Reproductive Rights and Chinese Women

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“If the family planning program posed a conflict between the interests of the individual and those of the state, the individual’s interests should be subordinated”
History of Population Programs

- Thomas Malthus - geometric vs. arithmetic growth
- Post WWII realization - military and economic power, population all intertwined
- Decrease in mortality, increase in fertility and life expectancy = global problem (40s and 50s)
Defining “Reproductive Rights”

☐ As defined by the UNFPA...

- Reproductive and sexual health as a component of overall health Reproductive decision making
- Equality and equity for men and women
- Sexual and reproductive security, including freedom from sexual violence and coercion, and the right to privacy
Brief History

- 1949 - Mao promotes big families
- 1956 - First birth control campaign
- 1971 - Two child policy created
- 1979 - One child policy implemented
- 1983 - Peak of coercive campaigns
Chinese Case Study-hypotheses

- Individual decision makers (Void)
  - Confucius-institutionalized discrimination
  - Lin Biao-women are “backward”

- Domestic determinants
  - Poor central planning
  - Breakdown between central government and local cadres

- International environment (Void)
  - Fourth Women’s World Conference-Beijing
Hierarchy of Power

Central Government

Social and Economic Conditions

Provincial Government

Political and Cultural Conditions

Local Government

District Government

Township Government

Village Government
Causes of Mistreatment

- Poor policy implementation
- Confusing laws
- Evasion of policies
- Insufficient resources
- Unfair easing of policies
Results

- Sex-selection abortions
- Infanticide
- Involuntary sterilization
- Forced implantation of IUD
- Imbalanced sex ratio
- Increase in cases of AIDS
- Mass migration to urban areas
Future of Chinese Situation

- Increase in participation of NGOs
- Bottom up approach to democratization
- Move towards client-based services
- Cadres replaced by professionals
- Greater equality between sexes
Further Research

☐ Family Planning Policies and programs from other countries
☐ Compare other issues in China