

NEWS BREAK

Sunday's News Break selects an article from Sunday, January 8, 2017 of The Seattle Times print replica for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions.

Please remember to always preview the content of the article before sharing with your students.

Article: After reversal on 'one-child' policy, China's IUD-removal offer elicits fury (MAIN, A10)

Pre-Reading and Vocabulary

- Should the government determine what happens to a women's body? Anyone's body? Should they interfere with their private lives? Why or why not?
- What do you know about China's rules for having children?

Vocabulary: Match the words to the numbered definitions in the chart below.

A. demographic	1. of or relating to an invasion, intrusion
B. dogma	2. a belief, principle, or doctrine or a code of beliefs, principles, or doctrines:
C. chafe	3. to come into view indistinctly with an enlarged and often threatening aspect
D. invasive	4. to speak contemptuously (about)
E. loom	5. a section of the population sharing common characteristics, such as age, sex, class
F. scoff	6. done, acquired in secret or by improper means
G. surreptitiously	7. to irritate or be irritated or impatient

Comprehension:

1. A few months after Lu Qiumei gave birth to her daughter in 2012, local officials visited her home and told her she was required to be fitted with what?
2. How long has this been a national policy in China?
3. The IUD was the government's most important tool for doing what?

4. Now, a year after abandoning the “one-child” policy, the government is hoping to make it up to millions of women. How? Was there any type of apology?
5. While IUDs elsewhere can often be removed with the tug of their strings in a doctor’s office, surgery is usually needed in China. Why?
6. Many Chinese women have chafed at the thought of the government’s getting involved, yet again, in their private lives. And for many mothers, the offer has come too late for them to consider what?
7. When did China begin demanding that women be fitted with an intrauterine device after they had one child, and sterilized after they had two?
8. What happened to those who refuse? What did they risk?
9. From 1980-2014, according to official statistics, _____ million Chinese women were fitted with IUDs. And _____ million underwent tubal ligations or, as is commonly said, got their “tubes tied.”
10. Last year, President Xi Jinping relegated the one-child policy to the Communist Party’s scrap heap of discarded dogma. Why?
11. Over the years, many Chinese women have come to hate the IUD. What is it?
12. With fewer young people to support larger numbers of retirees in China, scholars have warned of a looming demographic crisis. But many couples are not interested in having a second child. Why?
13. The government’s eagerness appears to be driven in part by what factors?
14. Yi Fuxian, a scientist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who studies China’s demographics, said half of all Chinese women eligible to have a second child were how old?

Group Discussion Questions or Extension Essay Questions:

And without so much as an expression of regret or an admission that it had perhaps made a mistake, the party pivoted from punishing couples for having a second child to encouraging them to get on with reproducing.

- Would admitting the government made a mistake have made them look weak? Why do you think they didn’t offer an apology to the women and families that were affected?

To that end, an official said at a recent news conference that 18 million women would be eligible for the free removal of IUDs in the next three years so they could bear a second child.

“Our country provides support in terms of law, finance and service systems to ensure citizens’ access to the free removal of IUDs,” said the official, Song Li of the National Health and Family Planning Commission’s department of women and children.

But the reversal, the paternalistic attitude, the failure to accept any culpability was too much for some. Within hours of the news conference, the internet was fuming with indignation.

- What was the response to the official statement regarding removing the IUD’s?

The mass implantation of IUDs amounted to “involuntary, forced acts of mutilation,” Han Haoyue, a popular columnist, wrote in a post shared nearly 3,000 times on Weibo, China’s version of Twitter. “And now, to say they are offering free removal as a service to these tens of millions of women — repeatedly broadcasting this on state television as a kind of state benefit — they have no shame, second to none.”

“In the eyes of the government, women are labor units,” Ai said. “When the country needs you to give birth, you have to do so. And when they don’t need you to give birth, you don’t.”

- Do you agree or disagree with Ai’s response? Why or why not?

“Most people have already lost the ability to give birth,” Yi said by email. “The willingness to have children is already very low, so the Chinese government’s offer of free surgeries will be of no avail. It will have little effect on the birthrate.”

- Why is the willingness to have more children low, at this point in time?
- Do you think this lifting this ban will have an effect on the birthrate? Why or why not?

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Newsbreak Answer Key: January 8, 2017

Vocabulary

- A. 5
- B. 2
- C. 7
- D. 1
- E. 3
- F. 4
- G. 6

Comprehension Questions

1. An intrauterine device (IUD)
2. More than three decades
3. Limiting couples to one child, and almost all new mothers were required to get one.
4. By removing their IUDs for free. But the offer, made without even a hint of an apology, has provoked incredulous outrage.
5. Because most devices are designed or altered to be more difficult to extract, some with shortened strings and others with no strings.
6. Having a second child
7. In the early 1980's
8. They risked that their children would be denied access to public schools and health insurance. Civil servants and state employees who refused lost their jobs.
9. 324 million; 107 million
10. The country is now confronting an aging population and a shrinking workforce.
11. It's a device inserted into the uterus to block fertilization.
12. Some because of the potential costs, others because of their age.
13. Growing concern over the economic impact of the nation's plummeting birthrate, now one of the lowest in the world.
14. 40 or older