussed in Chapter Three. Despite wearing hearing aids as a child, he found them to be ineffective and subsequently, between the ages of 11 and 23 lived without hearing aids<sup>113</sup>. P1A's involvement in the research was particularly beneficial because although much of the data collected from his interview correlated with that obtained from the Deaf interviewees, his experience of prison was very different to theirs because he viewed and responded to his deafness so differently. This is discussed in more depth later in the chapter and is important as it highlights the complexity of the interrelationship between the importation and deprivation models, and demonstrates the extent to which imported characteristics can mould an individual's penal experience.

In terms of the way they viewed their deafness, the medical model of disability was at the core of the views of all of the deaf/HoH prisoners, who were united in seeing their inability to hear as a problem. It was apparent that their opinions had been formed via the hearing agenda, with all of the prisoners believing that in order to lead a full and 'normal' life, hearing was required. This was highlighted by P1C who, at the end of the interview when asked if he thought there was anything that would help to improve his experience of prison, said "Could you ask them to get my hearing aid PLEASE! Please,

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<sup>113</sup> He only then began to wear them again during his trial, because he did not want to let a murder trial take place without being able to hear it.

because I would like to live a better life”, and P3A who answered the same question by saying that “[It would help] if they could fix my ears properly so I can hear again”.

The fact that all but one of the deaf/HoH prisoners interviewed had gone deaf as teenagers/adults and viewed themselves via the hearing agenda resonates with the ideas of Higgins (1980) who argues that people are unlikely to become culturally Deaf if their hearing identity is already in place before they lose their hearing. Links can also be made to Goffman’s (1963) ideas around stigma, with his explanation for the rejection of a stigmatised identity resonating strongly with the data collected. Many of the interviewees expressed views that fit with Goffman’s (1963: 47-48) belief that people who become stigmatized later in life react differently to those who are born with a particular “stigmatising” feature, and often have difficulty undertaking the process of re-identification. This was shown further by the fact that the nine prisoners who had lost their hearing during or after adolescence had little or no comprehension of the existence of the Deaf community, with all of the interviewees (including P1A) being unable to understand why they would want to be placed on wings with other d/Deaf prisoners. This is illustrated by P1H who stated that “If two deaf people were sharing a cell it would be a disaster because they wouldn’t be able to hear. They would have nothing to talk about other than their deafness”, and P5H who remarked that “The last thing I need is to be on a quiet wing, the same thing as I don’t need to be in a quiet fucking cell, that’s that last thing I need”. As argued by Higgins (1980), these views indicate that sound remains central to the worlds of these prisoners, who identify with the hearing word and view themselves as being *hearing people who cannot hear*. This proved to be significant to the research, as such perceptions went on to shape the way these prisoners experienced the prison world, as to be discussed later in the chapter.

Although the other deaf/HoH prisoners were not aware of the Deaf community, P1A did recognise its existence, but had consciously chosen to reject it. He was very critical of both the community itself and those who identified as being part of it, as shown here in an extract from his interview:

P1A: I don't see it [deafness] as a part of my identity, it's just a thing that I have. I don't understand these people who say 'Well we must maintain the Deaf community; we don't want our Deafness to be cured'. Bring it on man; fix me, that would be brilliant.

Interviewer: So you're not an advocate of the Deaf community then?

P1A: No!

Interviewer: I suppose people in the Deaf community generally sign as well don't they, so they have that whole different thing?

P1A: I suppose. But I think they are just afraid really. It's the fear talking.

Interviewer: In what way?

P1A: Well, having to get rid of the life that they know and enter the real world, the normal, the hearing world is a frightening prospect. People would rather stay as they are, they are comfortable with what they know, so if you suggest taking all that away then they will oppose it, even though deafness is a bad thing. And it is a bad thing; It's life limiting being deaf. It's annoying.

This extract echoes the findings of Turner (1994b) discussed in Chapter Three, and illustrates the complexity of d/Deaf identification. It also works to contravene Deaf Studies literature (see, for example Lane et al, 1996, Ladd, 2003) which indicates that individuals who are deaf as children usually become Deaf at some point in their lives, as it is clear that P1A who was born deaf intended to remain deaf (but not Deaf) throughout his life.

Another important part of the identities of all of the deaf/HoH prisoners interviewed related to stigma, with interviewees again being united in feeling greatly stigmatised by their deafness. This was shown by P4H and P5H who both refused to consider wearing hearing aids because they did not view themselves as the 'type' of person they were made for, with P5H stating "It's for an old man really ain't it a hearing aid. I'm not shoving one of them in my ear yet". In line with this, interviewees indicated

that they felt “tainted” (Goffman, 1963: 12) as a result of their deafness, with one particular example coming from P2A who was yet to tell his family about his deafness for fear of how they would respond, as shown in the following quote:

I am trying to ring my brother to sort out certain things before I tell him about this business with my hearing aids. I don't think, he doesn't know that I've got hearing aids, and I haven't said nothing to him about it... I was going to break it to him when he comes up on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

This example draws attention to another theme; the rejection of what Goffman (1963: 155) calls the “stigma symbol”, which in this case is the hearing aid. While the above quote implies that P2A had not seen his brother since he had lost his hearing, this was not the case and in reality during visits he had removed his hearing aid in order to avoid family members finding out about his deafness<sup>114</sup>. Whilst discussing this he then went on to state that the only way he would be comfortable wearing a hearing aid would be “If I could get those ones where they were inside my ear drums and they couldn't be seen”. A number of other interviewees also avoided wearing any equipment that could be associated with deafness in a bid to prevent others from labelling them as such, with P3A saying that in order to minimise the extent to which he was stigmatised he had refused a cochlear implant despite feeling as though it would help. He then went on to state that he refused the operation because “It [the implant] is on the outside, so it makes you feel like people aren't bothered about you. They would think I'm a deaf and dumb person. You don't want stuff like that”. Such findings echo those of Goffman (1963) and O'Brien and Harris (1999) in that these individuals were attempting to conceal their deafness and to 'pass' as hearing people, in a bid to avoid being stigmatised.

A final illustration of the stigma felt by the deaf/HoH prisoners related to the fact that a number of interviewees had been, or continued to be in denial about their deafness. P1C acted as a particularly striking example of this, as although he did acknowledge that he had hearing problems during the interview, he also advised that for a number

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<sup>114</sup> He also came to the interview without his hearing aid in, and then struggled to hear my questions throughout.

of years he had refused to accept this, as shown in the following extract from his interview:

P1C: It is taking time for me to accept the fact that I did hit my head, and it has caused my loss of hearing. At first I would stand there in conversations and I would say yes when I was supposed to be saying no. This was in Jamaica before I began to accept. There was a lot of pretending going on.

Interviewer: Would you say that you have been in denial about your hearing loss?

P1C: I believe so. I am only slowly now in the last like year beginning to accept the fact that I am partially deaf.

Interviewer: Did you have a hearing aid on the outside?

P1C: No, I've never had a hearing aid since my accident. But this is also part of my denial.

Interviewer: Are you still viewing your deafness very negatively?

P1C: In certain aspects I am because I still have it in the back of my mind that I'm going to get better. I keep on saying "I'm going to get better, I'm going to get better". But it's not improving.

Thus far it has become clear that the views of all of the deaf/HoH prisoners included in the research were underpinned by the medical model of disability, with these individuals being united in feeling stigmatised by their inability to hear, and employing methods such as denial, correction or concealment in order to overcome such stigma. Such findings are vital to the study as it became clear that these imported perceptions and behaviours went on to mould the way that these individuals experienced prison, as to be discussed throughout the remainder of the chapter.

### **Responses to Hearing Loss in Prison**

Consideration is now given to the way that the deaf and HoH prisoners responded to their hearing loss in the prison environment, with it becoming apparent that such responses in many cases acted as a mere continuation of those discussed above. All of

the interviewees wanted to be viewed by others as 'normal' prisoners, and because their definition of 'normal' was constructed via the hearing agenda and included an ability to hear as a key component, this meant that they were striving to behave as hearing people in prison. There were two main ways that individuals attempted to do this; either to wear hearing aids or to conceal their hearing loss from others (or in fact a combination of the two).

The prisoners who decided that wearing hearing aids would be the most effective way to attain the label of 'normal' in prison had to an extent accepted their deafness, and were attempting to "correct" (Goffman, 1963: 19) their stigma by agreeing to wear equipment that they thought would allow them to behave as a hearing person. P1A felt that because he had good quality hearing aids he was fulfilling this role successfully, and stated that "Some people accuse me of faking it because I cope really well. They say 'You're not deaf!'". During the interview he appeared to be very pleased about this, and was satisfied that he was presenting himself in such a way that other prisoners did not seem to take much notice of his deafness. However, he also reported going through periods of time when through no choice of his own, he could not wear hearing aids due to a lack of access to batteries in prison. While P1A deemed instances such as this to be fairly unusual, all of the other prisoners who had opted to respond to their deafness via the route of hearing aids (P1C, P2C, P3A, P1H, P3H) were facing a variety of difficulties that were preventing them from 'correcting' their stigma and behaving as 'normal'. P1C, P2C and P3H were experiencing the most severe difficulties in that they had yet to receive hearing aids whilst in prison, and had thus far only been able to access to them whilst in court, as shown in the following quote from P1C:

The only place I feel comfortable is in court, and it is ridiculous for a person to only feel comfortable in court, where they are going to get a sentence... [In court] I have a thing that goes in my ear with a loop to everybody's microphone. I just want my hearing aid, I would be fine. I think I would be more my old self<sup>115</sup>.

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<sup>115</sup> This quote illustrates the degree to which P1C's identity was being affected by his deafness, and the extent to which his sense of self had been formed around his ability to hear and his access to sound. While he was willing to be seen as deaf if it was to give him his hearing back, lack of access to hearing aids, made this impossible.

It is important to acknowledge that all three individuals had been in denial about their hearing loss and unwilling to wear hearing aids before entering prison, and had only changed their minds during their sentences when it became apparent to them that they needed them in order to take part in prison life (as to be discussed later in the chapter). In terms of P1C and P2C, SM1C deemed the fact that they did not have hearing aids when they entered prison as being a central reason for the lack of provision inside the prison. When explaining this, he stated that staff members become suspicious if a prisoner requests items that they did not enter prison with, as they perceive this to mean that they are merely “trying it on” and do not actually need it. This explanation sits in line with existing findings which suggest that staff members are inherently suspicious of prisoners due to the divide that exists between the two groups in prison (Goffman, 1961, Stern, 1987, Crawley, 2004). P1C also made reference to this suspicion and stated that “I believe they don’t believe that I’m deaf. The only time they will believe is when I get my hearing aid”. Along with such suspicion, interviewees also cited a number of practical reasons for this lack of provision which included long referral times and a lack of continuity between services inside and outside of prison. Furthermore, P1C and P2C claimed that because they were serving short sentences, they had been advised that there would be little point applying for access to hearing aids, as by the time their application would come to be considered, they may have already been released from custody.

While the other individuals who were wishing to correct their deafness by wearing hearing aids (P1H, P2A, P3A) did in fact have access to them in prison, they also faced difficulties in that the hearing aids provided were either of a low quality, not set correctly or prone to running out of batteries. Such issues made their ability to behave as a hearing person inconsistent, as shown by P3A<sup>116</sup> who stated that his hearing aids were buzzing and were turned down too low, but that when he had asked healthcare for help with this they said that they were “Just waiting for my ears to get worse, because that’s the way prison works”, and P1H who remarked:

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<sup>116</sup> P3A was an interesting interviewee because although he did wear hearing aids, he felt very stigmatized by them and did actually try to conceal his deafness whenever possible.

They are a bit parsimonious with the batteries, they will give you one little card and that's it. And then when you queue up there probably won't be any at the health kiosk. So it's one of intermittent supply, which causes great problems for us, because if you lose your hearing you just can't function at all... Just trying to function as a prisoner doing the everyday things that are part of the system can be very difficult if you can't hear properly<sup>117</sup>.

The fact that most of the relevant interviewees had difficulties securing access to adequate hearing aids whilst in prison maps onto findings from HMP (1996), HMIP (2009) and McCulloch (2010, 2012) which suggest that provision of resources is insufficient for d/Deaf prisoners. Such findings reaffirm the argument that the prisons entered were ill equipped to manage the needs of those who do not fit the mould of a 'normal' or 'expected' prisoner, and that consequentially individuals who are different in prison become institutionally deficient, thus raising doubts as to the adequacy of the Equality Act 2010 in protecting the rights of deaf (and sometimes HoH<sup>118</sup>) prisoners.

The other main way that prisoners responded to their deafness in prison was to attempt to conceal it from other people, and to 'pass' (Goffman, 1963, Garfinkel, 1967, O'Brien and Harris, 1999) as hearing. All of the prisoners that responded in this way were HoH rather than severely deaf; while severely deaf prisoners appeared to accept that they would be unable to hide their deafness in the penal environment, those with some comprehension of sound were more likely to believe that they could attain the label of 'normal' by hiding their hearing loss from others. This was illustrated by P3H, P4H, P5H, P2A and P3A who were united in the view that they would not be willing to make other prisoners or staff members aware of their hearing difficulties unless they had absolutely no choice, with P4H expressing that "It ain't really something that you bring up you know. I just shut off from it, and get on with it", P2A saying "I never used to ask people for help or anything else; I tried to sort it out myself, and that's where I've gone wrong", and P5H who advised that the reason staff members were not aware

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<sup>117</sup> This quote highlights the degree to which sound rules in the prison environment, and insinuates that prisoners need sound in order to exist as part of the "batch" (Goffman, 1961: 17), as to be discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>118</sup> The word 'sometimes' is used here, as not all HoH people require access to hearing aids, and those who do often do not seek access to them (Action on Hearing Loss, 2015), as will be seen throughout the remainder of the chapter.

of his deafness was because “In a prison like this they just slap you and stuff when you tell them things like that”.

These prisoners reported feeling that if they were to admit to being deaf/HoH then this would make them vulnerable to abuse from other prisoners, which echoes existing arguments that prisoners who are seen as weak can experience ridicule, bullying and abuse from their peers (see, for example Cheney, 2005, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2006, Crawley, 2007, Durcan, 2008, Crewe, 2009, Scott and Codd, 2010, Philips, 2012).

This is shown in the following quote from P2A:

I’m more a paranoid person when it comes to it, I think I’m worried about my own image. What I look like as well. Because it’s all so new, it’s not even been a year since I’ve had them [hearing aids]. So, when I did have it on for a little bit I did have the mick taken out of me in Beeston, I did. So I took them off. And then I tried putting them on again here, and it seemed like it was, like I was like ‘Oh I can’t do that, they are looking at me, what are they thinking?’

This quote highlights a desire to remain part of the “batch” (Goffman, 1961: 17) and a fear that being deaf could impinge upon this. It also shows that these fears were not merely the product of personal perceptions, but were also grounded in past experience and actual events that had further ingrained his negative perception of deafness. Similar feelings were also expressed by P5H, as shown here in an extract from his interview:

P5H: I don’t think that it’s wise to advertise the fact that you’ve got disabilities.

Interviewer: Why?

P5H: I am also really disabled in the fact that my shoulders dislocate, and defending myself is obviously affected by that. So I don’t go around advertising the fact that ‘Oh I get in to a fight and my shoulder pops out of its socket which would render me useless and someone could kick the fuck out of me’. Why would I go and display that, you can’t can you?

Interviewer: What do you think would happen if you displayed the fact that you couldn't hear in one ear?

P5H: Well, I would imagine. Well people take the piss anyway, but you know, I'm a piss taking kind of guy myself so I take it all in my stride

Interviewer: Have you ever been given the option to wear a hearing aid?

P5H: No. No. Well when I was in Broadmoor, they sent me for this test thing, and they said that I could have something that went from the back of my head to there [points to ear], and I just thought that I'd rather cope with it as it is.

This links back to the idea that the expected 'role' of a prisoner does not involve showing weakness (Sykes, 1958, Sykes and Messinger, 1960, Durcan, 2008, Crewe, 2009) as discussed in Chapter Six when outlining some of the main features of the prisons I visited during the research. Throughout the interview with P5H I felt as though I was witnessing a personal struggle, with P5H attempting to maintain a masculine facade and trying to behave as a 'normal' prisoner, whilst simultaneously appearing very resentful of this. This resonated with the ideas of Goffman (1961: 18) because it highlighted the extent to which he felt confined by his role; despite claiming that changing his behaviour went against his principles, he appeared to be resigned to the fact that prisoners are supposed to behave in a certain way.

This section of the chapter has highlighted the importance of imported identity in prison, and has shown that the way the deaf/HoH prisoners interviewed viewed their hearing loss had a significant influence on their behaviour there. However, it has also become apparent that in instances where the prisoners were willing to accept their 'stigma' and correct it with hearing aids, the establishments were often unable to accommodate such difference or make the necessary provisions. Therefore, although the deaf/HoH prisoners included in the research may have been attempting to exist as part of the "batch" (Goffman, 1961: 17) in prison, their inability to hear, combined with a lack of available resources set them apart from other prisoners, with the consequences of this being discussed as follows.

## **The Pains of deaf/HoH Prisoners**

Consideration is now given to the distinct problems that the deaf/HoH people included in the research were having in prison. While they were attempting to behave as though they were hearing, the fact that sound is so key to the penal regime made this difficult, particularly when access to resources was insufficient. As already specified, a key argument posited within this thesis is that prison as an institution relies on sound in order to operate, with tannoys, voices, bells and alarms all being central to the prison regime. With this in mind, it is argued that an ability to hear is a necessity if a prisoner is to fulfil the requirements of the prisoner role, and therefore for individuals to whom sound is not available, prison automatically becomes more difficult. This shows that deaf people do not experience prison in the same way as other prisoners due to their lack of hearing, and rather, as suggested in existing literature about d/Deaf prisoners (Tucker, 1988, Fisker, 1994, Ackerman, 1998, Young et al, 2000, Gerrard, 2001, McCulloch, 2010, 2012) experience the pains of imprisonment both differently and more intensely than others, as to be discussed below.

Evidence of an inability to adapt to the sound focused prison regime was provided by all of the deaf/HoH prisoners who discussed having issues hearing tannoys, being unable to hear the television and feeling unsafe because they could not hear alarms ringing, thus echoing findings from existing sources (see, for example Gibbs and Ackerman, 1999, Glasner and Miller, 2010, McCulloch, 2010, 2012). This is shown by P1C who said "Last night I tried to watch a film and I just have to watch the action even though I had the volume on like 57", P4H who stated that "I am definitely missing what they are saying on the tannoy, because I can't understand what they are saying. I just shut off. If they want me they can come and get me can't they?", and P1C who remarked:

A couple of times it has dawned me that I might not hear the fire alarm. If I don't have assistance to tell me 'YO FIRE', I may not know. I could die because I was not aware that the alarm was going off.

Although the Equality Act 2010 does not provide a specific definition of what would be classed as a 'reasonable adjustment', it is difficult to comprehend an instance where upholding an individual's physical safety could be seen as anything other than 'reasonable'. While personal evacuation plans<sup>119</sup> had been created for a number of the prisoners to ensure that their safety was not compromised in the case of a fire, none of the interviewees at HMP Hale, HMP Cheadle or HMP Wilmslow had such a plan in place<sup>120</sup>. This suggests that issues relating to the deprivation of security (Sykes, 1958) were being exacerbated for these prisoners as a direct result of the establishment's inability to adapt its regime to fit their needs, as illustrated in the following quote from P5H, which highlights the extent to which he felt that the rigidity of the regime disadvantaged deaf prisoners:

As for wanting people to sit there and be mindful of my disability, I'm not bothered about it no more; I've tried to make people bothered about stuff. And not because I might not hear the tannoy blah blah, but because it's what they should be doing, because there may well be a guy who hasn't got that good a hearing and he really won't hear that tannoy, and he really won't have that peep [personal evacuation plan] done, and he won't get out of his fucking cell when there's a fire.

Another issue experienced by deaf/HoH prisoners as a result of an inability to adjust to the sound oriented regime related to watching television, with interviewees discussing experiencing disproportionate levels of monotony during their sentence because they were unable to hear the TV. Although this could have been counteracted by the provision of subtitle-enabled televisions or in some instances, good quality head

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<sup>119</sup> Personal evacuation plans are documents that are drawn up for prisoners who would need adaptations to be made in the case of a fire. For the deaf/HoH prisoners the plan would usually involve another prisoner/a particular staff member agreeing to let them know when an alarm was going off. These plans appeared to be compulsory throughout the prison estate

<sup>120</sup> Jamie, the staff member who was accompanying me during my time at HMP Hale, became very concerned about the fact that the prison had nothing in place to ensure that the safety of deaf/HoH prisoners was not compromised, to the extent that he altered the schedule of my day to include a visit to the equalities office, where we then discussed this issue.

phones, again such adjustments were often not being made, thus echoing the findings from HMIP (2009)<sup>121</sup>. This is problematic for two main reasons; firstly, because it increased the levels of boredom felt by these prisoners, and secondly because it often created issues between them and their peers. Interviewees who were sharing cells with other prisoners were particularly vulnerable to such problems, with P5H explaining because he did not have access to a television that he could plug his headphones into, he was forced to have the volume very high in order to try and hear it. Consequently, he discussed feeling afraid that “One day they may put me in a cell with a geezer who don’t like me having my TV up, and may want to come in here and fight in the morning. But they don’t give a shit about that”, which again suggests that the deprivation of security was being exacerbated for this individual.

Another reason that the deaf/HoH prisoners were experiencing the pains of imprisonment differently to their peers relates to issues with communication. Although the existing literature discussed in Chapter Four was focused upon the communication barriers faced by Deaf prisoners because of their preference for BSL, the data indicated that the lived realities of the deaf/HoH prisoners were also being affected by such issues because they could not hear people’s voices. Central to this was the role of noise (as opposed to sound) in prison (see also, Wacquant, 2002 for discussions about noise); interviewees felt that the intensity of the noise generated by the prison environment made it more difficult for them to communicate than it otherwise would be<sup>122</sup>. This is highlighted by P1C who stated that “I don’t interact with them [other prisoners] because when it is association, it is a load of noise, and I’m not good in a noisy situation”, P5H who felt that “If someone’s trying to tell you something and there’s loads of noise like there usually is in prison then that’s when it causes problems”, and P1H who said that:

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<sup>121</sup> However, it is also necessary to acknowledge that even if resources had been available, the HoH/deaf prisoners may have been unwilling to take advantage them. One particular example of this came from P5H who was extremely resentful of his deafness and was subsequently unwilling to utilise certain resources because he felt that it would mean admitting that he was deaf.

<sup>122</sup> I found these sentiments easy to relate to, as when I entered a prison wing the first thing I always noticed was the sheer level of noise that I was met with; almost as though someone had turned up the volume in my ears to such a level that I began to feel disoriented.

You will be well aware that prisons do not have perfect ambience; they are very noisy places, and frankly the average hearing aid cannot cope with that. The problems don't stem from the hearers themselves, they stem from the noisy environment that no hearing aid can cope with.

Therefore, it can be argued that although the comprehension of certain types of sound is key to full participation in prison life, for deaf/HoH prisoners, other types of noise compromise the level of access that they have to this 'useful' sound. This is shown by P1H who believed that his main problem in prison was the fact that "You can't distinguish useful noise from useless noise. It drowns it out all the time", and P5H who stated that "It is just when there is surrounding noise I can't hear nothing". With this in mind it can be suggested that, in addition to access to sound, an ability to filter between different types of sound is also necessary if an individual is to be able to adapt to their prisoner role.

The fact that the prison environment makes communication more difficult for deaf/HoH prisoners is of particular importance, as although the same could also be said for wider society (Ladd, 1991), it can be argued that communication is even more important in prison than in other arenas. This is highlighted by P1A who, when discussing an occasion when his hearing aid batteries had run out, stated that:

Communication is really important in manmade volatile environments. And without a hearing aid I found it hard to communicate, so I found it difficult...If I didn't have them it would be impossible. This environment more than any other is all about communication and without my hearing aids I literally don't think I would be able to survive.

All of the deaf/HoH prisoners interviewed spoke of having difficulty hearing what people were saying to them, with individuals reporting being frustrated by having to say 'What?' to other prisoners/staff members all the time. Examples of these communication difficulties came from P1H who stated that "You don't know what people are saying to you, and you can't actively join in with a conversation like other

people do because you can't actually hear what they are talking about", and P1C who remarked "As a prisoner I am less than everybody else... and the lack of hearing most definitely adds to that, because if they are going to say something, I may miss that". Furthermore, in accordance with the findings of McCulloch (2010, 2012), prisoners reported that problems with communication caused issues for them with regards to their relationships with staff members, as shown here by P1H:

There is no consciousness in the mind of the officers generally about just how difficult it is...The officers shout your name loud when you are needed usually, but you can't hear it, you can't distinguish it from other noise, and then when the message does get to you then you get in trouble. You get a roasting for not turning up.

This links back to the argument that prison is made for a certain type of prisoner, who is expected to be able to adapt to the prison regime and to behave in a certain way; because P1H could not automatically adjust to the fact that shouting is a primary way for staff members to get a prisoner's attention, it appears that that he was then viewed as problematic, thus reinforcing the argument that in prison, different equals deficient.

For P2A, P3A, P3H, P4H, and P5H, who were attempting to conceal their deafness in prison, issues relating to communication had further consequences. These interviewees all spoke of instances where staff members or fellow prisoners had misinterpreted their lack of hearing as being a sign of ignorance. This was shown by P5H who stated that:

If there is surrounding noise, like on a prison landing, someone says something to me, it causes loads of funny things; you can walk past someone in the morning and they would say hello to you, and because you haven't heard them, the mere fact that you have blanked them makes that person think they've upset you or something. [And] the other thing that gets me in things with people is because people think I'm being aggressive and stuff and I'm not, I've just got a raised voice, you know.

This links back to Goffman's (1963: 105) argument that a desire to conceal one's stigma via concealment can be problematic because it can "give rise to hurt feelings and misunderstandings on the part of others". However, it is important to acknowledge that such misinterpretations were not always the consequence of a deaf/HoH prisoner attempting to conceal their deafness. Conversely, inconsistencies in wing staffing were also seen to cause similar issues because it meant that staff members were not based on a single wing all the time and therefore had less awareness about the individual needs of different prisoners. This suggests that recent budget cuts (National Audit Office, 2012, NOMS, 2014b) could indeed be compounding the issues faced by HoH/deaf (and Deaf) people in prison.

The impact that the communication difficulties discussed thus far had upon the prisoners again echoed the experiences of the Deaf prisoners discussed in Chapter Four, with the majority of interviewees feeling isolated from other prisoners, and appearing to view themselves as being separate from the "batch" (Goffman, 1961: 17). Remarks from P1H were particularly insightful here as he made connections between his penal reality and the reality of a Deaf prisoner that he had met earlier in his sentence, and stated that:

But I thought, 'Poor fellow, how on earth will he get through this?'. He had a cell mate who was quite helpful, patient, that's the important thing, and I think they managed to get on alright. But he was always sitting alone, no one ever talked to him. He was never able to talk back to them. And I thought 'Gosh, you are being imprisoned two or three times over, just because of your disability'. Of course having said that, I suppose I am a bit wary of the same thing happening to me... People get fed up of me saying 'What did you say?', because it is irritating in the extreme. You can't join a group because you can't contribute. And they will see you as an intruder if you come in and say 'What's going on?'. So you are an outsider for that very reason. I can see that for my future, I am going to be driven more and more to my own inner resources.

This shows that although they may identify with their deafness differently, many of the problems experienced by Deaf and deaf prisoners are very similar because, irrespective of how they feel about their d/Deafness the bottom-line is still the same;

in an environment where sound rules, neither can hear. With this in mind, when considering the interrelationship between the deprivation and importation models in the context of d/Deaf prisoners, it could then be argued that their lived realities are shaped by the fact that the nature and structure of the environment is not designed for individuals who 'import' an inability to hear.

Furthermore, while findings presented in Chapter Six suggested that the deaf/HoH interviewees did perceive there to be a hostile staff-inmate divide at their respective establishments, the fact that most of these prisoners reported feeling isolated from other prisoners shows that, to them, the divide also took a different form based upon their hearing loss; 'Me' with the impairment and 'Them' with the ability to hear. As well as being shown in the above quote from P1H who used words such as "Intruder" and "Outsider", these feelings were also highlighted by P1C who stated that "Prison doesn't fit me. It's hard, it's hard. I feel left out", and P2C who said that "I know that people here say 'I'm not going to talk to him because I'll have to repeat myself all the time'; that's not nice in jail!". This variation in the perceived divides in prison shows that in reality, like Goffman (1961: 116) suggested, the prisoner group is not completely "homogenous". On the contrary, it is clear that the way an individual perceives their position in prison depends on the extent to which they are able to adjust to "batch living" (Ibid: 22).

In addition to contributing to feelings of isolation inside the prison, findings from the data indicated that for the deaf/HoH prisoners, this extended to isolation from members of the outside world. All of the relevant interviewees felt as though their lack of hearing became particularly problematic when they were attempting to make phone calls to family and friends, with it being seen to exacerbate the level to which they were being deprived of meaningful contact with them. While access to hearing aids in prison alleviated various issues for interviewees, making phone calls remained difficult, as shown by P1A who was forced to take them out when using the phone because "They don't like it when you put something over them; they squeal and mess up". The extent to which issues with contacting family and friends were viewed as problematic was highlighted by P3A who spoke of being frightened that he was going to lose touch

with his daughters because he could not speak to them on the phone. Such issues are outlined further in the following extract from the interview with P1C:

P1C: I can't make phone calls. I make them but I don't hear what's going on from the other end.

Interviewer: Have you tried to make phone calls.

P1C: Oh yes. But I cannot hear the phone properly. I can't hear what they are say. It's a mumble. The only thing I hear clearly is digits, like numbers.

Interviewer: Have you tried to use the phone in prison?

P1C: Yes, but I don't hear. So all I do is give instructions over the phone. My friends taught me this from being in England, I can WhatsApp or text with what I have to say, so that's how I communicate now. But I can't do that in here. I phoned my son, and I gave him the instructions, and told him to write me and tell me what he had to say.

While enforced separation from family and friends has been deemed as being pervasively painful for prisoners (Sykes, 1958, Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Coyle, 1994, Codd, 2008, Jewkes, 2012a), these findings indicate that deaf/HoH prisoners experience this pain disproportionately as a consequence of their hearing loss, thus showing that they do indeed experience the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958) differently to other prisoners<sup>123</sup>.

The sound related communication difficulties discussed thus far were shown to have wider reaching consequences for HoH and particularly deaf prisoners, in that they made it difficult for them to carry out routine activities in prison. Interviewees discussed having difficulty successfully communicating during appointments with doctors, meetings with offender supervisors and during educational/rehabilitative classes, because they could not hear what was happening. Such issues appeared to be

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<sup>123</sup> Although problems of this type could have been resolved by using specialist equipment such as minicomms, none of the deaf/HoH interviewees were aware of the existence of such options until I mentioned them during interviews. Even after this, interviewees were generally unwilling to consider using such equipment because they felt that this would mean having to accept the stigma associated with their deafness. However, based upon findings to be discussed in Chapter Eight, issues stemming from an inability to accommodate difference in prison would make such provision unlikely even if they were to request it.

most problematic for the interviewees at HMP Altrincham<sup>124</sup> as effective communication was pivotal to the therapy sessions, and because they were run based upon sound this meant that they struggled to fully participate. This is highlighted by P3A who stated that “If I could hear I could learn how to change in therapy but with this hearing aid I know nothing, it's just quiet all the time” and P2A who said that:

I went in to the first big [therapy] meeting and it was just like someone ‘You done this, you done that’, and everyone shouting god knows what. And it was just like, there was no structure and everyone was shouting over each other, and I was trying to work out what the hell was going on. I couldn’t keep track of it...I just thought ‘Oh I can’t take this, this is just too, noisy’, and then I walked out. I did walk out of the room.

The fact that the deaf/HoH prisoners were having difficulty carrying out routine activities echoed findings from Gerrard (2001) discussed in Chapter Four who focused on the lived realities of Deaf people in prison. This shows again that the experiences of the deaf and Deaf prisoners do indeed overlap, as irrespective of the nature of their perceptions, neither can hear in a sound focused environment.

The findings presented throughout this section of the chapter show that deaf/HoH prisoners experience the prison environment differently to other prisoners due to their lack of access to a key component of the prison regime; sound. Without sound they become isolated from various parts of prison life simply because they are not able to hear what is going on, and although findings from Chapter Six indicated that the deaf/HoH prisoners had for the most part taken on the staff view of them as a ‘prisoner’, it is clear that in reality their hearing loss means that they struggle to fulfil this role. The issues faced by deaf/HoH prisoners are arguably a consequence of an inability to adapt on both an individual and an institutional level; not only does an individual who is ‘different’ have difficulty adapting to the prison regime due to their imported characteristics and perceptions, but the prison as an establishment designed

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<sup>124</sup> As mentioned already, HMP Altrincham runs as a therapeutic community and focuses upon rehabilitating prisoners through intensive therapy sessions

for similarity has difficulty adapting to the individual, particularly in a climate of benchmarking and budget cuts.

While the fact that they were experiencing prison differently undermines the applicability of the deprivation model to the experiences of deaf/HoH prisoners, it can be argued that many of their experiences were still derived from their environment; just not necessarily in the way that advocates of the model would necessarily anticipate. With this in mind, it is argued that deprivation focused frameworks rely too heavily on the assumption that a prisoner will possess all of the characteristics necessary to adjust to prison in a certain way. In doing this they fail to sufficiently consider what happens to prisoners who do not have such a capacity, whose experience of prison then goes on to largely be derived from the fact that the nature of the environment is not designed to accommodate them. From this consideration is now given to the way that the deaf/HoH prisoners included in the research responded to the issues that they were facing in custody.

### **There is No Room for deafness in Prison**

As shown earlier in this chapter, all of the deaf/HoH responded to their hearing loss in prison by attempting to behave as though they could hear, either through concealment or via the use of hearing aids. However, it has since become apparent that a lack of adequate resources combined with the fact that sound rules in prison makes this difficult to do so, and creates extra pains for these prisoners. This section of the chapter explores how these individuals responded to the fact that they were largely unable to sufficiently fulfil the role of a hearing person, or to behave as a 'normal' prisoner during their time in custody.

In response to their failure to fulfil their designated prisoner role, many of the deaf/HoH interviewees then went on to withdraw from the environment. While this did not apply to PH4 or PH5 who had chosen to respond to the difficulties associated with their deafness by attempting to 'chameleonise' themselves further, for the most part withdrawal appeared to be a standard response. Such withdrawal is highlighted in the following extract from the interview with P1C, who expressed that he would rather

be placed in to solitary confinement than continue to share a cell with another prisoner:

P1C: I don't try to take myself away from a situation, or put myself in a situation where I'm going to have problems. I just keep away from the system; I've got no choice. It's my only way of getting on.

Interviewer: Do you think it is changing the way you feel about yourself?

P1C: Most definitely. I'm withdrawn. It's only on a one to one basis that I talk so much. Out in the public I don't interact.

Interviewer: Right okay. What about other prisoners on the wing?

P1C: I don't interact with them because when it is association, it is a load of noise, and I'm not good in a noisy situation.

Interviewer: How do they react to you then?

P1C: I don't know, because I don't stay around long enough. If I don't hear something I move on. It's pointless to try and keep a conversation with somebody if you can't hear what they are saying...

Interviewer: Okay

P1C: I'm in a double prison in a position of losing, so I just try not to get to get in that position...I don't really have relationships with other prisoners because of my condition. If me and my cell mate end up not getting on even further, I will stipulate that I need a single cell. Otherwise I will stay in the block, I would like to move to the block.

Interviewer: Is that segregation?

P1C: Yeah.

Interviewer: Would you rather that than...

P1C: Than the confrontation yes.

The feelings expressed by P1C were mirrored by other deaf/HoH prisoners, who spoke of staying in their cells as much as they could, and feeling as though they had

no choice other than to shut themselves off from other prisoners. The interviews with P1C, P2C and P3A, were particularly significant here, as these individuals had been in prison on multiple occasions, both before and after they lost their hearing, and reported being much more withdrawn afterwards. This is shown by P1C who believed that if he was hearing he would be “much more active within the system” and P3H who stated that:

I'm not as forthcoming [now I'm deaf]. I don't make conversation with people and I tend to stay away from them because it is a struggle to listen. It's okay in here, but on the wing, I tend to stay away from everyone... Normally I am the person who would be there in the conversations with other inmates. I'm well known, I've been here a few times. But that's what I mean, it has changed me cos I just want to stay away now.

Such withdrawal echoes the behaviour of d/Deaf people within wider society, particularly with regards to deaf children who are born into hearing families and/or attend mainstream schools (Ladd, 1991, Corker, 1996, Lane et al, 1996). This shows that although the prison as an institution is inherently unique, the problems experienced by deaf/HoH prisoners and their subsequent responses often are not. On the contrary, the interviewees indicated that the way that they identified with their deafness and the fact that sound is also key in wider society (Higgins, 1980), meant that their lives 'outside' had also been littered with similar issues. The overlap between their experiences inside and outside of prison is discussed by P1C who stated that:

For me, from my being in prison and from my being deaf, there's not really been much of a difference, because I couldn't go to parties. If I went on the road it would be for a limited period of time just to get my essentials and go back in. I don't socialise, I can't socialise. So I don't see much really, the only difference is that I don't have the key no more to open the door to let myself out. But otherwise it is just the same for me right now.

It became clear that their lack of comprehension of sound was actually the catalyst for many of the issues faced by the deaf/HoH prisoners, rather than their entrance to prison specifically. Although sound plays a particularly important role in prison because it is used in order to regulate the “batch” (Goffman, 1961: 17) of prisoners, it can be argued that for as long as the deaf/HoH prisoners view their deafness as a stigma and continue to attempt to behave as hearing people, they will have difficulty escaping from such issues, and will continue to be imprisoned by deafness whether they are in prison or not. One particularly striking example of the fact that sound rules far beyond the walls of the prison estate came from P1A who, unlike the other interviewees, was born deaf, and had only experienced sound for the first time since entering prison. This individual had viewed himself via the hearing agenda for all of his life and because he had not had access to hearing aids, had experienced many of the problems that the other deaf/HoH prisoners had discussed experiencing in prison, in wider society. This is shown in the following quote from P1A:

I did a lot of avoiding people generally. I don't know, a thousand times I must have walked away from a conversation and left the other person thinking 'That was weird'. It's excruciating... It's difficult to form a lot of confidence when you are frightened of interacting with other people.

Because he identified as being deaf rather than Deaf, this prisoner had always attempted to integrate himself into a world led by sound, and reported being extremely withdrawn until he had obtained good quality hearing aids when he entered prison. Throughout the interview he spoke of being much happier and socially confident since being able to hear (despite the fact that he was in prison), and was very passionate in his view that an ability to effectively comprehend sound had transformed his life. This is highlighted in the following extract from the interview:

Interviewer: Have you noticed a big change in yourself then?

P1A: Yeah

Interviewer: In a good way?

P1A: Really really good. It was something that was really highlighted to me on one of the courses I did in Timperley which was about how we think about ourselves and other people and how we can rebuild those relationships. And one of the ways to rebuild those was to force myself to constantly go out of my way to interact with people, and once I started doing that I realised that I was better doing that than I thought. And that's because I can hear people, it's as simple as that... [When I first got my hearing aids] it was absolutely amazing. I walked round with a massive smile on my face for days when I first got them. Although it took a while for my brain to adapt; I was hearing water through pipes and all this sort of stuff because my brain hadn't started forwarding useful information and relegating useless information. But yeah it was cool.

While such findings may indicate therefore that the themes discussed throughout this Chapter may not be distinct to the lived realities of deaf/HoH prisoners, it can be argued that the regulated nature of the prison regime, which is designed for a certain type of person means that many of the problems associated with being deaf in a hearing world are compounded.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the lived realities of deaf/HoH prisoners and has shown that despite being aligned with the experiences of other prisoners to some extent, they are also inherently different in a variety of ways. The fact that the prisoners viewed their hearing loss negatively and felt stigmatised by it is central here, as it became clear that such imported perceptions had a direct impact upon their behaviour in prison, with individuals wanting to be seen as 'normal' and attempting to behave as though they could hear, either through methods of concealment or via the use of hearing aids. Despite wishing to be seen as 'normal' hearing prisoners, findings presented throughout showed that their attempts to behave as such were thwarted by an inability to adapt on both an individual and institutional level; institutionally because the prisons were for the most part failing to provide adequate hearing aids, and individually because interviewees were unable to behave as hearing or to conceal their deafness in an

environment like prison where sound is so key. As a result of this, the deaf/HoH prisoners included in the research were existing largely separately from the “batch” (Goffman, 1961: 17) of others, and had difficulty becoming fully integrated into the penal regime.

The role played by sound is key when seeking to understand such issues, with it becoming apparent that sound is at the heart of the penal regime, and that prisoners therefore need access to it in order to fulfil the requirements of their allocated role. This inevitably causes problems for deaf/HoH prisoners, who, without access to the necessary equipment, become institutionally deficient and experience a number of the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958) both differently and more intensely than their hearing peers, and commonly go on to withdraw from the environment. Such findings challenge Goffman's (1961) deprivation focused framework as they show that even if an environment is indeed designed for similarity, this does not mean that all those confined within it possess the faculties necessary to behave in such a way, or to adjust as would be expected in prison. With this in mind, it is argued that although the structure of the penal environment does influence the lived realities of deaf/HoH prisoners, such influence does not always take the same form as it does with other prisoners. On the contrary while the realities of individuals who fit the criteria of 'normal' in prison may indeed become moulded by a structure to which they are able to successfully adapt, the lives of deaf/HoH prisoners are often instead derived largely from the fact that the structure of the penal environment is not designed to accommodate an imported characteristic such as deafness, and therefore become characterised by isolation and separation.

It also became clear that many of the problems faced by the deaf/HoH prisoners were not actually distinct to the penal environment, and rather sat closely with their experiences outside of prison, where sound is also key, their deafness also contravenes what is 'normal', and where their lives are still characterized by stigma. This leads to the argument that that prison as a highly regulated, strictly regimented environment which is designed for similarity and diminishes the

power and autonomy of those who are confined within it, compounds rather than creates the issues faced by deaf/HoH people. Further to this, while certain aspects of the lives of deaf/HoH prisoners are indeed influenced by their way in which they identify with their hearing loss, throughout this chapter it has also become apparent that many of the experiences of the interviewees did indeed align with the experiences of Deaf prisoners discussed in Chapter Four, thus showing that although they may identify with their deafness differently, many of the problems experienced by Deaf and deaf prisoners are very similar because, irrespective of how they feel about their d/Deafness; in an environment where sound rules, neither can hear.

From this, Chapter Eight goes on to examine the lived realities of the Deaf prisoners interviewed, and considers how this type of audiological *and* cultural difference impacts upon the experiences of these prisoners, both in terms of how establishments adapt to this type of difference, and how the prisoners themselves respond to the prison environment.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: THE EXPERIENCES OF DEAF PRISONERS

This chapter examines the experiences of the Deaf prisoners included in the study, and explores how individuals with this type of physical *and* cultural 'difference' experience prison. Within this, further consideration is given to the idea that d/Deafness exists on a continuum inside and outside of prison, with findings from this chapter again indicating that the way in which an individual identifies with their d/Deafness has a significant impact upon the way they experience prison. Unlike the deaf/HoH prisoners who viewed their deafness through the medical model of disability and subsequently attempted to behave as hearing whilst incarcerated, the Deaf prisoners interviewed all continued to identify positively with their Deafness throughout their sentences and were either unwilling/unable to exist as part of the "batch" (Goffman, 1961: 17) for this reason, as to be discussed throughout.

While a lack of comprehension of sound was still problematic for these interviewees, it became clear that they also experienced a number of additional pains of imprisonment because the way they viewed their Deafness clashed so profoundly with the institutional understanding of it. When exploring these pains, consideration is given to the influence of the imported characteristics and perceptions of the Deaf prisoners, including their use of BSL, their visual ways of behaving and their perceptions of the hearing world. The way that the establishments responded to such profound difference is also examined, with the extent to which they were able to meet the needs of individuals who differ so significantly from what is seen as 'normal' in prison being scrutinised throughout. When doing this, connections are made to the existing literature discussed in Chapter Three, with it becoming apparent that there are in fact a number of similarities between the lives of Deaf people inside and outside of prison, because, as well as being sound oriented, the two arenas are organised via the hearing agenda and embody the core principles of the medical model of disability.

Before continuing on to the main body of the chapter, it is important to acknowledge that although this chapter is longer in length than the majority of the other chapters,

this was deemed as necessary as the experiences of the Deaf prisoners were much more distinct than those of deaf/HoH prisoners. This meant that in order to provide an authentic and accurate representation of their lived realities more data must be presented.

## **Big D Deaf Perceptions**

Attention is firstly given to the way that the Deaf prisoners interviewed identified with their Deafness, as in accordance with the principles of the importation model, such perceptions had a significant impact upon their experience of prison. The fact that these interviewees identified as being culturally different as well as physically different is explored in some depth, as it became apparent that this cultural difference makes “batch living” (Goffman, 1961: 22) even more difficult. When considering the nature of their perceptions, their experiences of being Deaf in wider society are also discussed, as in line with the findings outlined in Chapter Three (see, for example Leigh, 2009), these experiences appeared to have been pivotal to the formation of their Deaf identities as adults.

Unlike most of the deaf/HoH interviewees, all of the Deaf prisoners had either been born deaf or gone deaf at a very young age, and had all been born to hearing parents. As a result of this, they discussed having childhoods which had been largely characterised by a deprivation of meaningful communication and a sense of chronic isolation, thus echoing findings from the literature (Ladd, 1991, Gregory et al, 1995, Corker, 1996, Leigh, 2009). This is highlighted by P5B who felt that he had “Grown up alone” because he could not communicate with family members, and is also shown in the following extract from the interview P2B:

Interviewer: Ok. Did you have hearing parents or d/Deaf parents?

P2B: Yeah, all of my family are hearing, my brothers hearing, everyone's hearing. I'm just the one person who is Deaf, and my sister died as a baby.

Interviewer: Right okay, and what was your childhood like then?

P2B: When I was a little boy I really didn't have any relationships with d/Deaf people you know. My parents went to work. We'd meet with the family and it was really really difficult for me because I didn't know anything about Deaf club at that time. I didn't really sign a lot either, and it was just like a silent upbringing really.

For a number of the Deaf prisoners, this isolation from immediate family remained an issue throughout adulthood, with individuals reporting that their family members still viewed d/Deafness through the medical model of disability and failed to see BSL as a 'real' language. The extent to which such views impacted on the quality of their relations with family members was highlighted by P4B who claimed to have severed all ties with his family as a direct result of how he believed they viewed his Deafness. He indicated that his family had displayed a complete lack of understanding about Deafness throughout his life, as shown in the following quote, which also highlights the extent to which he had been affected by being the only Deaf person in a hearing family:

To be truthful, all my life, my family have all abused me. I have stayed away because they didn't want to know. They don't want to know about Deaf people within the family...They just kind of disowned me because they put all of the hearing members of the family first. They didn't communicate with me.

As the interview progressed it became clear that these perceptions had drastically influenced the way that this individual responded to hearing people as an adult (and more specifically as a prisoner), as will be discussed throughout the chapter.

While the Deaf prisoners presented very similar accounts in relation to their position within their families as children, distinctions began to emerge when they discussed their schooling, with such findings mapping on to existing Deaf Studies literature (Corker, 1996, Lane et al, 1996, Ladd, 2003, Leigh, 2009, Marschark, 2009). For individuals who were enrolled at Deaf schools, education had been a positive experience which they felt had improved their lives, whereas for those who attended

mainstream schools it was viewed as little more than a continuation of their lives at home; isolated, confusing and difficult. While P1B, P2B, P1W and P1S all went to Deaf schools and discussed beginning to identify as being Deaf at this point, the remaining interviewees (who attended mainstream schools) indicated that their school lives were a constant struggle during which they felt as though their only option was to attempt to behave as though they were hearing. Links can be made here with findings from Chapter Seven which focused upon the experiences of deaf/HoH prisoners, as prior to becoming Deaf, the (now) Deaf (but then deaf) prisoners also felt stigmatised by their deafness, and viewed it through the hearing agenda. This is highlighted by P5B who stated that “When we were little we were that desperate to be hearing, desperate to come in the hearing world. We were pretending, do you know what I mean. Obviously it didn’t work”<sup>125</sup>. As well as further highlighting concealment as a core response to deafness, this quote also shows that for as long as a deaf person remains in the hearing world (where access to sound is vital), deafness remains a problem (Higgins, 1980).

Although the age at which the Deaf prisoners were introduced to the Deaf world varied based upon whether they attended Deaf schools or not, at some point all of the interviewees had begun to identify as being culturally and linguistically Deaf<sup>126</sup>. All of the Deaf prisoners viewed their Deafness positively and presented views which sat in accordance with the social model of disability, as shown by P4B who stated “My children are not deaf... I was praying that my son or daughter would be deaf, but they are hearing, so it was a bit of a shock actually because I am proud of [being Deaf]”. This was furthered by P1W who said that:

The Deaf way of life is very important to me. My family were a bit Deaf aware, but when I married a Deaf woman it just like formed my Deaf identity, and I was really happy then because I was in the Deaf world and it was so easy to communicate. I had lots of friends, it was brilliant; it was a much better life<sup>127</sup>.

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<sup>125</sup>In this instance when saying ‘We’, P5B is referring to himself and other deaf children who were also struggling in the mainstream education system.

<sup>126</sup>The other main ‘ways in’ to the Deaf world for the Deaf interviewees were meeting other Deaf people during adolescence/adulthood, and attending Deaf clubs.

<sup>127</sup>P1W is speaking in the past tense because he felt as though being in prison had removed him from the Deaf world.

Furthermore, findings from the data suggested that another core part of identifying as Deaf was the view that Deaf people are inherently different to hearing people because their minds are wired visually rather than verbally<sup>128</sup>, as shown in the following extract from the interview with P5B:

Interviewer: Do you socialise with Deaf people outside of prison then?

P5B: Yes, I prefer Deaf people, I'm more confident with Deaf people rather than hearing people. I do talk to hearing people, but it is always basic. It's never a long talk. I can't picture what they are saying, and I will just say 'Okay, yeah okay, yeah stop now, okay, stop now', I just can't do it. But when I am with Deaf people they get in to depth.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you can be yourself around Deaf people then?

P5B: Yeah, I can stand there and I can talk with them for a long long time. And if I don't understand it then they can draw a picture, because once they draw a picture I can see it. With the hearing, they talk, and I can't see the picture that they are talking about, and it's like what do you mean? What does that mean? It's too much for me, too much information for me. I can't do it.

Such perceptions insinuate that Goffman's (1961) 'Us' versus 'Them' dichotomy does in fact extend beyond the penal arena for Deaf people, and occurs between hearing and Deaf populations rather than officials and inmates (in this case, prisoners). In line with this, all of the Deaf interviewees reported preferring to spend their time with other Deaf people, with P3B remarking "Because I am Deaf I want to speak to Deaf people, I don't want to be speaking to hearing people. I don't feel comfortable speaking to them" and P5B stating "To be with hearing is very difficult. Deaf on Deaf

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<sup>128</sup> Although P1B and P5B had taught themselves to lip read in a bid to overcome issues that related to this difference, they still believed that this did not close the divide between Deaf and hearing people.

that's great; you get laughs, you get jokes... you're good to each other, you get on well".

While Goffman (1961) only saw there to be an 'Us' versus 'Them' divide within institutions where there is a discord in power relations, it could be argued that this theory is also applicable to Deaf people more generally because of the perceived power imbalance between Deaf and hearing people in wider society (Ladd, 2003). In line with existing literature (Turner, 1994a, Lane et al, 1996, Ladd, 2003), the data indicated that because the Deaf world does not exist autonomously from the hearing world, and because the norms of the hearing world are so much more pervasive, in everyday life Deaf people have little choice but to adhere with a set of cultural values that contravene their own. The Deaf interviewees discussed feeling resentful about this, and unhappy about the way they were treated within the hearing world, with P3B stating that "If you are Deaf, you just kind of get the elbow, it's frustrating", P4B believing that that hearing people viewed him as though he was "less of a man", and P5B saying:

Hearing seem to look down at me... They think I am simple because I can't interact on their level. They think that I'm no good to them, they don't want to know. I get that all the time, that's why I walk away from them. Don't get me wrong, there are good hearing who have got time and patience to listen to me. There are good, but there are also bad.

This section of the chapter has shown that the perceptions of all of the Deaf prisoners interviewed were aligned with the social model of disability, with interviewees viewing their Deafness positively and preferring to associate with other Deaf people. Another core part of all of the identities of the Deaf interviewees was their resentment of the hearing world, which had developed as a consequence of their lives growing up. These views are important because in line with the principles of the importation model and the findings from Chapter Seven, the way that the Deaf prisoners identified with their Deafness had a profound impact upon the way they experienced prison, with themes

of isolation, resentment, powerlessness and chronic difficulty being central throughout the remainder of the Chapter.

### **Responses to Deafness in Prison**

The way that the Deaf prisoners responded to the prison environment is now explored, with consideration being given as to how the perceptions discussed above influenced the nature of their responses. Although the responses themselves were inherently different, it became clear that the Deaf and HoH/deaf prisoners interviewed responded to their d/Deafness in prison in the same way that they would do outside of prison, and while the deaf prisoners remained deaf, the Deaf prisoners remained culturally and linguistically Deaf.

Evidence to show that the Deaf prisoners wished to remain Deaf in prison was highlighted by the fact that they continued to view hearing people in a largely negative way, and were deeply mistrusting of both hearing staff and prisoners. This is shown by P4B who stated “I don't trust them, I don't trust what they are saying”, P1W who believed “They [hearing people] are dangerous so I don't mix with them”, and P2B who said “Sometimes they want me to join in with their things and I'm like ‘No thank you’. They've got their ways, and their ways can be quite dangerous and I don't want to get involved in any of that”. As a result of this, the ‘Us’ versus ‘Them’ divide that existed between themselves and hearing people outside of prison remained in-tact, and was maintained by the interviewees who discussed avoiding hearing prisoners and feeling as though they should not be imprisoned with them at all. Examples of such perceptions are provided by P2B who felt that “It doesn't work being amongst all the hearing people as a Deaf person in prison”, P3B who began crying when talking about having to be in prison with hearing people and stated that “Between hearing and deaf, it's not right. I am not feeling comfortable”, and P5B who said:

I am on my own, with no one to talk to. I don't shout, I'm not aggressive, and once they worked that out, the hearing guys worked as a team to gang up on me and do something, like, steal from me... We don't get on, we don't talk. I'm in a cell with a hearing person right now, and we don't really talk. I just

need to keep my head down; I'll be getting my own cell soon. Deaf people should not share with hearing in the first place. Don't get me wrong, there are good hearing people and there are bad. It's just a handful that are good, the majority are bad.

As well as wanting to avoid hearing people, the Deaf interviewees were unanimous in their desire to be situated in an establishment with other Deaf prisoners. Although this was not an option for P1W or P1S who were the only Deaf prisoners incarcerated at HMP Sale and HMP Wilmslow, there were six Deaf prisoners at HMP Bowdon, and for these prisoners the maintenance of the 'Us' versus 'Them' divide also meant gravitating towards the available Deaf population in a bid to maintain their Deaf identity. This is shown by P3B who felt that "When we had others that were Deaf...we were signing to each other and we could understand each other, it was like being back in the Deaf world... We could relax", P2B who stated that "I get on very well with the Deaf group, obviously we talk to each other a lot every day, we keep away from the hearing people", and by P5B who remarked:

I felt more alive, more confident, more happier now I've got a Deaf person to talk with in my life. All of a sudden we are laughing. Before I was isolated, and I was sad, I felt like it was the end of the world, like there was nothing here<sup>129</sup>.

This highlights the extent to which the way an individual identifies with their d/Deafness impacts upon their experience of prison; although the deaf/HoH prisoners wanted nothing more than to behave as hearing and saw no benefit in being situated with other deaf/HoH prisoners, for Deaf prisoners the exact opposite was true, and to them, being incarcerated with other Deaf people was the only way that prison could become tolerable.

The fact that the Deaf prisoners had all imported their Deaf identities into prison meant that they also imported their culturally Deaf language and behaviour, and

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<sup>129</sup> This quote is particularly important because not only does it provide information regarding an experience of prison with other Deaf prisoners but *also* without; something that will be discussed at length throughout the remainder of the chapter.

wished to continue utilising them throughout their time in custody. However, interviewees were united in the view that being Deaf in an environment that is designed for similarity created an array of obstacles for them, and that in order to overcome such obstacles they were reliant on 'reasonable adjustments' being made. Because BSL was the primary and often only method of communication used by the Deaf prisoners<sup>130</sup>, this meant that they needed regular access to BSL interpreters and specialist equipment in order to actively participate in the penal regime whilst remaining Deaf<sup>131</sup>. However, the data suggested that such provisions were not consistently being provided and that the prisoners were subsequently having difficulty behaving as Deaf in prison, as to be discussed in the following section of the chapter.

Thus far it has become apparent that the way the Deaf prisoners viewed their Deafness had a significant impact upon the way they behaved in prison, with all of the interviewees importing their Deaf identities into the penal arena, and wishing to maintain them throughout their time in custody. This sits alongside the argument that different people experience prison differently (see also Schmidt, 2016), and resonates with existing literature relating to the experiences of other minority groups in prison (see, for example Crawley, 2007, Liebling, 2007, Medlicott, 2007, Durcan, 2008, Prison Reform Trust, 2008, Rowe, 2011, Scott and Codd, 2010, Mann, 2016, Moore and Scraton, 2016). While this highlights the importance of imported identity in prison, it became apparent that in an environment designed for similarity that is ruled by sound and spoken communication, being Deaf is not always an option, as to be discussed throughout the remainder of the chapter.

### **Prison is deafening for Deaf Prisoners**

Although the Deaf prisoners interviewed were attempting to remain Deaf in prison, it became apparent that the nature of the prison environment made it almost impossible for them to sufficiently carry out their desired role. From this it can be argued that

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<sup>130</sup> The extent to which the Deaf interviewees were reliant upon BSL varied, and although some of the Deaf prisoners were able to lip read and had basic literacy skills, others were unable to comprehend written word at all, and could only communicate visually.

<sup>131</sup> As well as needing access to equipment such as minicomms and vibrating alarm clocks, due to their lack of conception of sound.

prison is in fact deafening for Deaf people, as although they viewed their Deafness positively, as discussed in Chapter Six there was little conception of this institutionally. While this resonates with findings discussed in Chapter Three regarding the impact of ideological collisions upon Deaf people in the hearing world (Lane et al, 1996), the fact that the power imbalance is even greater in prison means that the label of deaf was being enforced upon individuals who were in fact culturally and linguistically Deaf, thus indicating that the imported Deaf characteristics of the interviewees were being overridden by the structure of the environment. Findings from the data highlighted a number of key reasons why the Deaf interviewees had difficulty being Deaf in prison, which are outlined as follows.

#### Being the only Deaf person in a 'hearing' prison

The first primary reason why interviewees had difficulty behaving as Deaf in prison related to the fact that they were, or had at some point all been the only Deaf person in a prison that was otherwise populated by hearing prisoners/staff, and therefore while they attempted to remain Deaf, this became difficult without contact with other Deaf people (for similar findings, see also Gerrard, 2001, McCulloch, 2010). The fact that the Deaf prisoners viewed themselves as being inherently different to the rest of the prison population meant that although they did acknowledge the existence of an 'Us' versus 'Them' divide between staff members and prisoners (Goffman, 1961), for them, this divide took a different form; 'Me' the Deaf person versus 'Them' the hearing. The fact that this 'Me' versus 'Them' divide was also alluded to by the deaf/HoH prisoners, indicates that because neither group fit the mould of 'normal' in prison, they then felt isolated from the rest of the population, irrespective of identity. However, when seeking to understand the reasons why they felt isolated it became apparent that the way they identified with their d/Deafness was central; while the deaf prisoners wanted to be seen as part of the "batch" (Goffman, 1961: 17) but became isolated due to their inability to hear, Deaf individuals purposefully separated themselves from hearing prisoners because they saw themselves as intrinsically different. This is shown by P15 who discussed being unwilling to mix with other prisoners and stated that "I don't want to

play those games [chess or cards] with them, I want to have Deaf people here...I just feel like I am on my own, I just feel horrible, it is absolutely awful”, and by P1W who remarked:

In the gym they all go round together; the Russians, the Romanians, the Latvians, the Africans, the Blacks. Everybody’s in their own little groups, and I’m just on my own in there. If there was a Deaf group I know I would be part of it, but there isn’t one so I’m on my own... Everybody else talks to each other but I don’t know what they are talking about, and it’s really difficult depending on the situation. Nobody signs, so I just keep myself to myself really. I have brief chats with people with paper and pen but it’s very brief. To get anything out, and to communicate, that would be great. It would help me sleep better.

Such findings map on to existing critiques that deprivation focused frameworks give insufficient consideration to complexity of human identity or the differences between different prisoners. For example, while Goffman (1961) did acknowledge that the inmate group in total institutions is not completely homogenous, he did not fully consider the sheer power of existing identity or cultural affiliation in shaping an individual’s life in a closed off establishment such as prison. The findings discussed above also draw attention to the degree to which an inability to communicate in a verbal language contributes to feelings of isolation in prison as to be discussed later in the chapter.

### Being Deaf in the ‘Deaf prison’

During the fieldwork process it became clear that HMP Bowdon was viewed as being the most ‘Deaf friendly’ prison in England and Wales, with staff members at the prison believing that as an establishment they were more equipped to manage the needs of Deaf prisoners than anywhere else, and subsequently attempting to recruit them from other prisons. Central to this belief was the fact that they had numerous Deaf prisoners there, and also ran a Deaf sex offender treatment programme which was tailored to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically Deaf sex offenders. The view that the prison was ‘Deaf friendly’ extended beyond the walls of the institution itself,

with all of the Deaf interviewees there discussing being transferred in from other prisons because of its reputation, and P1S speaking of desperately wanting to be transferred there because he knew it held other Deaf prisoners and would therefore enable him to behave as Deaf.

Before entering HMP Bowdon I was aware of its reputation, and with this in mind I hypothesised that the interviewees would therefore have less difficulty being Deaf there. While this was to an extent true because they did have periods where they were allowed to be together, in reality it was not that straightforward, and the Deaf prisoners were often unable to have contact with each other, thus again making the maintenance of a Deaf identity difficult. Central to this was the fact that staff members generally viewed Deafness through the medical model of disability (as discussed in Chapter Six), which meant that they had little conception of the Deaf world, and did not understand why it would be beneficial to place Deaf prisoners on wings together. Consequently, although individuals were moved to the prison with the impression that they would be with other Deaf people, once they arrived they were often placed on different wings; while P1B, P2B and P3B were on the same wing, P4B, P5B and a 6<sup>th</sup> Deaf prisoner (who was not interviewed) were all situated on wings on their own. This was proving to be extremely frustrating for the Deaf prisoners, as shown here by P5B:

At the other prison I was isolated, no Deaf lads. So they said come over to here, so I came here and I was glad I saw Deaf lads. But when they start separating us in different wings, I think 'why are you doing that?'. We are here for a reason; we are supposed to be here together to get rid of the isolation. I don't want to be isolated again, to sit with the hearing people and not with the Deaf...We are isolated on our own, we feel overpowered. We should all be on the same landing, so we can see each other, and communicate with each other.

This separation further embedded feelings of resentment towards the hearing world, and intensified feelings of powerlessness and frustration; not only did hearing people fail to comprehend their culture, but they also prevented them from integrating with each other. Furthermore, although P1B, P2B and P3B were able to spend more time

with each other and therefore had less difficulty behaving as Deaf, their prison lives were still littered with obstacles because, as is the case in wider society (Turner, 1994a, Lane et al, 1996, Ladd, 2003), their mini penal Deaf community did not exist completely separately from the wider prison culture. P5B was particularly aware of the effect that not being able to maintain the 'Us' versus 'Them' divide between themselves and the hearing world whilst in prison was having upon the Deaf prisoners, as shown here:

On the outside the majority of hearing people can't be a pain because they aren't with us, it's like see you next week, you know what I mean? They do their own thing on the outside. That's why we don't have problems on the outside, because they aren't there constantly. When we are here we see each other every day and it gets on our nerves...Deaf people are brought up with Deaf, and not really socialising with the hearing... But as soon as they are apart from the Deaf and mixing with the hearing, pure hearing, 24 7, it's like they are being punished already.

This notion of having the hearing world 'enforced' upon them links directly to Goffman's (1961) framework because P5B appeared to feel as though he was being contaminated by the hearing world whilst in prison, and Goffman (1961: 35-36) argues that this "contaminative exposure" to "undesirable fellow inmates" is central in total institutions. An example of the impact that this 'contamination' was having on the Deaf prisoners was again provided by P5B, who discussed the effect that being separated from P1B had upon P2B, who had become accustomed to spending time with him. He stated that on an occasion where P1B was placed in segregation, P2B "Couldn't stand it" so he "Locked himself in his cell and said 'I'm not coming out' ...because he didn't want to be part of the hearing".

The interviews with the staff members at HMP Bowdon provided an insight into why the Deaf prisoners were being separated from each other, with a primary reason relating to the premise discussed in Chapter Six that, in prison, equality equals similarity. This is shown in the following extract from the interview with SM4B:

SM4B: Like even though a lot of them are on the same wing, they are on two different landings, and they can't mix between the landings, which causes problems.

Interviewer: Why aren't they allowed to mix?

SM4B: I don't know; I think that's just a general rule to be able to control where prisoners are. So if you are located on the bottom floor, there's no reason why you should be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> floor because it isn't where you should be. Those rules are the same for Deaf prisoners, but that doesn't really take in to account that they might be the first floor, and every person they can actually communicate with is on the second floor, and things like that<sup>132</sup>.

Therefore, although HMP Bowdon had been labelled as the 'Deaf prison' it was evident that in reality this label was not being fulfilled. While it is important to acknowledge that the creation of a Deaf sex offender treatment programme is undoubtedly a step in the right direction, in order for any prison in England and Wales to fully accommodate the needs of Deaf prisoners, its regime and structure would need to be reorganised, and a shift away from "batch living" (Goffman, 1961: 22) would be required.

Another issue that prevented the Deaf prisoners at HMP Bowdon from successfully behaving as Deaf relates to the fact that the majority of the staff at the prison had little Deaf awareness, and often perceived culturally Deaf behaviour such as touching or signing as being problematic. This echoes findings from Corker (1996) who reported such problems to be common in the wider hearing world as well. While neither P1W or P1S faced issues of this kind because they had no-one else to be 'Deaf' with, for the prisoners at HMP Bowdon this was a key theme, with it again becoming clear that in an environment like prison there is no room for Deafness. Goffman's (1961: 59) total

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<sup>132</sup> Although I have not commented on whether recruiting Deaf prisoners from other institutions and then separating them is unethical, SM2B who was unaware that the Deaf prisoners were being separated, unwittingly gave her view on the matter whilst trying to make the point that they were being treated fairly, as shown in the following statement; "Which is why the Deaf men are on the same unit or in the same compound. Because if you were to move one of them over here that would be fundamentally unethical and unfair because they would have no access to anybody to talk to, to communicate with, to understand them"

institution framework is also relevant here because the data very much mirrors his argument that in such establishments the desire to negate against difference means that there is a type of “institutional incest taboo functioning to prevent dyads from creating their own worlds”.

The main form of culturally distinct Deaf behaviour viewed as problematic by staff members was the Deaf prisoners’ use of BSL, with the data indicating that because the overwhelming majority of staff members were unable to comprehend sign language they then looked upon it with suspicion. While much of the information collected in relation to this came from the point of view of the prisoners, the existence of staff suspicion was also acknowledged by SM4B who stated that:

But then there are negative attitudes about how the Deaf prisoners interact with each other, which I don’t necessary think is about rules, but rather staff not being aware of Deaf culture... They fear that they don’t know what’s going on because they can’t understand what they are saying [when the Deaf prisoners are communicating in BSL], or what’s happening, [and they worry] that they might be able to group together and make plans and plot.

The Deaf prisoners at HMP Bowdon all provided examples of instances where they felt that their use of sign language was provoking suspicion, and while most of the examples given were largely subjective, during the group interview P2B gave me a letter to read that provided objective evidence of such suspicion. This is shown in the following extract from the group interview:

P2B: Two weeks ago, I received a letter about the Parole Board and I was really upset. I can show it to you if you want me to?

P1B: Can you read it and explain to him?

[P2B then passes the interviewer the letter]

Interviewer: Okay. [Reading out the letter] She also expressed some concerns with who you associate with on the wing,

particularly one individual who is considered to be a negative influence on you. However, it is noted that your ability to associate with other prisoners is considerably restricted and other prisoners are suspicious of you as they suspect that you are talking/signing about them.

P4B: You know what I mean, that doesn't make sense at all... and inside I'm really angry about that because that's wrong. I don't know. That's really wrong. I'm going to see my brother when he comes to see me and tell him about that. He's going to blow up when he sees that because that just feels really wrong. The things that are in that report are horrible.

Interviewer: What's the worst bit about this? Is it the fact that they are saying that they've got concerns with who you associate with?

P2B: I don't know who it is.

P1B: Because it is trying to say that they are suspicious of us signing.

In addition to there being a generalised suspicion of BSL, it became clear that there were certain types of signs that were viewed disproportionately problematically, with SM2B saying that when she looked on staff logs there were lots of unwarranted entries about 'Deaf aggression' when specific signs were used. In line with this, P2B discussed being taken into an office and questioned about violent behaviour because staff members had seen him making a stabbing action when signing, and P1B remarked:

One time we were signing, and we were talking about a new programme, thinking about some ideas so we could pass them on to psychology, and we were talking about it being a big jump. And we signed it like a frog jumping over a rock or something. And when people look at it, they wrote down our names and said that we were trying to escape, because they'd seen us signing this sign, and it looked like we were jumping over.

These issues sit in line with the argument that being Deaf does not fit with the remit of being a prisoner, and therefore even when they are placed with other Deaf prisoners,

individuals still have difficulty acting as Deaf. Although the Deaf prisoners had all experienced difficulties in the wider hearing world, as adults they had the freedom to utilise BSL in most situations outside of prison. However, because they were disempowered by their role as prisoners, that freedom had been removed, and their imported characteristics were being overridden by the nature of the prison environment. The extent to which the freedom to be Deaf had been restricted was shown by P5B who claimed that the Deaf prisoners had been attempting to sign to each other “in secret” in order to avoid provoking suspicion. Goffman’s (1961) total institution framework is again applicable at this point, because the data discussed above resonates with his argument that when a group of inmates attempt to deviate from the “batch” (Ibid: 17) and create their own cultural world, staff members can suspect that this solidarity “Can provide the base for concerted activity forbidden by the rules” (Ibid: 59-60) and may subsequently “Consciously try to hinder” (Ibid: 60) the formation of such groups.

Furthermore, the Deaf prisoners' use of touch was also viewed as problematic, with the data indicating that touching behaviour represented the most profound culture ‘clash’ between the hearing and Deaf worlds in prison. In line with the findings of Gerrard (2001) discussed in Chapter Four, it became clear that for both security and authority related reasons it was deemed as inappropriate for prisoners to touch staff members, with SM3B stating:

As an officer, prisoners are not allowed to touch me. But for a Deaf prisoner, they will tap you on the shoulder, and if you want to be pedantic about it, a lot of officers are a bit taken aback, and would class it as an assault.

Such issues were compounded by the fact that violence and disruption are both common features of prison life, as the data suggested that staff members were always on the lookout for potential incidents and viewed prisoners touching other prisoners as

being an indication of trouble to come. This is shown in the following extract from the group interview at HMP Bowdon:

P1B: We'll be messing about, and then because there's CCTV you've got officers running and shouting 'What's going on?', and it's actually part of Deaf culture.

P4B: We use our bodies to act to explain expression, and that's why the officers take it the wrong way, thinking that we are being violent or attacking each other, and that's why they take it the wrong way.

P1B: Yeah, yeah.

P4B: They don't understand, that's the problem, they don't understand us. And that's what we keep trying to say, they don't understand us at all.

P1B: You know I was saying, that people like us, we sometimes make big movements when we sign, and sometimes we tap each other to get people's attention. The staff would run up and say 'You aren't allowed to touch each other; you aren't allowed to do that'.... Everything is just so over the top, you know. When I went outside [one day] I had a newspaper in my hand, and there were two Deaf guys just stood there, and they were signing, and I was talking to Ian, and I wanted to say something to the others so I tapped one of their shoulders with the newspaper and the two officers run to me and grab me and told us 'You shouldn't be doing that, you will bruise him'. So they said to Paul who I tapped 'Did he bully you? Did he bully you?'

Such findings further highlight the fact that there is little room for Deafness in prison, and show that if prisoners attempt to maintain any cultural norms that violate the requirements of their prisoner role then their difference will not only equal deficient, but may also be perceived as both disruptive and dysfunctional. Despite wishing to remain Deaf in prison it became clear that the structure of the penal environment dictated against such difference, and therefore, as argued in Chapter Seven when considering the experiences of the deaf/HoH interviewees, the lived realities of the Deaf prisoners became largely characterised by separation and isolation from a world which was enforced upon them, but not designed to contain them.

### A lack of resources

Another reason why the Deaf prisoners had difficulty behaving as Deaf in prison related to the Prison service's inability to meet their needs, specifically with regards to resource provision. While access to BSL interpreters and specialist equipment would have made it easier for the Deaf prisoners to adapt to the prison regime whilst remaining Deaf, it became clear that such resources were not being regularly provided, thus sitting in line with existing sources discussed in Chapter Four (Fisken, 1994, HMPS, 1996, Ackerman, 1999, Young et al, 2000, Gerrard, 2001, Izycky and Gahir, 2007, O'Rourke and Reed, 2007, Churchill, 2008, HMIP, 2009, McCulloch, 2010, 2012, Makoff, 2011). Despite needing access to interpreters in almost every scenario involving hearing people in prison, an inability to obtain access to interpreters emerged as a core theme in all of the interviews, with interviewees at HMP Bowdon stating that the only time interpreters were consistently available was for the Deaf sex offender treatment programme, and P1W reporting such provision to be "rare".

However, the Deaf prisoner who appeared to have the least access to BSL interpreters was P1S, with the extent of this lack of access being shown by SM1S who advised that he was not provided with an interpreter at his trial, and subsequently "Didn't even know what he was sentenced to, where he were going, what category he were going to be" until he had been in prison for a number of months<sup>133</sup>. SM1S spoke candidly throughout the interview and admitted that despite being "desperate" to communicate with P1S, she had been unable to do so because they had not had an interpreter at the establishment for over three months. It was evident that she was anxious about this lack of communication and was concerned for the prisoner's welfare, which was reflected in the fact that she then asked if she would be able to use my interpreter to communicate with him, thus indicating that 'reasonable adjustments' were not being made for P1S, despite SM1S' best efforts. After agreeing that this would be okay my interpreter accompanied SM1S to P1S's cell where he

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<sup>133</sup> SM1S advised that they only became aware that P1S did not know this information during the first occasion where an interpreter was present.

interpreted a range of questions for her. When speaking to my interpreter afterwards, he advised that during this interaction it became clear how poor the situation was for P1S (and SM1S) with SM1S appearing to be extremely worried about his welfare, and asking questions such as 'Are you okay?', 'How have you been getting on recently?', and 'Is there anything you need?', as well as telling him that "He needed to get up and come out of his cell more, and have a shower".

The reasons for this lack of provision were multifaceted. While staff members reported that funding issues were key, it became clear that a lack of Deaf awareness was also problematic, and in line with findings from Chapter Six, meant that appropriate resources were often not provided even when sufficient funding was available. This was highlighted by SM1S who, when asked whether she thought reasonable adjustments had been made for P1S, responded by saying "No, I don't actually know what he should have. What rights should be in place for him, I don't know, I only know that we try and help him to live a safe life in here". This lack of understanding of how to manage such difference was echoed by SM1B who stated that:

I know they had a parole hearing last week or the week before, and to be fair he [the offender supervisor] was good in that he sat there and was asked questions about the Deaf man, and went 'I'm out of my depth. I don't have a clue, I don't know how to work with this man, I can't assess him because I don't even know how to communicate with him so it wouldn't be fair for me to comment'".

Staff members felt that they had more difficulty accommodating the needs of Deaf prisoners than those of other minority groups because they did not have access to the one thing that they need in prison; sound. While foreign national prisoners are also often culturally and linguistically different to the majority of the prison population, they were viewed as being easier to provide for simply because they were able to hear, as highlighted by SM1B who stated that she felt that Deaf prisoners had the "worst" time in prison because:

Even with foreign nationals, they can hear can't they? They can hear, and the prison runs English as a foreign language courses, so they can learn English. Our Deaf guys can never learn to hear. We have the resources for stuff to be in the other languages, but not for sign language... [Also] everything that is written down, we have it in a thousand different languages. So at least they [foreign nationals] can access the written stuff. Whereas our Deaf guys don't have that. When trying to get interpreters in it has always been the attitude of, 'We can't'. Even down to legal representation, solicitors are aware of getting foreign language interpreters, I just don't think they are aware of Deaf interpreters.

This suggests that sound rules in prison to such an extent that the provision of adjustments is also dictated by it, and indicates that a lack of Deaf awareness across the prison estate makes it even more difficult for Deaf prisoners to gain access to the necessary resources than other minority group prisoners. Such findings also work to highlight the uniqueness of the lived realities of d/Deaf prisoners, as although existing literature shows that different people do indeed experience prison differently, d/Deaf prisoners are in fact *more* different simply because they are the only prisoners to experience the penal environment without sound.

Furthermore, although comprehension of sound was not important to the Deaf prisoners themselves, because penal establishments are organised around sound it meant that in order to adapt to the prison regime, they needed access to equipment that would convert the sound into a d/Deaf-friendly format. However, as discussed in the previous chapter when considering the experiences of deaf/HoH prisoners, it was clear that these adjustments were not being made in any consistent way, with prisoners discussing not having access to vibrating alarm clocks or flashing fire alarms, amongst other things. One particularly insightful example of resource denial was highlighted by P5B who had been told that he "wasn't allowed" over-ear headphones despite not being able to wear the in-ear headphones provided because he was born without ears. SM4B, who had been present during my interview with P5B, spoke of being shocked at hearing the above information and feeling as though in this instance

denial of such equipment was unacceptable. Such findings again echo the experiences of the deaf/HoH prisoners interviewed and show that irrespective of identity, the fact that neither group can hear in an environment where sound is so important means that the nature of their lived realities inevitably overlap.

This notion of “not being allowed” certain equipment was also reflected in the interviews with both P1S and P1W, with P1S discussing being told that he was not allowed a minicom because it would “be against the rules”, and P1W being unable to get access to a vibrating alarm clock because it was “an unauthorised item”. In the instance of P1W this information was verified by the staff member who was present in the interview, who agreed that for procedural reasons he would not be allowed access to a vibrating alarm clock. Such findings further the argument that there is no room for d/Deafness in an environment like prison, where prisoners require access to sound in order conform to “batch living” (Goffman, 1961: 22).

This section of the chapter has shown that although the Deaf interviewees continued to identify as Deaf in prison and relied on the presence of other Deaf people and the provision of interpreters/specialist equipment to allow them to behave in such a way, in reality there was little room for such profound cultural (and physical) difference in prison. Without other Deaf people/people who could communicate in BSL or access to interpreters, the Deaf prisoners were experiencing another type of ‘pain’; the deprivation of meaningful communication. This inability to communicate was perhaps the aspect of their difference which created the most issues for the Deaf prisoners, with the data indicating that without meaningful communication it is impossible to exist as part of the “batch” (Goffman, 1961: 17).

Before going on to explore the problems that this created for Deaf prisoners, consideration is now given to the way that staff members attempted to overcome the communication barriers that existed between themselves and Deaf prisoners. The fact that staff members play such an important part in the lives of prisoners means that effective communication between the two parties is imperative. In the context of this research, in the absence of a common language (or access to resources) staff members

were found to be employing a variety of different strategies in order to communicate with Deaf prisoners, which are outlined as follows. This is important as it became apparent that all such strategies were problematic, which further highlighted the fact that the prison system is ill-equipped to meet the needs of individuals who are as different as those who are Deaf.

## **Communication with Staff Members**

While a lack of access to resources would have been less problematic if there had been staff members who were able to communicate fluently in BSL at the establishments where the prisoners were being held, in reality this was not the case<sup>134</sup>, which meant that there was often a total language disconnect between Deaf prisoners and staff members. In a bid to overcome such communication issues staff members employed a myriad of different strategies which varied based on the extent to which they were Deaf aware. While the intentions behind such behaviour were often positive, it became apparent that, in reality they were insufficient in closing the communication gap between the Deaf prisoners and staff members, and often created further issues for them, as discussed below.

When considering the behaviour of staff members with little/no Deaf awareness, it became clear that they commonly responded to Deaf prisoners by treating them as though they were hearing, as shown by SM1B who stated that:

Offender supervisors would just 'manage' and hope the [Deaf] guy understands, and a lot of them I don't think really understand how Deaf their guys are or their communication needs, so they just think 'Oh yeah he nods along so he must understand'...Or, like I went to see Thomas on his wing to tell

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<sup>134</sup> While there were no staff members who were completely fluent in BSL at HMP Bowdon, there were four staff members who had attended BSL classes, and had some comprehension of the language. The reason that these staff members had received BSL training was for the purpose of aiding the running of the Deaf sex offender treatment programme, and while this was extremely beneficial while the programme was running, once it had ended the staff members had limited access to the Deaf prisoners. Although two of the staff members were in the psychology department and would therefore inevitably not have as much contact with the Deaf prisoners, the remaining two worked on prison wings and therefore could have been placed on the same wing as at least one of the prisoners. Despite this, neither staff member was on a wing with any of the Deaf prisoners, and only had any contact with them when there was an emergency and they were called over. SM4B alluded to this in her interview and spoke of being unable to understand why the staff members who had some level of BSL comprehension were not working on the same wing as the Deaf prisoners.

him that an appointment had been cancelled, and I spoke to the officer first and said 'Can you just let him know this and this?', and he went 'Yeah yeah. Just write it down'. I was like 'Okay is that to remind you', and he was like 'No, I'll just give it to him'. Then I was like 'But he can't read English'. The officer was then like 'Can't he? Well we always do that'. Then I said 'Well does he always get it wrong?', and he was like 'Yeah, come to think of it'. And I was like 'Because he can't read what you are writing down for him!!'

All of the Deaf interviewees indicated that such a scenario was common-place in prison, with P4B stating that in order to communicate with staff members he had to attempt to lip read them, P3B saying that when he attempted to communicate staff members they would tell him to "Write it down" even though he was not able to write in English, and P1W (who could read and write) stating that:

They come up to me and start talking and I try and say 'No no you are going to have to write it down', and they just think that they haven't got enough time, so they just walk off. So they can talk to someone else and it's quick, but they never have the time to write it down for me, or to read what I have got to say.

Such findings further develop the argument that prisons, as places designed for similarity are unable to adapt their regimes to include those who not fit the criteria of 'normal', and rather that the onus is on the individual themselves to behave as would be expected.

However, such findings do not apply to all staff members who have little Deaf awareness, as SM1S and SM2S, neither of whom were Deaf aware, were making a concerted effort to communicate with P1S in a way that he would understand. Although they were still trying to correspond with him verbally, they were also using visual cues in a bid to engage with him, with SM1S stating that "I've made, charts on his wall with pictures, like a picture of a bike for the gym, a picture of the canteen, a picture of laundry" and SM2S saying that during sentence plan meetings she printed

off picture cards for P1S to “point to”<sup>135</sup>. However, SM1S and SM2S viewed themselves as the exception to the rule with regards to the efforts they made, and were very open about the fact that such efforts were not reflected in the behaviour of other prison officials, who they believed would just leave P1S to his own devices and would “Probably forget that he’s even here”. SM1S highlighted this when speaking of the treatment that he received while she was off sick for six weeks, as shown here:

So I came back from the sick and... in that time, again, he has been neglected. When I came back he were like a vagrant; you can't walk in his cell, you walk in and it is like horrific, the smell... It does upset me to see him just festering there. So when I came back the other day, I were like “Oh my god”. He just gets left, it is like horrific, horrific.

This notion of Deaf prisoners being “left” because they are too profoundly different to accommodate was also reflected by SM1B who stated that “Half the time the staff can’t communicate with them, so they just leave them, and they just get stuck in the system”. Such findings clearly indicate that the Prison Service is currently ill-equipped to meet the needs of Deaf prisoners, and that the Equality Act 2010 is ineffective in ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made so that Deaf prisoners are able to “take a full part in the normal life of the establishment” (MOJ, 2011a: 21).

With regards to HMP Bowdon specifically, the data indicated that the presence of multiple Deaf prisoners and numerous staff members who could communicate in BSL at a basic level at the establishment, gave staff members the opportunity to employ a number of other strategies in order to communicate with the Deaf prisoners. SM4B, SM3B and SM1B (all of whom had some level of BSL comprehension) spoke of being contacted by other staff members who were unable to communicate with the prisoners and without access to qualified interpreters, needed assistance. This is highlighted by SM1B who stated that the wing staff “Ring up and say ‘We haven’t got a clue what he is on about, can you come over?’” and SM3B who said “I will get a phone

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<sup>135</sup> Although SM1S and SM2S were making a concerted effort to communicate with P1S, during his interview he stated that “They get by with some gestures, but it’s not good at all... I don’t understand them at all”.

call saying something like ‘Can you come across? We aren’t quite sure what’s wrong but there is clearly something wrong’”. While such behaviour was viewed as inevitable by the staff members interviewed, SM1B felt that the extent to which other staff members were relying on their abilities had become problematic, as illustrated below:

Like when I’ve been called and they say ‘We’ve got an adjudication with this guy, can you come and interpret?’, and I’m like ‘NO, because I’m not an interpreter’. And they are like ‘Oh okay well we’ll just go ahead anyway’, and I’m like ‘Well you can’t really do that because it is a legal setting and you shouldn’t be doing that without an interpreter’. I’m not going to get listened to but I know that’s not the right thing for that person<sup>136</sup>.

This indicates that as a result of the prison’s inability to adapt to the needs of Deaf prisoners, the staff members were resorting to inappropriate means in an attempt to enable them to participate in fundamental aspects of the regime. Although the staff members that were being approached to act as interpreters could communicate in BSL at a basic level, none were fluent, which would therefore have meant that if they were to be used then the Deaf prisoners could receive inadequate/inaccurate information in an important setting like an adjudication, and if they were not used would receive no comprehensible information at all<sup>137</sup>.

Another strategy employed by staff members at HMP Bowdon in a bid to overcome communication difficulties with Deaf prisoners was to use P1B (who could lip read and talk to a certain level) as an interpreter. All of the Deaf prisoners interviewed alluded to this point, with P2B stating that things were better when P1B was nearby because

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<sup>136</sup> An adjudication is a hearing which must be attended by a prisoner who has been found to have broken the prison rules in some way. In a document available to prisoners titled 'Prisoner adjudication information sheet and prisoners statement' it is stated that “Adjudications are important events which must be orderly but fair...You will be asked whether you understand what happens in an adjudication and what the charge against you is, whether you have had enough time to prepare your defence to the charge, and whether you have written down what you say happened...The Governor or Director will ask the reporting officer to describe the allegation against you, and you may ask questions about his or her evidence. The reporting officer may call witnesses in support of the allegation, and may present any relevant physical or written evidence... You will have an opportunity to explain what happened and offer a defence, if you wish to plead not guilty” (MOJ, 2011b: 1-2).

<sup>137</sup> According to the conditions of adjudication outlined in the document alluded to in the above footnote (MOJ: 2011b) if a Deaf prisoner was to have a lack of access to accurate information in an adjudication setting this would contravene the standard adjudication procedure.

“He can help us communicate”, P5B stating that staff members “Are always asking him for help... and he will have to go to A5 [another wing] because there is a guy that they have difficulty talking with” and P1B himself stating “I don't mind doing it, but it is just too much, it should be the staff's job. It should be part of their job [but] because they don't know what's going on, I'm expected to help them”. It could be said that a scenario such as this where staff members were so heavily reliant on a prisoner is unique in prison because they were enabling P1B to behave in a way that his prisoner ‘label’ would usually inhibit, which was in turn causing the power balance between the two groups to alter. Furthermore, although prisoners are usually deprived of their autonomy during their time in custody (Sykes, 1958, Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Cooke et al, 1990, Coyle, 1994, James, 2003, Irwin and Owen, 2005, Liebling et al, 2011, Rowe, 2011), in this context this core pain of imprisonment was not applicable, and on the contrary because of a lack of resource and Deaf awareness P1B was being given an almost unprecedented level of control.

SM1B, SM2B and SM4B all expressed concern about this arrangement, as shown in the following extract from the interview with SM1B:

SM1B: There is one Deaf guy on the wing at the moment and they basically use him as an interpreter which is VERY ropey.

Interviewer: Do they do that a lot?

SM1B: Yeah.

Interviewer: What do you think of that?

SM1B: It scares me. He has personality traits that do not need to be encouraged, which relate to putting him in a position of power.

Interviewer: In terms of his offence?

SM1B: Yeah. So yeah, it encourages all the wrong messages that we don't want to be giving that individual.

Interviewer: Have you told them [the other staff members] that?

SM1B: We've had discussions about it, but then there's also the 'Yeah well we are stuck, so this is the best we can do'. They are very reliant, it is worrying. It just worries me as to the level of manipulation that is going on there. By him helping out staff, staff seem to be really helpful with him, and I think that's opening a dodgy door for him grooming staff.

Interviewer: Really?

SM1B: Yeah. Crossing boundaries and stuff... It is a concern for someone with his personality traits, that we would be concerned about anyway, almost psychopathy traits that we need to manage. A hearing guy isn't easy to manage, but it is easier to raise staff awareness of that, and to be putting in boundaries that are quite strict, and making sure they aren't crossed. But given that they need him, those boundaries are more lax. It's just not good.

These concerns were further compounded by the fact that there was no mechanism in place to monitor the accuracy of his translations, or to mitigate against manipulation, with SM2B saying:

You have to put some trust in him because it is better than having no ability to communicate at all with some of these men. But yeah, it's not an ideal situation at all, and I wouldn't even use P1B in that sort of way... At the end of the day you need somebody who is impartial. I'm all for peer support, but at the moment we can't monitor whether the peer support being provided is appropriate peer support. He [P1B] kind of tends to be the one in charge who does a lot of stuff for the others, and then you get others which are more sort of perhaps, follow on, go by what the leader says. But that's not always the right information that they are going off, and instead is perhaps what that guy thinks it right, or what he thinks should happen. But it's not always the right information that he is telling them, which then creates more problems for the guy who thinks that this guy is helping him.

This indicates that at HMP Bowdon, P1B was acting as a mediator between the Deaf and hearing worlds, with him being the primary source of information about prison culture and life for a number of the other profoundly Deaf prisoners. While the

prisoners themselves were united in the view that P1B was helping them, staff members were much more critical. Although they had little concrete evidence to confirm that P1B was abusing his position of power, SM2B provided the following example which appeared to highlight an occasion where this may indeed have been the case:

There was a concern with him [P1B] and Mason, and this is probably why you won't see Mason with him. Because Mason signed a letter that he wanted written to his mother, P1B wrote that letter and sent it, and Mason has never heard from his mother again. And nobody knows what was written in that letter, do you know what I mean? So there is that side of things when you just think, how is he in that position? But staff aren't necessarily aware of that because the Deaf guys don't go to the staff, they go to him and then he goes to staff.

The findings discussed throughout this section of the chapter show that in the absence of necessary resource provision, staff members are unable to communicate sufficiently with Deaf prisoners, and respond to such difficulties by employing an array of problematic and arguably inappropriate tactics, which raises questions as to the suitability of the prison environment for people who are profoundly Deaf. As a result of being deprived of meaningful communication in prison, the Deaf prisoners were found to be experiencing a number of extra pains of imprisonment, as to be discussed below.

### **The Distinct Pains of Deaf Prisoners**

Consideration is now given to the distinct problems that the Deaf people included in the research were having in prison. While they were attempting to continue behaving as though they were Deaf, it has become clear that nature of the prison environment dictates against such cultural and physical difference. As argued in Chapter Seven, the prison regime is not only organised around sound but also verbal language, and while the deaf/HoH prisoners struggled with this simply because they could not hear, Deaf prisoners also experienced a number of extra pains of imprisonment as a consequence of their use of a visual language.

The first primary issue faced by the Deaf prisoners mapped on to both findings from existing literature and the data collected from the deaf/HoH prisoners, and related to an inability to adapt to the sound oriented penal regime without access to resources. This links back to the idea that prison is deafening for Deaf prisoners, because even though conception of sound would usually<sup>138</sup> be deemed as unimportant by them, without access to it in prison they experienced the same problems as the deaf/HoH interviewees, in that they could not hear tannoy or the calls of staff members. These issues were also acknowledged by staff members, with SM1S advising that P1S had missed multiple meals because he had not heard the tannoy and SM4B stating that:

If I've gone on to a landing and I've needed one of the Deaf guys to come out of his cell and down to the office, they will go on the tannoy and say 'Mr such and such to the office', and I just think why are they doing that, he isn't going to hear you?

Further to this, and again echoing findings from the deaf/HoH interviewees was the fact that a lack of access to sound exacerbated the deprivation of security for Deaf prisoners, who were also unable to hear fire alarms. This was something that was discussed by all of the Deaf prisoners, none of whom had access to visual fire alarms, with P1W stating that "In education twice there's been fires and they've all rushed out, and I'm the last one because the alarms gone off and no-one's let me know; I've told them that they need to have something in place, but there is still nothing". The lack of adjustments made in regards to the safety of Deaf prisoners was highlighted by SM1S who stated that:

I've asked the governors to provide things to help us with him. For instance, if there is a fire, he should have a vibrating pillow or something like that. But he's got nothing... and they've known about this for months and months and the fire officer came and assessed it, and said yeah this is what we need, but it's not here.

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<sup>138</sup> Outside of the prison environment.

Such findings again cast doubts on the effectiveness of the Equality Act 2010 in ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made for d/Deaf prisoners, and further highlights the fact that irrespective of identity, an ability to hear is a necessity if an individual is to conform to the “batch living” (Goffman, 1961: 22) that takes place in prison.

While a lack of access to sound was problematic for both the deaf and Deaf prisoners, the fact that the Deaf interviewees also had limited access to meaningful communication exacerbated their lack of understanding of the penal regime. All of the Deaf prisoners discussed feeling confused about the daily goings on in prison because they could not understand what was being said to them, and were often unable to comprehend written documents such as induction booklets that were given to them. This lack of understanding echoes findings from Gerrard (2001) and is highlighted by P1B who stated that “We don't know what's going on, they don't tell us the information”, P5B who said “I feel like a zombie, not knowing what's going on [or] where I'm going to be” and P1W who felt that “I am always trying to say ‘What do you say? What are you saying?’ ...I'm constantly left in a state of ‘Well what's going on?’”. Such perceptions were furthered by staff members who also alluded to such issues, with SM2B stating that one Deaf prisoner had “Had adjudications where he's not understood what has happened, and when staff have had to pull him up and give him feedback he doesn't really understand what is happening” and SM1B arguing that:

I think it is very scary for them because they don't know what's happening. Decisions are being made that they are not fully informed of because people aren't getting interpreters...Sentence plan stuff, and you know, treatment, and probably moving around, going to different prisons.

The degree to which the Deaf interviewees were unaware of key information was emphasised by P5B and P3B who alleged not to know what tariff they were serving,

and P1W and P1S who claimed not to be aware that they had a sentence plan<sup>139</sup>. In line with findings from existing sources (Tucker, 1988, Vernon, 2010, McCulloch, 2010) interviewees also discussed being unclear about the prison rules, with all of the Deaf prisoners reporting that they often did not realise that they had broken a rule until they were punished for it. This was illustrated by P5B who asserted that he been placed in segregation for wearing a hat in the prison corridor, when he did not realise that this violated a prison rule. Such findings insinuate that he was being punished because he was not able to behave as would be expected in prison without institutional adaptations, thus furthering the argument that 'different' often means institutionally deficient in prison.

This lack of comprehension of the regime also meant that the Deaf prisoners were not aware of the services that were available to them, or if they were, had often not been told how they could go about accessing such services, as shown by SM2B who stated that:

Communication is the biggest thing, so yeah they can access work, they can access association, they can access canteen, they can access the gym, but if they don't know that they can access those things then what's the point in providing them. Because if you can't communicate that those things are available then they may as well not be there, because then the men aren't going to use them because they won't know to use them.

The instance where this was most problematic relates to what is known in prison as the 'application procedure'; a process whereby prisoners must submit applications to staff members in order to request items to be ordered for them, to sign up for courses/activities, to organise visits and to make complaints. While this procedure

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<sup>139</sup> During the interview with P1W, the present staff member admitted that she was shocked that that he was not aware of his sentence plan, which in her words was "Something that prisoners go on about all the time". After finding out this information she then proceeded to use my interpreter in an attempt to explain to him what a sentence plan was, which also highlighted the fact that the provision of interpreters was clearly not commonplace at HMP Wilmslow.

plays a core part in the penal regime in England and Wales it became clear that the Deaf prisoners were either completely unaware of it, or were aware of its existence but unsure of how it worked, which meant that they were often unable to access important facilities/items that they had a legal right to. Such findings again show that these establishments, as places designed for similarity were not able to meet the needs of the Deaf prisoners who were not able automatically adapt to the regime, and consequentially were then experiencing the deprivation of goods and services (Sykes, 1958) at a greater level than their hearing peers.

In order to overcome these issues, the prisoners at HMP Bowdon relied on P1B to submit applications for them, which, despite being viewed positively by the Deaf prisoners themselves, was again problematic because of the level of autonomy it gave P1B. However, as the only Deaf prisoners at their respective establishments, P1S and P1W had little comprehension of the application scheme and were even more isolated from the penal regime. In order to get around this, staff members spoke of bypassing the process for them, and in some instances contacting their families who would provide the necessary information. This is shown by SM1H, who, when discussing her experiences with a Deaf prisoner, stated that:

I don't think he knew how to put an application in but to be honest a lot of the time he didn't even go through the application procedure because we were just doing it for him... The disability liaison officer was in contact with his family, so [through that contact] we established he likes doing art work, and normally they would have to buy art stuff from our education department and pay for them themselves, but it was arranged for his family to send some in for him so it wouldn't cost him anything

SM1S made similar statements and spoke of emailing P1S's family in instances where "The prisoners will come and say, 'He's not much money left for his canteen, could you ask his family?'" , as well making arrangements for them to come and visit him without any input from him. Such behaviour further highlighted the degree to which the Deaf

prisoners were isolated from the penal regime, and indicated that prison was even more 'totalising' (Goffman, 1961) for P1S, and P1W who, because they could not adapt to the regime were experiencing the deprivation of autonomy (Sykes, 1958, Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Cooke et al, 1990, Coyle, 1994, James, 2003, Irwin and Owen, 2005) at a greater level than other prisoners. This leads to the argument that the respective deprivation focused frameworks of Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) were formed based around the experiences of the 'average' prisoner who could adapt to the regime, which means that, in line with findings from existing literature about minority group prisoners (see, for example Crawley, 2007, Liebling, 2007, Medlicott, 2007, Durcan, 2008, Prison Reform Trust, 2008, Rowe, 2011, Scott and Codd, 2010, Mann, 2016, Moore and Scraton, 2016), those who fall outside the remit of 'normal' experience the pains of imprisonment differently.

Another core issue experienced by the Deaf interviewees related to the fact that they were unable to participate in many of the core parts of prison life as a consequence of their Deafness. While the deaf/HoH prisoners often had difficulty participating in certain activities because they struggled to hear what people were saying, this was further exacerbated for the Deaf prisoners because significant parts of the regime were not available in their language. This compounded a number of the 'standard' pains of imprisonment discussed in Chapter Two, and in some cases acted as not only a violation of the Equality Act 2010 but also their basic human rights, as outlined under the Human Rights Act 1998<sup>140</sup>, thus echoing the findings of Izysky and Gahir (2007) and McCulloch (2010, 2012). A particularly significant example of this related to their access to healthcare, with P1W and a number of the Deaf prisoners at HMP Bowdon being unable to receive treatment from prison doctors because BSL interpreters were not provided during their appointments. The extent to which this was problematic is illustrated in the following extract from the interview with SM1B:

SM1B: This one Deaf man... I know he has a lot of health care problems and it never really came out until we were in

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<sup>140</sup> Particularly Article 3; No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and Article 14; The rights and freedoms set out should be secured without discrimination on any grounds.

group [the Deaf sex offender training programme] and he started to talk about it and the interpreters were like 'We are quite worried about him, we think there's actually quite a lot wrong with him, we need to get him seen by the doctor'. So I contacted health care on his behalf who said 'Yeah yeah, we've seen him before a few times, he's fine'. I was like 'How do you know he was fine?', and they were like 'He said he is, he was smiling'. And it's like, this man is profoundly Deaf and you haven't got an interpreter; you have got a duty of care, and you are saying yeah yeah you think he's fine, but he can't communicate with you and you can't communicate with him, so how can you say that?

Interviewer: Has anything happened as a result of that?

SM1B: We've had a lot of rows with healthcare. They basically said that they don't have the funding<sup>141</sup>, and we were like well you can't not treat them.

Interviewer: Do they apply for funding from a different place?

SM1B: Yeah... So yeah, they just refused. So it got to the point where we just asked our interpreters to stick around for an extra hour after session to go to healthcare with him, and actually get him the treatment that he needed and the tests that he needed... [It's] really dangerous, really unethical. I don't know how they have argued it for so long, and have got away with it. It is scary.

Interviewer: The guys complained to me a lot about not having interpreters for the doctor and all that sort of thing. Did it mean that he had illnesses that weren't treated then?

SM1B: Yeah, yeah. Quite serious stuff. And the stuff that he was worried about, he was worried about cancer and all sorts, and from what he described it sounded feasible. I don't know the ins and outs of what he actually has but that was, the interpreters are bound by confidentiality, but yes he has some serious stuff to get sorted.

Interviewer: And it was just being left?

SM1B: Yes, just left. It's scary.

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<sup>141</sup> This suggests that the pains of Deaf prisoners may be being exacerbated by recent budget cuts that have taken place across the prison estate.

Despite having hypothesised that Deaf prisoners may be having issues participating in prison life based upon the findings of existing literature (Gerrard, 2001, McCulloch, 2010, 2012), I had not conceived that the implications could be as harmful as the above extract suggests. In this instance, the degree to which HMP Bowdon was unable to adapt to the needs of the Deaf prisoner undermined his right to medical treatment and jeopardised his physical health, which again suggests that the Prison Service may be acting illegally by failing to meet the duty imposed by the Equality Act 2010. Such findings indicate that in their current form, establishments across England and Wales may not be suitable places for Deaf people to be imprisoned.

Furthermore, in a similar vein to the deaf/HoH prisoners, the Deaf prisoners also reported experiencing higher barriers to meaningful contact with family and friends compared with their hearing peers. While the deaf/HoH prisoners were not aware of the existence of equipment that would enable them to communicate with members of wider society over the phone, the Deaf prisoners were, but were still largely unable to gain access to it. The impact that this compounded isolation from family/friends was having upon the interviewees is illustrated below by P1W:

How can I phone my family from prison? What can I do? It was really hard [when I came to prison]. Luckily a Muslim man came to me and said 'Are you a Muslim?'. He then said that he would phone my son for me. So he phoned my son, and my son was really shocked. All my family were crying and it was a horrible time, all my relationships with my family and the Deaf world were gone.

The fact that this prisoner described his relationships with his family as being “gone” again indicates that prison can be even more ‘totalising’ (Goffman, 1961) for Deaf prisoners because they cannot adapt to the “batch” (Ibid: 17) without access to specialised equipment. As a consequence of this inability to use the phone, P1W reported having to ask staff members if they could do so for him<sup>142</sup>, something which he stated was “embarrassing” because “they could gossip about my business”. As well

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<sup>142</sup> He did this by writing notes to them.

as acting as another example of the fact that Deaf prisoners often experience the deprivation of autonomy more severely than their peers, it also shows that their privacy can be undermined at a greater level than existing literature would suggest (Cohen and Taylor, 1972, Wacquant, 2002, Rowe, 2011).

Furthermore, a lack of access to the necessary resources also meant that the Deaf prisoners interviewed were largely unable to partake in educational classes, training or rehabilitation courses. This was problematic for a number of reasons; the first being that it caused Deaf prisoners to experience the monotony of prison at a more intense level (for discussions on monotony, see Gibbs, 1982, Medlicott, 2001, Scott and Codd, 2010) than their hearing peers, as shown by P4B who became upset when asked about this and said “What do I have to do? Just sit in my cell all day, and watch the TV”. The second reason that this lack of access to classes/courses is significant is because by failing to adapt such activities to make them accessible for Deaf prisoners the Prison Service is arguably contravening one of the main aims outlined by the MOJ (2016): rehabilitation. In line with the findings of Gerrard (2001), as well as being problematic for the prisoners themselves, this could also undermine public safety, as shown by SM2S who, when discussing P1S stated that because he had a determinate sentence “He will be released regardless... and it could lead to more victims”.

As mentioned earlier, the only exception to this lack of availability was the Deaf sex offender treatment programme which ran at HMP Bowdon. While this programme was viewed positively by all of the interviewees at the prison, it was still proving to be problematic because funding issues meant that it could only run once every two years, which again links back to the argument that difference is not always a funding priority in an environment like prison. Interviewees also advised that even on the years when the programme was scheduled to take place, this would only be possible if there were a minimum of four Deaf prisoners available to attend. This issue was particularly difficult for P5B who was the only Deaf prisoner at the establishment who was yet to do the course, and was therefore waiting for another three Deaf people to arrive at the prison before he could become eligible. When discussing such difficulties SM4B advised that if they could not locate any other Deaf prisoners then the course would

not be able to run again, and that P5B would therefore be unable to complete it, as shown in the following quote:

We haven't actually got enough for this year's group yet, so we are contacting other prisons to make sure that they are aware that we are here...I think we have got another one that is coming soon. So hopefully it should run this year, but if we don't have enough men it will have to run next year. And the guys that are already here will have to wait.

A lack of access to rehabilitation, education or training was particularly problematic for the Deaf prisoners at HMP Bowdon given that they were all serving IPPs. This meant that they could not be released until a Parole Board was convinced that they no longer posed a risk to the public. While existing literature indicates that IPPs generate an extra set of 'pains' for prisoners who are serving them because of the feelings of uncertainty that they provoke (see, for example Crewe, 2011, Liebling, 2011), the Deaf prisoners were experiencing these pains at a greater level because the prison could not provide them with access to the necessary 'risk reducing programmes'. As a result of this, all five prisoners were already over-tariff and were concerned that a lack of access to sex offender courses would mean that they would never be able to leave prison, with P5B saying "I feel like I'm going to end up having my funeral here, like I'm going to be dead in here". The group interview with the Deaf prisoners was particularly revealing regarding this, as shown in the following extract:

P5B: When they are hearing, they do their course then they're gone.

P1B: Yeah

P5B: They move on.

P1B: In, out, in, out, in, out. You think what's going on?

Interviewer: Do you find that a lot of hearing people come and go then?

P1B: Yeah, we're just stuck here.

P5B: We aren't moving anywhere, we can't get interpreters, it's horrible.

P2B: Where's the progress? There's no progress at all. Altogether we've been waiting for 28 months just twiddling our thumbs, literally, nothing happening. And to be quite honest it is becoming emotionally draining. Other people are going on course after course after course and we've just got nothing coming to us at all.

These perceptions were echoed by the staff members interviewed at HMP Bowdon, who were all in agreement that IPP sentences were inappropriate for Deaf prisoners, as shown by SM1B who said that because of a lack of provision the Deaf prisoners “Are just stuck indefinitely if they are IPP”, and SM3B who remarked:

If they are on a determinate sentence they will just get released anyway, and if they are not on a determinate sentence they might never get released just because they are Deaf... Everybody kept telling them that they had to do a course, but they can't because they are Deaf. And then they are told that they can't get out until they do a course, but you can't do a course because you are Deaf.

Such findings show that HMP Bowdon is clearly not equipped to meet the needs of Deaf prisoners serving IPPs, and was certainly not making reasonable adjustments to ensure that the interviewees were fully involved in the penal regime, thus raising further doubts as to the effectiveness of the Equality Act 2010 in protecting their rights. This implies therefore that the Prison Service in its current form is not a suitable place for these prisoners to be held, as they are too profoundly different from what would be expected, and consequently go on to suffer disproportionately in prison as a direct result of this, thus mapping on to existing d/Deaf prisoner literature (see, for example McCulloch, 2010, 2012)

This section of the chapter has shown that as a consequence of a lack of resources, Deaf awareness, or access to other Deaf people, Deaf prisoners are largely unable to exist as part of the “batch” (Goffman, 1961: 17) in prison, or to adapt to the role of a

prisoner. While many of the issues that they face are aligned with those experienced by deaf/HoH prisoners due to their lack of access to sound, it has become clear that Deaf prisoners are also subjected to an extra set of pains because their cultural difference and preference for a visual language further contravene what is expected in prison. When linking this back to the importation versus deprivation debate, it can be said therefore that the deprivations associated with imprisonment become more severe the more d/Deaf an individual is; while the deaf prisoners interviewed were experiencing the pains of imprisonment more severely than those who were HoH, for individuals who were Deaf, these structural deprivations were even more harsh and encompassing. As a consequence of this disproportionate punishment it became apparent that the lives of the Deaf prisoners interviewed often became characterised by enforced isolation and subordination, as will be discussed below.

### **There is No Room for Deafness in prison**

In a similar vein to the findings presented in Chapter Seven regarding deaf/HoH prisoners, the Deaf interviewees reported feeling isolated whilst incarcerated as a result of the issues discussed throughout. The overlap here between the perceptions of the two groups again shows that irrespective of the way they identify with their d/Deafness, the fact that neither group can hear in an environment where sound rules means that they inevitably become isolated from prison life. However, the relevance of the importation model became apparent during the interviews with the Deaf prisoners, who were experiencing more severe feelings of isolation as a consequence of their imported cultural difference. In line with findings from existing research (Ackerman, 1998, Izycky and Gahir, 2007, Churchill, 2008), such isolation was proving to be damaging their feelings of wellbeing, with all of the Deaf prisoners discussing feeling depressed, anxious, frustrated and worried as a consequence, and P1W, P1S, P2B and P3B stating that they cried in their cells because they could not cope with it. The depth of this isolation was shown by P1S, whose poignant reflection captures the sadness of his plight:

I only feel a little bit depressed, not heavily depressed. Sometimes I cry just because I am in prison. I cry a lot...because there's nobody Deaf, there's nobody Deaf here. I can't communicate. I can't express myself to anybody.

These concerns were echoed by P2B who went as far as to say that he would rather be in a secure mental institution than in prison at HMP Bowdon, as shown here:

I've been crying, really upset because I don't want to stay in prison. I'm worried that I am going to have a mental breakdown if I stay here... I can't sleep at night, and I want to move on. I want to have good health, and I want to be able to go do courses and move on... My brother's really worried about me because I am sitting here twiddling my thumbs. I'm hurt, I'm upset, I'm crying, I don't know what's happening all the time. Because I'm on IPP all I am waiting for is to get my courses finished. What I'd like to do is to improve my IQ, I'd like to be keeping my mind active. What's happening is, my mind's dying because I am just not being stimulated at all. I just feel like I'm not improving here at all. I feel like I'm going downhill. I feel ill because I've got problems with my ears hurting. I'm upset all the time. When I'm in bed I'm tossing and turning, and worried about stuff all the time. I am happy when people help, and when I've got friends who will help, but there's nothing happening.

Such findings certainly appear to indicate that imprisonment may be disproportionately damaging to the mental health of Deaf prisoners, which not only builds upon the arguments of Ackerman (1998), Young et al (2000), Izycky and Gahir (2007) and Churchill (2008), but also substantiates Schneider and Sales' (2004: 82) claim that d/Deaf people may actually be at risk of "psychological breakdown" as a result of the issues they face in prison. The validity of such assertions is further demonstrated here by P1W:

My son emailed me and said 'Don't worry'. He is a doctor and he said that I must be strong, I must be patient, I must be strong. And I must read the Quran and pray every day. So I am trying to be patient and do that. But it is very difficult because there is no communication. Who do I talk to? With my colleagues there is a barrier between us and I can't

communicate with them, they just leave me alone... Inside and mentally I feel that I want to communicate, I want to get stuff out, but I can't. And even with jokes, humour, there's nothing. I get very emotional... Very stressed. I want to get it out, and I don't want to get mentally ill, but I have to keep it all inside and be patient. That's all I can do.

This interview was very difficult to conduct because P1W became extremely distressed on a number of occasions, and while transcription does not fully convey the extent to which he was affected by being the only Deaf person at HMP Wilmslow, it does provide an indication of the way he was feeling. A further example of this is provided in the following extract from the interview:

P1W:It's a real problem for me inside. I keep it in. We are communicating now at this appointment, and I was EXCITED to come here. I was excited to see you because I knew I would be communicating with people. But out there I have to hold it all in, and I really do struggle.

Interviewer: So is it nice to have somebody that you can sign with then?

P1W:Yeah. It is.

Interviewer: Okay. Just a couple of questions, I know I've kept you for ages so thank you.

P1W:\*Starts crying\*

Staff:I'll go and get a tissue.

Interviewer: Oh no, are you okay? Are you alright?

P1W: Yeah, I just get upset because I need to communicate. If I was in a Deaf prison, I would be able to communicate so it is really emotional for me.

These feelings of isolation again resonate with findings discussed in Chapter Three regarding both the experiences of deaf people growing up and the experiences of Deaf adults in a hearing world (Ladd, 1991, Corker, 1996, Lane et al, 1996, Leigh, 2009), with it becoming apparent that, for the Deaf prisoners the prison world was acting as a

more concentrated version of the hearing world that they had grown up in, where their lives were also characterised by isolation and separation. This is highlighted here in the following extract from my fieldwork journal from HMP Bowdon:

When they were taking part in the day to day activities in the prison it seemed as though they were being stripped of their Deafness, and consequentially reverting back to the isolated subordinated deaf people that they were as children. This was interesting because it indicated that the experience of Deaf people in prison was much the same as it would be in wider society, except that in prison the 'hearing way' was being continually enforced upon them, with little option to retreat (19<sup>th</sup> February, 2015).

Evidence of this was provided by P1W who stated that “You are free outside. You’ve got Deaf football, Deaf sports. [Here] it’s like living in my mind, like now I’m like a little box” and P4B who became very upset during his interview and argued that:

I feel like I've been thrown in a box in the corner, and I feel like they are getting all these boxes of paper and piling them on top of the Deaf. It just feels like we've been trapped in and stuck in, and Deaf culture is broken.

This suggests again that the prison environment is in fact deafening for Deaf people, who are disempowered by the nature of their prisoner role to such a degree that they are unable to behave as Deaf. However, because their imported Deaf characteristics also mean that they are unable to behave as a 'normal' prisoner, they not only become isolated from the Deaf world, but also the prison world. Such isolation garnered the same response from all of the Deaf prisoners who, upon realising that Deafness was not an option in prison, responded by withdrawing from prison life. This is highlighted by SM1S who, when discussing P1S stated that “All the time he is fed up. It upsets me. Sometimes I want to cry for him. It is sad. It is bloody sad. He never comes out of his cell”, and P2B who, when asked what would happen if there were no other Deaf people at HMP Bowdon, said:

I think I would just go in to my cell and shut the door. I wouldn't be able to communicate; I wouldn't have anyone to talk to. It was the same at Hale prison for me before, when I was there for that first few months, I just went in my cell and just shut the door and ignored everybody. It's dangerous.

This quote suggests that on some occasions Deaf prisoners were withdrawing voluntarily because they did not wish to mix with 'Them'; the hearing prisoners/officers, which is furthered by P1B who said "How can we hang around with hearing people, we never do, we are always stuck in the cell", and P5B who spoke of retreating to his cell to "get away from hearing prisoners" who can "drive you crazy".

However, in most instances the decision to withdraw appeared to be involuntary, and was a direct consequence of the fact that there was little room for such difference in an environment designed for similarity; because the penal regime was not being adjusted to enable their participation, withdrawal often appeared to be the only available option for Deaf prisoners. This was shown by P1B who discussed initially attempting to make officers aware of the needs of the Deaf prisoners by submitting complaints, but when nothing was done decided that keeping "Myself to myself" was the only way to get through his sentence. Such a perception echoes those of the deaf/HoH prisoners presented in Chapter Seven, for whom withdrawal was also a primary response in prison, thus showing that irrespective of differences in their d/Deaf identification the fact that neither could successfully adapt to the penal regime or fulfil the requirements of their designated prisoner 'role' meant that they reacted in the same way<sup>143</sup>.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the lived realities of Deaf prisoners, and has presented findings which highlight the distinctiveness of their prison experience. While it has

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<sup>143</sup> While this research is focused around d/Deafness in prison, it is important to acknowledge that withdrawal has also been found to be a standard response for other minority group prisoners (see for example HMIP, 2006). This suggests therefore that although the nature of the difference may be inherently different, a lack of ability to conform to "batch living" (Goffman, 1961: 17) may in fact provoke the same response.

become apparent that there are a number of overlaps between the experiences of deaf and Deaf prisoners in that neither group can hear in an environment where sound plays such an important role, the fact that the two groups identify with their d/Deafness so differently also creates an array of differences. For the Deaf prisoners interviewed a desire to remain Deaf whilst in prison was at the core of these differences, as, unlike the deaf/HoH interviewees they imported perceptions and characteristics which collided profoundly with the institutional understanding of deafness. While their lack of access to sound meant that both the deaf and Deaf prisoners had difficulty behaving as would be expected, the Deaf prisoners' preference for a visual language, use of culturally distinct Deaf behaviours and negative views towards hearing people meant that they were more profoundly different in prison than the deaf/HoH prisoners.

Despite importing their Deaf characteristics into the prison environment, it has become clear that there is little room for such profound difference in prison, with establishments being largely ill-equipped to adapt to their Deafness, or to meet their distinct needs. Central to this was their failure to provide the necessary resources for Deaf prisoners on any consistent basis, which not only echoes the proposition made in Chapter Six that those who are different become institutionally deficient in prison through no fault of their own, but also highlights the limitations of the Equality Act 2010 as it suggests that reasonable adjustments were not being made to meet their needs, thus echoing findings from McCulloch (2012).

A lack of Deaf awareness on the part of staff members was found to be key to this lack of provision, as without this they failed to understand how to appropriately respond to such profound difference. This proved to be particularly problematic at HMP Bowdon where the prisoners' attempts at being Deaf were thwarted by staff members, who commonly had little understanding as to why it could have been beneficial to keep them on the same wing, and often viewed their Deaf behaviour as being suspicious or inappropriate. Although these findings resonate with the experiences of Deaf adults in the wider hearing world to some degree, the Deaf interviewees had more difficulty being Deaf in prison as a consequence of the nature of the penal environment, where

they were disempowered by their prisoner role. As a result of such disempowerment, their imported characteristics were being overridden, and the hearing agenda continually forced upon them, which links directly to Sykes' (1958: 76) argument that prison re-imposes "the subservience of youth", as there were significant overlaps between their lives in prison and their lives as deaf children, with both being characterised by isolation from a hearing way of life which is enforced upon them not designed to contain them.

Isolation arose as a key theme within all of the Deaf prisoner interviews, and although this does echo findings from Chapter Seven, the fact that the imported identities and characteristics of the Deaf prisoners deviated more profoundly from the prescribed prisoner role than those of the deaf/HoH prisoners meant that they became more severely isolated from the "batch living" (Goffman, 1961: 22) that takes place in prison. As a consequence of an inability to hear or to communicate verbally the Deaf prisoners were existing largely separately from the regime, and were experiencing the structural deprivations associated with imprisonment both differently and more severely than their hearing peers, to an extent that their lived realities were often equivalent to a continual form of solitary confinement. This suggests that the standard pains of imprisonment as outlined by Sykes (1958) are most applicable to the experiences of the 'normal' prisoner who is able to automatically adjust to the regime, rather than the Deaf prisoner who is not, for whom they are then compounded. When linking this back to the importation versus deprivation debate, it could be suggested that in the context of d/Deafness, the amount of pain generated by the structural deprivations of imprisonment exists on a scale, which correlates directly with the extent to which an individual's imported identity deviates away from that which is expected.

The points made throughout this chapter paint a picture of a lived reality which is characterised by feelings of isolation, fear, frustration, stress, uncertainty, powerlessness and anxiety, and show that in its current form the Prison Service is certainly not equipped to meet the needs of a group of prisoners who are as different as those who are culturally and linguistically Deaf. From this, the conclusion to this thesis now goes on to draw together the main arguments presented throughout

Chapters Two to Eight, whilst demonstrating how this research has made an original and significant contribution to existing literature.

## CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to critically interrogate the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners in England and Wales by fusing together the field of Deaf Studies with classic and contemporary prison studies, in order to answer one overarching research question which was 'What are the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf people who find themselves in penal establishments throughout England and Wales?'. In doing this thesis has addressed the following six component questions:

- Do HoH/d/Deaf prisoners experience prison in the same way as other prisoners?
- How do staff members respond to prisoners who are HoH/d/Deaf?
- Does an individual's d/Deafness affect their experience of prison?
- How does prison impact upon the identity of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?
- Is the Prison Service able to meet the needs of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?
- Are there any overlaps between the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people inside and outside of prison?

In order to answer these questions a variety of steps were taken. In Chapters Two, Three and Four consideration was given to relevant literature relating to the lives of prisoners, d/Deaf people and d/Deaf prisoners respectively. After fusing together the different bodies of literature, Chapter Five outlined the methodology and research design utilised in the research, which took a qualitative form and involved semi-structured interviews with 17 HoH/d/Deaf prisoners and 10 staff members across seven prisons throughout England, as well as observations at each establishment. In Chapters Six, Seven and Eight findings were presented from the data collected, the most prominent of which are summarised below.

## Overarching Findings

Chapter Six examined the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners in line with an awareness of the lived realities of prisoners more broadly, and showed that their experiences do align in a variety of ways. Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment framework, as well as other more contemporary sources was used to highlight this, with it being demonstrated that a number of the general pains of imprisonment were felt by HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, particularly the deprivation of autonomy, security, and liberty. Further to this, findings were presented which showed that all of the prisoners interviewed had at least to some degree become institutionalised during their time in prison, with numerous interviewees employing standard methods of adaptation in response to the prison environment. These findings demonstrate that irrespective of their imported personal characteristics, the lives of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners are inevitably shaped by the prison environment, where they are disempowered by their role, deprived of their freedom and heavily regimented by a repetitive regime. To put it simply – HoH/d/Deaf prisoners are still prisoners. As well as going some way to answering the component question 'Do HoH/d/Deaf prisoners experience prison in the same way as other prisoners?', such findings highlight the relevance of deprivation frameworks in this particular context, as just like other prisoners, those who are d/Deaf are exposed to the structural deprivations associated with imprisonment

Within this chapter, Goffman's (1961) total institution framework was employed to illustrate that a number of the features outlined as being central to such institutions were also relevant to the seven prisons included in the research. The three most prominent of such features were the notion of “batch living” (Ibid: 22), the necessity to comply with designated roles, and the presence of a divide between staff members and prisoners. It was argued that the presence of such features indicated that prison is designed for a certain type of person who is expected to be able to automatically adjust to the regime. After this the role of difference in prison was explored, and consideration was given as to what happens when an individual enters prison who is not able to conform to their designated role, or to exist as part of a “batch” (Ibid: 17). Findings from the interviews with both staff members and prisoners showed that

these prisoners often become institutionally deficient due to a lack of resources, awareness and time on the part of staff members, particularly in the present climate where recent benchmarking and staff cuts have made prisoners who are 'different' even less of a funding priority.

The chapter drew to a close by 'sounding out d/Deafness', and looking at how staff members perceived it, thus starting to address the component question 'How do staff members respond to prisoners who are HoH/d/Deaf?'. Findings were presented which indicated that prison officials commonly have little conception of Deafness, and rather, hold opinions that sit in accordance with the medical model of disability. This proved important given the extent of the power imbalance that exists between staff members and prisoners, and had a dramatic impact on the Deaf prisoners as such perceptions clashed profoundly with their own. While this ideological collision also exists between the hearing and Deaf worlds more broadly (Lane et al, 1996), its dimensions were altered in prison where the Deaf prisoners were disempowered by their role. As a consequence of this disempowerment, the perceptions and identities of Deaf prisoners are commonly overruled by the disabling, medicalising and stigmatising perceptions of staff members. While the impact of this enforced deafness was explored in some depth in Chapter Eight, this initial sounding out of d/Deafness proved to be important as it showed that the principles of the hearing agenda permeate the prison world, and that therefore the lived realities of Deaf people in prison mirror their lives in wider society on some levels. As well as being significant in terms of the component question 'Are there any overlaps between the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people inside and outside of prison?', these findings also drew attention to the influence that the imported perceptions and characteristics of prisoners have upon their lives in prison, as while the Deaf prisoners were affected by this ideological collision, the deaf/HoH prisoners who held different views about their hearing loss, were not.

In Chapters Seven and Eight findings were presented which highlighted the distinctiveness of the lives of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners. By separating data from the HoH/deaf and Deaf interviewees into two respective chapters, attention was drawn to the complexity of d/Deafness, with it being shown that the way an individual identifies

with their d/Deafness has a drastic impact upon the way they behave in prison. This went some way towards addressing the component question 'Does an individual's d/Deafness affect their experience of prison?', and gave meaningful consideration to the role of imported identity in prison. Although the way the two groups associated with their d/Deafness was markedly different, similarities arose in that the deaf prisoners remained deaf, and the Deaf prisoners remained culturally and linguistically Deaf, with both groups responding to their d/Deafness in prison the same way as they did outside of prison. These findings also worked to address the component question 'How does prison impact upon the identity of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?'

In Chapter Seven it was shown that in line with existing sources, all of the deaf/HoH prisoners viewed themselves as being part of a hearing culture, and felt stigmatised by their hearing loss. To them, an ability to hear had always been a key component of their identities, and as such, with hearing loss came a sense of inferiority, and a desire to be seen as hearing wherever possible (see also, Goffman, 1963, Higgins, 1980). This had a profound impact upon their behaviour in prison, with all such interviewees attempting to conform to "batch living" (Goffman, 1961: 22) by behaving as though they were hearing, either through methods of concealment or by wearing hearing aids. Although this desire to be seen as 'normal' was not unique to the prison environment, it was seen by all of the deaf/HoH prisoners as being particularly important there, where they felt that any sign of weakness made them vulnerable to bullying, thus mapping onto existing sources (for example, Sykes, 1958, Sykes and Messinger, 1960, Durcan, 2008, Crewe, 2009) which pose that aversion to weakness is a key feature in prison culture.

While such findings highlighted the importance of the role played by imported identity in prison, findings were then presented which showed that the interviewees were, for the most part, failing to fulfil their imported desires to be seen as 'normal' hearing prisoners. On the contrary, an inability to adapt on both an individual or institutional level meant that they were having difficulty adhering to the conditions of their role, and were subsequently becoming isolated from the "batch" (Goffman, 1961: 17). This notion of institutional inadaptability links back the broader arguments made in Chapter

Six that the Prison Service is unable to accommodate the needs of prisoners who are 'different', as in line with this, prisons were shown to be largely failing to provide adequate hearing aids for the severely deaf prisoners. They were also failing to give those who were willing to accept their deafness, access to vibrating alarm clocks, flashing fire alarms, minicomms or other such equipment, with such findings working to answer the research question 'Is the prison service able to meet the needs of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?'.

While this indicates institutional inadequacy, it was then shown that the decision to conceal their hearing loss and to perform as hearing in prison was also largely unfeasible due to the fact that sound is so important in prison. The role of sound has been key throughout this thesis, where it has been demonstrated that in addition to being young, able bodied, English speaking and male, prisoners must also be able to hear if they are to comply with the expectations of the prisoner role. Findings have been presented which show that sound rules in the prison environment, with prisons being reliant upon sound in order to run. While sound is also key in wider society (Higgins, 1980) it is even more important in prison where it is used to regulate the "batch" (Goffman, 1961: 17) of prisoners and to guide them through their daily routine. Consequently, it was shown that full participation in the prison regime automatically becomes harder without the capacity to hear fully, with individuals becoming more isolated the less they are able to hear. These findings were used to demonstrate that as a consequence of their lack of access to sound (including speech, tannoys, bells, and alarms amongst other things), the deaf/HoH prisoners were experiencing a number of the pains of imprisonment both differently and more intensely than Sykes (1961) inferred in his deprivation focused framework, and were often withdrawing from prison life as a consequence of this

Before moving on to Chapter Eight it was acknowledged that many of the problems faced by the deaf/HoH prisoners were not actually distinct to the penal environment, and rather, on many levels, mirrored their experiences in wider society where sound is also key, hearing loss also deviates from what is 'normal' and their lives are still characterized by stigma (Higgins, 1980). Findings were

presented which showed that instead of creating the problems faced by these prisoners, prison compounds them; with deaf/HoH people often being imprisoned by deafness whether they are in prison or not. Such findings are important in terms of the component question 'Are there any overlaps between the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people inside and outside of prison?', and highlight the permeability of the prison estate, showing clearly that the prison world remains a part of the hearing world.

Chapter Eight was dedicated to looking at the lived realities of the culturally and linguistically Deaf prisoners, and presented findings which highlighted the distinctiveness of their experiences. While these experiences did overlap with those of the HoH/deaf interviewees in a number of ways given that neither group can hear in an environment where sound rules, the fact that they identified with their d/Deafness so differently also generated a variety of distinctions. As in Chapter Seven, findings were presented which highlighted the relevance of the importation model, with the Deaf prisoners being shown to have imported their Deaf norms and values into prison, and to be attempting to maintain their cultural and linguistic Deaf identities throughout their time in custody. Evidence of this was provided in the fact that they continued to communicate in BSL, to use culturally distinct Deaf behaviours, to gravitate towards other Deaf prisoners (where possible), and to view hearing people (be it prisoners or staff members) negatively. These findings work to address the research question 'Does an individual's d/Deafness affect their experience of prison?', as well as 'How does prison impact upon the identity of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?'

Despite attempting to remain culturally and linguistically Deaf, it became clear that there was little room for such profound difference in prison. There were a number of reasons for this, the first being that, in addition to sound, verbal communication also plays a key part in the penal regime. Therefore, in order to adapt to their designated prisoner role, Deaf prisoners also require regular provision of qualified BSL interpreters, as well as access to other prisoners/staff members who can communicate fluently in BSL. However, establishments were

shown to be largely ill-equipped to adapt their regimes to accommodate Deafness, and mapping on to findings from existing literature (see, for example Gerrard, 2001, McCulloch, 2010, 2012), were not providing the prisoners with access to BSL interpreters or specialist equipment in any consistent way. While this was slightly less isolating for the prisoners at HMP Bowdon because they had other Deaf people to communicate with (at times), for P1W and P1S who had no one else with whom to communicate, this lack of provision led to almost total communication isolation. This suggests that prisons are unable to adapt their regime to ensure the inclusion of Deaf prisoners, thus working to address the research question 'Is the Prison Service able to meet the needs of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?'.

Issues relating to Deaf awareness on the part of staff members were found to be key to this lack of provision, as without a certain level of understanding about the complexity of d/Deafness and the needs of Deaf people, prison officials often failed to understand how to appropriately respond to these prisoners. It was demonstrated that in the absence of such awareness, staff members either left Deaf prisoners to their own devices, or attempted to communicate with them in a variety of largely ineffective and at times inappropriate ways. Strategies for communication ranged from speaking louder and writing things down, to attempting to use staff members with low levels of BSL comprehension as interpreters, to finally using a Deaf prisoner who could sign and speak (P1B) as an interpreter. This final strategy was perhaps the most concerning, as it gave P1B an unprecedented level of power without any means of monitoring the accuracy of his interpretations. While these findings show that the attitudes of staff members do contribute to a lack of suitable provision for Deaf prisoners, it can be argued that broader structural issues relating to a lack of training and appropriate support for prison officials are largely to blame for such responses. Such findings again go towards addressing the component question 'Is the Prison Service able to meet the needs of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?', as alluded to further when considering the implications of this research later in this concluding chapter.

As HMP Bowdon was the only prison included in the research that was holding multiple Deaf prisoners, it had been anticipated that the interviewees there would have had less difficulty behaving as culturally and linguistically Deaf. However, throughout Chapter Eight it was shown that a lack of Deaf awareness on the part of staff members inhibited the maintenance of such difference. Officials had little understanding about why it could have been beneficial to keep them on the same wing, and often viewed their Deaf behaviour as being suspicious or inappropriate. This links back to findings presented in Chapter Six and shows that prison is often deafening for Deaf prisoners whose imported identities are overruled by the perceptions of those who hold the power in prison; the staff members.

When considering the impact that this enforced deafness had upon the Deaf interviewees, it became apparent that just like the deaf/HoH interviewees, they became isolated from the penal regime. However, for them, this isolation was intensified because their imported perceptions and characteristics deviated more profoundly from the prescribed prisoner role than those of the deaf/HoH prisoners, which meant that they became institutionally deficient on a greater level. In addition to an inability to hear, their preference for a visual language in an environment where verbal communication is central contributed to almost complete isolation from the penal regime. In line with existing literature (see, for example McCulloch, 2010) the Deaf prisoners were shown to be largely unable to partake in education, training or rehabilitative programmes, to access medical assistance or legal aid with an interpreter, or to gain a meaningful understanding of the penal regime or the expectations of their prisoner role.

Clearly then, the pains of imprisonment as outlined by Sykes (1958) were being experienced differently and much more intensely by the Deaf interviewees, to the point that they were often living in a continual form of solitary confinement through no fault of their own. The fact that there was little room for either deafness or Deafness in prison, meant that, just like the deaf (and some of the HoH) prisoners, they had little choice but to withdraw from prison life. Findings

were presented which showed that Deaf people are certainly punished disproportionately in prison to the extent that it could have a negative impact upon their mental health, with all of the Deaf prisoners appearing anxious, lonely, fearful, frustrated and stressed during their interviews. Such issues were perhaps experienced most severely by those serving IPP sentences, who, as claimed by both the prisoners themselves and a number of the staff members interviewed, appeared to be stuck in prison indefinitely because establishments were not equipped to enable them to fulfil the conditions of their sentence plans.

By examining the experiences of Deaf people in prison through the lens of Deaf Studies literature more broadly, it became apparent that the findings from this research did in fact resonate with the experiences of Deaf adults in the wider hearing world, where the hearing agenda and medical model of disability also pervade (Turner, 1994a). However, differences were also evident given that prior to their entrance to prison, the Deaf interviewees had, for the most part been able to behave as culturally and linguistically Deaf as adults. With this in mind, when considering the component question 'Are there any overlaps between the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people inside and outside of prison?', it was demonstrated that their lives in prison sat much more closely with the experiences of deaf children who are born to hearing parents/attend mainstream schools; like deaf children, Deaf prisoners become isolated from a hearing way of life which is continually enforced upon them but not designed to contain them. As a consequence of being disempowered by their role, the freedom to be Deaf is taken away from Deaf prisoners, who are consequently forced to revert back to the "the subservience of youth" (Sykes, 1958: 76); a time where deafness is often a stigmatising feature, sound is key, and spoken language is a necessity.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The main theoretical ideas used throughout this thesis are Sykes' (1958) pains of imprisonment framework, Goffman's (1961) total institution paradigm, the respective deprivation and importation models, and finally ideas from the

academic discipline of Deaf Studies. Throughout this thesis, findings have been presented which highlight the continued relevance of Sykes' (1958) classic pains of imprisonment framework to the lives of prisoners. Despite it being almost 60 years since the time of Sykes' writings, it was clear that the environments of the prisons entered were still structured by his core pains, with all of the prisoners interviewed experiencing the deprivation of liberty, heterosexual relationships, autonomy, security and goods and services during their time in custody. However, what also became clear was that the way a prisoner experiences these structural deprivations depends upon their imported characteristics and identities, and the extent to which they sit in line with what is expected in prison. This was shown by the fact that the HoH/deaf prisoners interviewed experienced a number of such pains at a greater level due to their lack of access to sound, and the Deaf prisoners even more severely because of their added cultural and language difference. Therefore, it can be said that this research adds to existing knowledge about the pains of imprisonment because it highlights that the structural deprivations associated with incarceration are more keenly felt by prisoners who may not have the facilities or capabilities to adjust as is expected of 'normal' prisoners. With this in mind, it could be said that the structural pains as Sykes outlined them are most applicable to the experiences of the 'normal' prisoner who is able to adjust to the expectations of their prisoner role, rather than the HoH/deaf, and particularly Deaf prisoner, who is not.

Turning now to Goffman's (1961) total institution framework, which like Sykes (1958), has been shown throughout to remain pertinent to the study of prisons. During this thesis findings were presented which demonstrated that, just like total institutions, the prisons included in the research appeared to be places designed for similarity, where prisoners are expected to behave in a certain way and to automatically adjust to the regime. Furthermore, it became clear that, as suggested by Goffman, pre-allocated roles and expectations of a clear cut divide between prisoners and staff members can conceal important facts and disguise inevitable complexities. For example, while the Deaf prisoners interviewed did

often view staff members with hostility, to them, the divide between themselves and hearing prisoners/staff members was deemed as being much more problematic. Although this variation on the 'Us' versus 'Them' dichotomy was mainly considered in the context of prison life, it was evident that to the Deaf prisoners, this divide between themselves and the hearing world also existed in wider society. This was significant as while Goffman (1961) only discussed the existence of a hostile divide within institutions where there is a discord in power relations, it could be argued that this theory is also applicable to Deaf people more generally because of the perceived power imbalance between Deaf and hearing people in wider society. In line with this, the data indicated that because the Deaf world does not exist autonomously from the hearing world, and because the norms of the hearing world are so much more pervasive, in everyday life Deaf people often have little choice but to adhere with a set of cultural values that deviate from own and to attempt to behave in line with the hearing "batch" (Ibid: 17). This suggests therefore that Goffman's framework may be relevant on some levels when seeking to understand the lives of Deaf people more broadly.

However, it must be acknowledged that while Goffman (1961) (like Sykes) assumed that "the resources for adjustment [lay]... inside the institution" (Crewe, 2016: 81), it became apparent that this was not the case for the HoH/deaf and particularly Deaf interviewees, who, without access to sound and/or verbal communication, were largely unable to adjust to "batch living" in prison (Goffman, 1961: 22). With this in mind, it can be argued that whilst Goffman considered the role of imported characteristics to some extent, this study adds to knowledge on why such characteristics matter by providing an insight into the lives of a group of individuals whose pre-prison characteristics and identities often prevent them from adapting to their prisoner role.

The application of the importation and deprivation models to the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people in prison is now considered. Findings have been presented throughout this thesis which map onto those of existing sources (for example,

Crewe, 2009, Harvey, 2012 and Schmidt, 2016), showing that both models are in fact relevant to the lived realities of HoH/d/Deaf people in prison; while the lives of the interviewees were indeed organised around the highly regulated and strictly regimented nature of penal regime, the way that they responded and adapted to this regime was contingent upon their individual qualities and perceptions. However, in contrast to the lives of those who fit the mould of 'normal' in prison whose existences become organised around a structure that is designed to accommodate their imported characteristics, the lived realities of HoH/deaf and particularly Deaf prisoners are commonly derived largely from the fact that prison is not designed to accommodate an imported characteristic such as d/Deafness, and therefore become characterised by separation and isolation. As posited earlier when discussing Goffman (1961), the extent of this isolation has been shown to depend upon the degree to which their imported characteristics deviate from what is expected. For example, culturally and linguistically Deaf prisoners become much more severely isolated than those who are HoH. With this in mind, it can be argued that in the context of d/Deafness, the amount of pain generated by the structural deprivations of imprisonment exists on a scale, which correlates directly with the level to which an individual's imported identity deviates away from that which is expected.

Finally, by applying ideas from the discipline of Deaf Studies to the prison world, this thesis has shown that there are clear overlaps between the lives of HoH/d/Deaf people both inside and outside of prison. The numerous similarities which have been drawn between the lived realities of Deaf prisoners and those of deaf children born to hearing parents/attending mainstream schools are key here, as they suggest that d/Deaf people do not have to be in prison to be imprisoned by their d/Deafness. These findings indicate therefore that the deprivation versus importation debate can also be applied to the lives of d/Deaf people more broadly, as they too import characteristics into structured hearing oriented arenas such as mainstream schools, which enforce a way of life upon them to which they are unable to adhere (see, for example Ladd, 1991). Consequently, not only has

this research informed and deepened understandings of the lived experiences of d/Deaf people in prison, but also provided insights into how the experiences of some individuals in prison can mirror those experienced by d/Deaf people in the wider community.

Throughout this section of the concluding chapter it has been shown that this research has real implications for the fields of Deaf Studies and prison studies; the former because it examines in-depth the lives of a group of culturally and linguistically Deaf people which scholars in the field have yet to consider, and the latter because it adds to literature which explores the experiences of prisoners from the perspective of those who do not fit the 'normal' prisoner mould, and considers the implications that this deviation from the "batch" (Goffman, 1961: 17) has for such individuals.

### **Recommendations for the Prison Service**

This thesis has shown that the Prison Service is failing to meet the needs of d/Deaf people in prison in any consistent way. Findings have been presented throughout which map onto those of McCulloch (2012), demonstrating clearly that the prisons included in the research were not complying with the conditions of the Equality Act 2010, and were consequently acting illegally by failing to meet the duty the legislation imposes. As a consequence of this d/Deaf prisoners often become isolated from the penal regime, with limited understanding of what is expected of them and restricted access to key aspects of prison life such as educational classes, training courses, rehabilitation programmes and medical assistance. These findings suggest that the Prison Service is neither decent, humane nor useful (MOJ, 2016a) for d/Deaf prisoners, whose lives commonly become characterised by anxiety, stress, fear, confusion, frustration and anger.

While promoting policy change was not a core aim of this thesis, the findings presented throughout have obvious implications for Prison Service policy. With this in mind, in order to ensure that establishments are able to comply with the legal stipulations of the Equality Act 2010 and to implement the necessary reasonable

adjustments for d/Deaf prisoners, a set of recommendations for change for the Prison Service have been outlined. When putting together these recommendations, particular attention was given to the data collected in response to Question 16 of the prisoner interview schedule and Question 10 of the staff member interview schedule, where participants were able to discuss what they thought would improve the situation for both HoH/d/Deaf prisoners and the staff members working with them. Information from existing sources that have already recognised the need for changes to be made is also drawn upon (Royal National Institute for the Deaf, 1995, Rickford and Edgar, 2005, Churchill, 2008, Gahir et al, 2011, McCulloch, 2012), as although the recommendations suggested have yet to be implemented, many continue to be valid and relevant.

There are an array of broad recommendations that could be included here, particularly with regards to there being a shift away from the focus on “batch living” (Goffman, 1961: 22) across the prison estate. However, it is acknowledged that the likelihood that this thesis could provoke such change is minimal, and therefore focus is instead given to offering recommendations that are deemed as being both practical and feasible. With this in mind, it is recommended that the Prison Service ought to implement the following changes to their practices and procedures if they are to be compliant with the conditions of the Equality Act 2010:

1. To make it a statutory requirement for establishments to record d/Deaf prisoner numbers, and to introduce an accurate system for doing so.

The implementation of this recommendation is imperative, as this research has shown that without an accurate recording mechanism the Prison Service has little knowledge of numbers or locations of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners, or the extent of their d/Deafness. For these figures to be accurate and useful, distinctions must be made between the different levels of d/Deafness, with HoH, deaf and Deaf being split into separate subsections, and there being simple definitions provided for each term. Establishments must be provided with clear standardised guidelines for how to implement the system,

and staff members must undertake training in order to become competent in its use<sup>144</sup>  
145.

2. To acknowledge the importance of sound in prison, and to make it standard practice for HoH/d/Deaf prisoners to be provided with equipment that converts sound into an accessible format.

This thesis has argued that sound rules in prison, and that HoH/d/Deaf prisoners therefore have difficulty becoming integrated into the prison regime without access to specialist equipment. To overcome this, HoH/d/Deaf prisoners must be given access to items such as visual fire alarms and vibrating alarm clocks. Minicomms must also be provided where necessary to ensure that these prisoners are able to use the telephone, as should hearing aids, and replacement batteries<sup>146</sup>.

3. To ensure that BSL is treated as an official language in prison.

Findings presented in Chapters Six and Eight demonstrated there is little room for Deafness in prison, and consequently, resources are often not converted into a visual format for Deaf prisoners. To combat this, the Prison Service should ensure that where translated alternatives are in place for foreign prisoners, the equivalent information is also available in BSL. While this may be more complicated initially due to the visual nature of sign language, it is recommended that visual versions of documents such as information packs should be available nationwide, and adjustments should be made to written procedures such as making complaints and using the application system, to make them accessible to Deaf prisoners<sup>147</sup>.

4. To provide Deaf prisoners with regular access to qualified BSL interpreters

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<sup>144</sup> This system could also be used for other types of difference – Including mental health difficulties and sight issues, as NOMIS is currently used to record this information too.

<sup>145</sup> This information will also be beneficial for future researchers, as it will make d/Deaf prisoners easier to locate.

<sup>146</sup> It is acknowledged that this recommendation can only be implemented if an individual is willing to acknowledge their hearing loss, and to use such equipment.

<sup>147</sup> This recommendation may also be useful for future researchers as it ought to make the provision of visual consent forms/information sheets, and the video recording of interviews more feasible.

The provision of BSL interpreters for Deaf prisoners is often inconsistent, and in consequence these individuals commonly become largely isolated from prison life. To overcome this, Deaf people in prison must be given access to a fully qualified BSL interpreter during medical appointments, legal appointments, Parole Boards, and adjudications<sup>148</sup>. While face-to-face interpreting is preferential where possible, failing this, a service such as InterpreterNow could be utilised in meeting/appointment type settings, which can provide access to fully qualified interpreters over the phone<sup>149</sup>.

Deaf prisoners must also be given the opportunity to actively partake in educational, vocational, offending behaviour and rehabilitation classes/courses either in their own language or with the presence of an interpreter. The Prison Service must make it possible for Deaf prisoners to fulfil the requirements of their sentence plan, as without doing so Deaf prisoners may be serving longer and more painful sentences than other prisoners – putting them at a distinct disadvantage compared to their peers. An example of good practice here is the sex offender treatment programme that runs at HMP Bowdon which has been tailored to allow Deaf prisoners to participate.

5. To provide nationwide d/Deaf awareness training for prison staff.

Findings presented in this thesis indicate that staff members commonly have little Deaf awareness, and in consequence do not know how to effectively manage their needs. With this in mind, it is recommended that staff members at every prison establishment must receive d/Deaf awareness training, where they will be taught about the differences in different levels of d/Deafness, the importance of providing specialist equipment, and the culturally distinct norms and behaviours of many Deaf people.

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<sup>148</sup> In order to ensure that an interpreter is sufficiently qualified, the Prison Service ought to use only those who are registered with the NRCPD. It is important to acknowledge that only certain interpreters are qualified to do legal work, and therefore in the context of legal appointments the NRCPD can be consulted to find an interpreter with the appropriate skills.

<sup>149</sup> InterpreterNow was formed by the Deaf Health Charity SignHealth in 2012, and uses technology to provide an interpreting service to Deaf people in instances where they cannot get access to a face-to-face interpreter. In order to use the service, a computer, smartphone or tablet is needed, along with a working webcam and an internet connection. Service providers must register with the service, agree to pay for the calls and download the InterpreterNow app. In instances where a BSL interpreter is necessary, the service provider would open the app and request access to an interpreter, who then appears on the screen of the device being used and can interpret for the Deaf person in the room. This service is currently used by service providers such as the NHS and the Leicestershire Police force (InterpreterNow, 2016).

Those chosen to undertake this training can then be used as information points for other staff members if/when a d/Deaf person arrives at their establishment<sup>150</sup>.

6. To provide a standardised set of guidelines for prison establishments and other responsible agencies.

It has become clear throughout this thesis that the Equality Act 2010 is not sufficiently protecting the rights of d/Deaf (and sometimes HoH) people in prison. Without a clear definition of 'reasonable adjustments' staff members often have little idea of how to adhere to the legislation when faced with a deaf, and particularly Deaf prisoner. To reduce such ambiguity, the Prison Service ought to provide a standardised set of guidelines which detail the expected adjustments for HoH/d/Deaf people in prison, as well as information about how to go about making such adjustments<sup>151</sup>. Alongside this it is recommended that a replacement of the PSI titled 'Ensuring Equality' (2011) is created, which provides further clarity for establishments about the adjustments that they are required to make for prisoners who are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

7. To consider the needs of Deaf prisoners serving IPPs.

It is recommended that the Prison Service takes account of the findings from this research which suggest that Deaf prisoners serving IPPs are becoming increasingly over-tariff as a consequence of the fact that establishments do not have the resources to enable them to fulfil the conditions of their sentence plan. If it transpires that these claims are in fact valid, then the Prison Service must see that these prisoners are given the opportunity to complete the necessary courses in a timely fashion.

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<sup>150</sup> It is important to acknowledge that since the fieldwork period ended one of the prisons included in the study has in fact begun to provide d/Deaf awareness training for staff members in conjunction with the registered charity Royal Association for Deaf people. This is therefore an example of good practice which ought to be rolled out across the prison system more broadly. I was made aware of this development by contacts at the charity who I had previously met with to discuss their training, and to share information about the whereabouts of Deaf prisoners.

<sup>151</sup> If the procedures at a particular establishment differ from these guidelines, staff members there should be made aware of such deviations.

## **Limitations of this Study, and Ideas for Future Research**

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research, both in terms of its methodology and also its scope. A primary methodological limitation was the relatively small sample of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners interviewed, as this impedes the generalisability of the findings. Issues relating to access were central to this, particularly with regards to the inadequacy of NOMIS in providing accurate information about HoH/d/Deaf prisoner numbers. Without this it was difficult to locate the sample, or to establish how d/Deaf an individual was before the beginning of an interview, hence the importance of the first recommendation outlined earlier in this concluding chapter. If this recommendation were not to be implemented across the Prison Service, then an alternative for future researchers would be to carry out a research project with a larger scope and a longer time allowance for gaining access, as during this research, establishments continued to express interest in being involved long after the fieldwork period had ended. A second limitation associated with access related to the extent that access to the prison environment was restricted at a number of the prisons entered. Such restrictions made it difficult to gain an understanding about the nature of the prison environment there, and inhibited the ability to make observations. Further to this, the fact that the majority of the prisoner interviews were supervised by a staff member potentially undermined the quality of the data collected, as it may have caused interviewees to censor their disclosure.

Further methodological limitations arose when recording and transcribing the interviews with the profoundly Deaf prisoners, given that security clearance was only provided for a Dictaphone. In future, the use of a visual recording device would be preferential as it would ensure complete authenticity rather than merely recording the interpreter's interpretation of the raw data. This would also be beneficial for transcription, as it would mean that a copy of the raw data would be available for the researcher to refer back to after the fieldwork period is over, thus minimising the margin for error. It would also eliminate issues with regards to Deaf participants speaking over the interpreter's translation of their BSL, which, in this research made

certain interpretations indecipherable. Alternatively, if the option to visually record an interview with a Deaf person was not available, two Dictaphones could be used instead; one to record the interview, and another to record the researcher's/interpreter's<sup>152</sup> dialogue during the interview. A final suggestion with regards to transcription would be to utilise multiple BSL interpreters when carrying out group interviews with Deaf prisoners, as during the group interview at HMP Bowdon the interpreter had difficulty comprehensively interpreting the complex and flurried conversations taking place without the assistance of a second interpreter.

In addition to overcoming these limitations, a variety of suggestions can be made for future research. Firstly, this research could be repeated in other prisons throughout England and Wales, in order to examine similarities and differences between the lived realities of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners at different establishments. As this research was carried out in Category B and Category C prisons, future research could also explore the experiences of HoH/d/Deaf people incarcerated in Category A and Category D prisons respectively. Secondly, the dimensions of the research could be extended to include those such as HoH/d/Deaf young offenders and Hoh/d/Deaf female prisoners. By doing this an understanding could be gained about how different types of difference intertwine, and whether these HoH/d/Deaf individuals experience prison even more differently because their imported characteristics deviate from what is expected in multiple ways. In doing this, greater connections could be made between the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners and those of other minority group prisoners, something which this research had insufficient space to do in any meaningful way. Thirdly, further research could explore the lived realities of ex-prisoners who are HoH/d/Deaf. The prospect of life after prison was something which was of particular concern to a number of the Deaf interviewees at HMP Bowdon, who discussed feeling anxious about how the Deaf community would respond to them when they left prison, and reported being fearful that they may be rejected by other Deaf people. Future researchers could therefore consider the effects that their time in prison has upon Deaf

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<sup>152</sup> If the researcher was able to communicate fluently in BSL, then an interpreter would not necessarily be required.

ex-prisoners after release, particularly with regards to their ability to behave as Deaf.

## **Final Thoughts**

This thesis has provided a more in-depth and comprehensive understanding about the lived realities of HoH/d/Deaf prisoners in England and Wales than had previously been available. By intertwining Deaf Studies literature with classic and contemporary prison research, the lives of d/Deaf prisoners have been considered on both an audiological and a cultural basis, and in doing this, this thesis has given a new and unique slant on theoretical issues in prisons literature and Deaf Studies literature respectively. It has shown that in an environment like prison which is designed for similarity, those who are 'different' often become institutionally deficient. While this could apply to many different subsections of prison populations, it has been demonstrated that the difference of d/Deafness is unique because sound rules in prison, with sound being used to regulate the “batch” (Goffman, 1961: 17) of prisoners and to guide them through prison life. However, d/Deafness is not merely a lack of hearing, and on the contrary there are different levels and layers of d/Deafness. Consequently, how a d/Deaf person experiences prison depends strongly on the way in which they identify with their d/Deafness and the way their d/Deafness is viewed by the prison.

It has been shown throughout that there is little room for either deafness or Deafness in prison, with HoH/deaf and particularly Deaf prisoners often experiencing the pains of imprisonment more severely than their hearing peers as a result the Prison Service's inability to accommodate such difference, or meet their unique needs. The fact that prisoners who are Deaf import cultural and linguistic Deaf identities into prison as well as an inability to hear, means that they are more profoundly different than deaf/HoH prisoners, and often become institutionally deficient to a greater degree. This thesis has given a number of these prisoners an opportunity to provide an insight into their lives, and in doing this has highlighted the presence of a group of prisoners in establishments throughout England and Wales who are often forced to exist in almost complete isolation, with little option for rehabilitation or inclusion in prison life. By drawing attention to the significant issues currently being faced by d/Deaf people in

prison, this research has shown that the Prison Service is currently failing to meet the needs of these prisoners, or to adhere to the Equality Act 2010 in any consistent way.

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## **Legislation**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Criminal Justice Act 2003

The Equality Act 2010

The Care Act 2014

# **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A: Interview Schedules**

- Interview schedule for prisoners
- Interview schedule for staff members

## Interview Schedule for Prisoners

1. When did you become HoH/d/Deaf?

- What was your childhood like? Family? school?

- Is your d/Deafness a big part of who you are? - Do you know a lot of d/Deaf people?  
Or mainly mix with hearing people?

- Do you see your d/Deafness as a positive thing?

2. How long have you been in prison?

3. Have you been at this prison for your whole sentence?

If not, why did you move?

Is it different at different places?

4. How did you feel about coming to prison?

- Did you tell the prison that you were HoH/d/Deaf?

- How did you feel about telling them?

- How did they react?

5. How do you communicate with people here?

- Have you met any other Deaf people, or BSL users?

6. What are your relationships with other prisoners like?

- Are there any other HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?

- Are you able to fit in with other prisoners? Do you change yourself to fit in?

- Have you been bullied at all?

7. Do you get on with staff?

- Do they treat you differently to other prisoners?

- Are staff members aware of any issues you are experiencing because of your d/Deafness?

- If so, are they trying to help?

8. What is it like being locked in an environment with mainly hearing people?

Is it a lot different from being d/Deaf on the outside? How do you cope with the isolation?

- Is it different here than other prisons?

9. Are you able to communicate with family and friends outside of prison?

- Has prison impacted upon your relationships with people outside of prison?

- Telephone, letters, visits?

10. What do you do on your average day in prison - could you talk me through it?

- Education or training: What are they like? [BSL? Interpreter?]

- Television, radio, read?

- Offender management or rehabilitation programmes?

- Is there anything that you would like to take part in that you haven't been able to?

11. Have you ever needed to get medical access or legal aid?

- How did you communicate? BSL? Interpreter?

12. Do you feel safe in prison?

13. Do you understand all the prison rules?

- How did you get this information? Information pack?

- How do you know when meal times and lights out and classes are taking place?

- Have you ever broken prison rules without realising?

14. Are you different now than you were before prison? i.e. Self confidence, general mood, esteem, anxious, depressed, paranoid etc]

- Are you still happy that you are d/Deaf? Or would you rather be hearing in prison?

- What do you miss most about the outside world?

15. I don't know much about complaints systems, what do you do about that here?

- Have you used the complaints system?

16. Do you think prison is harder for HoH/d/Deaf prisoners?

- Improvements?

17. If you were given the option to transfer to another prison where there were other d/Deaf prisoners, and more equipment for you to use, do you think you would accept?

18. How do you feel about being interviewed? Reason you agreed to participate?

## Interview Schedule for Staff Members

1. What do you do on a day to day basis?

- Important features of your role?

2. What are the best parts of your job?

- Problems?

3. What it is like working in a prison?

4. Do you get on with the prisoners?

- Are some relationships better or worse than others?

- In what ways?

5. Do you work directly with d/Deaf prisoners?

- What is this like?

- How do you communicate with them?

6. What do you think it is like being 'different' in the prison environment?

7. Do you find that d/Deaf prisoners are the same as other prisoners?

Do you find Deaf prisoners similar to foreign prisoners?

8. How do other prisoners react to deaf prisoners?

- Nature of relationships?

- What about staff members?

9. What do you think it's like for d/Deaf prisoners here?

- What do they do on a daily basis?

10. Do you think you [as both an individual and prison] are equipped to meet the needs of a d/Deaf prisoner?

- What do you think could be done to make it easier for prison staff to work alongside d/Deaf prisoners?

- What do you think of putting all Deaf prisoners together?

11. How much do you know about the Equality Act?

- How hard is it to put the requirements of the act in to practice?

12. How do you feel about being interviewed?

Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

How do you feel about being interviewed?

## Appendix B: Information About the Prisons Included in the Study

Establishment name (Pseudonym)	Prison Type	Operational Capacity	Date(s) of entry
HMP Wilmslow	Category B local prison	1877	7/05/15
HMP Sale	Category B training prison	798	01/02/15
HMP Cheadle	Category B local prison	1300	23/03/15
HMP Denton	Category C training prison	1095	04/12/14 04/02/15
HMP Altrincham	Category B training prison	238	30/04/15
HMP Bowden	Category C prison for sex offenders	841	19/02/15 16/03/15
HMP Hale	Category B prison, mainly local	1271	19/03/15

## **Appendix C: Letters to Prisons**

- Letter to prisons listed on my NOMS application as holding a d/Deaf prisoner in the 12 months prior to the application date
- Letter to remaining prisons in England and Wales

Letter to Prisons Listed on my NOMS Application as Holding a d/Deaf

Prisoner in the 12 Months Prior to the Application Date

Laura Margaret Kelly  
[Address line one]  
[Address line two]  
[Postcode]

[Name of governor]

[Prison Address]

[Date sent]

**Dear Sir/Madam**

I am writing to inform you about my PhD which is examining the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners, and looking at how they are perceived by other prisoners and prison staff. It has been agreed that after gaining an in-depth understanding of the current situation for deaf prisoners in England and Wales, I will aim to provide a framework of recommendations for the Prison Service which will help to ensure that prisons are able to manage deaf prisoners in a consistent and appropriate manner. My primary method of data collection will be semi-structured interviews with d/Deaf /hard of hearing prisoners (with the support of a British Sign Language interpreter if the prisoner is profoundly Deaf) and other prisoners and staff members.

In terms of the current position of the research, I have been granted full approval by NOMS to carry out interviews with d/Deaf and hard of hearing prisoners, and prison staff in a variety of institutions, and for your reference I have attached the letter of approval to this document. I am now looking to gain some information as to the whereabouts of any d/Deaf/hard of hearing prisoners before starting to organize interviews with the relevant institutions, and with regards to this, I have been advised that you currently have a d/Deaf prisoner at your establishment, and I would be extremely grateful if you could provide information as to:

- a.) Whether this is correct? And if it is, how many d/Deaf prisoners your prison is currently holding?
- b.) How many hard of hearing prisoners there are at your prison?
- c.) Whether your establishment has carried out any Deaf awareness training with staff members?

- d.) Whether you would be open to interviews being carried out with d/Deaf/hard of hearing prisoners (and potentially surrounding staff members and prisoners) at your establishment?

Any information that you can provide would be of great value to my research, and your response would be much appreciated.

Thank you in advance

Kind Regards,

Laura Margaret Kelly

*University of Central Lancashire*

## Letter to Remaining Prisons in England and Wales

Laura Margaret Kelly  
[Address line one]  
[Address line two]  
[Postcode]

[Name of governor]

[Prison Address]

[Date sent]

**Dear Sir/Madam**

I am writing to inform you about my PhD which is examining the experiences of d/Deaf prisoners, and looking at how they are perceived by surrounding prisoners and prison staff. It has been agreed that after gaining an in-depth understanding of the current situation for d/Deaf prisoners in England and Wales, I will aim to provide a framework of recommendations for the Prison Service which will help to ensure that prisons are able to manage d/Deaf prisoners in a consistent and appropriate manner. My primary method of data collection will be semi-structured interviews with d/Deaf /hard of hearing prisoners (in the presence of a British Sign Language interpreter if the prisoner is profoundly Deaf) and surrounding staff members.

In terms of the current position of the research, I have been granted full approval by NOMS to interview all the above parties at multiple institutions, and for your reference I have attached the letter of approval to this document. I am now looking to gain some information as to the whereabouts of any hard of hearing/d/Deaf prisoners, before I can start to organize interviews with the relevant institutions. The fact that there is currently no Home Office policy in place to record the numbers/whereabouts of these prisoners means that we do not have a clear idea of how many there currently are within the Prison system. Therefore I would be extremely grateful if you could provide information as to:

- a. Whether there are any d/Deaf prisoners at your prison, and if so how many?
- b. Whether there are any hard of hearing prisoners at your prison, and if so how many?
- c. Whether your establishment has carried out any Deaf awareness training with staff members?

These details would be of great value to my research, and your response would be much appreciated.

Thank you in advance,

Kind Regards

Laura Margaret Kelly

*University of Central Lancashire*

## **Appendix D: Information Sheets and Consent Forms**

- Information sheet for prisoners
- Information sheet for staff members
- Consent form for prisoners
- Consent form for staff members

## Information Sheet for Prisoners



Title of research project: Silent Punishment: The experiences of d/Deaf prisoners

You are being invited to take part in the above research project, but before you decide whether you would like to do so, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. If there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, contact an appropriate member of staff and they will speak to the researcher about this. Feel free to discuss it with other people if you wish.

The research has been approved by the National Offender Management Service research committee, and will be carried out by Laura Kelly, an independent PhD student at the University of Central Lancashire.

The purpose of the research is to gain an in-depth understanding of the current situation for HoH/d/Deaf prisoners in England and Wales, and to look at how well equipped prisons are to meet their needs. Laura is aiming to provide a framework of recommendations for the Prison Service which could contribute to feasible change being made to ensure that the needs of d/Deaf prisoners are being met.

Your opinions are very valuable to the research, and your participation could actually help to contribute to a tangible difference being made throughout the Prison Service. It is only by gaining an insight in to your experiences that Laura will be able to make appropriate recommendations for change. If you agree to take part in the study, you will need to commit to an interview which will last up to two hours.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be

given this information sheet to keep and will also be asked to sign a consent form. Information sheets and consent forms will be available at least two weeks before the arranged date of the interview, and consent forms must be returned on the day of the interview

You can still withdraw at any time without needing to give a reason. You will not be named in any reports or publications involving this research, and any opinions you give will be made **anonymous**. Your opinions, views and other information you supply may be used **anonymously** in reports and presentations about the research. Although you need to be made aware that any information given in the interview that suggests risk of harm to yourself or others, that is against prison rules or is illegal, may need to be reported by the researcher to the necessary authority. If you become distressed during the interview we can stop at any time, and Laura will provide information about potential avenues of support available at your prison.

If your primary method of communication is British Sign Language the interview will be carried out with the support of a qualified interpreter. Their job will be to bridge to communication barriers between you and Laura, and to ensure that each understands the other – They will not be expressing their own opinions during the interview.

It is also important that you are aware that there is a complaints procedure in place and that if you have any complaints about the study you can notify the appropriate staff member at the prison who will then contact a member of the research team with any complaints. If you do wish to make a complaint you should do so within two weeks of taking part in the interview.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

## Information Sheet for Staff Members



Title of research project: Silent Punishment: The experiences of d/Deaf prisoners

You are being invited to take part in the above research project, but before you decide whether you would like to do so, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. If there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information, contact an appropriate member of staff and they will speak to the researcher about this. Feel free to discuss it with other people if you wish.

The research has been approved by the National Offender Management Service research committee, and will be carried out by Laura Kelly, an independent PhD student at the University of Central Lancashire.

You have been chosen to take part in this project because of your role in the prison and the contact that you have had with a HoH/d/Deaf prisoner during their time in custody. Your opinions are very valuable to the research, and your participation could actually help to contribute to a tangible difference being made throughout the Prison Service. If you agree to take part in the study, you will need to commit to an interview which will last up to two hours.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be given this information sheet to keep and will also be asked to sign a consent form. Information sheets and consent forms will be available at least two weeks before the arranged date of the interview, and consent forms must be returned on the day of the interview.

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Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Consent Form for Prisoners



Consent to take part in the research project ‘Silent Punishment: The experiences of d/Deaf prisoners’

	Add your initials next to the statements you agree with
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project. I have been able to ask any questions I wanted to about the project, and am happy with all the given information	
I understand that taking part in the project is my own choice and that I can pull out at any time without giving a reason. I am also aware that if I don't want to answer any of the questions, I don't have to.	
I give permission for Laura to have access to my responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified in the project. I understand that if I disclose any information about behaviour which is illegal or against the prison rules, or suggests serious or immediate risk of harm to myself or others, the researcher will be required to report this to the necessary authority.	
I agree for the data collected during my interview to be used in conference presentations, the doctorate thesis and a report for the Howard League for Penal Reform and the charity Action on Hearing Loss, as well as potential future research.	
I agree for my responses to be recorded by Laura on behalf of the research team, and understand that members of the research team will be the only persons with access to the recording. I am also aware that this interview is only being recorded for purposes of accuracy, and that it will be erased as soon a written copy has been made.	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	

Date	
Name of researcher	
Signature	
Date*	

\*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.

Consent Form for Staff Members



Consent to take part in the research project 'Silent Punishment: The experiences of d/Deaf prisoners'

	Add your initials next to the statements you agree with
<p>I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project. I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I wanted to about the project, and am happy with all the given information</p>	
<p>I understand that taking part in the project is my own choice and that I can pull out at any time without giving a reason. I am also aware that I am not required to answer any questions if I do not wish to.</p>	
<p>I give permission for Laura to have access to my responses, and I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified in the project I understand that if I disclose any information about behaviour which is illegal or against the prison rules, or suggests serious or immediate risk of harm to myself or others, the researcher may be required to report this to the necessary authority.</p>	
<p>I agree for the data collected during my interview to be used in conference presentations, the doctorate thesis and a report for the Howard League for Penal Reform and the charity Action on Hearing Loss, as well as potential future research.</p>	
<p>I agree for my responses to be recorded by Laura on behalf of the research team, and understand that members of the research team will be the only persons with access to the recording. I am also aware that this interview is only being recorded for purposes of accuracy, and that it will be erased as soon a written copy has been made.</p>	

Name of participant	
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Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of researcher	
Signature	
Date*	

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