

# RESPONSE PAPER: SOUND AND FURY

In this movie, we explore how cochlear implants affect one extended family. Some members of the family can hear, and some members of the family are deaf. Two sets of parents are trying to decide if a cochlear implant is right for their child. Strong emotions from everyone involved appear to divide the family into those who support the device and those who are against it.

I was overwhelmed watching this movie. I'm still not sure how I would feel if faced with the same decision for my own child. I was taken aback with how vehemently negative the Deaf Community felt about a piece of technology that could give hearing to people without it. That sentence seems so strange to write. Why would anyone not give the gift of hearing to their child, if they could? Yet the fury behind their actions, their signing, and their words was undeniable. I struggled to understand why. However, a few moments in the movie finally helped me to see from their perspective.

The first moment was with the Grandma who is deaf, after Peter's implant surgery. She worried that he would now make fun of her and how she talks. He would be able to hear, and he would not understand why she was different. My thought on this is that she was excited to have a grandson to share her non-hearing life with, to be understood by and to have a special bond with that child. But that bond had been unceremoniously ripped away from her. To be replaced with fear that her grandson would treat her as badly as other hearing people had in the past. That moment stuck with me. I could now understand her sense of loss.

The second moment was when Heather's family moved to Maryland. Moving is difficult, and it means leaving your support system behind. Yet this family was willing to do that for their children. As a mother, I could easily have made the same decision.

Especially after seeing Heather interact with the class full of kids who were deaf and using sign language compared to the class full of kids that could hear (naturally or with implants). I felt the struggle of this family. They were trying to learn as much as they could, get opinions from everybody, really consider the pros and cons of each side, and then try to live with their difficult decision. I couldn't help but go along with them on their journey, flipping back and forth myself.

The third moment came up multiple times. One of the over-arching themes of the movie was the simple fact that each family wanted their children to be the same as them. The hearing parents and grandparents wanted the children to get a cochlear implant, so they could hear. While the parents and grandparents who are deaf did not. The main point here is that a difference in hearing between parents and children seems to be a source of pain for everyone involved. If everyone you socialize with is the same as you, then life is "easier." There appears to be a distinct separation between the hearing world and the deaf world. Both worlds tend to isolate themselves from each other, to protect themselves and their children. And one little device is tearing their worlds and their families apart.

The decision seemed to boil down to choosing a side. It was one side or the other, all or nothing. By choosing an implant for your child, you were rejecting the Deaf Community. By not choosing an implant, you were "abusing" your child and limiting their opportunities. It doesn't have to be this way. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the children could be accepted into and be a part of both worlds?

I did additional research into this family and learned that Heather did eventually get a cochlear implant. I am happy to hear that, but it doesn't change this icky feeling I have after watching the movie. This family has dealt with so much misery. I just can't feel good about that.