

Research on the Effects of Traffic Accidents on the Daily Life of Bereaved Parents

– Focusing on the interpersonal relationships of “bereaved parents of an only child” in Jiang Su Province, China –

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Keywords: Traffic accident, interpersonal relationships, bereaved parents of an only child

This paper probes into the state of mind and lifestyle of “bereaved parents of an only child.” In China, the one-child policy has rendered parent lifestyles very vulnerable, as some children have become victims of ever-increasing traffic accidents.

Five parents in the southern region of China were chosen to participate. The method consisted of a semi-structured interview.

After such accidents, the family structure of the parents is destroyed and their social relations are affected; old relationships change and new relationships emerge. Each parent coped with their loss of an only child in their own unique way, by, for example: Joining a reclusive life at a Buddhist temple, receding from all areas of life (leading a life of isolation), finding and joining a self-support group and increasing interactions within such group, or adopting another child. In each case, the parent coped with the loss in his/her own way. There remains, however, a lack of support, both voluntary and public.

Families with improved interpersonal relationships have been able to alleviate the affect of such loss on life and spirit. Interpersonal relationships are found to be key in improving the quality of life and the mental state of the bereaved parents.