ADVERSE RELINQUISHMENT & ADOPTION EXPERIENCES (ARAEs) ASSESSMENT PROJECT

The current phase of the project is interviewing adoption triad members on adverse relinquishment & adoption experiences (ARAEs). The ARAE assessment takes into consideration the systems adoption triad members interact over their lifetime. An ecological systems model provides an ideal framework to look at adverse relinquishment and adoption experiences because it acknowledges the impact of the extended family, communities, adoption professionals, services, and adoption laws/policies on triad members. The advantage of an adverse relinquishment and adoption experience assessment is that it broadens an assessment from the simplicity of “is it an adoption issue” to a comprehensive look as to the reality of the number of ARAEs experienced by an adoption triad member over their life time as well as an opportunity to look at an individual’s ecological system to assess the best places for support and intervention.

The adverse relinquishment and adoption experiences listed in the ARAEs assessment were compiled from a review of adoption literature (research, biographical & autobiographical), professionals sharing on clinical cases, and individuals accounts shared by adoption triad members. As of March 15, 2018 the ARAEs assessment includes:

- 42 Adverse Relinquishment & Adoption Experiences for birth/first parents
- 57 Adverse Relinquishment & Adoption Experiences for adopted individuals
- 24 Adverse Relinquishment and Adoption Experiences for adoptive parents

While the ARAEs assessment does not include adverse relinquishment and adoption experiences that have impacted triad member’s extended families due to a need to limit the scope of this endeavor, the author acknowledges that extended family members/ adoption constellation members also experience adverse relinquishment and adoption experiences.

FUTURE STEPS

The current phase of the project is interviewing adoption triad members on their adverse life experiences to “fine tune” the list. Adoption triad members and professionals interested in reviewing the complete ARAEs list to help improve the comprehensiveness of the list should contact Marie Dolfi to share their experiences and knowledge. The second phase will be the development of a draft self-administered ARAEs assessment that would provide an individual an opportunity to rank the severity of the adverse life experience and what age range the adverse experience happened.

ADVERSE RELINQUISHMENT & ADOPTION EXPERIENCES

- Relinquishing their child to adoption (involuntary & voluntary)
- No knowledge of how child is doing after surrender
- Coerced to relinquish by family and significant others
- Coerced to relinquish by adoption professionals
- Declared unfit to parent by family court
- Forced to leave school or employment due to pregnancy
- Sent away to maternity home or other location
- Being shamed by family, friends &/or professionals for having an unintended pregnancy
- Birth parents who have secondary cases
- Child relinquished is a secret from family members & significant others
- Lack of support & services for trauma of relinquishment & PTSD
- Birth father learned about child after adoption was finalized
- Open relationship closed by adoptive parents
- Reunion relationship with adult child difficult or unsatisfactory

ADOPTEE INDIVIDUAL ARAEs

- Abandoned as a child
- Life-threatening illness
- Spent time in foster care
- Relinquishment from first family
- Loss or relationships with family, friends, community, country, language
- Adopted parents “as if” born into family
- Rejection by adoption parents due to poor family fit or wanting to talk about adoption & birth family
- Genealogical bewilderment due to lack of information
- Lack of genetic mirroring negatively impacting identity
- Open adoption relationship that was closed by birth parent
- Being a person of color with white adoptive parents and a lack of relationships with individuals of their race/ethnicity
- Reunion relationship with birth parents that is difficult or unsatisfactory
- Late discovery adopted person
- Unresolved loss of infertility, miscarriages, still births that impact relationship with adopted child
- Difficulty attaching to child due to differences in personality or temperament
- Parenting a child with significant mental health issues caused by early life experiences (i.e. fetal alcohol exposure, abuse or neglect)
- Birth parent does not acknowledge adoptive parent as child’s parent and tries to sabotage relationship with child
- Parenting a child with mental health issues and no post adoption services available
- Parenting a child with developmental trauma that rejects care and love
- Child rejects adoptive parents and wants to return to birth family
- Rejected by extended family adopting a child with special needs
- Secondary trauma experienced by parent due to hearing trauma stories from child

ADVERSE RELINQUISHMENT & ADOPTION EXPERIENCES (ARAEs)

- Malnutrition or other medical issues
- Witnessing domestic violence or other family conflict
- Family members act “as if” relinquishment & child never happened
- Loss of relationship with birth family
- Lack of information about birth family
- Lack of support & services for trauma of relinquishment & PTSD
- Rejection by birth family
- Seventeen and under
- Parenting a child with significant mental health issues caused by early life experiences (i.e. fetal alcohol exposure, abuse or neglect)
- Parenting a child with special needs
- Parenting a child with developmental trauma that rejects care and love
- Secondary trauma experienced by parent due to hearing trauma stories from child

ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS IMPACTING RELINQUISHMENT & ADOPTION

MACROSYSTEM
- Laws, Media, Funding for Services, Views on Race, Sealed Records, DNA Databases, Foster Care, Family Court, Negative Views on Unplanned Pregnancy, Adoption & Triad Members, Lack of Training Requirements for Professionals & Prospective Adoptive Parents

EXOSYSTEM
- Organizations (Adoption, Community) and Employments, Family Members & Professionals Participate In That The Triad Member Is Not An Active Member of

MESOSYSTEM
- Religious Organizations, Support Groups, Neighborhoods, Schools, Employment, Extracurricular Activities, Extended Family, Family Court, Counseling, Post Adoption Services, & Adoption Professionals Triad Member Interact With

MICROSYSTEM
- Individual That Live In The Triad Member’s Home

An adverse relinquishment and adoption assessment includes a review of the impact of multiple systems on triad members over their life time.

ECONOMIC SYSTEMS


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ADOPTIVE PARENT ARAEs

- Abandoned as a child
- Life-threatening illness
- Spent time in foster care
- Relinquishment from first family
- Loss or relationships with family, friends, community, country, language
- Lack of support & services for trauma of relinquishment & PTSD
- Reunion relationship with child difficult or unsatisfactory
- Rejected by extended family adopting a child with special needs
- Secondary trauma experienced by parent due to hearing trauma stories from child