

Choose one -1- of the following three questions:

1

Thomas Risse et al write about “the power of human rights”. What kind of power are they alluding to? In your view, to what extent do human rights today influence the foreign policy of states?

2

A cochlear implant (CI) is a surgically implanted electronic device that provides a sense of sound to a person who is deaf. The medical community argues that CI for congenitally deaf children is beneficial for improving children’s quality of life and for their ability to participate fully in society. CIs are considered to be most effective when they are implanted at a very young age when the brain is still learning to interpret sounds. Hence they are implanted before the recipients can decide for themselves on the assumption that deafness is a disability.

Advocates for CIs argue that implants, coupled with intensive post-implantation therapy, can help children to acquire speech, language and social skills. However, strong objection to this has come from the deaf community. Within this community some voices regard CI as an affront to their culture, which, as they view it, is a minority now threatened by the hearing majority. They argue that CI can affect negatively the child’s ability to form a positive sense of one’s self and one’s identity. The argument is further that children with CI are educated orally with limited or no access to sign language and that these children often need special education and speech therapy because the implants do not produce normal hearing. This, and assessing children’s prospects for leading a good life only by their mastery of hearing and speech, will lead to the construction of a low self-image as “disabled” at the expense of a future Deaf identity.

The vast majority of CI surgeries and therapies are done in developed countries because of the high cost of the device and the associated surgery and therapy.

In order to research this further you may consult the relevant entries in Wikipedia and the links suggested there.

- a) Identify and discuss relevant rights-based arguments for and against cochlear implants in congenitally deaf children.
- b) Discuss whether cochlear implants in congenitally deaf children should be required by law (when medically indicated) or whether the decision to insert a CI should be left to the parents of the child.

3

Human rights as a category of thought and a call for action: In his standard reference book about human rights, James Nickel notes that ‘many people around the world have adopted "human rights violations" as a category of political thought and appraisal'. Discuss this assertion and give examples of how tropes (figures of speech) like, for instance, ‘serious human rights violations’ or ‘fight for your rights’ influence the way political issues are handled. Use material from the reading list to show the implications of adopting human rights as a framework for political action. Choose at least two countries where this *problematique* has been particularly acute to ground your discussion empirically.