

Representation of Population Policy in Testimonial Narratives ---- from One-child to Two-child Age

As we all know that policy is from the ruling class which control most rights to speak. In this way, I'd like to explore how people from the opposite class recording history in their tone with the case of one-child policy.

Normally, the social history is written by historians, especially those who are supported by authorities in both funding and reputation. However, with the rise of new forms of literature and oral history, many marginalized people are able to write history in more flexible ways. As John Beverly said it's a kind of testimonial narratives, which means that the novel or novella-length narratives representing the narrator's life experience, and usually the narrator was the real protagonist or witness of the events recounted.¹

There was a time that lots of demographers and officials write books to illustrate and advocate the laws and regulations of the population policy, moreover, in some local history materials and archives, there are also systematic records about it. In 1980, Chinese Communist Party published an open letter that commanded couples could only have one child. In 2013, director Zhang Yimou was fined 7487854 Yuan for having three children. The first photo below was collected from my father, it was a billboard which could be regarded as a representation of those past years. The one-child policy has been pursued for around 35 years, until 2016, the government transformed it to two-child policy, then the Family Planning Department renamed to Health Committee, that is to say, each family is admitted and even encouraged to have two children.



In my memory, my grandparents used to want to have a son like most of the people at that time, so they had been giving birth to children for decades. Finally, they have five daughters and one son, however, they have to pay for the fines until the children grow up to 18 years old. In addition, my uncle worked for the Family Planning Department, he said that actually, most of the people who have many children were too poor to live, so it is impossible to afford the fines. In the last year of my undergraduate, the

1. John Beverly, "The Margin at the Center: On Testimonio (Testimonial Narrative)", *Modern Fiction Studies* 35 (1989): 11-28.

two-child policy came out, such as the second picture from news shown. Now I am still keeping a certificate to proof I am the only kid in my family. Therefore, for people born from 1980s to 2015, the impact of one-child policy could not disappear immediately.



The third picture is the cover of Mo Yan's history novel, *Frog*, which narrates the experience of author's aunt as a worker in the Family Planning Department. It could be regarded as testimonial narrative, because Mo Yan is the witness of the story he depicted in the novel. The events happened in his hometown, a village in Shan Dong Province, all the characters are subalterns like farmers and vagrants. It is the first and the only literature I have seen talking about the one-child policy, especially some anti-human details. The novel became part of my memory, because the characters in the novel are similar to my relatives. Although the novel is silent, it is the agency of marginalized voice, I nearly could hear the cry of those women whose babies were killed before they born to the world. We could usually learn the policy from official records or news of famous people, but we could not imagine how the subalterns lived under such policy without Mo's novel.

