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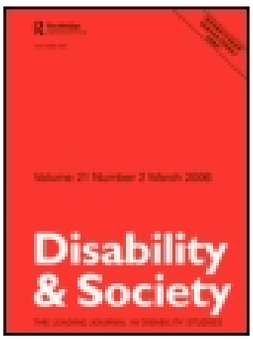

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Deaf migration through an intersectionality lens

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on an empirical research study of deaf migration, using an intersectional lens. The study of migration and the lens of intersectionality are increasingly being deployed in academic circles but both are very recent when it comes to the study of deaf people. Our key reason for using the lens of intersectionality is twofold. Firstly, we believe that it enables us to highlight the experiences of people who tend to be neglected in the scholarly literature – in this article, our focus will a case study of two Black deaf African migrants. Secondly, we want to encourage the reader not merely to 'add' migration as an identity/experience of the lives of a community of deaf peoples but to examine and explore the interlocking relations of power that they experience. We believe intersectionality is an ideal lens through which to do so.

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Deaf; intersectionality; migration; racism; deaf studies; sign language

Points of interest

- In the literature on the study of disabled people when many identities are being examined it is not always clear if deaf migrants are included; in this article we do so.
- We studied interviews that had been held covering the life experience of two deaf migrants, which were undertaken within a larger research project.
- We found it useful to look at deaf migrants' different experiences within institutions such as education and the Home Office, in relation to their identities such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class or religion
- We found that while deaf migrants experience discrimination and racism from deaf and hearing people alike, they also find means of solidarity and support from different hearing and deaf people and groups.
- It is suggested that social policymakers and deaf communities can miss or neglect deaf migrants' wide range of life experiences – these need to be identified and included when forming policy.

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Introduction

This article is based on an empirical research study of deaf migration, using an intersectional lens to analyse its findings. Both the study of migration and the lens of intersectionality are increasingly being deployed in academic circles, but both are very recent when it comes to the study of deaf people. There is also a growing tendency within the wider Disability Studies literature to address intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class and disability. The location of the study is London, UK, and our key reason for using the lens of intersectionality is twofold. Firstly, we believe that it enables us to highlight the experiences of people who tend to be neglected in the scholarly literature – e.g. not only are the participants deaf but they are migrants of an ethnic and racial background that is a central part of their life experience. In this article, our focus will be on two Black deaf African migrants. Secondly, we want to encourage the reader not merely to 'add' migration as an identity/experience of the lives of a community of deaf and disabled peoples, but to examine and explore the *interlocking* relations of power that they experience. We believe intersectionality is an ideal lens in which to do so and in using this lens we are contributing and continuing an existing discussion, debate and critique, drawing upon literature that has already been started by deaf scholars from Black, Queer, Disabled and Feminist studies.

In the context of this article, 'deaf' refers to those who became deaf at birth or in childhood and who use one or more sign languages as their first or preferred language and come together as community groups. Of course, we do not deem any deaf 'group' to be homogenous, but our focus is on signing deaf people, of whom both authors are too. As Deaf Studies scholars with backgrounds in Social Sciences, International Development Studies, Geography, Cultural Studies and Anthropology, we believe it is of vital importance to state our positionality in relation to our research and we will do so after a critical review of the literature. Drawing on a range of disciplines, we demonstrate the usefulness of taking a multi-disciplinary approach and do so by, firstly, providing a brief overview of the literature on migration and deaf people, and where we also touch on relevant work in the wider field of Disability studies too and, secondly, the literature on intersectionality in Deaf studies. We also briefly outline our methodological approach, including our positionality. Crucially, in this article, we take an intercategorical intersectional approach (McCall 2005; Minear 2011) and outline why we will be doing so, before reflecting on the two cases. Finally, unless otherwise stated, all names of those in this article are real given names.

Migration studies – the research focus

In the growing scholarly literature on mainstream migration studies, including refugees and asylum seekers, very little has been written on the experience of deaf migrants. Disabled migrants tend to be overlooked in the literature

around disability and ethnicity (Burns 2017; Yeo 2017, 2019) and it is not always clear whether the experiences of deaf migrants are included within the wider Disability studies literature. It is only very recently that scholars have begun to explore the intersection of Disability studies and migration studies (Duda-Mikulin, Scullion, and Currie 2020) which tells its own story. As if to underline the way in which intersectionality is on an emerging journey in Disability Studies, Berghs and Dyson (2020) recent study of Black disabled workers asks the question as to where their visibility is within the literature.

As with the few studies that have been written, however, deaf scholars, along with Disability studies scholars tend to focus on the plight and experiences of refugees and asylum seekers, particularly stressing the vulnerable position they are in when migrating to a country such as the UK (e.g. R. Yeo 2020; Harris 2010; Macdonald and Morgan 2020; Quinn 2014), where they are vulnerable to extreme poverty caused by austerity, deprivation and isolation, mental health distress, along with racism and social exclusion (e.g. Berghs and Dyson 2020). The very few exceptions when deaf migrants are part of a research project include, for example, those by Parr, Bashir, and Robinson (2010), and Willoughby (2015), who write of the situation of migrants in the London, UK and Melbourne, Australia respectively, and also reflect such concerns, tending to stress the lack of support and access to service and language use – and explore ways these can be addressed in public policy. Some scholars have researched or included the experiences of migrant care givers, for example, African mothers of autistic children (Munroe, Hammond, and Cole 2016) or family members of migrant deaf people (Swartz and Marchetti-Mercer 2019), which is timely as such knowledge has implications for social policy. For example, during our research study we had been contacted by migrant organisations or sign language interpreters who were seeking contacts and services specifically for migrant deaf people, some of whose sign language they were most fluent in was not British Sign Language (BSL).

While there have been studies on disability and migration, other than on rare occasions (e.g. Swartz and Marchetti-Mercer 2019) it is difficult to see whether 'disabled' in the context of migration includes deaf migrant signers. We assume so, but there is little evidence of this being the case unless addressed explicitly or referenced, but by including deaf migrants, policy-makers would be informed of their plight; for example, in respect of national sign language legislation (De Meulder, Murray, and McKee 2019), how would this legislation cater for migrants who do not use the native sign language, BSL in the case of the UK?

That does not mean these studies have no relevance to our approach but the reference points for scholars of Deaf studies are difficult to pin down in the wider Disability studies and migration studies literature without further research data. Exceptions include Sivunen (2019), for example, who, in

examining the situation of deaf asylum seekers in Finland and also concluding that the Finnish asylum system can do better to cater for deaf individuals, had adopted an ethnographic approach. Her study entailed recording detailed observations on the range of challenges they faced, for example, language usage, recognizing the positive role that volunteers played in supporting their introduction to Finnish society, and the sign language instruction they received, all of which had a positive impact on their wellbeing.

Our challenge, however, is not only that there is a general dearth of literature, but the gap in studies which narrate the experiences of deaf or disabled people who have moved and settled in new social networks; the study by Sivunen (2019) or Swartz and Marchetti-Mercer (2019) are exceptions and also very recent. In terms of 'new social networks', there is also the question of what constitutes 'deaf community' in the Disability Studies literature. The term 'deaf community' is a founding concept in Deaf Studies, and one which is commonly referred not only in scholarly literature, but in social policy and refers to a community of signing deaf people (Padden and Humphries 1988). As we found in our research amongst signing deaf migrants, there is a rich diversity in deaf communities.

We recognize that while we met deaf refugees and asylum seekers whose situation appeared desperate, and therefore in need of urgent investigation by social policymakers (e.g. they were due to be deported, had been threatened with violence by hearing migrants, were living in areas isolated from other deaf refugees), the majority of those who participated in our research had migrated to the UK and resided in London for several years, and some had been able to move to the UK because they had connections, e.g. families or spouses, in the city. In this respect the two participants whose stories we tell in this article have much in common with the case of Emma in Swartz and Marchetti-Mercer (2019) who had found a degree of settlement within existing London deaf communities, as similarly, is that of Mehrun in Dossa (2005), a Canadian Muslim activist.

For the purposes of this article we take the term migration to cover a broad and wide range of communities and languages. Our base of research, the city of London, UK, is a superdiverse city (Vertovec 2007) with at least 34% of its citizens born abroad (Gidley and Jayaweera 2010), and where over 300 different languages are spoken (von Ahn et al. 2010). To narrow the focus of our study, therefore, we concentrated on the experiences of deaf migrants who we considered were the most marginalised in the hostile climate that came into force during the 2010s (Liberty 2019); people who were most exposed to experiencing racism and xenophobia in UK society and are largely invisible in Deaf Studies research.

The significance of the context of the Liberty (2019) study just mentioned cannot be downplayed. This hostile climate was in place during the Brexit

process which also led to the Windrush scandal (exposed in 2018), which in turn highlighted how Black people from Caribbean countries who had been resident in the UK since the 1950-60's were being illegally deported on the pretext of being undocumented. In fact, the Home Office had, in 2010, destroyed the landing cards of the Windrush immigrants. Reporting from the Home Office report on Hate Crime in England and Wales in 2018/2019 (Home Office 2019), Quinn (2019) highlighted that these events brought into sharp focus a hostile environment experienced by those from all minority groups, of whom those from Black and Ethnic minorities faced by far the highest levels (Armstrong 2019). However, there is a far more fundamental reason why we chose to write, assuming a connection between immigration and racism, and that was because we see these as interlinked:

> …there has been a growing recognition that racialised categories and migration categories are intertwined, and signs of a convergence between these previously disparate streams of research, in spite of attempts by some 'liberal' public discourses to argue that strict limits on migration lessens racisms within borders. (Dolmage 2018, 6)

The rise of racism and hate crime is not new to Black people and migrants of all nationalities, including Europeans (Gilroy 1987; Panayi 2014). The historical precedents in the UK go back to the slave trade from 1600 to 1800s. However, there were no immigration acts as such in the UK until the introduction of the 'Alien' laws of the 1905, and a succession of immigration laws ever since has kept the ideology of immigration and racism high on the political agenda (Fryer 1984).

We took care to avoid categorising 'deaf migrants' as an unproblematic common whole: hence for example, we recognize there is a long history of migration of white people from non-European countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and others. Our intention was to bring to the fore the experiences of migrant deaf people who tend to be overlooked, and in the process, challenge the complexities of taking an approach which assumes deaf people experience a 'principal' oppression based on being deaf, with all other experiences such as racism, sexism, homophobia or transphobia as additional.

Our chief focus is on the ways in which power *interlocks*: many deaf migrants face not only lack of access to education and services in their host nation, but the power of State, and the racism, violence and discrimination that is inherent in border controlled immigration, be it within Europe or not (Dolmage 2018; C. Yeo 2020). Our key concern was to ensure that the most marginalised were not 'whitewashed', or that their experiences were not minimalised by a sweeping scope of the data, which brings us to intersectionality.

Intersectionality

The intersectionality term has been the subject of much academic discussion since being coined by Crenshaw (1989), although the spirit of its meaning has been around far longer. While homage is paid to Crenshaw, she was part of a wider Black Feminist movement, who themselves drew on past historical sources (e.g. Collins and Bilge 2016). When intersectionality was originally coined, the term was referring to the intersections of race, gender and class, while other key intersections were addressed later, and key to the debates were discussions as to how to liberate people from oppression. In other words, the debate was not purely academic, but organically connected to radical movements engaged in the social transformation of society (e.g. The Combahee River Collective 1977; Smith 1978; Lorde 1984). Much of intersectionality thought, however, tends to address the term as an academic endeavour (Collins and Bilge 2016).

Crenshaw's work was unique in that her study arose from her academic research within the discipline of law when she was addressing and representing Black working-class women in the workplace and it was through these empirical studies that she coined the term intersectionality as a way of describing these interlocking relations of power. Although identity was a strong feature of this politics – there was also an emphasis on how it called out the nature of *power* (see later for our interpretation of power). Since the work of Crenshaw, and also Collins (1990) who was writing on the nature of interlocking power at the same time, the notion itself has 'travelled' to such an extent that there are now different ways and views of how intersectionality is used (Salem 2018; Hancock 2016).

There is, in contrast with studies on deaf (and disabled) migration, a growing literature within Deaf (and Disability) Studies which engages with intersectionality, to highlight the complex ways that deaf/disabled people experience power and identity. Literature within Disability Studies has addressed intersectionality within a variety of contexts: for recent studies, see, for example, Berghs and Dyson 2020 on Black disabled people and employment; Banks (2018) on intersections of disability, race, gender and class; Cain and Valesco (2020) on intersections of autism, gender and sexuality; or Kim, Skinner, and Parish (2020) on disabled women and employment. However, our focus is on the most recent literature that has emerged in Deaf studies. Significant work has been undertaken by Ruiz-Williams et al. (2015), Moges (2017, 2020), García-Fernández (2014, 2020), Dunn and Anderson (2020), Miller and Clark (2020) and Stapleton (2014). Nevertheless, intersectionality remains quite recent in the Deaf studies literature and it appears that a key centring of this work is on identity formation, as opposed to, for example, structural and social processes. A crucial underlying aspect of these studies and works is to appeal to scholars and deaf communities

to listen to the stories and narratives of people from marginalised communities as theirs are perspectives that are often absent from Deaf studies curricula (Simms 2018). Deaf Studies has been criticised for marginalising disabled or LGBTQ voices from the all-encompassing term 'deaf' (Ruiz-Williams et al. 2015; Moges 2017), and 'the focus, generally, has been on the White Deaf community' (Dunn and Anderson 2020, 283). These authors challenge the privileging of some 'voices' and scholarly studies, resistances and oppressions over others. Some of these studies reflect that deaf people from minorities show (also) a strong sense of solidarity with hearing people from the same minority group because they have a shared experience of racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination and considers that the different intersections of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality are *interlocking*.

Therefore, while many studies have reflected on how being deaf, and being part of a collectivist culture, constitutes an important narrative in many deaf people's lives, in recent years, the aforementioned scholars have challenged narratives which assume deaf people have a universalistic centrist unitary sense of being around which other identities coalesce, or that they hold a multiplicity of identities, with some being more prominent at certain times than others. There are several reasons why this narrative has been challenged, one being that it tends to privilege some identities over others – namely those from white, male, heterosexual, cis-gendered, backgrounds – and tends to marginalise the rich contribution and historic oppression of deaf people from oppressed groups such as from Black, Ethnic Minorities, LGBTQI+, Latinx and women groups. Furthermore, a deaf-centrist, deaf-same ethos can downplay the role of mainstream studies such as Critical Race Feminism, Queer studies, amongst others. These authors who make these critiques do so by drawing on scholarship from a range of theoretical frameworks, for example Critical Race Theory, Critical Deaf Theory, Crip Theory, Black Feminism, Queer studies, Disability studies or Latinx Critical studies (Moges 2017; García-Fernández 2020; Miller and Clark 2020). The authors of these studies reflect a general trend of challenging Deaf studies universal narratives and racism within deaf communities and a rich stream of writing has also emerged to address the intersection of Black Deaf studies and Queer Deaf studies. The former includes Clark (2007) who explores how African American deaf people navigate their cultural identities, Chapple (2019) who seeks a move towards a Black Deaf feminism, and Dunn and Anderson (2020) who use an historical framework to highlight Black Deaf people's experiences. The later includes Miller and Clark (2020) who use critical inquiry in their critique of the Deaf queer identity development model, Moges (2017, 2020) and García-Fernández (2020) promote a Deaf Queer theory. Studies focusing on the intersectional experiences of deaf women (Bruggemann and Burch 2006), deaf people from Asian ethnic minority groups (Ahmad, Atkin, and Jones 2002; Wang et al. 2016), LatinX

deaf people (e.g. García-Fernández 2020; Yingst in Miller and Clark 2020), and transgendered deaf people (Gale 2017) remain in their infancy. All these works, however, challenge, implicitly or explicitly, privileged narratives in Deaf studies that fail to address the prevalence of white supremacy, heteronormativity, cis-gendered, able-bodied normativity, and a range of other privileges (e.g. Stapleton 2014).

Scholarly literature on the experiences of deaf *migrants* are not completely absent; e.g. Foster and Kinuthia (2003) and Ruiz-Williams et al. (2015), included authors who had migrated to the USA to study at Gallaudet; Wang et al. (2016) relate individual experiences of a Deaf Chinese woman and a Deaf Singaporean man, while *Deaf in DC* is an autobiographical account of an Indian deaf man who had moved to Washington DC (Vasishta 2011). While Ruiz-Williams et al. do challenge and expose privilege within Deaf studies there is scant literature and scholars *of all social sciences/humanities disciplines* have yet to understand the full range of deaf migrant experiences.

In her article exploring disability as an intersection, Minear (2011) quotes Yuval-Davis (2006) who cites numerous possible intersections when exploring the intersectionality lens: 'race'/skin color; ethnicity; nation/state; class, culture; ability; age; sedentariness/origin; wealth; North-South; religion, stage of social development' (p. 101), and asks:

> is it even conceivable to address all these possible social categories intersecting with a common master category (e.g. race or gender) at any given time? Do some differences acquire greater prominence than others (e.g. sexuality)? And are some 'other' differences just added on to merely complicate and 'nuance' this intersectional analysis (e.g., disability)? (Minear, 101)

In this article, we draw on McCall's (2005) distinction between approaches that are *inter*categorical and those that are *intra*categorical. Yuval-Davis (2006), for example, follows an intercategorical approach, of which 'the point is to analyse the differential ways by which social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they relate to political and subjective constructions of identities' (in Minear, 101). In this respect our advance is similar to that taken by Meekosha (2006) who also explored the intercategorical approach when suggesting that disability as a category in intersectionality was a much-neglected area. We take this approach as opposed to that of an intracategorical approach which, while validating the reality of racism and the way it intersects with other social categories of difference such as sexism, classism and heterosexism, also works to uncover *differences and diversities within the group*. The intracategorical approach is fairly prevalent across the data and, furthermore, the approach has been adopted by Kusters (2019) in her work on deaf women's use of spaces in Mumbai trains – in other words where the intersection is that of being deaf and being a woman commuting in Mumbai. Examples of an intracategorical

approach by research participants do appear across our research data, particularly in relation to deaf migration and class or deaf migration, class, and sexuality. The intracategorical approach is a useful pointer to uncovering differences and diversities *within* the group (in this case the 'deaf' group).

The challenge, however, is that not only do the categories risk become endless in their variety they can end up focussing on intra-group differences at the expense of the inter-group ones: or rather there is an imbalance in exploring differences qua group. The key purpose of the intercategorical approach is to avoid the risk of taking categories from one or more key others (e.g. race, class and gender), and adding various identities depending on an individual or group characteristic (e.g. disability, sexuality, being deaf), because, crucially, the intercategorical approach 'foreground[s] the historical and structural conditions within which identity categories' intersect – in Minear's case, for example, that of race and disability.

To address and exemplify the intercategorical approach we take examples from two participants of our research study, Hawa and Samba, who provide a narrative that enables us to explicitly link intersections of experience to power structural institutions – for example, the Home Office, education, work, church, and the family.

Methodology and positionality

Our research study – which is one of a strand of four themes of a larger research project on international deaf mobilities (see www.mobiledeaf.org.uk) – comprised of ethnographical observation at numerous deaf spaces and places across London in addition to conducting one to one face to face interviews. In raw data terms, a total of 22 interviews were held, while our observation notes covered 23 different venues. Altogether, a myriad number of 'events' – 44 in total – were recorded by taking notes, and these range from observations at classrooms, canteens, social events, and formal group meeting events, some of which were intended only for private purposes. All those who ran the events were aware we were observing and undertaking research and while we do not have an exact total number of people we encountered on an informal basis, our reach was nevertheless significant. The time one or both researchers spent at each place or space varied, generally from 1 h up to 3 h, although one was an all-day event, and some were half day or all evening. For example, we hosted an event for Black History month in 2018 at Stratford Cinema's '888 club' where we showed Barpaga's (2014) powerful documentary 'Double Discrimination', which explores racism within the UK deaf community. This attracted a large audience, not least because Barpaga was present to take a question and answer session after the film, which was part of our methodology, to identify themes for this project.

Our methodology was, therefore, ethnographic, but of equal significance is our positionality. The Author's, Steve and Sanchu, are both deaf since early childhood and our language preference is BSL, marking us as uniquely placed to carry out a research project where participants are deaf signers. Crucially, we have both spent periods long living abroad – Asia and South America, for example – and attended international conferences on a regular basis for the past 20 years, and where we have met and mixed with deaf people in these countries. We have not only learned signed languages other than BSL but have learned about the different issues that deaf people face in their everyday lives in countries other than the UK. However, Steve is a white British born man, while Sanchu is a south Asian British born woman, and we hold a relatively privileged position in relation to those who participated in our study. We therefore, identify and recognise our privileges not only as British passport holding citizens, but as academic scholars in a position to carry out a study of this nature and frame its discussion, since we possess a level of English literacy from our education and studies that enables us access to a wide range of literature. We are both cis-gendered and in heterosexual relationships, Steve being married to a non-EU migrant. Both authors already had friends and an extensive network of contacts since we were also both resident in the capital city at the time of the study; however, whereas Steve 's prior connections with migrant deaf people were minimal, Sanchu was already heavily involved with Black and ethnic minority organisations in the city. Hence, we were in a position to network with several well-connected individuals, and groups, from Black and Ethnic minority groups in London and the UK, who were vital to suggesting places and spaces where we could visit to identify and include migrants from these backgrounds in the study. As part of our ethnographic approach we would spend time in places where migrants were in regular attendance, for example at City Lit College, a well-established adult educational college in the Holborn area of London, where several courses are specifically aimed at Deaf migrants. While doing research, we were continuously reflecting on our privileged positions and felt a strong sense of responsibility towards those who participated in the research project.

The data and our analytical approach

As we outlined previously, looking at the data from the lens of intersectionality via an intercategorical approach enables us to identify and unpick the interlocking relations of power as well as those of identity because there is a risk of underplaying the ideological power immigration law has in society, namely, the racism that underlies immigration controls. Our analytical approach was broadly thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006), whereby we undertook a thorough reading of interviews and research notes,

familiarizing ourselves with the data, and identifying common themes which we then categorized and further explored. Hence, we identified themes emerging such as the importance of agency and connections, experiencing of hostility and discrimination, or narratives on journey and arrival.

There were limitations to this analysis as not all our research data provided us with such detail as these two examples, and therefore we are making a cautious attempt which we nevertheless believe represents a strong duo of case studies. Our research study was rich in examples which highlight a particular category of identity and where it would have been difficult to extrapolate without much more data. For example, two participants in the study, Luis, from Guatemala, and Lenka, from the Czech Republic, reflected in depth on issues surrounding their sexuality with one stressing that the wider deaf community sometimes fails to appreciate diversity and difference within its own networks of spaces and places. Another participant, 'Adrian' (a pseudonym), from Romania, while not stressing class explicitly, provided experience of class struggle and class unity that we would argue is one of great significance to his life journey to London. Another, 'Kwame' (a pseudonym), also a Black deaf African migrant, reflected mainly on his status as an educated man and his relationship to Black deaf people with African heritage living in London. There is a risk, however, in thinking of deaf people as having a constellation of identities, or where language is the overriding factor in their lives; but that then runs the risk of emptying 'power' – particularly, but not only, economic, social and political power.

Moving onto the data, all quotes cited from hereon in are translations of interviews and interactions that were conducted in BSL by both interviewer and interviewee. Some interview quotes are available online in BSL with English subtitles (with the interviewees' consent) and we list those where they are available. We start with the example of Hawa.

Hawa – interviews and observations by Steve

Hawa is a Black deaf female Muslim migrant from Somalia who emigrated to the UK with her family when she was in her mid-teens:

> We moved here and my family took me to the Home Office but it was a really long process without access. I felt like the family dog, being dragged along and not knowing what was happening. There were these big meetings with lots of people, and I had no idea what they were talking about.

Hawa is attempting to enter the UK to join her family, thus her first experience of the Home Office is that it represents a double barrier, the need to go through and pass a border control experience *and* without any access to knowing what was being communicated by the various people there. She felt like 'the family dog' – a metaphor that is often used by deaf

people, including in the arts (Meek 2020) – and had no means of understanding what was being discussed. As is evident in these extracts, and as will be demonstrated throughout the article, Hawa experiences 'audism'. Audism is a term first coined by Humphries (1977) and Lane (1993) expanded its meaning to refer to the way in which social policy, amongst other things, is construed by people who have little or no experience or knowledge of signing deaf people, their culture and language, and such people tend to be hearing. Hawa's experience of audism with the Home Office is overtly evident here, and when asked for instances of racism she replied: 'I have experienced a lot of what you mention' so such experiences remain personal to her. She continues:

> My sister tried to explain to me what was going on, but the Home Office blocked her. Instead they brought in a male interpreter, but he said he signed but he didn't really. I remember he brought a book with him, and tried to talk to me but I was really put off and didn't know what was happening. I tried to talk to the man who leads the meetings, but he told my sister to stop so I had to pull back and put up with it.

Hawa received support from her sister, she is clearly annoyed and frustrated and wanted to know what was happening with her application. Crucially here, is her experience as a woman. Although the interpreting profession in the UK is overwhelmingly female (McDermid 2009), the Home Office demonstrated not only a lack of understanding of gender but also language and power. We do not know the interpreter's ethnicity but he clearly could not communicate with Hawa and failed to use his power to show solidarity by, for example, stressing that she requires a specialist interpreter who she can understand. There was a man leading the meeting who also failed to understand the situation and used his power to impose order – thus intersections of deafness/disability, race and gender are interlocked here.

> They made another appointment and again it was full of people and my sister and I had to sit there passively whilst they discussed my case. I really don't know what they said, but I think (bearing in mind I couldn't access any of the information) that the Home Office were objecting to my application a bit? I'm not sure. They seemed to be saying 'why are you here?' and not accepting me. My sister tried to contact a lawyer to support us, and with their help the Home Office accepted my application and I received written permission to stay in the UK.

Border and immigration controls are inherently racist – 'why are you here' they seemed to be saying to Hawa. We can draw upon migrant experiences to demonstrate Hawa shares a similarity with many migrants, particularly those who are constantly having to attend Home Office meetings to try to prove their legibility to enter the UK. It was Hawa's sister who contacted the lawyer and once again it is the power of the lawyer, the legal system, that decides whether Hawa is to enter the UK or be denied.

Hawa is in the UK when she is placed in a mainstream school, and the interview shifts to her relating her experiences as a deaf woman in a local state school.

> So once we had that, I then started school. It was the local school near our home, and it was awful; I was the only deaf person there in a large school and did not have any access at all. For two years I had no education at all. I would just sit in the class with no idea what was happening.

During this extract Hawa relates her experience as the only deaf person in school who had no access to classes, no idea what was going on there, and where the evidence is that the teacher was not responsive or aware of her access needs in the classroom. Her experience of being the only deaf person in a mainstream school setting and where she struggles is well covered by the Deaf studies literature too (Oliva 2014; O'Brien 2015; Nunes, Pretzlik, and Olsson 2001). Here is where her experience of audism is also quite prominent, but also it is the institution of education which represents the power and authority of a complex which will shape her for a lifetime. This extract highlights Hawa's experience as a deaf/disabled migrant, not in the sense of her deafness, but in the way the structure of education is so designed as to deny her access. For a disabled person, the medical industrial complex historically tended to lock disabled people away in 'schools' where they had little day to day interaction with non-disabled peers; in the case of a deaf person who attends a mainstream school, historically education institutions play a similar role although in a different way – she has physical interaction with her peers but little or no mental or emotional satisfactory interaction. Worse still, she has no deaf peers to interact with.

> For two years I had no education took no exams, studied nothing and had nothing to do. I didn't know what to do, but now I understand I did have rights, and it didn't have to be like that. I now know I had the ability to learn and develop, but back then I was ignorant.

There are many questions to ask here. For example, why didn't the teacher or the school system recognise that Hawa was not studying or learning anything there? We do not get to know the ethnicities of the tutors nor of Hawa's peers, but nevertheless, why did the whole school system allow or enable Hawa to become virtually invisible within this educational institution? Were there any class issues at play here – for example, the education of children is already class-biased, with poorer, working-class schools struggling to run their service in light of historical cuts in local authority education budgets. What is that telling us about the education system in terms of her being an African migrant? How do we know that has not played a role in her being left struggling? If she was a white deaf migrant from a Commonwealth country, for example, would the experience have been the same? Would the tutors have 'reached out'?

Finally, Hawa was visited in her later school years by a deaf tutor, a man, who also visited her at home and encouraged her family to allow her to attend the local Deaf club and learn sign language. From this meeting, she begins to attend her local Deaf centre and learns British Sign Language. However, we cannot generalise her experience in terms of her being deaf without a wider study, but these are important questions for exploring deaf communities and their people's relationships with wider society and each other.

As a woman, Hawa sometimes struggles to communicate with women from her religion who wear a hijab since she cannot see their lips to lipread them. A *male* Muslim migrant from Somalia would not have to cover themselves in the same way as a do many *female* Muslims hence will not have the experience of a communication barrier; but, crucially, the intersection of her religion is far from additive to her identity, it intersects with who she is – for example, Steve's fieldnotes observe:

> Our communication: It started with her telling me a story of how she had met a woman working [at a photocopier or Internet cafe just before her presentation to her peers from Somaliland] who was dressed in a niqab – when [Hawa] explained she was deaf the women took her to a private room, locked the door and removed her veil to communicate by lipreading. [Hawa] was extremely moved by this experience as this is not usual and was in fact the first time it had happened for several years.

Earlier, we mentioned how Hawa's experience is related to deaf/disability, and while she is active in attending deaf events, she also engages and gets involved with a group of Somalian people – deaf and hearing – which is seeking to support disabled people from her country. Deaf organisations often fall under the umbrella of disability worldwide, and that is also true of African countries. While we sense she feels amongst allies and there is a unity within this movement, there is also a feeling of a distance from it due to language barriers. Nevertheless, the group attempts to interact with her through the use of various means, including a BSL/English sign language interpreter, written English, spoken Somalian and it is clear that this group has high value for her.

While at various times throughout her day she may talk about her experiences of each as if they are separate categorical identities, her narrative shows just how powerful an intersectional *intercategorical* lens can be in summarising and making sense not just of one person's experience, but how power intersects in our society to render marginalised and invisible those will less power and privilege.

Samba – interview with Sanchu

Samba's experience demonstrates similar interlocking themes at various levels to Hawa. He is a Black deaf African Christian male migrant from Sierra Leone with a complex class background.

Unlike Astur, Samba did not experience similar barriers with the Home Office: In summary, he moved to the UK with his father who believed Samba would get 'a better education and life prospects here in the UK'. It was a straightforward process for him to obtain a British passport for many reasons. He had been resident in the UK for 10 years and simply 'had to find 2 or 3 professionals in Britain willing to support my application', for example, people who had been his carers or school tutors and knew him well. (See interview clip https://vimeo.com/447610599).

It is instinctive to highlight that Samba appears to enjoy some privilege due to his father's wife, who was a UK citizen from a rich background, but our positionality is that we deem the immigration system to be essentially racist. The fact Samba had to have been living in the UK for a period of time, provide references, and make an application, is where he experiences intersections of being deaf, Black, and migrant: he experienced the power of racist border controls in his quest to become a UK citizen. When he was in the UK:

> I am Black, I'm deaf, and I saw British people as white and affluent – not wealthy, just normal for them. They had all this information. I was Black, deaf, ASL [American Sign Language] user, no BSL [British Sign Language]. None of the access to information that they had. It took me a long time to work it all out finding out how things work, and it wasn't easy. (See interview clip: https://vimeo.com/447603755)

He identifies British white people as not only affluent, but possessing information he did not have and having grown up in a different country means there is a lot of information for him to catch up on. He also had to face violent racism from a white deaf person:

> I was threatened. I remember a white deaf person, I thought they might be knowledgeable, and I was trying to communicate with them and learn from them and they wanted me out. They were so angry they threatened me with a knife. (…) They pointed a knife at me and I was so shocked. When I asked 'why the knife?' they said 'get out'! I wanted to calm them down, said that I wasn't trying to destroy our relationship. I wanted us to work together for better education for deaf people. I know I'm from a different country, but I did feel really lost and wanted to move on but I experienced challenges. Really anyone like me, Black and deaf or just wanting to develop, we have to expect challenges. You can't cover it up and pretend that everything in the UK is smooth and it's all fine. I experienced a lot of threat. I worked hard to convince people who threatened me that I'm not a bad person, not a destroyer. It's a really slow process to change people's perceptions so that we can engage with each other. (See interview clip: https://vimeo.com/447603755)

His experience is not unique, as evidenced by Barpaga's film on racism in the deaf community in the UK. The Black Lives Matter movement has also led to the emergence of a whole host of stories of the racism Black deaf people have experienced in the UK, a history that has rarely been addressed in UK scholarly studies (e.g. See Hear 2021; BSL Zone 2020; Cader

2018). Samba alludes to the historical colonialism that not only impacted his country, but also the sign language that was taught there, and it also alludes to the involvement of Church missionaries: 'So my country was colonised by the British but BSL was never introduced here' – it was American Sign Language that became the most dominant' because 'it was the missionaries from America who set up the deaf schools'.

Samba was mixing with hearing people from his own country, Sierra Leone, in London, which highlights the interlocking intersections of being a Black deaf man. He therefore had access to a cultural group stating that while at first it was easier to mix with hearing people, 'I find as a deaf person it is difficult to fit in with that group, as they don't have good deaf awareness' and 'there's a real barrier for me to be part of the Sierra Leonean cultural group. They don't enable access for me, and I can't belong there. I think they need deaf awareness training.' A critical part of Samba's journey, however, is his faith, which is a vital interlocking intersectional experience for him:

> So if I compare to when I first arrived, it was easier to communicate with hearing people then… Hearing people really were focussed on working, earning money and wanting to get wealthy enough to go back home; they had no time for communication. Deaf people also wanted to work, but they had more solidarity, supporting each other and sharing language. They had sports to share like football and would spur each other on. But though I saw that connection and support, I didn't see love or spirituality amongst them, and without that it felt fragile, as though those bonds could collapse.

Christianity is, of course, the official state religion of the UK, and Samba has drawn on the resources of church communities to promote love, spirituality and solidarity amongst deaf people; his identity as a Black African Deaf Christian is therefore interlocking and we can see how, by viewing intersectionality as a lens and related to structures and systems of power, these connect. His identity as a deaf person becomes more evident when he reflects on his education and his work aspirations, all of which are connected not only to his Christian identity, but also to that of his class and masculinity. As he states, he had wanted to become a professional footballer but 'to do that I knew that I needed to eat healthy' and learned to cook and became a chef after taking a three-year course at Doncaster College for the Deaf. Having obtained a job at the Hilton in London he 'worked there for a few months, it was really hard – it's a five-star hotel, and the pace and lack of inclusivity for deaf people was exhausting'. He moved to work at another hotel in Victoria (London). He became seriously injured playing football which meant he couldn't become a professional player. He began working with deaf children and then teaching BSL at a primary mainstream school but encountered numerous problems:

> Then things got difficult, the situation broke down and I was struggling to cope. The church then helped me and gave me a job here…Just now I am working for the church, looking after the building and developing opportunities for deaf children here to give to them what we never had. They really helped me get back on my feet, and I can manage the workload now.

What is important about this narrative is how it demonstrates the interlocking connections of Samba as a Deaf Christian working-class man, his connection to deaf children, people and their communities, and shows how over the years in someone's life different aspects of their identities get different weight or attention.

Discussion and conclusion

By using an intercategorical approach to our intersectional analysis on the experience of deaf migrants we hope to have demonstrated the ways in which the intersection of being deaf, of the experience of audism, is a form of power that interlocks with other forms – in this case racism and other forms (gender-related and language-related) – and which leads to the marginalisation and exclusion of deaf people in relation to institutional structures in society.

There are a number of key take-away points of which we wish to identify two. Firstly, deaf participants are migrants, and by way of being a migrant they experience intersectionality in ways that overlap with those of Black people who were born in the UK, but there are also differences with regards to Black migrants. They experience not only racism but also discrimination based on their being a migrant, for example, in using a different sign language.

Secondly, this leads us to ask what deaf intersectionality looks like in the context of *mobility*. So in the case of Samba and Hawa, for example, they are not simply migrants who have moved at the UK, but 'became Black' when they arrived there in the sense that they now were a minority in terms of skin colour – they also had to learn a new sign language.

The implications for social policy are crucial: a deaf migrant cannot be boxed into a category of 'migrant', nor 'deaf' (or disabled), nor even necessarily 'deaf migrant'. To define singular experience is therefore problematic as these are rich in their diversity. When research on the experience of disabled migrants is undertaken, it needs to be clearer whether deaf migrants are included, and if so, the extent to which their mobility impacts on their experience (i.e. on language). In other words, on migrating, they do not simply become a category of human being who has the exact same experiences as sign language users of the national language: they experience intersections in relation to the majority sign language users of that community.

In conclusion, what we have attempted to do is use an intersectionality lens that foregrounds structural and institutional powers in relation to identities as opposed to foregrounding the identity of deafness in relation to multiple levels of power that is prominent in much of the Deaf Studies intersectional literature. Taking this approach has led us to demonstrate how deaf migrant experiences interlock with institutionalised racism and audism – and also with those relating to gender, religion and class – and as a result cannot be divorced from multiple relations of power.

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