Actual and perceived attitudes towards deafness

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SYNOPSIS This study had two aims: first, to investigate the attitudes of deaf and hearing people towards deafness; and, secondly, to study the difference between how deaf people perceive the attitudes of hearing people towards deafness, and how hearing people perceive the attitudes of deaf people towards deafness. The results showed that the deaf had more negative attitudes towards deafness than the hearing. In addition, the deaf believed that hearing people have more negative attitudes to deafness than hearing people actually have. This lack of empathy between the two groups was discussed. The amount of contact with the deaf was found to be associated with more realistic and less stereotyped attitudes to the deaf. The results are discussed in the context of research on social interaction with disabled people.

INTRODUCTION
Considerable research on attitudes towards disabled and handicapped people has shown that they are often seen as dependent, isolated, depressed, emotionally unstable and socially inadequate (Altman, 1981; Yuker et al. 1960). Hence it is believed that the disabled are incapable of a range of ‘normal’ forms of behaviour and are inadequate in dealing with peers, professionals and the public (Schroedel, 1978).

Shattuck (1946) has argued that the major handicap of disabled people is not so much their specific disability as the attitude of the non-disabled general public towards them. For instance, negative attitudes towards the deaf have been shown to affect deaf people’s educational aspirations (Schein, 1968), socialization (Meadow, 1969), vocational ambitions (Rodda, 1969) and work adjustment (Altshuler & Baroff, 1963). Thus the expectations of the non-disabled frequently deter the efforts of the disabled to lead a ‘normal’ life (Linowski et al. 1969). One important consequence of these negative attitudes and stereotypes is that they produce self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, if a group of disabled people is seen as being ‘dependent’, no encouragement or opportunity is given to them to be independent and they often find themselves in a position that prevents them from achieving and asserting their independence.

Although many studies have been conducted to determine attitudes towards disabled and handicapped people (Altman, 1981; Furnham & Pendred, 1983), most have concentrated on how non-disabled people have viewed handicap. There is a paucity of studies that attempt to assess what the disabled themselves believe about their disability and how these beliefs compare with those of a non-disabled population.

One aim of the present study was to compare attitudes of members of the general public towards a particular disability with the attitudes of a matched group of disabled people. A second aim was to investigate how disabled people perceive non-disabled people’s attitude towards them.

The study was concerned specifically with the handicap of deafness. In recent years the physically disabled – particularly those confined to wheelchairs – have fought successfully for easier rights of access to public buildings and have, as a result, gained a considerable amount of attention (Weir, 1981). The deaf, however, being both less vocal and less obvious, have been relatively ignored, though they are now campaigning for easier access to the media etc.

A number of studies have examined attitudes towards deafness (Bunting, 1981). For instance, Furnham & Pendred (1983) found that members of the general public believe that the deaf are just as sensible and happy as other people, that they...
do not feel sorry for themselves, that they worry a great deal, and that they are more easily upset than other people. Similarly, in a study of school-
children's attitudes towards handicaps, Furnham & Gibbs (1984) found that 14-year-olds believed that deaf children are moderately happy, are fun to be with, and have lots of friends, but should have special facilities and should not be expected to do as well in school as normal children.

Studies on the deaf themselves, however, have suggested more negative attitudes towards deafness than in comparable hearing groups. Schroedel & Schiff (1972) attempted to study attitudes towards deafness in several groups of the deaf and in people with hearing difficulties. They were particularly interested in how the deaf perceived the attitudes of the normal non-deaf to deafness. They found that the attitudes towards deafness are more negative in the deaf than in the hearing population and that deaf subjects perceive hearing subjects as having more negative attitudes than is actually the case. However, they record the possibility that: 'attitude scores of deaf persons reflect actual experience, while hearing persons have not thought much about their feelings towards deafness, and give spuriously positive scores' (p. 69). Despite methodological problems (Altman, 1981), this study highlights some of the major problems of the deaf. Similarly, Thomas & Gilholme-Herbst (1980) found that the deaf had a significantly depressed self-image and were more lonely, unhappy at work and less likely to be psychologically well-adjusted than the general population. In addition, many thought that their hearing problems were not understood by those closest to them. In a study of acquired deafness in the elderly Humphrey et al. (1981) found that negative attitudes were prevalent in the subjects and that these attitudes were felt to play a crucial part in perpetuating the disorder – which in these cases was treatable.

The present study attempted to examine two aspects of attitudes to deafness while avoiding some of the major methodological problems of previous research (Altman, 1981; Furnham & Pendred, 1983). In addition, three other independent variables were examined: age, sex, and contact with the disabled group (i.e. the deaf). Although most other studies on attitudes towards the disabled have found no age or sex differences (Bell, 1962; Seller & Chipman, 1964), others have found that older subjects are more sympathetic towards disability than younger subjects (Horowitz et al. 1965). Further, many previous studies have shown that contact with the disabled is an important moderator of attitudes (Furnham & Gibbs, 1984; Furnham & Pendred, 1983). However, Gaier et al. (1968), in a study of attitudes towards disability before and after contact with the disabled, found that contact was not effective in ensuring an enduring shift in the subjects' attitudes.

METHOD

Subjects

There were 54 subjects, of whom 24 were deaf and 30 had normal hearing. Of the deaf subjects, 9 were female and 15 were male, while in the hearing group 16 were female and 14 were male. Only 2 of the hearing subjects and 1 of the deaf subjects were students, the rest being members of the general public, from a wide variety of backgrounds. The age range of subjects was from 18 to over 60. Fifty-nine per cent were under 30 years of age, 20% were aged between 31 and 40, and the remainder were over 40 years of age.

The deaf subjects were recruited through clubs and social workers for the deaf. Four deaf subjects stated that their main method of communication was speech, and these people all had moderately impaired hearing and were able to benefit from the use of hearing aids. The other deaf subjects used a mixture of speech, British Sign Language (BSL), lipreading and writing to communicate, depending on the situation. These deaf subjects had more severe hearing difficulties, with little or no usable hearing, even with the use of powerful aids. All deaf subjects had been deaf since birth, except for one subject who had been deaf since the age of 4.

The subjects were assigned to three categories of degree of hearing impairment on their rating of the severity of their deafness. The deaf subjects were recruited first, and then the hearing subjects, with attempts being made to match subjects by age and sex. It was not possible to match by occupation, as it is generally accepted that the deaf are underemployed and rarely obtain employment commensurate with their abilities (Schein, 1968).
Questionnaire
A modified version of the Attitudes Towards Disabled Person (ATDP) scale, devised by Yuker et al. (1960), was used. This scale has been shown to be a reliable way of measuring attitudes to handicap (Altman, 1981; Bell, 1962; Furnham & Pendred, 1983). The scale consists of a 20-item Likert-type scale with two sections, the first relating to characteristics of the handicapped, the second relating to treatment. In addition, 11 supplementary items were added which were more specifically related to the deaf. These covered such areas as whether television caters adequately for the deaf, whether the deaf try to conceal their deafness, and whether the hearing are embarrassed about talking to the deaf. The items were chosen from previous studies on attitudes towards deafness.

Procedure
Each subject was asked to complete the anonymous questionnaire twice. Hearing subjects were asked to complete the first questionnaire as a true self-report, and the second as they thought a severely deaf person would complete it. In addition, they were asked to indicate their age, sex and the amount of contact they had had with deaf people.

The deaf subjects were asked to respond to the first questionnaire normally, and to the second as they thought a hearing person would complete it. In addition, they were asked to indicate their age, sex and the amount of contact they had had with deaf people.

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RESULTS
Preliminary analysis of the data showed that there were very few sex and age differences in the subjects’ attitudes to deafness. Males more than females thought that the totally deaf were harder to get along with than the partially deaf and that deaf people find it harder to make friends than other (non-deaf) people. Also younger respondents, more than their older counterparts, believed that deaf children should be less strictly handled by parents and that it is good for the deaf to live and work in special communities. On the other hand, older respondents believed more than the young that there should not be special schools for deaf children. However, overall there were fewer age and sex differences than might be expected by chance.

There were, however, many differences between deaf and hearing respondents, and between those having and not having contact with the deaf.

1. Deaf/hearing x self/other differences
The deaf population was separated into various groups, depending on the severity of their impairment. Then, a 4 x 2 ANOVA (deaf/hearing v. self/other) was computed on each of the 31 items (Table 1). However, as there were few differences between the various groups’ attitudes a 2 x 2 ANOVA was thought to be more useful for interpreting the results. Over half of the hearing/deaf comparisons showed significant differences which indicated that the deaf were more negative about deafness than the hearing. The hearing group believed more than the deaf that: the deaf feel sorry for themselves; and the deaf are often cross and cannot lead a normal life. On the other hand, the deaf believed significantly more than the hearing group that: the deaf are just as sensible as other people; the deaf tend to keep to themselves much of the time; the deaf are more easily upset than other people; the deaf are the same as everybody else; parents should be less strict with deaf children; the deaf should live and work in special communities; the deaf should be looked after by the government; the deaf should not have too much expected of them; the deaf are sensitive about what others say about them; and the deaf tend to hide their deafness. They also believed that: hearing people are embarrassed about talking to deaf people, yet are usually sympathetic and helpful to deaf people; and television caters adequately for deaf people.

Eighteen of the 31 self/other differences were statistically significant. Most of these differences arose because the deaf subjects appeared to be inaccurate in estimating the attitudes of the hearing. For instance, the deaf believed, incorrectly, that the people with normal hearing thought that: the deaf are just as sensible as other people; the deaf are not as easy to get along with as other people; the deaf are sorry for themselves; the deaf worry a great deal; the deaf
Table 1. Means and F values for the hearing and deaf groups own (self) and attributed (other) scores on each item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items†</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Hearing</th>
<th>Deaf</th>
<th>Hearing</th>
<th>Deaf</th>
<th>Hearing/def</th>
<th>Self/other</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>9.37***</td>
<td>49.62***</td>
<td>39.61***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>23.00***</td>
<td>19.57***</td>
<td>23.00***</td>
<td>19.57***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>6.74**</td>
<td>4.19*</td>
<td>5.05*</td>
<td>5.05*</td>
<td>5.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.32*</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>6.01*</td>
<td>6.01*</td>
<td>6.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>5.75*</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>18.77***</td>
<td>17.41***</td>
<td>18.77***</td>
<td>17.41***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>3.60**</td>
<td>4.40*</td>
<td>3.60**</td>
<td>4.40*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>5.53*</td>
<td>10.00***</td>
<td>5.53*</td>
<td>10.00***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>7.12**</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>7.12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) Treatment of the deaf

1. You should not expect too much from a deaf person
   1.50 1.79 1.77 5.00 22.96*** 22.37*** 16.03***
2. Deaf people cannot have a normal social life
   1.78 1.26 1.87 4.88 9.40* 20.71*** 18.95***
3. You have to be careful of what you say when you are with a deaf person
   1.64 2.48 1.56 4.29 21.05*** 4.23* 5.03*
4. It is almost impossible for a deaf person to lead a normal life
   2.04 1.47 2.12 4.76 5.86* 15.72*** 13.96***
5. The parents of deaf children should be less strict than other parents
   0.96 1.58 1.93 3.29 6.14* 11.33*** 0.88
6. It would be best for deaf people to live and work in special communities
   0.64 2.00 1.27 4.57 15.80*** 1.66 0.01
7. It is up to the government to look after deaf people
   2.43 3.58 3.30 3.88 4.31* 1.98 0.46
8. Deaf people are the same as everybody else
   4.36 5.21 4.40 1.94 4.07 16.44*** 17.33***
9. There should not be special schools for deaf children
   1.07 0.47 1.33 2.11 0.07 7.51* 3.95
10. Deaf people should not be expected to meet the same standards as everyone else
    1.78 2.42 2.67 3.05 1.44 3.15 0.88

(c) Communicating with the deaf

1. Deaf people try and hide their deafness
   2.71 4.89 1.83 4.35 45.98*** 4.28* 0.29
2. Hearing people are embarrassed about talking to deaf people
   3.96 4.42 4.73 4.29 21.05*** 4.21* 0.24
3. Hearing people are usually sympathetic and helpful to deaf people
   3.71 4.42 3.30 4.29 4.90* 0.50 0.14
4. Deaf people find it harder to make friends than other people
   3.61 2.74 3.17 5.00 1.31 4.70* 10.34**
5. Deaf people are more likely to feel depressed than other people
   3.00 2.68 2.83 4.23 2.54 4.13* 6.36**
6. You can always tell when you are talking to a deaf person
   2.96 3.37 3.90 4.70 2.63 9.28** 0.29
7. Hearing people tend to avoid talking to deaf people
   3.89 4.84 4.43 4.70 2.98 0.33 0.91
8. Deaf people are more likely to feel lonely than other people
   3.96 3.63 3.66 4.53 0.55 0.70 2.78
9. Hearing people should have more information about deafness and hearing people
   4.75 4.89 5.10 4.59 0.40 0.07 1.30

(d) The media and the deaf

1. Television caters adequately for deaf people
   1.71 2.10 1.50 3.65 8.95* 2.45 4.28*
2. Deaf people are ignored by the media
   3.50 4.68 3.83 3.41 0.96 1.45 4.24*

* P < 0.05; ** P < 0.01; *** P < 0.001.
† The items have been grouped a priori to reflect the context of the items as well as the size of the differences.
are not as happy as other people; the deaf are more easily upset than other people; parents of deaf children should be less strict than other parents; the deaf are not the same as other people; and there should not be special schools for deaf children.

Similarly, the deaf believe, inaccurately, that the hearing think that: it is impossible for a deaf person to lead a normal life; one should not expect too much from a deaf person; deaf people cannot have a normal social life; people have to be careful when talking to the deaf; the deaf try to hide their deafness; hearing people are embarrassed about talking to deaf people; deaf people find it harder to make friends than other people; one can always tell when one is talking to a deaf person; and deaf people are more likely to feel depressed than other people.

The 19 significant interactions were nearly all due to the fact that, whereas the hearing group were moderately accurate in predicting how the deaf would respond, the deaf were far less able to anticipate the responses of the hearing. The largest significant differences were for items referring to the normality of the deaf, where the deaf anticipated that the hearing would find them far more 'abnormal' than they actually did.

2. Contact and attitudes towards deafness
A one-way ANOVA was computed between two groups of hearing subjects – those who had, and those who had not, fairly extensive contact with the deaf. In all, 7 items showed significant differences. Hearing subjects who had had contact with the deaf agreed more that: the totally deaf are no harder to get along with than those with partial deafness \((F = 6.86, P < 0.01)\); deaf people are usually easier to get along with than other people \((F = 3.79, P < 0.05)\); the deaf are the same as everybody else \((F = 6.22, P < 0.01)\); and there should not be special schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Loading</th>
<th>Eigenvalue</th>
<th>Variance (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(a) Normality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people are easier to get along with than others</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people are as happy as others</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally deaf people are no harder to get along with than those with partial deafness</td>
<td>-0.78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people are more easily upset than others</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>9.95</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people feel they are not as good as other people</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people are the same as anyone else</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is almost impossible for a deaf person to lead a normal life</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people cannot have a normal social life</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(b) Neuroticism</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deaf people feel sorry for themselves</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deaf people worry a great deal</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people are as happy as other people</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people are more easily upset than others</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people find it harder to make friends</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people are more likely to feel lonely</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people are more likely to feel depressed</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(c) Social life</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deaf people are just as sensible as others</td>
<td>-0.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>It is impossible for a deaf person to lead a normal life</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You should not expect too much from a deaf person</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people cannot have a normal social life</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can always tell when you are talking to a deaf person</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(d) Integration</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people are as happy as other people</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of deaf children should be less strict than other parents</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf people are the same as anyone else</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would be best for a deaf person to live and work in special communities</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(e) Communication problems</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing people are embarrassed about talking to deaf people</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing people tend to avoid deaf people</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
for the deaf ($F = 3.87, P < 0.05$). On the other hand, those who had no contact with the deaf believed more than those who had had contact with the deaf that: it is impossible for a deaf person to lead a normal life ($F = 7.28, P < 0.01$); deaf people cannot have a normal social life ($F = 11.90, P < 0.001$); and deaf people tend to be ignored by the media ($F = 5.30, P < 0.05$).

Thus the results tend to indicate that those who had had contact with the deaf believed that the deaf are more normal and capable of leading a normal life than did the non-contact group.

3. Factor analysis of the questionnaire

Because there has been some doubt as to the unidimensionality of attitude to the handicapped questionnaires (Furnham & Pendred, 1983; Seller & Chipman, 1964), a factor analysis was performed (principal components followed by a varimax rotation).

It was possible to carry out 5 factor analyses on the items of: the hearing group towards deafness; the deaf towards deafness; the hearing group regarding their metaperceptions of the deaf’s attitude towards deafness; and of the deaf regarding the hearing group’s attitude towards deafness. These were all computed and were shown to be broadly similar (using the coefficient of congruence); however, there is the possibility that they were unstable solutions because of the size of the sample. A fifth factor analysis was performed combining the hearing group’s and the deaf subjects’ attitudes to deafness ($N = 54$). This factor solution was also similar to the above 4 solutions (see Table 2).

Overall, 5 factors emerged which accounted for nearly 60% of the variance. The first factor was labelled normality, since the items were concerned with the similarity of the deaf and the hearing. The second factor was labelled neuroticism, because nearly all the items related to the emotional instability of the deaf. The third factor contained items referring to the social life of the deaf. The fourth factor, labelled integration, contains items referring to how to treat the deaf, while the fifth factor referred specifically to the communication problems of the deaf. The factor solution here was very similar to that of Furnham & Pendred (1983), and underlies the fact that a single attitude score such as that used by Schroedel & Schiff (1972) would be both insensitive to, and obscuring of, the variety of attitudes to the deaf.

A two-way deaf/hearing v. self/other ANOVA was then computed on the factor scores with predictable results. Whereas only two of the factors, social life and integration, revealed deaf/hearing differences, all the factors revealed significant self/other differences.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrated that the deaf subjects were found to have very negative attitudes towards aspects of their disability (their social life, and integration with the hearing); they also believed that hearing people would be far more negative in attitude than is the case. Deaf people’s views about deafness may reflect accurately the difficulties they have as a result of their disability. The fact that the deaf tend to be underemployed, and excluded from many normal social activities (cinema, television), could well lead the deaf to hold negative attitudes towards themselves and to have a low self-image (Thomas & Gilhome-Herbst, 1980; Schroedel & Schiff, 1972).

The negative attributed scores of the deaf to the hearing on all five factors could be a true reflection of the attitudes of hearing people that the deaf have encountered. All the deaf subjects had had extensive contact with the hearing, whereas many of the hearing group had not had contact with the deaf, so the judgements by the deaf may be more realistic than those by the hearing. Hearing subjects’ scores may be unrealistically positive and reflect how they think they might behave towards a deaf person in real life. Nevertheless, it does seem that the major reason for the numerous self/other differences occurred because the deaf completely over-estimated the negative feelings of the hearing towards them: that is, the low self-esteem and poor self-concept among the deaf probably accounts for this discrepancy of attitudes.

This lack of empathy between the hearing and the deaf suggests perhaps that the self-fulfilling prophecy mentioned earlier does occur, but in the opposite way. If the deaf believe that the hearing think them abnormal, neurotic, difficult to communicate with, they might reduce their attempts to interact with the hearing; this could, in turn, confirm their own belief that the hearing avoid and despise the deaf.

However, it should be pointed out that believing the deaf to be different from the
hearing is not necessarily equivalent to rejecting them (Bell, 1962; Yuker et al. 1960). Clearly, unfavourable attitudes to various aspects of a deaf person could underlie the overall reaction to that person; but they are not synonymous with rejection.

The second major finding from the study concerns the factor structure of the attitude scale. The factor analysis revealed five interpretable factors which were very similar to those found by Furnham & Pendred (1983) and Seller & Chipman (1964). Although the five factors accounted for over 60% of the variance the first factor, labelled normality, was by far the most important and alone accounted for a third of the variance. There was, however, no difference between the deaf and hearing on the ANOVA computed on the factor scores derived from the first factor, although there was a significant self/other difference. The analysis of variance on all the factor scores clearly revealed that the self/other (metaperception) dimension was a more powerful discriminator than the deaf/hearing (disability) dimension. Furthermore, despite the unstable nature of the factor analyses performed on such a small sample, there was a surprising similarity between the factor structure solution of the hearing and deaf group, suggesting that this was a robust solution. These results, in common with previous research, therefore suggest that attitudes towards the handicapped are clearly multidimensional. This study was concerned specifically with deafness and it may be that the factor structure of the adapted ATDP scale (Yuker et al. 1960) may be different, depending on the disability considered (e.g. blindness, mental retardation).

A study such as this is not without its limitations. The sample, although fairly heterogeneous and matched, was relatively small and hence generalizations can only be made with caution. Secondly, the ‘contact’ measure could be made more specific in terms of quality and quantity. Thirdly, and perhaps most important, the study says nothing about the truth or falsity of the attitudes themselves, or about the origins of the attitudes.

Nevertheless, the findings in this study (particularly factor analytical) are similar to those which have investigated larger more diverse populations in other countries. To that end, it may be seen as an extension of the literature in a field in which there has not been much progress hitherto (Altman, 1981).

REFERENCES


