PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ADOPTIVE FATHERHOOD: DESCRIPTIONS OF LIFE SATISFACTION PROVIDED BY ADOPTIVE FATHERS BRINGING UP ADOPTED KOREAN SONS

A dissertation submitted to the Kent State University Graduate School of Education, Health, and Human Services in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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The purpose of the current study was to gain an understanding of the phenomena of adoptive fathering and to describe life satisfaction as told by adoptive fathers bringing up Korean sons. In-depth interviews were conducted with 6 adoptive fathers raising Korean sons. Using a semi-structured interview guide, the following questions were asked, “What are some words that capture your experience as an adoptive father raising an adopted Korean son?” “Who were the people that influenced your role as an adoptive father?” “Describe how your role as an adoptive father has evolved over the years.” “Describe the benefits of adoptive fathering that you have experienced over the years.” A structural description was explicated from the narratives as a whole consisting of 3 overarching themes. Those 3 overarching themes included having a relationship, experiencing life fulfillment, and creating legacy. Adoptive fathers made active efforts to have a father and son relationship. It was recognized as mutual participation between adoptive fathers and sons doing things together—“the two of us.” Pre-adoption factors contributed to adjustment problems and brought about difficult father and son interactions. Adoptive fathers told of personal satisfaction forming emotional connections with their adopted Korean sons. Adoptive fathers also described how, through adoptive fathering, they gained fulfillment in life. Their identity was defined as a
father, rather than an adoptive father. Finally, adoptive fathers described how passing on positive memories of a father and son relationship to their adopted son was important. Adoptive fathers described an active, intentional effort to create a memory of a father and son relationship different from adoptive father’s own experience with his father. Two invariant themes emerged. One invariant theme reflected adoptive fathers experiencing behaviors from others that seemed like racism. Also, bringing up a Korean son offered adoptive fathers cross-cultural experiences they might have not experienced otherwise.

Implications of the findings to counselor education, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are provided.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

According to statistics provided through the United States Department of State—Office of Children’s Issues (n.d.), between 1999 and 2009, 214,496 Intercountry Adoptions were recorded. Between the years of 2005 to 2009, the top five countries for Intercountry Adoption included China, Russia, Guatemala, South Korea, and Ethiopia. Data of Intercountry Adoption starting from 1981, by 2003, 63,432 children were adopted by American families from East Asian countries—China and South Korea (Holt International Children’s Service, 2005). The data reflects that between 2005 and 2009, 21,844 children were adopted from East Asian countries (United States Department of State—Office of Children’s Issues, n.d.). According to statistics available from the United States Department of State—Office of Children’s Issues (n.d.), between 2004 and 2009, American families adopted 8,354 children from South Korea. This study focuses on Intercountry Adoption of South Korean boys and the lived experiences of their respective adoptive fathers.

A review of the literature found a limited base of understanding on adoptive fathers in general. A search for a broader understanding regarding the role of adoptive fathers, based on their lived perspective for instance, was also limited. Studies with particular focus such as intercountry adoption and adoptive father have been minimal.

Within the study of fatherhood, conceptual understanding of adoptive fatherhood paralleled those obtained from studies of biological parents. For example, according to Miall and March (2003), biological reproduction was regarded as the cultural norm for
child-bearing and child-rearing in America. Cultural rituals associated with pregnancy and the child-bearing process centered on the mother-to-be. Biological fathers offered a supportive role during this period. The supportive role continued into a child-rearing role. Biological reproduction established parenthood and the defined family. Cultural norms defined the kinship system. Tradition norms conceptualized biological ties as an indissoluble bond, transcending legal and other relational arrangements. Traditional norms of biological parenting described adoptive fatherhood.

Levy-Shiff, Zoran, and Shulman (1997) explored adoption and cultural norms. Although similarities existed, differences existed between adoptive fatherhood and fatherhood achieved through biological reproduction. Traditional cultural norms could not explain adoptive parenthood. Adoptive parenthood was not based on biological reproduction. Fatherhood was not established by the birth of his biological child. In the adoption process, cultural emphasis on pregnancy was disengaged and traditional cultural constructions misrepresented adoptive fatherhood. Levy-Shiff et al. (1997) investigated adjustment issues of 100 Israeli adoptive parents during the pre-adoption to post-adoption period. Adoptive fathers and mothers were equally engaged in the process. Fathers reported shared participation and experience with their spouse during the adoption process. Shared participation continued into the post-adoption period in family function activities. Adoptive parents, beginning from pre-adoption to the post-adoption, actively shared in parenting.

A review of the literature revealed studies on motherhood and adoption (Forbes & Dziegielewski, 2003; Gair, 1998; Howe, 2001; Priel, Melamed-Hass, Besser, & Kantor,
2000; Steele, Hodges, Kaniuk, Hillman, & Henderson, 2003; Yngvesson, 1997) and various studies of intercountry adoption and motherhood (Gribble, 2006; Juffer & Rosenboom, 1997). Studies of adoption and fathering revealed a mixed picture (Baumann, 1999; Daniluk & Hurtig-Mitchell, 2003; Levy-Shiff et al., 1997; Miall & March, 2003; Severson, 1994).

Kim, Shin, and Carey (1999) reviewed the reports of 15 adoptive families who had completed the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991). Those families had adopted Korean children—seven of the families had biological children. According to the findings from the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991), adopted children from Korea were reported to have normal social and behavioral/emotional adjustment. When the ratings of adopted and biological children were compared, no significant differences between internalizing or externalizing factors were found.

Sook-Bergquist, Campbell, and Unrau (2003) surveyed American parents who adopted children from Korea. The survey sample included 117 parents who adopted Korean children, 53 parents adopted two or more Korean children and 18 of those were sibling pairs. At the time of the survey, average age of the Korean adoptees was 5.7 years of age. The investigators explored family adjustment related to intercountry adoption. Their findings suggested mothers and fathers shared similar views regarding their family’s adjustment. The family adjustment related to the intercountry adoption was positive. Adoptive parents reported contentment with their decision to adopt a Korean child. Adoptive parents reported that they would repeat their decision to adopt a Korean child.
Kim et al. (1999) explored the South Korea national adoption structure. South Korea’s national adoption system reflected that when children were put up for adoption, they received care in foster homes and provided essential health care (Kim et al., 1999). A child up for adoption was placed in foster care until an adoption could be arranged. Usually, only one or two children were placed in each foster home. The government provided foster parents with extensive training, support, and medical care. Thus, Korean children in the foster system were likely to experience stable adult supervision, responsive care, and individualized face-to-face social contact.

**Pertinence of Understanding Adoptive Fathering for Counselor Education**

The data gathered by understanding the adoptive fathers’ lived experiences represented the meaning of life satisfaction as a whole. Presently, understanding of how adoptive fathers described their lived experience of fatherhood—socially constructed by their lived experiences—was minimally represented in available literature. Research efforts that yielded clinical information of adoptive fatherhood as described by adoptive fathers from their lived perspective were limited. Research of intercountry adoption as related to the role adoptive fathers was minimally represented.

The findings of this study have implications for the inclusion and integration of phenomenological procedures into understanding the psychological issues adoptive fathers bring. Appreciation of lived experiences provided unique understanding into how adoptive fathers sort through life in the process of gaining life satisfaction bringing up their adopted Korean sons. Those lived experiences gave rationale for examining adoptive father’s vocabulary of descriptions, and explanations for what is observed. If
counseling was a process of interactions, then the process needed to involve the adoptive father. The best source of information regarding what brings life satisfaction to an adoptive father was the adoptive father himself. The data gathered by understanding the adoptive fathers’ lived experiences represented the meaning of life satisfaction as a whole. Life satisfaction and its meanings were defined by the adoptive father according to lived experiences and not the counselor’s preconception of how lived experiences should or ought to be.

According to the American Counseling Association (2005), the practice of professional counseling respected and promoted diversity when working with clients. Counselors had a duty to continually monitor their cultural competence and engage in continuing studies to maintain their professional competence. When working with adoptive fathers, assumptions that a general understanding of fathers was applicable to adoptive fathers could lead to inappropriate diagnosis and treatment. A conceptual understanding of the diversity and complexities of adoptive fatherhood was needed. Such an understanding provided professional counselors insight into appropriate diagnosis and therapeutic approaches.

The counselor used prevailing theories and empirically validated therapeutic practices to assess problems and determine solutions. Counselors incorporated prevailing theories and assumptions to interpret and offer advice in order to change what is wrong and bring about a solution. In such a scenario, adoptive fathers learned a scripted plan on how they should sort through life. A plan scripted by the counselor was based on the counselor’s preconceptions. Adoptive fathers may have achieved goals set forth, but may
not have acquired a sense of personal agency (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Quantitative data can provide information, but cannot provide what life satisfaction feels like to be an adoptive father or understand how life satisfaction emerged out of adoptive fathers’ lived experiences bringing up adopted Korean sons.

For instance, Condon, Boyce, and Corkindale (2004) suggested that the transition and subsequent series of related changes for first-time fathers caused men significant distress. Psycho-educational approaches based on fathering skills were suggested as an appropriate way to reduce their stress (Condon et al., 2004). Available studies suggested the adoption process was stressful for adoptive parents, during both pre-adoption and post-adoption periods (McDonald, Propp, & Murphy, 2001; McGlone, Santos, Kazama, Fong, & Mueller, 2002). During those times of psychological stress, adoptive parents could seek counseling. Appropriate diagnosis and therapeutic approaches would address coping skills needed to help ease some of the stress associated with their particular circumstance.

According to Condon et al. (2004), distress stemmed from issues beyond fathering skills. Many first-time fathers who manifested extreme distress lacked a mental image regarding the role of fatherhood. Distress emanated from the belief that their experience with their own father provided an insufficient example of fatherhood. For men struggling to establish a conceptual framework of fatherhood, fathering skills development provided the most appropriate therapeutic interventions. However, it was unknown if fathering skills development was the most appropriate therapeutic
intervention for adoptive fathers who were struggling to develop a tangible concept regarding their fathering role.

It has been suggested that counselors begin with an already created meaning, which emerged out of preconceptions (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). Those preconceptions had a prejudicial impact on the counseling process and limited the full meaning of the client’s description of his or her experiences. When we approached counseling from the perspective of the counselor as specialist or expert, the counseling process became mechanistic or unilateral. It was the counselor who defined what life satisfaction or lived experiences should or ought to be and not the person.

Counselors should be mindful that adoptive mothers and fathers manifested and experienced psychological stress differently—presenting different clinical profiles (Condon et al., 2004). Judge (2003) investigated variations in parents’ assessment of parenting stress among 109 mother-father pairs who adopted children from Eastern Europe. The type and quality of stress reported were found to be significantly different between mothers and fathers. Mothers reported initial concerns regarding their reduced time to bond with a child, as compared to the process of pregnancy, whereas fathers raised concerns regarding anticipated changes to family functioning and family life.

It is important for counselors to understand and respect the diversity adoptive fathers bring to therapy. Adoptive fathers have their own perspectives, which differed from mothers. Understanding those experiences and perspectives of adoptive fathers were processes that impacted the therapeutic course of action. An approach, which
recognized experiences from the adoptive father’s perspective, opened up the possibility of fathers becoming actively involved in counseling rather than being a silent participant.

Narratives of lived experiences apprised the counselor of adoptive father’s strengths and resources. Respecting their contribution affirmed their role and value to counseling. A positive therapeutic atmosphere between the counselor and adoptive father achieved a trusting relationship. A trusting relationship founded on mutual respect enhanced the likelihood of a constructive therapeutic process and outcome.

Fathers have a significant role in determining counseling outcome. Carr (1998) conducted an overview of research addressing the relationship between father involvement and family therapy outcome. It validated intentional efforts to engage fathers in the counseling process, which had a direct impact on family therapy outcome. When counselors made purposeful efforts to involve fathers in the therapy process, a higher rate of therapeutic improvement was found.

It is critical that as professionals, counselors developed interventions that were based on a cross section of appropriate research. It made sense that a narrow knowledge base minimized the quality of the counseling process. A knowledge base of the lived experience of adoptive fathers as told by adoptive fathers enriched insight and understanding. Adoptive fatherhood reflected a dynamic interplay of multiple systems, influences, and processes. Understanding the multifaceted interrelationship of cultures, community influences, and cognitive processes offered alternative insight into counseling objectives and goals. A phenomenological study of adoptive fatherhood added to an understanding of fathering in its fullness, richness, and complexity. The outcome of a
A phenomenological study would illuminate the breadth and depth of the adoptive fathering experience in its fullness, richness, and complexity.

A study that investigated the phenomenon of adoptive fatherhood from their lived experience departed from traditional classification research methods. The lived experience of adoptive fathers was multifaceted. It involved the complex interrelationship of each father’s immediate culture, multiple community influences, and internal mental processes. The conceptual foundation suggested that a holistic understanding into a complex human issue of adoptive fatherhood needed to be illuminated. An investigation of the lived experience of adoptive fathers afforded insight of one’s lived experience, conceptual and imagined representations, as well as the social influences found in one’s immediate environment.

A one-dimensional investigation into a particular paternal role overlooked the phenomenon of fatherhood based on the father’s lived perspective. A traditional research method by design suggested that a universal truth could be discovered. Since a traditional research method by design strived to answer a question under study by identifying its singular effect, it dismissed a multi-dimensional solution or possibility. A traditional research approach of adoptive fatherhood discounted the intersection of meaning and social interaction between adoptive fathers, families, extended families, and larger communities. A one-dimensional conceptualization of adoptive fatherhood did not capture the possible reality as it was acted out day to day within the natural world of lived experiences. The socializing effects of a local community and kinship network on adoptive fathering could not be determined by a one-dimensional research paradigm.
The narratives provided by adoptive fathers would illuminate those shared realities as well as divergent ones experienced by adoptive fathers—reflecting common and diverse qualities of each one’s local culture, kinship networks, peer groups, community influences, and individual cognitive processes.

Research of adoptive parenting has given adoptive fathers little attention. This study added new information to available literature in a number of ways. Adoptive fatherhood has been conceptualized as a phenomenon, which represented a multiplicity of meaning and value (e.g., life satisfaction) for men—influenced by each father’s lived experience within his immediate social system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006) and related mental proceedings (Geertz, 2002; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006; Rice, 1980). A phenomenological approach captured the narratives of adoptive fathers based on their perspective and lived experiences. Second, this study provided information on ways adoptive fathers described life satisfaction gained from their lived experiences. Third, the narratives captured the unique lived experiences of adoptive fathers and provided them a voice regarding their life satisfaction gained from experiences of fathers bringing up their adopted Korean sons. Finally, the study provided seminal, qualitative understanding into the phenomenon of cross-cultural adoption and paternal parenting.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the life satisfaction gained by adoptive fathers as a result of fathering Korean boys. Adoptive fatherhood was conceptualized as a phenomenon that intersected individual meaning and social interaction between fathers, families, extended families, and larger communities—which
became a reality as it was acted out day to day within the natural realm of lived experiences. Phenomenological methods with narrative analysis established a systematic approach at discovering the essence of life satisfaction as described by adoptive fathers based on their fathering experiences. Narrative inquiry procedures provided the means for data collection. In-depth interviews engaged adoptive fathers in telling their story in order to capture the richness and complexity of adoptive fatherhood. Data analysis and explication methods were employed to allow the essence of life satisfaction associated with adoptive fathering to emerge. The study with its participants of adoptive fathers also provided a seminal understanding of cross-cultural adoption and parenting.

**Definition of Terms**

*Accessibility:* Accessibility refers to a fathers’ proximity to a child and determines the potential for interaction (Hofferth, Stueve, Pleck, Bianchi, & Sayer, 2002).

*Availability:* Availability refers to a father’s affective ability to attend to and interact with their children (Lamb, 2002).

*Domestic adoption:* Domestic adoption refers to within-country adoption practices.

*Engagement:* Engagement refers to interaction time spent together in daily activities between father and child (Lamb, 2002).

*Fatherhood:* Fatherhood refers to a fixed status men attain by having a child (Tanfer & Mott, 1997).
*Fatherhood movement*: Fatherhood movement describes a social trend of public and political activism with efforts to affirm fatherhood coupled with fathering activities and responsibilities.

*Fathering*: Fathering describes and distinguishes those parenting roles, activities, duties, and responsibilities that fathers are expected to perform and fulfill (Tanfer & Mott, 1997).

*Identity negotiation*: Identity negotiation refers to the process by which individuals of bicultural or multicultural background managed and interchanged their ethnic identity within varied environments with fluidity (Reed, 2001).

*Intercountry adoption*: Intercountry adoption refers to the adoption process that involves a change from the child’s country of birth to the country of the adoptive parents. The adoptive parents and child typically do not share race, ethnicity, or nationality (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001).

*Life satisfaction*: Life satisfaction represents a global affective evaluation of one’s life. It is the greater presence of positive and lesser presence of negative affect (Flouri, 2004).

*Regenerative families*: Regenerative families refer to family dynamics, particularly family coherence and family hardiness (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Patterson, 2002).

*Responsibility*: Responsibility refers to the commitment to roles, activities, and duties that fathers are expected to perform and fulfill (Lamb, 2002).
Rhythmic families: Rhythmic families refer to family dynamics, specific to family times and routines (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Patterson, 2002).

Social construction: Social construction refers to the argument that meaning is not an objective truth (Gergen, 1999). Whereas scientific traditions suggested that humans follow a natural order, social construction suggested that meaning was based on the conversational construct of self, which was regarded as the frames or lenses people used to understand their continuously evolving experiences.

Social parenting: Social parenting refers to a cultural shift in community values. It shifts from the traditional and recognizes parenthood based on the function of adoptive families, regardless of how they are formed. Community values minimized the capacity of parents to biologically reproduce and placed meaning on parenting activities within culturally organized ways. The shift in community values encouraged adoptive parents to make their own conceptual transformations from biological parenting to a social parenting. During the process of adoption, adoptive parents began to form value and meaning of social parenting. Adoptive parents began to affirm their child-rearing function and family development—rooted in value and worth. Social parenting bolstered an important part of self-development—providing adoptive parents a renewed perspective on family development and the possibility of child-rearing (Miall & March, 2003).

Subjective well-being: Subjective well-being refers to the process people use to evaluate the quality of their life (Kim-Prieto, Diener, Tamir, Scollon, & Diener, 2005).
Time sequential framework: Time sequential framework refers to a research method used to assess life satisfaction and subjective well-being—a process of on-going evaluations of lived experiences that led to a resolution about one’s entire life, rather than an objective evaluation of a single point in life (Kim-Prieto et al., 2005).

Transracial adoption: Transracial adoption refers to adoption in which the adoptive parents and child are of different races such as European American and African American or European American and American Indian (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001).

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Adoption has been a growing trend for many American families over recent decades, particularly intercountry adoption from East Asia (e.g., China and South Korea). Adoption challenged the dominant social construction of child-bearing and child-rearing, which has been based on biological reproduction. According to Miall and March (2003), biological reproduction has been the defining cultural norm for child-bearing and child-rearing in America. Adoption challenged the dominant social construction of the traditional family unit. It blurred the social context of the immediate and extended family. Adoption impacted relationships with friends and connections to local community. Adoptive fatherhood provided researchers a distinctive study into a man’s expression of fathering, since it was not defined by the birth of his child.

A review of the literature reflects several recent studies conducted on adoption as well as intercountry adoption, pertaining to motherhood (Forbes & Dziegielewski, 2003; Gair, 1998; Howe, 2001; Juffer & Rosenboom, 1997; Priel et al., 2000; Steele et al.,
Although studies conducted on adoption and fatherhood could be found (Baumann, 1999; Daniluk & Hurtig-Mitchell, 2003; Levy-Shiff et al., 1997; Miall & March, 2003; Severson, 1994), studies conducted on intercountry adoption and fatherhood have been limited.

Studies pertaining to adoptive fatherhood focused on the relationship between the adoptive father and adopted child (Baumann, 1999; Severson, 1994). Severson investigated the quality of attachment between fathers and their adopted children. The data suggested that fathers had difficulty committing to and feeling affection for their adopted child. Adoptive fathers demonstrated significant difficulty bonding with their adopted child. According to Severson, the lack of biological tie with the adopted child was reported by fathers as the prominent impediment to their emotional attachment.

Baumann (1999) suggested the quality of attachment between the adoptive father and adopted child correlated to the circumstances surrounding the decision to adopt. Infertility has been one factor, which led to adoption as an option for child-rearing. The news of infertility produced varying degrees of emotional distress for both husband and wife. When the decision to adopt was due to infertility, Baumann suggested that men and women experienced the news differently. Although traditional definition of parenthood assumed a biological connection between parents and children, female respondents stressed motherhood as an important part of their self-development. Despite infertility, women viewed motherhood through adoption as worthwhile. The possibility of child-rearing through adoption gave women a new perspective on personal growth and fulfillment.
Whereas women tended to be interested in the possibility of adoption as meaningful for self-development, men tended to attribute their infertility as a reflection of their masculinity. According to Baumann (1999), in general, infertility altered those fantasies of being transformed through biological reproduction and a second chance to fulfill dreams and goals through their biological son. Infertility threatened fantasies of being reborn, of creating a better version of oneself, or of filling a void as expected. Baumann suggested that men’s difficulty adjusting to their infertility adversely impacted their ability to bond with their adopted child.

Whereas some fathers found it difficult to accept their infertility, other fathers became motivated to adopt in the dawn of childlessness. One study suggested that fathers, who experienced feelings of loss due to their infertility, found that the possibility and expectation of raising a child through adoption offered a sense of renewed hope (Daniluk & Hurtig-Mitchell, 2003). The researchers suggested that adoptive fathers anticipated establishing a father-child bond with their future child. Through a natural process of discovery, adoptive fathers looked to discover similarities between them and their adoptive child’s temperament, humor, talent, and intelligence. The spirit of their childrearing approach was to realize compatible social characteristics and features of their adopted child and disregard any differences in physical characteristics.

Cultural rituals surrounding child-bearing—emphasizing motherhood and pregnancy—was disengaged or significantly reduced. Levy-Shiff et al. (1997) investigated the adjustment issues of 100 Israeli adoptive parents during the pre-adoption to post-adoption period. Fathers and mother had integral roles during the adoption...
process. In most cases, fathers and mothers approached the process of adoption united. Fathers reported shared participation and purpose with their spouse. The adoption process required shared participation and partnership between the adoptive parents—in order to endure the legal and bureaucratic obstacles and setbacks. Adoption was a give-and-take process, which required fathers and mothers to unite and draw on each other’s support to endure the course.

Miall and March (2003) conducted an in-depth qualitative interview with 82 respondents in a Canada-wide random sample of adoptive parents. The majority of the sample identified themselves as White, older, well educated, in the lower-middle- to upper-middle-class income range, married, and having raised children. The researchers examined the perceptions of adoptive parents regarding biological (birth) and adoptive parenting. Adoptive parents recalled initial concerns regarding their reduced time to bond with a child, as compared to the time afforded through the process of pregnancy. However, bonding issues between adoptive parents and child were not found to be significant during the post-adoption period.

During pre-adoption, a conceptual alteration from biological parenting to social parenting gained momentum. Social parenting was supported by a cultural shift in community values. The shift from the traditional recognized parenthood on the function of adoptive families, regardless of how they were formed. Community values minimized the capacity of parents to biologically reproduce and placed meaning on parenting activities within culturally organized ways. The shift in community values encouraged
adoptive parents to make their own conceptual transformation from biological parenting to social parenting.

According to Miall and March (2003), during the process of adoption, adoptive parents developed a conceptualization of social parenting. Adoptive parents established their child-rearing function and family development—rooted in value and worth. Social parenting bolstered an important part of self-development—providing adoptive parents a renewed perspective on family development and the possibility of child-rearing. Adopting a child involved a conscious decision to parent, and, ultimately, men learned to be fathers by parenting children. Fathers emphasized family functioning and commitment to family life as important considerations over biology when evaluating families and child-rearing.

Over the last few decades, the position of fathers and the meaning of fatherhood have evolved. Fathers became more involved in raising their children, spending time with them, and sharing with household chores, which differed distinctly from fathers’ involvement with child-rearing and household duties of previous times. The change has taken place over the years supported by the encouragement that fathers played an important role in families—both in the context of childrearing and in a general developmental sense. The evolution of fatherhood was gradual and could be attributed to both cultural and academic influence. A review of the literature offered insight into those influences and provides a backdrop into the study of adoptive fatherhood.

Fatherhood has been a fluid and changing phenomenon throughout history, frequently associated with the cultural importance of the period. Cultural expectations,
historical trends, and societal changes contributed to major shifts in expectations and the associated role of fathers (Lamb, 2002). Cultural and historical variability impacted constructs and practices of fatherhood ranging from breadwinner to moral leader to nurturer (Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 2000).

**Paternity.** According to Garbarino (2000), early historical accounts revealed that the concept of paternity raised the position of fatherhood within the fabric of cultural rites. Paternity provided the foundation for ancestry and lineage for sons. The fathers endowed their sons with heritage and inheritance. Paternity provided a means to propagate genes, establish lineage, and maintain ancestry (Lamb, 2000).

**Moral guide.** During the agricultural age of the U.S. cultural context, fatherhood was less defined by paternity and more by the substance of duty. Cultural prescription defined the function, position, and responsibility of fathers as the dutiful moral leader of the family (Lamb, 2000; La Rossa, 1997; Marsiglio et al., 2000). Good fathers provided their family with appropriate moral teaching and supervision. A responsible and effective father demonstrated proper judgment of moral values and exhibited an appropriate model of good Christian living (Lamb, 2000).

**Breadwinner.** By the mid-19th century, the expected role of fathers shifted as the economy moved from agricultural to industrial. The hallmark of the industrial age was the mass production of goods. The workplace gradually changed from within the home to outside the home. As fathers entered the workforce, the expected function, position, and responsibility of fathers as breadwinner achieved prominence (Lamb, 2000). As the breadwinner, fathers obtained a job and provided economic resources for the family. A
father’s income could be exchanged for essential and luxury goods. The duty of fathers was to provide for their family through wages earned from a job away from home. The home changed from self-sufficient to a consumption-oriented system. The work in the home to produce sustenance became less vital.

**Sex-role model.** During the 1930s and 1940s, fathers were to demonstrate a proper model of male values as well as a breadwinner (Lamb, 2000; Parke, 2000). As parents, fathers had significant function, position, and responsibility to provide a positive sex-role model, particularly for boys (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002; Mormon & Floyd, 2006).

**Conceptualizing Fatherhood**

Fatherhood has been a topic of research interest, which spanned over 30 years (Lamb, 2002). One of the early theories on men’s psychological and social development suggested that self-worth and identity were embedded in their work roles and work connections (Levinson, 1978). The psychological and developmental wellbeing of men was seen as directly associated with the degree of positive work roles and work connections they maintained. Levinson (1978) added social factors, beyond work, played a qualitative role in men’s life span development. Life events and interpersonal relationships contributed to men’s psychological and social well-being and presented opportunities for healthy development. Fatherhood embodied the interrelationship of life events and interpersonal relationships for men—from the birth of one’s first child to the emergent and developing father-child relationship. It was regarded as a fixed status—once a man became a father, he was always a father (Simpson, 2003; Tanfer & Mott, 1997).
In the study of fatherhood, the greatest challenge for researchers has been to develop an appropriate conceptual framework of fatherhood. Formative ideas regarding fatherhood was greatly influenced by available literature of maternal involvement with child care tasks and traditional division of labor. According to Mackey and Immerman (2003), models of paternal parenting qualities were patterned to studies of maternal parenting. Fathers were viewed to behave intrinsically much like mothers. Fathers were expected to endorse those activities such as spending time with their families and caring for their children. Conceptualization of the role of fathers were compared to maternal roles—such as time devoted to family activities and care for their children (Lamb, 2000; La Rossa, 1997; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Tanfer & Mott, 1997).

Studies on fatherhood emphasized fathering activities related to child care tasks and traditional division of labor (Hwang & Lamb, 1997). Traditional conceptual models of father involvement and effect on the well-being of children were based on conceptualization of mother involvement and subsequent well-being of children. Fatherhood was considered to be similar to motherhood (Tanfer & Mott, 1997). Mackey and Immerman (2003) reviewed studies conducted on father-child interaction and concluded that conceptual models of fatherhood were similar to those of mother-child interactions. Conceptual structure of the mother-family and mother-child relationship defined paternal behaviors and subsequent parenting activities.

According to Matta and Knudon-Martin (2006), paternal behavior was understood within the conceptual framework of maternal behavior. They reviewed interviews of 40 married couples with young children, which were collected between 2000 and 2003 from
a Contemporary Couples (CCS) study. According to Matta and Knudon-Martin (2006), fatherhood was defined within the context of larger relational systems—chiefly, within the system of couple processes. The data suggested a direct correlation between the quality of the marital relationship and paternal involvement.

Researchers designated dimensions of successful paternal behavior (Lamb, 2002; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Peters, Peterson, Steinmetz, & Day, 2000). Much of the available literature of fatherhood was grounded on traditional quantitative research methods. Within an otherwise broad subject matter, quantitative methods offered a time efficient approach to research. According to Lamb (2002), researchers applied quantitative methods as it gained wider acceptance and was viewed as an efficient technique of gathering pertinent information. Quantitative procedures isolated and measured tangible features of fathering (e.g., father involvement and parenting). Conceptual models of fatherhood centered on aspects of father involvement.

One of the most recognized conceptual models of father involvement was presented by Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1987). They identified three categories of father involvement—engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. Father engagement was conceptualized as the amount of direct contact between father and child. It characterized a father’s undivided attention given directly to his child (i.e., reading to the child). The second category of father involvement was accessibility. It was conceptualized as an indirect form of involvement and did not involve one-on-one interaction with the child (i.e., the father is reading the newspaper in the same room in which the child is watching television). Accessibility was defined as a father’s
availability to a child and the potential for interaction (Hofferth et al., 2002). The last category of father involvement, responsibility, included taking care of the needs of his child such as buying the child clothes and scheduling pediatrician appointments. Parke (2000) added that responsibility reflected a father’s motivation for involvement and whether he prioritized time around family activities. Involvement with children reflected a father’s motivation to conscientiously balance roles in order to spend time with his children (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002; Parke, 2000).

A quantitative approach provided an efficient way to study fathering. Using conceptual models with a singular focus, researchers emphasized one-dimensional hypotheses. Schoppe-Sullivan, McBride, and Ho (2004) reviewed the available literature and examined conceptual models in the study of fatherhood. Their analysis of the literature reflected a predominant application of one-dimensional conceptualizations of fatherhood.

Specificity has been important and contributed distinct information to available literature regarding expected function, position, and responsibility of fathers (Lamb, 2000; La Rossa, 1997; Marsiglio et al., 2000). It has been argued that a one-dimensional view of fatherhood presented limitations. A singular focus such as father involvement offered a narrow conceptualization of fatherhood (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). According to Palkovitz (2007), a one-dimensional representation of fatherhood offered a partial understanding of fatherhood—missing the wide-ranging meaning and essence of fatherhood for fathers. Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2004) further criticized that research pooled wide-ranging, disparate characteristics of paternal parenting to fit prevailing
conceptual models of father involvement. Conceptual models that addressed wide-ranging paternal parenting and subsequent father involvement were overlooked. Researchers needed to form a broader base of conceptual frameworks that addressed the multiplicity of father involvement (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). It was suggested that narrow focus of father involvement overlooked its fullness, richness, and complexity of paternal participation.

**Father Involvement**

Around the mid-1970s, the study of fatherhood shifted in focus. Rather than focusing on dimensions of father involvement, the study of fatherhood focused on fathers actively involved in nurturing and parenting their children (Lamb, 2002). The aim was to investigate fathers attending to paternal tasks and measure their involvement (Hwang & Lamb, 1997). Fathers were expected to be responsible for household and parenting duties (Marsiglio & Cohan, 2000; Townsend, 2002). The term fathering implied paternal roles, activities, duties, and responsibilities fathers were expected to perform and fulfill (Tanfer & Mott, 1997). Many studies adopted the conceptualization of father involvement—focusing on fathers being engaged, accessible, and responsible for children (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003).

Tamis-Lamonda and Cabrera (2002) presented an overview into the study of fatherhood. They classified studies of fatherhood into two broad groups: (a) becoming a father or (b) being a father. Researchers focused on the role fathers play in their children’s academic achievement, peer relations, cognitive development, and behavioral or emotional regulation. According to Tamis-Lamonda and Cabrera (2002), researchers
conceptualized the ideal father, the traditional authoritative father was replaced by the more “democratic-minded” caring father. Caring fathers were believed to be more involved in raising their children, spent more time with them, and were more willing to share household chores than their fathers.

On becoming a father, Levinson (1978) suggested fatherhood to be a significant milestone in men’s adult development. It established a significant interpersonal relationship, the father-child relationship, and represented a major life event for many men. Condon et al. (2004) investigated the transition process of first-time fathers to fatherhood. The investigators suggested that the transition to fatherhood could be a stressful life event for many men. First-time fathers’ transition to fatherhood produced gender-specific risk factors for psychological distress, which manifested in ways different from women (Condon et al., 2004). First-time mothers reported less stress than fathers during their pregnancy period. First-time mothers were more likely to anticipate motherhood. They tended to receive increased attention and support from families, friends, and health practitioners during the pregnancy period. The various levels of support provided to first-time mothers helped them prepare for changes in the marital relationship and lifestyle associated with motherhood.

Unlike women, first-time fathers were likely to anticipate fatherhood with anxiety and reservation. They were less likely to receive attention and support during this period. While first-time mothers prepared for changes in the marital relationship and lifestyle associated with motherhood, many first-time fathers were less likely to make similar adjustments. Stress seemed to be exacerbated during the transition for men who did not
have a firm conception or a foundation of fatherhood. Although men desired to create an experience with their future child different from those with their own fathers, they lacked an alternate model of father involvement which could provide a foundation. The transition to fatherhood entailed jumping from one universe of meaning to an entirely different universe of meaning, to which many men struggled to achieve (La Rossa & Sinha, 2006).

Researchers also focused on confirming the link between fathering characteristics and involvement (Henley & Pasley, 2005). A study of men’s perceptions and experiences involving paternity, fatherhood, children, and relationships was conducted by Marsiglio, Hutchinson, and Cohan (2001). The participants included 32 single men, between the ages of 16 and 30, with varied educational, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. The participants were encouraged to describe their experiences. Although their narratives were multifaceted and did not isolate particular relational or substantive descriptions of fatherhood, two general themes were implied. Readiness for fatherhood was one general theme. The most prominent sign of readiness for fatherhood was connected to breadwinning. Their sense of readiness was based on their present financial status and prospects of future financial ability to take on the responsibilities associated with fatherhood. Other than breadwinner, the participants viewed fathering as a learned quality rather than a natural one for them. Fatherhood was regarded an unfolding experience, which required adjustments and changes to their role. Most participants could not provide specific descriptions of fatherhood. According to Marsiglio et al. (2001), descriptions of fatherhood or father involvement were presented in the abstract.
Others described father involvement as interacting with their child in fun activities and focused on play time.

Fitzgerald, Mann, and Barratt (1999) reviewed studies that were devoted to measuring father involvement in parenting and household duties. The aim of researchers was to understand the relationship between fatherhood and its related impact on the well-being of children. They reflected the researchers’ belief that fathers and father figures played an important role in constructing unique identities, both in the context of childrearing and in a more general cultural sense. Many researchers focused on father involvement, measuring the impact of father involvement on the psychological and social development of their children and aimed to find significant related effect on the well-being of children (Mackey & Immerman, 2003; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Peters et al., 2000).

One such aspect, which gained popularity among researchers, was to measure the aggregate time spent by fathers with their sons (Lamb, 2002). Father involvement was conceptualized as the time spent by fathers with their sons—the amount of time fathers spent interacting with their sons (Mackey & Immerman, 2003; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Peters et al., 2000). Researchers hypothesized that interaction time between fathers and boys would reveal a significant, direct relationship between father involvement and positive child development outcomes (Garbarino, 2000; Morman & Floyd, 2006). From the data, one could infer that changes to father involvement in degree or kind would have observable positive effect on the emotional and psychological well-being of boys (La Rossa, 1997; Tamis-Lamonda & Cabrera, 2002).
In his research review of father involvement, Garbarino (2000) referred to a 1977 survey that linked father involvement to the well-being of boys. According to Garbarino (2000), the data suggested that boys regarded spending time with their fathers as most desirable. Other studies confirmed that boys desired to have greater involvement with their fathers (Mincy & Pouncy, 2002). Such data supported that the positive outcome of boys’ psychological well-being was directly impacted by the interaction between fathers and their sons (Mackey & Immerman, 2003). However, studies comparing parenting activities of fathers and mothers revealed that mothers maintained a greater role in the daily child care, attended more frequently to emotional needs, and spent more time interacting with their children (Lamb, 2002).

As information between dimensions of father involvement and the impact on the psychological well-being of sons became available, programs and interventions emerged to assist fathers in acquiring positive behaviors of fathering (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2000; Mackey & Immerman, 2003; Marsiglio et al., 2000; Peters et al., 2000; Tanfer & Mott, 1997). Shannon, Tamis-Lemonda, and Cabrera (2006) reviewed the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project, which studied approximately 3,000 families enrolled in Early Head Start. An experimental design was used to understand the effect of early intervention programs on fathers and children. Fathers’ level of education, income, and marital status were significantly associated with paternal parenting. Furthermore, the father–mother relationship reliably predicted patterns of fathers’ engagement over time. Fathers who rated the quality of their marital relationships as high and felt supported by mothers were found to rate high in their parenting quality and increase in quality over
time. The marital quality between mothers and fathers seemed to be a predictive factor of father involvement over time. Those findings paralleled the data presented by Tamis-Lemonda, Shannon, Cabrera, and Lamb (2004).

Those findings were confirmed by Cabrera, Shannon, and Tamis-Lemonda (2007). Cabrera et al. (2007) conducted a longitudinal study of fathers’ influence on their children’s cognitive and emotional development from toddler to age 4. They analyzed findings based on a sample of 290 adult, biological, resident fathers (and their partners). The findings suggested that fathers’ level of education, income, and marital status were significantly associated with father involvement. Positive father involvement was directly related to his level of education and income. Fathers who reported receiving higher sensitivity and positive regard from their spouse were connected to positive father involvement.

Clelia-Romano and Bruzzese (2007) reviewed fathers’ participation in the domestic activities of everyday life. They analyzed the data from the multi-purpose survey on household “Time Use” conducted by Istat (the Italian National Statistical Institute) in 2002–2003 and the data from this same survey conducted in 1988–1989. Fathers’ daily participation in the domestic activities was highlighted noting the changes that have taken place during the elapsed 14 years between the two survey editions. Consistent with prior findings, the level of father’s educational qualification predicted father involvement: the higher level of father’s educational attainment coincided with higher levels of father involvement. In the 14 years that elapsed between one survey and the other, fathers dedicated themselves to domestic activities by an increase of 21%. The
time dedicated to child-care activities rose from 27% to 45%. Between 1988–1989 and 2002–2003, the mean duration of the domestic work activities fulfilled by fathers increased by 28%. Fathers fulfilled domestic activities at a higher rate—including child-care activities, from the most demanding ones (such as feeding, washing, and dressing the children, etc.) to the simple interaction ones.

**Fathering Behavior and Gender of Child**

A presumption may deem that parents would be more adept at understanding the emotional needs of their same sex child (Mott, 1994). It would be logical to assume that closer emotional bonding existed between same sex parent and child. Cultural practices and observances supported those assumptions. Based on historical traditions, cultural norms supported a positive father and son relationship. Fathers had been expected to be responsible for modeling positive male sex-role behavior for boys. A positive father-son relationship was considered the foundation for healthy male sex-role identity development. Studies on father involvement suggested that fathers engaged in more physical contact with boys than girls during play activities (Lamb, 2002). Fathers were more likely to be sex-role differentiated in their parenting behavior—distinguishing between appropriate sex-role behavior for boys and girls within families (Feinberg & Hetherington, 2001).

Historically, fathers have been responsible to model appropriate male sex-role for their sons. Fathers reinforced male related behaviors and encouraged stereotyped sex-role expectations with their sons. According to Clelia-Romano and Bruzzese (2007), stereotyped sex-role expectations were dependent on whether a family had only male
children. In families with only male children, socializing and playing activities reflected more sex-role stereotype behaviors. Families with children of both sexes did not produce any significant marginal effect in sex-role stereotype behaviors.

Studies comparing biological and non-biological fathers (Gallagher, 1999; Hofferth et al., 2002; Popenoe, 1999) suggested that boys preferred involvement with their biological over non-biological fathers. Additionally, biological fathers were more likely to supervise their sons, maintain better discipline, and demonstrate more effective behavior control. According to Hofferth et al. (2002), the findings suggested that biological fathers demonstrated higher levels of commitment and involvement with their sons, when compared to non-biological fathers.

A meta-analysis of the studies regarding parents and sex-role socialization practices raised concerns. According to Lytton and Romney (1991), most studies reflected limited theoretical specifications along with weak methodology to make any definitive conclusions. A review of the methods and procedures suggested that many conclusions were based on inference. Findings of sex role stereotyping or attachment between parents and same sex children seemed to be based on speculative information rather than statistical significance. Forbes and Adam-Curtis (2000) conducted a study investigating the predictive effect between the sex of the child, the perceived sex-role activity, and the quality of parent encouragement. The sex of the child or the sex-role behavior demonstrated during an activity failed to predict differential levels of encouragement or sex-role expectations given by fathers and mothers to their children.
Parents provided encouragement equally for boys and girls, regardless of the sex-role associated with an activity.

Parenting existed in the context of larger relational systems—chiefly, within the system of couple processes. Research findings suggested that fathers and mothers provide varying degrees of emotional attachment with their children—unrelated to the sex of their child (Feinberg & Hetherington, 2001; Forbes & Adam-Curtis, 2000; Lovas, 2005; Spoth, Neppl, Goldberg-Lillehoj, Jung, & Ramisetty-Mihler, 2006). Spoth et al. conducted an exploratory study regarding the effect between the sex of the child and the quality of the relationship based on the parent’s sex. No statistical significance linked emotional closeness or attachment based on the sex of the parent or the child. According to Williamson (2004), healthy development of sex-role identity for children was linked to a positive relationship between children and both parents. However, the gender of the child did predict differential parenting patterns in handling of discipline. Fathers administered more severe discipline, sometimes involving physical punishment with their sons than daughters.

A review of the findings suggested that the temperament and emotional disposition of children seemed to be better predictors of parent and child closeness than gender. The research by Lovas (2005) suggested that mothers and fathers were more likely to display warmth and affection when they attributed a child’s emotional behavior as warm or affectionate.
The Fatherhood Movement

By the mid-1970s, examination of fathering and questions regarding fatherhood moved to the front of public and political debate. The debate coalesced as the fatherhood movement (Canfield, 1999; Eberly, 1999; Horn, 1999; Mincy & Pouncy, 1999). Horn, Blankenhorn, and Pearlstein (1999) outlined the various viewpoints that comprised the Fatherhood Movement. At its inception, renewal of fatherhood was the emphasis. It was achieved through assembling and marshaling fathers for fathers. The Fatherhood Movement promoted the position and meaning of fathers through on-going public and political discussions—within society, community, and family (Cabrera & Peters, 2000; Eggebeen, 2002; Horn, 1999). The goal of the discussions was to advance a comprehensive perspective and definition of fatherhood and fathering (Whitehead, 1999).

The fatherhood movement evolved into a widespread activism. As it spread, uncertainty regarding its organizational structure and purpose prevailed at both the public and political levels (Wallerstein, 1999). Some called for a political action, while others refrained from political affiliation (Coats, 1999). Unable to agree on common objectives, the movement splintered into factions and formed different goals and objectives regarding fatherhood and fathering (Peterson & Steinmetz, 2000).

For example, Promise Keepers promoted a moral foundation in its definition of fatherhood (Cabrera & Peters, 2000; Eggebeen, 2002; Horn, 1999). Promise Keepers affirmed a spiritual awakening and renewal for fathers. As the moral and spiritual leader, fathers needed to regain their authority in the family (Wallerstein, 1999). Promise
Keepers proposed that responsible and committed fatherhood ought to be the norm of masculinity (Horn, 1999).

On the other hand, The Fatherhood Project of the Family and Work Institute promoted a structural answer to fatherhood (Cabrera & Peters, 2000; Eggebeen, 2002; Horn, 1999). Fathers and mothers were instructed to unite parenting roles, activities, duties, and responsibilities. The project emphasized fathering and the impact of fatherhood on the physical and emotional development of children. The discussions of fatherhood suggested that men needed support and assistance with their role of fathering (Lamb, 2002). Such discussions contributed to the development of public and political interest groups, which aimed at coaching and educating fathers of those parenting activities and responsibilities expected of them.

Political rhetoric associated the state of fatherhood with a moral and stable society (Cabrera & Peters, 2000; Horn, 1999). Goals and interests united around the belief that fatherhood was vital to family economics, civic structure, and political values. Fatherlessness was regarded as the greatest problem facing the state of fatherhood. Fatherlessness was linked to social problems and the psychological development and outcome of children, with a more pronounced impact on boys in many areas. Fatherlessness had an unquestionable and damaging effect on children in specific and society at large (Cabrera & Peters, 2000; Eggebeen, 2002; Horn, 1999). As a direct result of fatherlessness 75% of children experienced poverty before the age of 11, experienced school failure or dropped out of school, and/or experienced behavioral or emotional problems requiring psychiatric treatment. Children from fatherless families were three
times more likely to commit suicide, become victims of child abuse or neglect, engage in premature sexual behavior, develop drug and alcohol problems, and commit violent crimes. The Fatherhood Movement promoted the message that restoration of responsible and committed fatherhood directly impacted children’s psychological and social well-being and the future of a healthy society (Horn, 1999).

The Fatherhood Movement brought to the forefront a public and political discussion of fatherhood. The fatherhood movement reflected diverse objectives. The fatherhood movement affirmed the position of fathers and the meaning of fatherhood. The effort unified attitude and character of fatherhood and the role of fathering.

**The Qualitative Aspects of Fatherhood**

Research using qualitative methods has gained increased attention (Lamb, 2002; Palkovitz, 2002). According to Creswell (1998), when the research goal was to understand social or human issue from the perspective of participants, a qualitative approach provided the most appropriate methodology. A qualitative study offered a conceptual foundation that diverged from traditional research methods. In a qualitative study, the lived world of participants was the center of the researcher’s attention. The lived experiences of the participants as told by the participants were integral to understanding a particular phenomenon under study. The information obtained from participants provided an understanding of a phenomenon of interest in their natural setting, which could not be captured fully through traditional qualitative methods.

Understanding the impact of psychological issues based on the participants’ own descriptions of their lived experiences has proven to be essential to research (Giorgi,
Palkovitz (2007) described the significant contribution of qualitative methods. Through qualitative research methods, the role of fathers as described by fathers for fathers brought forth an understanding, which had been neglected by traditional research methods. Fathers openly described their individual and unique lived experiences.

In the study of fatherhood, continued shift towards qualitative viewpoints broadened the way the role of fatherhood has been conceptualized. For instance, La Rossa and Sinha (2006) proposed fatherhood as a socially constructed phenomenon. As a social construction, fatherhood was culturally shaped and imaginatively built. Fatherhood was revealed in accordance with the norms of one’s cultural context. Every cultural context reflected a web of fluctuating influences—family, social, neighborhood, regional, institutional, and national. Those influences were fluid resulting in multiple social constructions of fatherhood. Fatherhood emerged at the intersection of meaning and social interaction between men, families, extended families, and larger communities. Reality could not be described as a standard shared by all but represented a personal mental and experiential construct (Matta & Knudon-Martin, 2006). Bronfenbrenner (1979) mapped the key circles of influence on people. The most powerful circle of influence was found in a person’s immediate social organization including kinship, family, neighborhood, and peer groups. Although surrounding circles of influence were broader cultural, economic, and political forces, a person’s immediate social organization exerted the greatest influence.

In addition to the cultural context, the cognitive processes of people had an equivalent influence. For example, according to La Rossa and Sinha (2006), fathers have
been bombarded with information from broader organizations and institutions on how to be a successful parent. However, fathers have not accepted those ideas completely or precisely. Within the context of changes, fathers considered and chose selectively those characteristics that complemented their own purpose and rationale (Rice, 1980). La Rossa and Sinha (2006) suggested understanding social construction and its role in individual constructions of ideas regarding everyday experiences was vital.

To better understand the interrelationship of local cultural norms and subsequent social processes, a review of the scholarly work of Geertz is applicable. As a cultural anthropologist, the importance of understanding the structures of inherited conceptions found in cultural observances and social systems was of interest (Rice, 1980). Cultural observances and social systems were considered as interdependent constructs as well as distinct. According to Rice (1980), Geertz described local cultural observances and social systems as explicit or implicit. Immediate cultural observances included symbols such as ceremonies, rites, and rituals. The behavior of people within a community, in most cases, closely paralleled local cultural observances. It was noted that behavior of people departed from recognized public social systems. Individual circumstances and personal assessments at a given moment in time were governed by local cultural observances or local social systems.

The role of personal judgment and its connection to social behavior was fundamental. Social processes represented people’s interpretation of cultural symbols immediately available in one’s culture—founded on their conceptual or ideational mental formations (Rice, 1980). According to Geertz (2002), the conceptual or ideational mental
formations of people embodied public meaning structures as well as locally defined construction of meaning. The influence of local culture governed people’s knowledge and structure of ideas (Rice, 1980). People constructed meaning of their lived world and responded to things based on one’s synthesis of public meaning structures as well as local knowledge and local culture. Structure of ideas was developed both intentionally as well as spontaneously. Therefore, investigation of human social life required an understanding of public and local symbols as well as the process used by individuals to assign meaning and respond. An in-depth appraisal of symbolic structures and related interpretational processes was necessary to understand the multiplicity of assigned meanings reflected in people’s actions.

An emphasis on a one-dimensional conceptualization of fatherhood presumed it to be monolithic. Fatherhood represented a multiplicity of meaning for men influenced by each one’s immediate social system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006), cultural observances, and personal assessment (Geertz, 2002; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006; Rice, 1980). Considering the cultural observance of fatherhood as an example, various representations can be found. Men who have biological ties to a child as well as men who have no biological connections can assume the role of father and fulfill its responsibilities. A man, as a step-father or an adoptive father, undertakes the role of father for a child. As observed in social processes, paternity is not always a precursor in order for a man to accept the role of father. The traditional concept of fatherhood as a fixed status based on an event does not appear to be the norm in present society. Fatherhood, as observed in the present society, reflected a social construct and was
grounded within an experiential framework. It departed from the traditional concept of fatherhood. That is, fatherhood emerged as an experiential construction (Simpson, 2003). For many men, the role of father reflected cultural observances and social influences of the local community.

The connection between cultural symbols and interpretational processes represented the possibility of having multiple perspectives on fatherhood. Cultural observances of fatherhood along with each father’s interpretation of those observances offered a range of personal perceptions. As suggested, the interpretational process represented a host of conceptual as well as the ideal (Rice, 1980). Mental activity assimilated cultural symbols, social influences, and the structure of ideas. Personal experiences with one’s own father or an adult male (other than a biological father) who symbolized a father figure and related interpretations give shape. One’s structure of the father’s role could be equally influenced through interactions with family, friends, and neighborhood. With the diversity of community influence and personal mental assessment, fatherhood represented a multiplicity of meaning for men.

Fatherhood existed in various perspectives and designs. Its observance extended beyond any measurable context or fixed status. Fatherhood was an experiential process and a human experience. Fatherhood was influenced by local culture observances as well as each father’s own personal assessment. Fatherhood involved both specific as well as multifaceted ideas and meaning. The multifaceted nature of fatherhood represented personal assessment, affirmed through personal experiences. Fatherhood represented a mental construct—as a memory, a conceptual figure, or a perceived ideal. The perceived
ideal could include a patchwork of memories and observations. Although an adult man may not have biological ties to a child, he could have a positive presence in that child’s life. Whether men acted as a father or not, they provided children with lasting, positive experiences. In such scenarios, fatherhood represented an experiential phenomenon that existed in various perspectives.

In addition to the significance of the role, the unique contribution of fathers to other fathers was of importance. Eggebeen and Knoester (2000) studied the difference between men who were fathers and men who were not fathers. They examined the association between fathers and non-fathers according to measures of well-being, social relations, and family ties. The data reflected that fatherhood directly correlated with better psychological health, greater social connections, closer intergenerational family ties, and higher commitment to work. Those findings supported earlier discussions by Tanfer and Mott (1997) where fathers reported an increase in life satisfaction as a result of fatherhood and fathering. Due to fatherhood and involvement with their children, fathers reported that they had become better people (Palkovitz, 2002).

In their role as fathers, they negotiated various obligations and responsibilities. Fathers balanced multiple priorities daily. According to Palkovitz (2002), the role of fathers required an on-going process of juggling responsibilities and maintaining balance among divergent roles, while meeting the needs of their children and family. Keeping perspective of what really mattered versus the distractions that competed for attention was a daily challenge expressed by fathers. Balancing fluid and shifting roles with limited resources against unlimited demands was a source of frustration for many fathers.
Despite the overwhelming challenge presented to fathers, they conveyed a remarkable commitment to their father role.

According to Palkovitz (2002), variations existed because fathers adapted interactional patterns and responsibilities in consideration for the psychological and developmental needs of their boys and family. Fathering reflected adapting parenting roles within the developmental context of their children. Variations in parenting involvement and responsibilities were viewed as expected and in accordance with changes in the family life cycle.

The findings from traditional research studies were not discounted. Findings from qualitative research revealed that fathers supported many of the ideas of fathering that were suggested through traditional research methods (Lamb, 2002; Palkovitz, 2002; Paquette, Bolte, Turcotte, Dubeau, & Bouchard, 2000; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004). Fathers agreed that their involvement with their children contributed to the positive social and emotional child development. Fathers acknowledged that their involvement contributed to successful adult outcome for their children.

Overwhelmingly, fathers reported that as a result of involvement with their children, they had become better people (Palkovitz, 2002; Paquette et al., 2000). Fathers reported that the experience of fatherhood made them more humane and sensitive. Such descriptions given by fathers provided researchers the understanding that fathers gained personal benefits as a result of involvement with their children. Personal life satisfaction and well-being seemed to be connected with fatherhood for many fathers.
Fatherhood and Life Satisfaction

According to Kim-Prieto et al. (2005), life satisfaction was a term found in the literature that denoted a person’s evaluation or judgment regarding one’s satisfaction with life at a point in time. It typically referred to an attitudinal or affective quality such as happiness and contentment as well as liking or disliking life. An expanded application of the term life satisfaction, which measured life evaluations or judgments based on feelings about one’s life fulfillment, was the term subjective well-being. Unlike life satisfaction, which typically denoted a life evaluation at a particular moment in time, subjective well-being referred to a process of on-going evaluations of one’s life, which represented an accumulation of memories and a foundation for life evaluation later in time (Flouri, 2004). In many studies, life satisfaction and subjective well-being were linked together and often interchangeable. Kim-Prieto et al. (2005) proposed that life satisfaction and subjective well-being were not interchangeable, but rather interrelated functions within the process of evaluating one’s feelings as well as thoughts regarding life fulfillment and contentment. According to Kim-Prieto et al., life satisfaction along with subjective well-being represented a fuller sequence of events and related processes of unfolding thoughts and feelings regarding life events over time. Together, they represented a person’s global evaluation regarding one’s life contentment. Since the task of understanding life contentment required insight into a person’s sequence of events and related processes of unfolding feelings and thoughts over time, measurement tools such as questionnaires captured a partial or incomplete evaluation of life satisfaction or subjective well-being. Measurement tools such as questionnaires were inadequate for
capturing the complete structure of a person’s life contentment (Kim-Prieto et al., 2005). In-depth interviews were considered as preferred approaches to understand the sequence of events and unfolding of thoughts and feelings over those events.

Despite the daily challenge of balancing priorities, responsibilities and activities, fathers seemed to gain contentment and happiness from their fathering experience. Fathers reported gaining life satisfaction as a result of fatherhood and fathering (Tanfer & Mott, 1997). Knoester, Petts, and Eggebeen (2007) analyzed the data on 2,494 new fathers from the Fragile Families Study to investigate the arrival of a new child and influence on fathers’ well-being and social participation. The data suggested that commitment to fathering was positively associated with changes in well-being, religious participation, and hours in paid labor. Fathers credited fatherhood and fathering with better psychological health, greater social connections, closer intergenerational family ties, and higher commitment to work (Palkovitz, 2002).

**Intercountry Adoption**


U.S. adoption accreditation (Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2006) corresponded to the Guide for Good Practice under the Hague Convention (Permanent Bureau, Hague
Conference on Private International Law, 2006). Strict regulations on intercountry adoption were put into effect. Regulations called for a thorough home study that included stringent eligibility requirements to adopt internationally. Adoption agencies provided prospective adoptive parents with a minimum of 10 hours of training (independent of the home study). Training included topics on the adoption process, possible developmental risk factors, and attachment disorders. Expectations to maintain or instill cultural identity were not stated and any decision to counsel or train adoptive parents in the culture of the country of origin was left to the adoption agency.

**Intercountry adoption from East Asia.** Rojewski and Rojewski (2001) differentiated domestic, intercountry, and transracial adoption. Domestic adoption referred to the adoption process that took place within national boundaries. The adoptive parents and children were of the same race and nationality. Intercountry adoption involved a process in which parents sought outside their national boundaries to adopt a child. The adoptive parents did not share nationality, race, or ethnicity with their adopted child. A third category of adoption was transracial adoption. In transracial adoption, the parents adopted a child of a different race or ethnicity, within their national boundaries (Steinberg & Avenevoli, 2000).

Intercountry adoption joined together parents and children from different countries in the adoption process. According to Rojewski and Rojewski (2001), intercountry adoption accounted for approximately 12% to 13% of total annual adoptions in the United States. In 2003, approximately 21,000 children were adopted from outside the United States. Many intercountry adoptees arrived from Africa, Asia, Central
America, and Eastern Europe. However, the largest and most rapidly growing percentage of intercountry adoptions came from East Asia—China and Korea (Holt International Children’s Service, 2005; Rojewski, 2005). According to Simon and Altstein (2000), the greater percentage of the intercountry adoptees from East Asian countries for the United States has been from the Republic of Korea (ROK). However, a recent shift in trend was evidenced with the increased percentage of children adopted from China (Holt International Children’s Service, 2005; United States Department of State—Office of Children’s Issues, n.d.). Adoption of Chinese children by American families increased from 61 in 1981 to average 6,151 by 2008 (see Table 1).

**Psychological impact related to intercountry adoption.** Bimmel, Juffer, Van Ijzendoorn, and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2001) reviewed the data on adjustment issues of intercountry adopted children and cited several concerns. First, children seemed to struggle to incorporate the culture of adoptive parents. Interrelated to differences in heritage, children found their ethnic appearance and trait, both different and distressing. Their difference in appearance and trait was magnified by the awareness of dissimilarity from their peers. Finally, children found it difficult to cope with the idea that they were given up by their biological parents. Such studies warned parents who were considering adoption to be aware of significant adjustment issues surrounding intercountry adoption (Narad & Mason, 2004). Adopted children were more likely to be considered for special education with learning or emotional disabilities (Brodzinsky & Steiger, 1991; Petrill, Deater-Deckard, Schatschneider, & Dacis, 2005). However, adverse pre-adoption conditions suffered by children such as malnutrition and deprivation were directly
Table 1

**U.S. Intercountry Adoptions From East Asia: 1991-2008**

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>71,201</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>29,761</td>
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</table>


related to post-adoption adjustment problems (Goldberg, 2001). When pre-adoption conditions were factored in research methods and measurement procedures, no significant effect could be found for adjustment problems of intercountry adoptees. Children who received physical, emotional, and medical care during pre-adoption were found to be resilient and demonstrated positive post-adoption adjustment (Juffer, 2005; Kim et al., 1999; Westhues & Cohen, 1997).

**Internalizing and externalizing psychological factors.** Achenbach (1991, 1993) conducted empirical validation studies of unique emotional dynamics and of internalizing and externalizing factors. Internalizing emotional problems were defined as the combined effect of anxiety, withdrawal, depression, and social problems. Externalizing emotional problems were defined as the combined effect of oppositional behavior, aggression and overactive behaviors. The combined effect of aggression, withdrawal, and depression were shown to contribute significantly to social problems (see Table 2).
Table 2

*Internalizing and Externalizing Psychological Factors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms</th>
<th>Internalizing Factors</th>
<th>Externalizing Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Withdrawn</td>
<td>Attention Problems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somatic Complaints</td>
<td>Delinquent Behaviors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anxious/Depressed</td>
<td>Aggressive Behavior</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social Problems</td>
<td>Oppositional Behavior</td>
</tr>
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</table>


**Emotional regulation issues.** Van Der Valk, Verhulst, Neale, and Boomsma (1998) studied adopted children to investigate the prevalence of internalizing and externalizing emotional problems. In general, internalizing emotional features were found to be significant among intercountry adoptees. Cederblad, Hook, Irhammar, and Mercke (1999) found a higher incidence of internalizing emotional problems among intercountry adoptees. Developmental and environmental influences were found to contribute equally to psychological problems. Developmental factors, early childhood (Brodzinsky & Steiger, 1991; Petrill et al., 2005), and adolescence (Bimmel et al., 2001; Hoksbergen, 1997; Versluis-den Bieman & Verhulst, 1995; Westhues & Cohen, 1997) were identified as critical periods. School-aged children were found to demonstrate emotional problems, which adversely impacted their academic performance and required special education programming (Brodzinsky & Steiger, 1991; Petrill et al., 2005). During adolescence, intercountry adoptees were found to suffer with psychiatric problems such
as depression and were more likely to attempt suicide (Bimmel et al., 2001; Hoksbergen, 1997; Versluis-den Bieman & Verhulst, 1995; Westhues & Cohen, 1997).

Contextual factors, such as family discord, also contributed to internalizing emotional problems (Anders, Lindblad, & Vinnerljung, 2002). According to findings, the incidence of mental health problems was related to family and parenting issues. Mental health problems of adoptees such as suicide, suicide attempts, psychiatric admissions, or drug addiction were correlated to multifaceted factors including family and parenting issues, marital discord, and emotional mistreatment (Hoksbergen, 1997).

Identity development. Perhaps, one of the most cited theorists on identity development has been Erikson (1959, 1968). Erikson (1959) proposed that life span development occurred according to an epigenic principle or process of differentiation. At certain developmental periods, individuals were anticipated to have psychosocial crisis, which required resolution. Differentiation resulted from the successful resolution of the psychosocial crisis. Psychological health and emotional well-being depended on the ability to differentiate successfully at each stage of life span development. Identity development was believed to emerge as a result of psychological and sociological crisis during adolescent development. During the adolescent years, they were presented with a psychosocial quandary. Questions emerged such as “Who am I?” and “What do I do?” During this developmental stage, adolescents wrestled with their self-image and sought out to distinguish themselves from others—particularly authority figures. Successful identity development led to a balance between self as individual entity and as part of the larger society—a necessary aspect for healthy adult development (Erikson, 1968).
Erikson (1968) defined identity development as an objective developmental event, which followed a natural order of crisis and resolution during adolescence. Gergen (1999) provided an alternative description of identity development, which reflected a diversion from Erikson. Gergen (1999) purported that identity was not an objective development, but rather a continuously evolving phenomenon. According to Gergen (1999), a person’s identity represented a social construction—self-representation of a continuously changing and transforming identity.

Whereas Erikson theorized that identity development followed a natural order, Gergen (1999) argued that identity continuously evolved and changed. Identity was not an objective phenomenon, but rather a social construction based on human qualities and characteristics moving within people (Gergen, 1999). Individual identity was based on the conversational construct of self. Those conversational constructs were viewed as the frames or lenses used by people to understand their world and form an accepted reality. Therefore, identity was a self-representation of patterned actions into which our accepted reality has been woven or constructed. As a conversational construct, identity was precariously situated and subject to spontaneous interference of additional verbal and nonverbal proceedings. Even slight modification of utterance, tone, and signal could potentially disrupt the pattern and shake up the accepted reality. Through an on-going process of reconstruction, individual identities evolved and gained in dimensions and regenerated possibilities of personal accomplishments.

**Racial-ethnic identity development.** The American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Adoptions (1971) reviewed the research on identity development. The
findings were described within four categories: (a) influence in an adoptive family; (b) identity needs of individuals and groups; (c) the role of family fantasy, and (d) the quest for knowledge origins. Families varied in the level of comfort with discussing the adoption process with children. Fear of hurting or creating unnecessary crisis was the foremost reason given by parents for avoiding discussion of the adoption process with their child (Bimmel et al., 2001). Identity issues frequently surfaced. Due to the difference in racial and ethnic makeup between family and child, intercountry adoptees were more likely to question their self-image, their diffuse ethnic identity, and their belongingness. Bimmel et al. (2001) described the process of reciprocal identification as a critical issue among families of intercountry adoption. The difference in race and ethnicity between intercountry adopted children and adoptive parents could strain their relationship. Finally, some adoptive children fantasized about eventual reunion with their birth parents and family of origin. Many adoptive children reported some degree of searching activity. Sobol and Cardiff (1983) distinguished the following reasons for the searching activity: (a) a desire to obtain factual information about their racial and ethnic roots; (b) a desire to increase their sense of racial and ethnic identity; (c) a desire to establish a relationship with their birth parents; and (d) a desire to reassure their birth parents regarding the outcome of adoption.

Recent investigations into ethnic identity development of intercountry adoptees have shown mixed results. Rojewski and Rojewski (2001) summarized theories explaining racial-ethnic identity development. In general, individuals proceeded through a progression of stages characterized by: (a) rejection of their own culture in favor of the
dominant culture; (b) rejection of the dominant culture in favor of the minority culture; and (c) finding a sense of balance between ethnicity and the dominant culture. Adoptive families who celebrated the ethnic ancestry of their adopted children fostered a positive racial-ethnic identity development.

Phinney (1991) provided a standard for understanding the stages of identity development of intercountry adoptees. According to the paradigm, individual’s progressed through three stages—unexamined identity, identity search, and achieved identity. According to Rojewski and Rojewski (2001), some intercountry adoptees described their identity as “adoptee” rather than any particular racial-ethnic group. Race did not define their identity development. Moreover, as intercountry adoptees, traditional racial or ethnic identity did not describe their unique experience (Coleman, 1995). Often, intercountry adoptees identified their ethnicity as “mixed” (Simon & Altstein, 2000). The appropriateness of traditional models to describe the ethnic identity development of intercountry adoptees remained unclear (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001).

Finally, intercountry adoptees regarded themselves as “mixed” (Simon & Altstein, 2000) or some other nontraditional collective identity (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). Among intercountry adoptees, identity appeared to be fluid rather than fixed racial or ethnic characteristic. Reed (2001) illustrated that children, who were of multicultural or multiracial background, used identity negotiation as a way to cope and interrelate inside varied ethnic and cultural environments. Fastening, unfastening, and refastening identities described the manner in which children adapted or modified ethnic presentations depending on the requirements of a local culture.
In general, positive identity development has been associated with healthy mental health, particularly during adolescence (Erikson, 1959, 1968). The adoptive families’ affirmation and celebration of their adopted child’s ethnic identity contributed to a sense of belongingness to an ethnic reference group and positive ethnic identity development. However, intercountry adoptees varied in need for racial-ethnic identity and affirmation. Traditional concepts of racial-ethnic identity development did not fully explain the process of identity development for intercountry adoptees.

**Family Characteristics**

Adoption process has been shown to be a stressful course for families, from the pre-adoption to post-adoption (McDonald et al., 2001; McGlone et al., 2002). Yet, family response to stress varied. Lavee and Olson (1991) suggested that response to stressful events and development of family crisis varied according to family types. Based on levels of cohesion and adaptability, four family types were described: flexible-separated families, flexible-connected families, unstructured-separated families, and structured-connected families.

A flexible-separated family was highly adaptable, but had little cohesion within the family. This type of family adapted to a crisis experience, but experienced stress due to their lack of coherence and disconnect among the family members (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Patterson, 2002). A flexible-connected family was highly adaptable as well as highly connected among the family members. This type of family was highly adaptable to a crisis experience and demonstrated a high level of cohesion among the family members. This type of family held firmly to the idea that they could get through
(McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Patterson, 2002). A structured-connected family had a high level of family cohesion, but experienced problems adapting to a crisis experience due to its rigidity and inflexibility (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Patterson, 2002). An unstructured-separated family was highly vulnerable and at-risk in a crisis experience. They lacked adequate family resources of adaptability and cohesion among family members (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Patterson, 2002). However, research could not ascertain with certainty, which family type fared best against or was most resilient to stressful events among families with intercountry adoption (Lavee & Olson, 1991; Patterson, 2002). See Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Typology</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lavee and Olson (1991)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Adaptability</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Cohesion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structured-Connected Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexible-Connected Families</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexible-Separated Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured-Separated Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Adaptability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Cohesion</td>
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</tbody>
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*Figure 1. Family typology, cohesion, and adaptability*

**Post-adoption adjustment factors.** The American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Adoptions (1971) suggested that the pre-adoption process, the waiting period, and parenting issues created significant stress for the adoptive parents. Although the literature has limited data regarding family adjustment issues (Levy-Schiff et al., 1997), the process of intercountry adoption has been cited to be stressful on the family system. McDonald et al. (2001) found the condition of family stability prior to adoption
was a predictor of post-adoption family adjustment. Conditions such as approaches to managing stressful events and the quality of marital satisfaction were compelling predictors of post-adoption adjustment. Wager (2000) found that negative community attitudes of intercountry adoption increased family stress by the unavailability of social support. Finally, preconceptions held by adoptive parents regarding their adopted children could be a stressor among intercountry adoptive families (Cederblad et al., 1999, Kim, 1994; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). Families who believed confidently that they had important contributions to give, celebrated the ethnic heritage of their adopted child, and maintained the intercountry adoption in a highly favorable light was correlated to positive post-adoption adjustment (Levy-Schiff et al., 1997).

According to Rojewski and Rojewski (2001), parent-child differences in heritage could create a dilemma for adoptive parents. For adoptive parents, whether to reject or acknowledge differences in racial heritage was a conscious and stressful decision. Many families regarded bi-cultural socialization important. Although families acknowledged the importance of their adopted child’s ethnic heritage, determining an appropriate approach to bi-cultural socialization—acculturation, assimilation, alternation, or choice—remained a difficult decision and a source of family stress (Rojewski, 2005).

In short, although predictable patterns have yet to be revealed, studies suggested that adoptive families experienced a stressful life event. Most families attempted to create a climate of predictability and continuity in the face of stress or crisis. Adoptive families who believed confidently that they had important contributions to give, celebrated the ethnic heritage of their adopted child, and maintained the intercountry
adoption in a highly favorable light reduced unpredictable interaction patterns and stress during post-adoption (McDonald et al., 2001).

**Issues of race and racism.** On the one hand, racial-ethnic identity development, according to traditional concepts, has been suggested to be uncertain for intercountry adoptees (Phinney, 1991; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). Yet, on the other hand, the interaction between the intercountry adoptees’ race and the intervening cultural attitude of race has been viewed as a struggle (Kim, 2002; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). Although many adoptive parents did not see their child as a minority, the community in which they lived could be inclined to racial prejudice. In response to prejudice, many parents maintained an active advocate position for their adopted child (Weir, 2001). In the presence of community intolerance, adoptive parents were either active advocates who confronted and defended, or kept their attitude and viewpoint personal and private. Prejudice and discrimination was a concern for intercountry adoptees and has been found to be a source of internalizing behaviors.

Rojewski and Rojewski (2001) cited the nature and form of racism that many intercountry adoptees from East Asia experienced. Those encounters involved overt actions such as teasing, insulting comments, racial slurs, and physical attacks. Less overt racism was described as looks and stares. Some forms of racism were experienced as unrealistic expectations or stereotyping such as the expectation to be docile or the stereotype of high intelligence or superior math ability.

Unfortunately, racism was a social ill experienced by many intercountry adoptees and their families. Many adoptive parents described their experience with racism as both
direct and indirect (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). Recounting their experiences, some adoptive parents revealed experiences of criticism from others for not adopting from the United States and having their motives questioned, while others sensed rude stares or adverse expressions (Wager, 2000).

Finally, Barlow (2000) investigated the experience of people of color and their perceptions of inclusion or exclusion in the United States’ cultural context. Basically, the questions were, “To what extent do you see yourself as American?” and “To what extent do White Americans see you as American?” Regardless of achieved economic or social status, many people of color expressed a significant feeling of exclusion from the dominant culture. That is, although many people of color considered themselves as American and ascribed to American ideals, they did not feel that the dominant culture accepted them as American.

The complexities of human experience were revealed in the process of intercountry adoption. Many factors impacted the experience of intercountry adoptees and their families. Those factors reflected the functioning of self, others, and cultural environments, which interrelated with individual experiences. To understand the experience of intercountry adoption, the context of influences was vital—individual variables, family variables, and cultural variables.

**Intercountry Adoption From the Republic of Korea**

The end of the Korean War in 1953 set in motion intercountry adoption from the Republic of Korea (ROK; Tessler, Gamache, & Liu, 1999). As a result of the Korean War, many Korean children were left orphaned and homeless. Simon and Altstein (2000)
cited four geo-political events in ROK, which contributed to the United States-ROK adoption network: (a) large population shifts from rural to urban areas; (b) a breakdown of the extended family; (c) large numbers of orphaned children; and (d) an influx of Western ideas, values, and social institutions. From 1991 to 2003, the number of annual adoptions from ROK averaged around 1,800 children (Holt International Children’s Service, 2005).

Adjustment of Korean adoptees. According to Kim (1994), many studies of Korean adoptees focused on developmental issues: physical, language, cognitive, psychosocial, and initial adoption adjustment. Studies have consistently suggested positive adjustment experiences among Korean adoptees compared to other adoptee groups (domestic or intercountry). Particular to Korean children, Kim et al. (1999) noted the following reasons for the successful adjustment of adopted Korean boys: (a) The children were adopted as infants; (b) The Korean system of childcare offered optimal pre-adoption health and wellness attention to pregnant women and newborn infants. Studies investigating the age at adoption showed positive adjustment for older aged Korean adoptees when compared to other adoptee ethnic groups (Kim, 1994). Studies into the adjustment of Korean adoptees revealed no significant effect for adjustment problems as compared to other adoption groups or biological children of adoptive parents (Kim et al., 1999).

Family adjustment. Families realized different interaction patterns and the degree of family stress, which were represented by a complex interplay among variables related to parent, child, and situation (McDonald et al., 2001; McGlone et al., 2002).
Nevertheless, families with Korean adoptees adapted better and met challenges more effectively compared to other adoptee cohorts. According to Kim (Kim et al., 1999; Kim, 2002), families managed to acquire adequate psychological and systemic resources to get through difficult periods. Much of family resources were based on emotional strength. Consistently, family members reported personal confidence that they had important contributions to give and maintained intercountry adoption in a highly favorable light.

Sook-Bergquist et al. (2003) surveyed a sample of 117 Caucasian parents who adopted children from Korea through a large Midwestern adoption agency. The investigators were interested in parents’ perceptions regarding the extent of family adjustment related to the adoption. The families had adopted at least one Korean child, whereas 45% of families adopted two or more Korean-born children and 18% of families adopted sibling pairs. At the time of the survey, the Korean adoptees were an average of 5.7 years old. Their findings suggested mothers and fathers shared similar views regarding their family’s adjustment at the time of adoption. Approximately half of the participating couples reported bureaucratic problems in the course of adoption as specific stressors. Aside from bureaucratic problems, adoptive parents were consistent in their views about the satisfaction experienced regarding family adjustment during the post-adoption period. With very little exception, parents reported that they would repeat their decision to adopt their Korean children again. Overall, the degree of family adjustment was encouraging and suggested parents’ contentment with their decision to adopt a Korean child.
Research Methodology

An investigation of the human experience such as adoptive fathering required thoughtful consideration of appropriate conceptual model and research methodology. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2000) advocated for holistic approaches to conceptual models for understanding the human experience. First, the holistic models required a thoughtful consideration into the contextual processes that influences human experience. The human experience represented a complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving person and an equally active, evolving cultural environment. Second, the human experience reflected simultaneous change and continuity. The human experience reflected change to meet the challenges and make sense of an active, evolving cultural environment. At the same time, the human experience represented continuity in order to maintain personal characteristics and live in a predictable context.

Adoptive fatherhood represented a multiplicity of meaning for men constructed through each one’s immediate social context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006) and perceptual discernment (Geertz, 2002; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006; Rice, 1980). Considering the focus of the present study, phenomenological research with narrative inquiry was regarded as the best methodology. In phenomenology, researchers attempted to understand the phenomenon of interest based on lived experience of individuals. Phenomenological approaches opened up the possibility of understanding in its fullness the qualitative nature of adoptive fathering experiences.
Qualitative Research and Phenomenology

The research paradigm. In academia, a long-established practice for inquiry of a topic of interest has been represented through quantitative approaches. According to Keppel and Zedeck (1989), the purpose of research has been aimed at providing objective answers or discovering objective characteristics of the physical world. Objective disciplines of investigation required that the outcome—results and inferences—of scientific inquiry could be offered with quantifiable confidence and integrity.

Giorgi (1985) argued that quantitative research methods provided significant limitations for investigating the meaning and subjectivity of human experiences. Moreover, Giorgi (1985) suggested the long-established practice of objective inquiry into the human experiences distorted the essence regarding the real meaning of human experiences. For Giorgi, the aim of research was not to quantify a human phenomenon or define a human experience from an external frame of reference. Human experience was social phenomenon and embedded in the lived experience of individuals. The purpose of research of human experiences was to describe human phenomenon according to the lived perspective of persons.

The research paradigm reflects a sharp contrast between the qualitative and quantitative research traditions. A research paradigm can be best described as the interconnection between the philosophical worldview and the investigation methods (Creswell, 1998). The philosophical worldview encompassed those fundamental beliefs and assumptions regarding the purpose of research, which influenced and guided the process of inquiry. Research paradigm was shaped and defined by three
principles—ontological, epistemological, and methodological processes (Creswell, 1998). Ontological processes reflected the underlying principles that defined the nature of reality. Traditional research methods approached reality as a representation of an objective universal truth. Qualitative research methods upheld the basic principle that the nature of reality was multi-contextual. Multiple realities existed. In a qualitative study, the nature of reality existed in the meaning that was constructed through life experiences. The lived experienced and associated constructions of meaning provided the essence of reality (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Epistemological processes represented the underlying principles regarding the essence of knowledge and knowing (Creswell, 1998). Those underlying principles distinguished the known from unknown—the knowable and unknown. Epistemological processes defined the importance of subjects and objects in order to acquire the real information—the manner of investigation used to obtain knowledge. Qualitative inquiry attempted at understanding the perceived world as experienced by the individual as acted out day by day in the realm of one’s life-world. Knowledge was acquired through discovery of meanings embedded within the individual’s lived experiences. Finally, methodological processes integrated the underlying ontological and epistemological processes to form a conceptual framework and research procedure.

**Qualitative Methodology as Scientific Inquiry**

Qualitative approaches were methodologically sound and demonstrated validity (Wertz, 2005). Qualitative approaches reflected the scientific virtue of critical thinking, creativity, and in-depth reflective decision-making. Qualitative methods provided
understanding into the lived experiences of individuals. Researchers gained insight into the phenomenon of interest. Qualitative approaches afforded descriptions into variations of the lived experience of subjects. Its findings challenged assumed knowledge, contributing a unique understanding into previously held constructs of scientific knowledge and truth.

Qualitative research methods have been used to investigate and understand human experiences. At its core, the research philosophy proposed that multiple meanings existed in human experiences. A given situation or phenomenon contained multiple interpretations, definitions, and shared perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Thus, even though people may find themselves in similar situations, interpretations were constructed by multiple internal and external factors. The multiple meanings that people developed of a given situation were subjective and reflected an idiosyncratic construction. Qualitative research methods attempted to understand meaning from the lived perspectives of participants and how participants described a phenomenon under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Hammersley (2000) presented the relevance of qualitative research: (a) the appreciative capacity; (b) the designatory capacity; (c) the reflective capacity; (d) the immunological capacity; and (e) the corrective capacity. In the appreciative capacity, qualitative research provided the ability to understand and represent points of view, which have been obscured or neglected. It required researchers to view experiences as making sense within contextual construction. The framework of meaning included how people considered themselves and their environment. Researcher captured experiences
from participant perspectives rather than through the lens of academic supposition. In the designatory capacity, qualitative research explained or developed an idea drawing on the language of participants. In the reflective capacity, qualitative research provided a mirror to the world of human experiences and their meaning. It illuminated the complexity of experiences rather than reducing them to generally assumed concepts of what is thought to be or ought to be. In the immunological capacity, qualitative research provided an understanding of the nature of the everyday world. Its aim was not to provide prescription or to judge. Accordingly, human experiences were shaped by multiple and interconnected patterns. Finally, in the corrective capacity, qualitative research provided an account of the full range of motives, and beliefs that shape human experiences as well as the way those were structured in environmental contexts. The attempt was not to result in misleading abstractions or grand theories, but to capture complex relationships.

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology emerged out of the aftermath of societal conditions in post-World War II Europe. Prompted by the state of European life following World War II, the German philosopher, Edmund Husserl, attempted to devise a philosophical method that would facilitate creation of absolute certainty among people existing amidst global deterioration and ideological crises (Groenewald, 2004). Greatly influenced by the philosophical thought and writings of Kant, Hegel, and Descartes, Husserl (1962) named his philosophical method “phenomenology.”

Phenomenology went against the widespread thinking that objects in the external world existed independently and that examination of objects was the best means to
knowledge. Husserl argued that human experiences could not be empirically perceived and treated as real fact. Phenomenology placed emphasis on getting to the real essence of human experiences in whatever form by understanding the associated perceptions that were manifest in the consciousness of the individual (Moran, 2000).

Whereas knowledge was conceptualized as the separation of the object and subject, phenomenology argued that reality existed in the realm of one’s consciousness of an object. That is, object and subject were inextricable (Creswell, 1998). Realities were thought of as pure phenomena. Furthermore, understanding of any problem situation required careful exploration into the universe that which is not discussed (Moustakas, 1994).

**Phenomenology and Scientific Inquiry**

Phenomenology has been used to explore the participants’ actual human experience and obtain an unbiased description of the interrelated object and subject (Giorgi, 1985). The basic element was to bring to light both rational and intuitive processes of participants’ actual experiences.

Phenomenology presented a conceptualization of scientific inquiry that was methodological and critical, and offered a foundation of knowledge into the topic of interest. The foundation of knowledge offered the possibility of future investigations for gaining a broad view if the phenomenon. According to Wertz (2005), phenomenology required critical thinking, creativity, and reflective decision-making in order for a credible description of the phenomenon of research interest. The importance of phenomenology was established in its methodological approach to scientific knowledge...
and subsequent pursuit to capture unique understanding into social issues from the individual’s lived perspective.

Two schools of thought represented the discipline of phenomenology—descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology (Koivisto, Janhonen, & Vaisanen, 2002). Descriptive phenomenology aimed to describe the meaning of actual experiences and regard the phenomena as unqualified. In descriptive phenomenological, guidelines or specific steps were not imposed on the process of explicating the subjective experience consciousness of the individual in order to preserve the integrity of that phenomenon. Interpretive phenomenology aimed to describe as accurately as possible the meaning found in the phenomenon. In phenomenology, preconceptions and assumptions were viewed as widespread and interrelated between researchers, participants, and the life-world (Hammersley, 2000).

**Phenomenological Research Methods**

In phenomenology, understanding of human phenomenon happened within the lived experience of persons and their life-world. Psychological representations and social issues were subjective human experiences and not objective measures. The essence of a social phenomenon was contextually embedded in the lived experiences of individuals. In order to discover the authentic meaning and subjective processes, the researcher had to make the lived experience of persons the center of investigative attention. Phenomenology, as a research method, was not grounded on any fixed, immutable ideology. Phenomenology, as a research method, aimed to capture accurate descriptions of the phenomenon under study. The goal of phenomenology was to uncover the human
essence of lived experiences in its purity and discover the multiple perspectives within their life-world. The goal to capture an accurate description of human phenomenon under study required a respect of individual viewpoints without bias (Giorgi, 1985).

The aim of descriptive phenomenological research was to present as accurately as possible the essence of human phenomenon under study, based on the participant’s own narratives of their lived experience. Bracketing assumptions or frameworks that prejudiced the data was essential for researchers. In order to discover lived experiences and uncover multiple perspectives, the essence of the human phenomenon had to reflect the person’s voice in its purity (Giorgi, 1985).

**The epoché.** Procedures of epoché reflected a vital function of descriptive phenomenology. It required the researcher to begin any study from an unbiased and unprejudiced point of view. According to Giorgi (1985), epoché was a necessary investigation procedure involving the abstention and deliberate suspension of personal judgments, bias, or prejudice. In phenomenological inquiry, intentional commitment to self-monitoring and discovery of the essence in its unadulterated form was critical. If a personal bias surfaced during the course of investigation, deliberate and immediate suspension of that bias or preconception was required. Epoché procedures contributed to the credibility of descriptions. Without epochés, descriptions of a phenomenon could be contaminated by bias. Any subsequent descriptions regarding its nature would be tainted.

Giorgi (1985) described two epoché procedures. The first was the epoché of the natural science. This procedure required the researcher to set aside prior scientific assumptions about a phenomenon. It required the researcher to abstain from
incorporating scientific theories, explanations, and conceptualizations during the inquiry process. The second epoché procedure was a methodological abstention. The procedure required the researcher to suspend shared ideas that emerged during the process of investigation. Personal perceptions, emotions, and inter-subjective connections that emerged had the potential to alter the descriptions of the phenomenon, tainting its essence. The subjective lived experience of the researcher could adversely impact the essence of the participant’s experience by rushing hastily to presumptions. By rushing hastily to presumptions, the participant’s representation of the phenomenon has been spoiled. Through suspension of presumptions regarding shared experiences, researchers consciously set aside personal experiences in order to empathically enter and reflect on the lived world of other persons. Suspension of presumptions was critical during the explication of the data. The method of phenomenological reduction called for an unprejudiced analysis of statements and themes for all possible meaning to emerge. The researcher had to prevent the inclination to jump to a specific conclusion (Creswell, 1998).

Finally, within the procedure of epoché, bracketing was a deliberate and purposeful action taken by the researcher to suspend personal bias. Assumptions and biases regarding the phenomenon under study were brought to consciousness and bracketed. In descriptive phenomenology, the procedure of epoché was vital to capturing and maintaining the nature of the phenomenon as it existed in unadulterated form.

**The eidetic reduction.** The eidetic reduction procedure in descriptive phenomenological methods provided a way to delineate each characteristic of the
phenomenon (Giorgi, 1985). Eidetic reduction required the researcher to reflect beyond the objective form of the phenomenon and describe essential characteristics rooted in multiple perspectives and influences. It was a concrete delineation of the phenomenon, while considering all related essential characteristics that went beyond the particular. The process required reflection and inquiry such as: How does the narrative account facilitate the essence of the phenomenon to emerge clearly and uniquely?

Occasionally, imaginative variation allowed for thoughtful consideration of every probable description of a word or phrase that suggested an invariant meaning or structure of the phenomenon. Imaginative variation was to spend time in deep reflection and not to be carelessly employed. The process required care and attention to general meaning of the phenomenon that was emerging and mapping out themes. Procedures of epoché added validity to the phenomenon under study in order that those impressions and themes remained free and unadulterated from personal bias.

**Intentional analysis.** According to Giorgi (1985), descriptive phenomenological inquiry required researchers to spend time conducting in-depth analysis of the narratives to bring to light the life-world of the participants and its relationship to the phenomenon under study. The life-world of people represented their rich history of experiences and personal view on accepted reality. According to Giorgi, in-depth analysis enhanced understanding into the multiple spheres of influence, which shed light on the interconnection between the lived experiences and the life world of participants. Narratives captured the perspectives of the participant’s lived world and social experiences in descriptive form. The process of intentional analysis enhanced the
description by taking into account the various interconnections between the life-world and lived experience given by participants. According to Giorgi (1985), the perspectives of people based on their lived world experiences often involved structures of meaning. Statements of personal action such as accomplishments and undertakings were purposeful and interwoven within the context of the life-world. In order to recognize the essence of social processes and personal actions as related to the phenomenon under study, researchers examined those narratives for its intentionality, purpose (Giorgi, 1985) and accepted reality (Gergen, 1999).

**The Contribution of Phenomenology to Counseling Research**

Often, researchers employed quantitative methods to investigate issues and problems in order to explore and describe their effect. The appeal of traditional quantitative approach was prompted by the belief that its methods brought about unbiased scientific explanation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Quantitative procedures and analyses required researchers to manage complexities by separating, isolating, and controlling all confounding variables of psychological issues.

The research paradigm of quantitative approaches necessitated a view of the world and reality as objective, which disregarded subjective constituents of an individual’s lived experience. The aim was to observe and measure specific behaviors, possibly overlooking the value of people’s lived experiences. In the field of counseling, the focus of research increasingly recognized that the lived experiences of persons were essential to understanding the human impact of psychological issue. Descriptive phenomenological inquiry methods emerged as a way for researchers to capture and
understand the phenomenon under study based on narratives given by persons from their lived experiences (Wertz, 2005).

In general, descriptive phenomenology as a method of inquiry gained greater acceptance for investigating the psychological struggles and human experiences within the field of counseling. In a practical sense, descriptive phenomenological methods captured and provided insight into the shared experiences between the client and counselor. According to Wertz (2005), descriptive phenomenological methods were well-suited to study the conscious and experiential processes experienced in the counseling process. Capturing and understanding those descriptions based on both the counselor’s and the client’s point of view helped align goals and therapeutic objectives. Phenomenology, as a vehicle to understanding the counseling process, provided insight into the experience between the counselor and client as well as the appreciating the meaning each brought to the counseling experience. The reality and meaning of the therapeutic process and psychological issues was a co-construction between the counselor and client. Counselors had a way that could allow them to consider and respect both personal assumptions as well as their client’s perceived and lived experience through phenomenological processes.

The Need for This Study

Although fatherhood has been the topic of numerous studies, the bulk of the information has been gained through traditional research methods, which provided objective and measurable data. The topic of adoptive fatherhood based on the adoptive father’s own lived perspective has been underrepresented in available literature. Studies
investigating the experience of intercountry adoption related to adoptive fathering have given them little voice. A study that investigated the phenomenon of adoptive fatherhood from their lived experience departed from traditional, classification research methods. Adoptive fatherhood reflected a social construction within the context of each father’s immediate culture, multiple community influences, and internal mental processes. The conceptual foundation aimed at developing a holistic understanding into a complex human issue of adoptive fatherhood. An investigation into the web that intertwined and interconnected each father’s construction of fatherhood was important. The data based on lived experience added to available understanding of adoptive fatherhood.

An emphasis on a one-dimensional conceptualization of adoptive fatherhood gave the impression that the phenomenon was monolithic. Adoptive fatherhood represented a multiplicity of meaning for fathers, influenced by each adoptive father’s broad and immediate culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006) as well as related interpretational activities (Geertz, 2002; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006; Rice, 1980). The richness and complexity embedded in adoptive fatherhood required study into the phenomenon within the broad context of human perceiving, interacting, and experiencing—the interrelationship of multiple experiences and ideas. The concept of adoptive fatherhood existed at the intersection of meaning and social interaction between fathers, families, extended families, and larger communities, and became reality as it was acted out day to day within the natural world of their particular lived experience. A phenomenological study of adoptive fatherhood added understanding to the available
knowledge base regarding the human essence of lived experiences of adoptive fathers in its fullness, richness, and complexity.

Adoptive fathers have their own perspectives, which differed from mothers, and the counseling process would benefit by involving them. An appreciation for the diversity of experiences and perspectives shared by adoptive fathers from their own, unique voice recognized their unique insight into the reality as experienced by them. Accordingly, recognizing adoptive fathers for their unique contribution to therapy, the importance of narratives adoptive fathers bring would be valued.

Quantitative research methods were not viewed as appropriate for the purposes of this study. Quantitative research utilized investigation methods such as objective observational analysis, approaches to investigation from a detached perspective, as well as the use of structured questionnaires. Quantitative methods aimed to discover measurable effect on a specified object of interest. Such methods contradicted the fundamental purpose of the study, which required a research approach suited for learning about the nature of a phenomenon from the experience and perspective of the individual. The purpose of the study required a methodology shift from quantitative approaches to one suited for investigation within the world of multiple meaning focusing on the individual in experience (Polkinghorne, 1988). Quantitative research methods were considered to be in discord with the purposes of this study.

It was important that as professionals, counselors based their interventions on appropriate clinical understanding of presenting issues. Clients were the best source of information of their human experiences. Adoptive fathers offered a perspective on the
dynamic interplay of multiple systems, influence, and processes embedded in multiple meanings and values. A phenomenological understanding offered insights that enhanced clinical perspectives. It provided an understanding into the interrelation of cultures, community influences, and cognitive processes experienced by adoptive fathers. The lived experience of adoptive fathers offered counselors unique insight into ways counseling perspectives and therapeutic goals aligned.

**The Purpose of This Study**

The purpose of the current study was to capture through narrative inquiry the descriptions from six fathers on gained life satisfaction as a result of adoptive fathering of Korean sons. Adoptive fatherhood existed at the intersection of meaning and social interaction among fathers, families, extended families, and larger communities. Reality was a product of day to day experiences, interactions, and conversation within the natural world (Gergen, 1999). Phenomenological procedures with narrative inquiry established a systematic approach of research. The collection of data and procedures for explication of data was organized. In narrative inquiry, the participants were viewed as embodiments of their lived stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry procedures provided the means for data collection, which allowed the researcher to capture the richness and complexity of the adoptive fathering experience as told by fathers. Phenomenological procedures with narrative inquiry provided methods to ensure validity. It was a logical procedure for capturing and describing life satisfaction as told by adoptive fathers based on their human experience.
The Research Question

The primary research questions were: (a) how do adoptive fathers describe their gained life satisfaction in connection to their lived experiences of bringing up adopted Korean sons? and (b) what are the themes of associated life satisfaction as illuminated, explained and described by adoptive fathers?
CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn how six adoptive fathers with Korean sons expressed and described their adoptive fathering experience, which captured the essence of life satisfaction associated with their adoptive fathering.

Research Design

In this study, the researcher chose phenomenological procedures with narrative inquiry. Adoptive fatherhood was conceptualized as having a multiplicity of meaning for fathers. The essence of lived experiences was grounded in each adoptive father’s lived environment and perceptual interpretation (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Geertz, 2002; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006). Narrative inquiry using research interviews with the participants was employed as a method of data collection.

Data Sources/Participants

In the current study, six adoptive fathers raising Korean boys participated. In-depth interviews were conducted with each. Adoptive fathers reflected on their immediate and unique influence from immediate social systems such as community, friends, and family (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Geertz, 2002; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006) and associated cognitive processes (Geertz, 2002; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006; Rice, 1980). The researcher placed no limits on personal experiences shared. The adoptive fathers were given liberty to regulate any discomforting or painful recollections without apprehension.
Procedures

Figure 2 illustrates the recruitment, screening, and protocol process utilized in the current study. Explanation is provided of each element in the procedures.

Figure 2. Recruitment, screening and interview process flowchart
Participants and Sampling

Approval was obtained from Kent State University’s Institutional Review Board to research human subjects (see Appendix A) prior to undertaking the study. Six adoptive fathers volunteered to participate in the study with at least five-years of adoptive fathering experience. The participants were adoptive fathers of Korean sons. The qualified participants lived within Ohio, and, therefore, the data reflected regional and geographic limitations. All of Korean boys were adopted within two years post birth.

In this study, the researcher used purposeful sampling because of its advantage in gaining access to a pool of potential participants who had personal experience with the phenomenon under study. The Korean-American Adoptee and Adoptive Family Network (KAAN) was one source used by the researcher to recruit potential participants because of its national network and understanding of Korean adoptees and adoptive families with Korean and Korean-American children. Other participants were identified through the snowball sampling method, which was a method by which the researcher asked one potential participant to recommend other potential participants who had personal experience with the phenomenon under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

Researcher Bias

The researcher was born in Seoul, South Korea, to an American Military father and a Korean mother. Growing up, he was inculcated with Korean traditions and values, and experienced an extended family structure at home.

It should be noted that the researcher was a practicing school psychologist and has worked in schools for 20 years. During those years, he met with parents regularly to
discuss learning and/or emotional issues related to their children. Mothers and fathers were invited to attend those meetings, although more likely mothers would attend alone. Rarely did he meet with fathers individuially.

It is possible that interpretation of data could be partially influenced by an internal bias toward parenting roles and personal fathering experiences. In keeping with research principles of phenomenological procedures, the époché was practiced to data collection and explication of the data. As preconceptions and bias about adoptive fathering and its meaning emerged they were “bracketed” in order for viewpoints of participants to emerge unadulterated.

Validity and Credibility of the Data

In the current study, the researcher was the principal researcher and data analyst. The dissertation co-directors acted as consultants when expert opinion was needed in guiding the research process. To enhance the credibility of the study, the researcher acquired the assistance and critique from a peer reviewer, member checkers as well as an established and transparent audit trail.

Peer reviewer. A doctoral student in the Counseling and Human Development Services Program with expertise in qualitative methodology during the study was obtained. The purpose of the peer reviewer was to provide feedback to the researcher from the outset of the study (pursuant to approval by the Human Subjects Review Board) through the process of data analysis and explication process to the final development of the study. The purpose of the peer review process was to develop an understanding between my study, my research procedures within the context of phenomenological
procedures, and narrative analysis. Meetings were scheduled with the peer reviewer to review and discuss main aspects of the study. Those main categories were not discussed as consecutive or linear foci, but rather discussed within circular processes to understand the relationship among various phenomenological philosophies, procedures, and methods. The discussions encompassed defining the focus of the study, exploring various phenomenological processes, developing an appropriate research methodology, understanding the contribution of various phenomenology philosophies, suspending the researcher’s preconceptions, creating interview guide, reviewing words and phrase found in interview guide, exploring various qualitative data analysis methods, reviewing data analysis procedures, integrating emerging categories, meaning units, and themes and clusters, and reviewing the overarching procedures of phenomenology. Monthly meetings were considered sufficient for the purposes of the present study at the outset and on an as needed basis during the second half of the study. At each meeting, the peer reviewer confirmed the process and conceptualization of data or raised questions regarding technical features of phenomenology, offered advice for clarifying the procedures, and provided encouragement of those areas of the study that were appropriate. Researcher biases were addressed by bringing them to consciousness through a process of reviewing how the data represented the voice of adoptive fathers and not the researcher. At each step of the data analysis, the discussion explored how the data emerged without prejudice or bias. The assistance of the peer reviewer during the study enhanced the validity and credibility of the data.
**Member checking.** Member checking was used as a method of increasing the accuracy of the explication of data and interpretation of findings. Each participant was asked to consider the general interpretation made from his respective narrative. Participants were asked if the interpretations made by the researcher accurately described their lived experience of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. Next, the participants were asked if the interpretation of themes and clusters conveyed the essence of their lived experience as an adoptive father bringing up adopted Korean sons accurately and concretely. The validity of the data was enhanced by the confirmation from each participant. Any clarification of interpretation received at this stage was incorporated into the final descriptions and explication.

**Audit trail.** In the present study, the audit trail was incorporated to provide clear documentation of the steps taken in collection and analysis of the data in qualitative research. This offered an opportunity for other researchers to confirm the findings of a study. The audit trail relied on field notes, audio tapes, and interview transcripts as well as data analysis procedures. An audit trail was established, which would allow for an independent auditor to conduct an inquiry audit. In this study, the researcher kept raw data, field notes, and existing relevant literature for examining validity, accuracy, and depth.

Clarification of theoretical constructs and interpretation of findings were reached through ongoing advisement and collaborative discussions with dissertation committee members. They were also strengthened by being responsive to and conducting extensive interviews with the participants. The interview guide was used to semi-structure the
discussions. Based on participants’ narratives (initial or subsequent), questions of words, phrases, or sentences followed. In this sense, the audit trail also represented the result of collaboration of multiple data inputs, committee members’ input, and detailed narratives of multiple research participants.

**Sampling and Coding**

The researcher allowed at least two weeks for the information packets to return. Upon the receipt of each information packet, the forms were reviewed for completeness and signatures, and whether the participant met the requirements for the study based on the completed general demographic form. Follow-up telephone calls were made to potential participants for the following reasons: (a) to confirm the receipt of the information packet and schedule the first interview; (b) to confirm the receipt of the information packet and to inform the participant of incomplete information; (c) to confirm the receipt of the information packet and explain the reasons for the ineligibility of the potential participant for the study; or (d) to ascertain the potential participant’s continued interest in volunteering in the study and if so, remind him to complete and return the information packet.

A research coding system was used made up of a combination of letter and number system for identifying, organization and maintaining confidentiality of each participant. Numeric codes were assigned, instead of personal identifying information, to each participant (e.g., P1) for confidentiality and to organize all subsequent, related documents that were generated during the study. Lowercase alphabet character was added to the numeric code on each written document, tape recording and related
manuscript to arrange them according to time line and sequence (e.g., P1, a...z, 00/00/0000).

**Prolonged Engagement**

The first interview was a face-to-face interview between the researcher and each participant, and the second interview was either through face-to-face or by telephone. A semi-structured approach was used for each interview. An interview guide provided an organized approach to explore central themes based on the lived experience of adoptive fathers raising their adopted Korean sons. The interview guide assisted with management with the collection of information and the flow of discussions (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The interview guide contained essential questions and also served as the document on which researcher’s observations of participant’s behavior or emotional responses during a particular description of their adoptive fathering experience was noted.

The researcher integrated the procedures of epochés at the outset of the interview. Leading to the initial interview, the researcher and each participant engaged in discussion consisting of shared personal judgments, preconceptions of expectations, and personal experiences that were conscious regarding the research interview as well as shared idea of fatherhood. Bringing to the forefront those personal experiences as well as underlying judgments related to ideas about research, interview, and adoptive fatherhood opened up those external frames of references (e.g., assumptions about research interviews based on knowledge from prior interviews and education) and internal mechanisms (e.g., shared experiences of adoptive fathering), which were suspended and bracketed.
In keeping with processes of epoché, preconceptions were carefully bracketed and set aside. It was essential to bracket those value judgments based on external frames of reference (scientific assumptions about fatherhood) and internal mechanisms (naïve notions of shared fathering experiences) in order to permit descriptions of the adoptive fathering experience from participants to emerge in its pure essence—unspoiled by influences from the researcher. As each interview unfolded, all the participants were encouraged to reflect on their memories of the adoptive fathering experience and describe them as they were recollected. Since memories were typically recalled in bits and pieces, participants were given the freedom to weave the whole through a process of shifting back and forth and between the past and present memories, which have been collected over the years. Discussions flowed spontaneously without interruption from the researcher. The researcher attended to the each participant’s story and follow up questions were introduced sparingly. The effort was to capture concrete illustrations of the adoptive fathering experience. Specific statement or description that contributed to the formation of the participant’s lived experiences was noted. Ongoing suspension of theoretical or personal assumptions was observed when bringing follow-up questions into the interview. The purpose was to ensure that each participant stayed true to his own point of view and provided rich descriptions of the phenomena of adoptive fatherhood.

The researcher periodically assessed the progress of the interview by reviewing the interview guide and the content of the recorded transcriptions. If the spontaneous dialogue between the researcher and participant did not address a question on the interview guide, the researcher brought the question into the interview at an appropriate
time. Based on the content of the conversation, queries were made at appropriate moments to stimulate further recall of memory, for clarification or for elaboration on specific descriptive statements.

The challenge for the researcher was to concentrate and reflect on each participant’s narratives while reflecting on the participant’s body language and associated emotional inference. During the first interview, the behavior of each participant was observed and indicators of possible emotional issues were handled in a sensitive manner. The researcher observed behaviors and reflected on the participant’s experience. Observations of emotional content were handled delicately. Any ensuing question was to capture each participant’s adoptive fathering experience within his particular experiential context, immediate life world, and circumstances. The researcher made brief notes of any subsequent thoughts at hand regarding the participant’s particular adoptive fathering experience raising his adopted Korean son. Any attempt to prematurely interpret an insight was suspended (Creswell, 1998). When the pace of an interview prohibited the integration of epochés, the researcher wrote down a mark such as a “*” as a reminder to consider and deliberate further after the interview with the peer reviewer.

Before the second interview, the researcher prioritized the process of transcribing the narratives from audio to text form. The audio tape recording of each interview from the first interview was transcribed verbatim into a text form. Each narrative was read carefully—attending to key words, phrases, and statements. If time did not permit the transcription process to be completed prior to the second interview, the researcher listened carefully to the audio tape recording from beginning to end and attended to key
words, phrases, and statements. By distinguishing significant words, phrases, and statements, the researcher developed an overall impression of each participant’s experience and reflected the manner of addressing life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering lived experience. Follow-up questions in the second interview were used to clarify such alterations and elicit unadulterated experiential responses from participants. Finally, the process of member checking provided credibility to the study as well as the opportunity for clarification and opened up the possibility for additional descriptions and richer interpretations.

With assumption bracketed, the researcher prepared to review statements and responses respective to particular descriptions, phrases, and statements recorded from the first interview with each participant, in order to clarify and explore with greater detail. Descriptions were explicated for each statement or response, which were shaped by the participant’s own lived experience. The process of expanding statements and conducting in-depth reflection on responses filled gaps of understanding left from the first interview.

The researcher conducted the second interview either through a face-to-face meeting or by telephone, according to each participant’s preference. The purpose of the second interview was to capture the essence of life satisfaction gained from the adoptive fathering experience. The goal was to come away from the second interview with concrete details and descriptions that expanded the richness and complexity of the adoptive fathering experience as well as filling in gaps of information that were left unexplained from the first interview. Particular responses or statements made during the first interview by a participant were shared to allow for elaboration on his original
statement. During the second interview, each participant was encouraged to elaborate and discuss the adoptive fathering experience without limit. As the second interview unfolded, each participant was prompted to add any additional memories recalled during the week. Each participant was prompted to refine details of the adoptive fathering experience stated during the first interview. The researcher explored how description of the adoptive fathering experience was shaped by the participant’s public and immediate, local cultural context and meaning was assigned as the essence of life satisfaction gained from the adoptive fathering experience. For instance, the researcher cited statements or responses such as “In my view . . .” and brought forth questions asking the participant to “Describe an actual situation in which . . .” The researcher attended to each participant’s description to one’s lived adoptive fathering experience within his life-world raising a Korean son.

Field Notes

Immediately following the first interview, field notes were made to accompany each interview. The practice of conducting mental deliberation soon after the meeting allowed for pertinent information to be reproduced and gathered before memories faded (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Appropriate time was scheduled for reflection after each interview. The time stimulated in-depth thinking and reflection about the nature of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience and the manner it was encapsulated within the life-world of each participant (Giorgi, 1985). In developing field notes, expressions and descriptions were consciously reconstructed and examined for meaning into life satisfaction and adoptive fathering illuminated by the
participant during the preceding interview. The field notes contained both the direct and indirect viewpoints offered by the participant with a particular question or a descriptive statement that were either essential or extraneous to general descriptions of his adoptive fathering experience. Certain mental images of the interview were noted, emphasizing particular features that emerged as significant details to be discussed with the peer reviewer.

In-depth reflection focused on the link between the influences of the immediate social system and associated cognitive processes with each participant’s particular description of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. Hunches, impressions, and feelings were entered in the field notes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The attempt was to gain a general impression of the immediate social influences and cognitive processes that comprised each participant’s particular adoptive fathering experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Geertz, 2002; Giorgi, 1985; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006). The procedures of epoché were integrated to suspend any effort to prematurely interpret or hastily categorize each participant’s particular adoptive fathering experiences (Creswell, 1998). Immediately following the second interview, field notes were made to accompany each interview and recollect important points of the conversation. In-depth reflection over each interview was necessary before memories faded (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The audio tape recordings from the first and second interview were transcribed verbatim into text form. Each narrative was read carefully attending to key descriptive words, phrases, and statements. The goal was to stay true to the lived experience given by adoptive fathers without prejudice. The authenticity of the
narrative was critical in order to understand the lived experience of adoptive fathers based on their given descriptions and accounts. The validity of this study depended on whether the process captured the lived experience of the adoptive fathers from their perspective or the process was biased or preconceived.

**Procedure of Data Analysis and Explication**

Table 3 illustrates the data analysis process along with actions taken.

**Preliminary phase of data analysis.** During the preliminary phase of data analysis, the goal of the researcher was to read through each narrative and field note and gain a general impression of the descriptions of each adoptive father’s lived experience. The researcher focused on appreciating each participant’s portrayal of the adoptive fathering experience and taking in the context of each participant’s perspectives and influence of his immediate social system. Suspending attempts to deduce prematurely any meaning, the researcher read each narrative without the research matter in mind. After gaining a general impression of each participant’s lived experience, the narrative was analyzed along with field notes to consider the whole as represented and interrelated among the collection of narratives and field notes. Suspending attempts to contrive any essential meaning, a general impression of the adoptive fathering experience within the whole context of individual and collective was formed, which represented both related and unrelated expressions among the narratives and field notes.

**Delineating units of meaning.** Following the preliminary phase, delineating collective units of meaning that emerged from the narratives proceeded. The researcher conducted in-depth reflection and thought beyond the explicit descriptions offered by
Table 3

Procedures of Data Analysis and Explication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Action Taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcription of interviews</td>
<td>• Created data files on each participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Each participant’s file coded to protect confidentiality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Audio taped recording of interviews transcribed verbatim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Epoché</td>
<td>• Used throughout the data collection and explication process to bracket and suspend researcher bias.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Preliminary Data Analysis</td>
<td>• Recognition of the general impression of each participant’s adoptive fathering experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Begin the reduction process and identify relevant, verbatim statements in each participant’s narrative related to his adoptive fathering experiences and life satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify invariant properties of the experience found in each narrative, determining each one’s relevance to the unique aspects of the adoptive fathering experience and life satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Delineating Units of Meaning</td>
<td>• Identification of meaning units based on those significant words, statements, and phrases found relevant to the adoptive fathering experience and life satisfaction: non-repetitive, non-overlapping statements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify meaning units for each invariant property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Clustering and Themes</td>
<td>• Clustering meaning units to identify core themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Identifying Structural Description</td>
<td>• Identification of themes and the interrelationship between the participant’s life world and the adoptive fathering experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) The Essential Description</td>
<td>• Integration of summaries regarding general structures and the interrelationship between each participant’s life world, life satisfaction, and the adoptive fathering experience into a descriptive summary reflecting common themes and essences of the whole. The goal is to provide an exhaustive, essential description that allows the reader to grasp what is central to the phenomenon of adoptive fathering. It is a simple, tight description.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Member checking activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
each participant of the adoptive fathering experience. The essential task was to embark on a process of exploring the narratives offered by the participants and discovering the essence of the value and meaning of life satisfaction gained from the adoptive fathering experience.

The procedures of epochés, eidetic reduction, and intentional analysis were integrated during the process of delineating meaning units of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. Inclination to consider prematurely any particular word, phrase, or statement or consider any single meaning as the core essence of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience was suspended. The world of each adoptive father’s lived experience existed in his particular life-world and represented his world of multiple influences and meanings.

The researcher read the narratives and field notes carefully discerning significant descriptions of life experience and the adoptive fathering experience. Every significant word, phrase, or statement found in the narratives and field notes that provided meaning of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience was highlighted. Any description or expression that suggested a spontaneous shift in meaning as well as any invariant characteristic found in the narratives and field notes were considered meaningful. Because some descriptions found in the narratives were lengthy and complex, the researcher looked for multiple features and processes embedded with the text. He extracted parts from the description, maintaining their semantic integrity, and identified significant words, phrases, and statements that lent meaning to the adoptive fathering experience.
The narratives were carefully explicated for descriptions containing invariant or multiple features and processes. Through intuitive processes and in-depth reflection, the researcher pondered on the psychological meanings the participants intended to express. The intuitive processes and in-depth reflection discovered meaning units of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience supported by the narratives and field notes of the participants. A prerequisite for a unit of meaning was its essential explanation and portrayal of the participants’ experience, which underlined the meaning of phenomenon of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience.

The researcher also examined the narratives and field notes with the purpose of descriptively delineating meaning units from the invariant characteristics of words, phrases, and statements used by each participant. Intuitive variation and in-depth reflection was helpful in order to expand and elaborate on each invariant characteristic according to the many descriptions represented in the narrative to associate the individual meaning as part of the whole. The initial attempt of the researcher was to transform the everyday expressions into terms that represented the phenomenon of life experience related to the adoptive fathering experience without altering the intent of expressions and avoiding any bias of theoretical concepts. The researcher suspended any attempt to infer meaning hastily from those words and thereby reduce their meaning or essence. Instead, the general description that formed out of the narratives as a whole represented a concrete example of the phenomenon of life satisfaction associated with the adoptive fathering experience. It was used as the foundation to expand essential features that were spontaneous and true-life.
If an invariant property did not seem to fit the general whole of adoptive fathering experiences, the researcher explored its meaning by considering each participant’s immediate lived experiences and associated processes. All essential features of the life-world were considered as relevant to the participant’s lived experience such as those immediate influences from family and friends as well as cognitive processes such as personal interpretations, stress, worry, or disappointment. Every invariant characteristic found in words, phrases, or statements were examined by the researcher for idiosyncratic meaningfulness that opened up the description into the true-life features of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience.

All meaningful descriptions or expressions identified in the narratives and the field notes were delineated as a meaning unit. Every statement found to be invariant or embedded were delineated according to appropriate categories of meaning. The researcher compiled a complete list of the meaning units. The compiled list of meaning units was used for subsequent analysis and further explication.

**Explicating clusters and themes.** Using the raw data, the researcher formed clusters of meaning by grouping units of meaning together. In order to accomplish the difficult task of distilling the world of multiple meanings into clusters, the researcher required a firm grasp of the essential nature distinguished in each meaning unit and examined its significance to the nature of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. The units of meaning were carefully scrutinized and the redundant units were eliminated. Organizing efforts required the consideration of the literal content, the number of times a meaning was mentioned, and how it was stated. Before the researcher
included a meaning unit into a cluster, all units of meaning were evaluated in terms of its significance and chronology of events.

Central themes emerged by asking what meaning was essential to life satisfaction and the fathering experience within the various clusters. Central themes were determined by in-depth examination of clusters of meaning, which emerged as the essence of those clusters.

The researcher aimed to discover the themes of the experience conveyed in every cluster of meaning units. Variation or transformations of description or portrayal were analyzed according to core cluster of meaning units. Bracketing possible commitment to theoretical concepts was necessary to procedures of epoché. In-depth reflection into all various manners or context in which each variant described the essence of identified cluster of meaning units was critical—avoiding researcher’s bias or assumptions of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience.

The personal sphere of experiences was explored and examined for inter-subjective connection of experiences and participant’s life-world to gain an in-depth, intuitive sense of each participant’s lived experience influenced by other father, immediate family members, extended family member, and the immediate community. Suspending attempts to use theoretical assumptions or personal bias, the researcher used eidetic reduction to comprehend the experience from the participant’s lived point of view. The researcher recollected personal experiences to reflect and enter the lived world of the participant with empathy and a felt sense of those lived experience.
Clusters of themes were isolated from these formulated meanings. These theme clusters were integrated into an exhaustive description of the findings. In paragraph form, the meanings of the isolated themes were discussed at length. The holistic context of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience was examined according to the list of units of meaning. The researcher used judgment, insight, and creativity to define clusters of meaning and put forward related themes. Consistent meaning units were synthesized into statements of the structure “being an adoptive father and finding life-satisfaction.”

**Explicating structural description.** The goal of the researcher was to develop a structural description from the themes found among the clusters of meaning units. The central focus was to discover what those themes revealed about the interrelationship between the life world and the phenomenon under study. The researcher used procedures of eidetic reduction to reflect on all possible meanings of life satisfaction from the themes. He examined all themes and their descriptions explaining or portraying the phenomenon of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. The relevance of understanding descriptions to the central theme of life satisfaction distinguished the multiple essence of the phenomenon and the general experience of adoptive fatherhood. Intentional analysis and in-depth reflection assisted in data analysis of experiential processes revealed among the themes. The researcher gained insight of multivariate structural accounts as the interrelationship between the objective and subjective qualities of participant’s lived adoptive fathering experiences and life satisfaction.
The researcher reflected on the experience-situation context of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. The researcher examined each significant theme according to what it revealed about the experience-situation context. The experience-situation context was embedded within the rational and intuitive processes of the participants and indistinguishable from the essence of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experiences. The intentional relationship between participants and their situational context was interwoven with the essence of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience.

The researcher used intuitive variation and in-depth reflection for the purpose of clarification as well as mapping out the general essence of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. Intuitive variation and in-depth reflection allowed the researcher to explore every context-bound structure of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. The relationship between life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience within the organization of the respective life world was explored. He continually evaluated individual to community influences and individual to cultural processes in order to grasp the structural meaning and interdependence of meanings that made up the lived experience life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience.

Insight into the life world of the participants was used to develop a structure for examining intentionality or the participant’s cognitive processes. The researcher examined descriptions that suggested intentionality of life satisfaction as a purposeful phenomenon of the adoptive fathering experience within the experience-situation context. The narratives of actual adoptive fathering experiences and field notes in text were
integrated with what was heard, seen, experienced, and thought in the process of interviews.

The practice of intuitive variation and in-depth reflection considered the structures of meaning requisite to life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. The clarifications brought to light those themes embedded within the rational and intuitive processes as described by the participants regarding life satisfaction and their adoptive fathering experiences.

Structured relations were constructed out of meaning units, which constituted the phenomenon of adoptive fathering in general. The researcher examined idiographic data, which provided meaningfulness to how the unfolding of life events shaped life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. Each idiographic meanings were distinguished as potential descriptions of the lived experience of adoptive fathers prior to becoming an adoptive father. Idiographic data enabled the researcher to grasp the meaning of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience, distinct from the rest of the experience that were embedded in the narratives.

Explicating the essential description. The purpose of the final step in data analysis was to synthesize the reflections and insights of the researcher into a consistent statement that expressed the essential description of adoptive fathering. The essential description had to grasp what was central to the phenomenon. It had to be a simple and tight description of the phenomenon under study.

At this phase of data analysis, the researcher brought together the structures of meanings. The aim was to refine the structures of meaning enlightening the social
interaction between fathers, families, extended families, and larger communities that captured the reality as it was acted out day to day within the natural world of lived experiences. The whole experience of adoptive fathering represented general structures interrelated in the life world of the participants. Field notes in text enhanced the distillation of the data. The experience of adoptive fathering was understood within the life-world of participants. Out of those structures of meaning along with the adoptive fathering experience in narrative form, the researcher entered into in-depth reflection considering the natural life-world of each participant to allow the essential essence of life satisfaction to emerge.

According to Donalek (2004), the essential description and a summary of the phenomenological research process was the culmination of preceding data analysis and explication. Readers had to be able to follow the researcher’s process of discovery and understand those themes that emerged from preceding data analysis and supporting quotes from participants. The validity of the research was supported by a presentation of the decision path taken by the research during the explication process that shaped the essential description, which readers and participants could acknowledge.

The essential description yielded the findings that were specific to the particular phenomenon of life satisfaction and the adoptive fathering experience. The essential description was evidenced in the study but could be considered as the representative voice of all adoptive fathers. The researcher made no claim of universality regarding the essential description. It imparted the voice of six adoptive fathers within the context of this study. It presented the unique stories of six participants and the essential description
explicated from their narratives. There existed a remote chance that the essential
description may describe the experience of other adoptive fathers and lend insight into
their cross-cultural adoption experience.

A validity check was conducted at the conclusion of this step. Each participant
was asked to consider the general interpretation made from respective narratives and if
the interpretations made by the researcher accurately captured his voice and described his
lived experience under study. The participants were asked if the essential description and
subsequent presentation regarding researcher’s process of discovery conveyed the
essence of their life-world and lived experience accurately and concretely.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to learn how six adoptive fathers with Korean sons
described and constructed life satisfaction with their adoptive fathering experiences.
Although adoptive fatherhood has been the focus of numerous studies, little voice has
been offered to adoptive fathers to share their stories regarding the essence of life
satisfaction gained through their adoptive fathering experience. To answer this question,
phenomenological procedures and narrative inquiry were considered the best means
toward capturing descriptions of adoptive fatherhood and discerning the essence of their
life satisfaction from adoptive fathering. Methods of phenomenological procedures along
with narrative inquiry and analysis offered a systematic research methodology for
accomplishing the purpose of the study.

In the study, narrative inquiry using in-depth research interviews with the
participants was employed. Research interviews focused on capturing personal
perspectives of adoptive fathers based on their lived experiences, obtaining rich
descriptions of the fathering experience and life-world, and gaining the essence of life
satisfaction from adoptive fathering. The researcher established general procedures of
phenomenology and narrative inquiry for the process of research interviews, data
collection, and ensuing data explication. An interview guide was developed to ensure
that the conversation between the researcher and participant brought forth narratives
capturing the richness and complexity of the adoptive fathering experience and associated
descriptions of life satisfaction. The narratives from each participant provided the
primary source of data. Steps taken during data analysis began with understanding the
general description represented in each participant’s experience of adoptive fathering and
life satisfaction. During each subsequent step of data analysis, significant statements,
words, and phrases found in the narratives from each participant were evaluated and
clustered according to their relevance to and explanation of the adoptive fathering
experience and life satisfaction. Finally, a structural description of life satisfaction
emerged out of the summary of the common themes and structures.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The aim of this qualitative research was to understand the lived experiences of adoptive fathers bringing up their adopted Korean sons. The main research questions guiding the study were as follows: (a) how do adoptive fathers describe their gained life satisfaction in connection to their lived experiences bringing up their adopted Korean son? and (b) what are the themes of life satisfaction as told and described by adoptive fathers?

The results of the data analysis for the study are presented in this chapter. The data analysis reflects narrative inquiry of interviews conducted with adoptive fathers. The method of inquiry was based on Narrative Analysis (Reisman, 1993). The interviews were transcribed into text. After reading and rereading the narratives, the procedure of data analysis and explication followed. The initial process of narrative analysis was to distill the lived perspectives of adoptive fathers from general idea to meaning units. After deep thought and reflection, structural description with three overarching themes was explicated, which recognized life satisfaction adoptive fathers gained raising their Korean son. An interview guide was used and is presented in this chapter. Basic demographic information was gathered using a Demographic Information Questionnaire (DIQ) and is also presented in this chapter.

Results of the Demographic Information Questionnaire

Participants’ demographic profiles were identified by age, ethnicity, education, age of their adopted son, age at adoption, siblings, and age of siblings (see Table 4).
Table 4

**Participants’ Demographic Profiles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Present Age of Participant</th>
<th>Participant’s Ethnic Origin</th>
<th>Participant’s Level of Education Attainment</th>
<th>Present Age of Korean Son</th>
<th>Son’s Age at Adoption</th>
<th>Sibling(s)</th>
<th>Age of Sibling(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>White Caucasian</td>
<td>Some college-no degree</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>Sister (Korean Adoptee)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>White Caucasian</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11 months</td>
<td>Brother (Biological), Sister (Domestic Adoptee)</td>
<td>22, 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>White Caucasian</td>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9 Months</td>
<td>Brother (Biological), Sister (Biological)</td>
<td>24, 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>White Caucasian</td>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5 Months</td>
<td>Sister (Korean Adoptee)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>White Caucasian</td>
<td>BS</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6 Months</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>White Caucasian</td>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4 Months</td>
<td>Sister (Korean Adoptee)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Member Check**

Verification of the researcher’s interpretation of the data was sought through member checking. Member checking is considered one method of enhancing the trustworthiness and credibility of the study. The process allowed for the researcher and participant to discuss the relationship between the data analysis and participant’s original
Each participant also reviewed the researcher’s interpretations and provided any corrective feedback. Member checking was a process as much as a procedure of the study. Phenomenological procedures were believed to apply to member check. That is, the researcher approached member check suspending those preconceptions of reliability and validity. Member check proceeded as an open-ended conversation without predefined expectations. Member check was to verify a human experience as described by adoptive fathers in a study.

The goal of the member check presently was for adoptive fathers to review the data analysis results against their original narratives, providing any corrective feedback. Member checking occurred after all interviews were transcribed and primary data analysis completed. Member checking was conducted in individual, semi-structured telephone interviews. When asked to participate in the study, participants were informed that they would be asked to verbally provide results of their member check during a follow-up telephone interview.

Selected excerpt of transcripts from each interview along with a summary of themes and clusters were sent to each participant via e-mail. Each participant was asked to review the materials for accuracy and provide any clarification. Through the member check process the researcher and adoptive fathers discussed the relationship between data analysis and determined if they believed that the primary data interpretation was relevant and accurate. Member checking also provided the participants with the opportunity to confirm, clarify, or dispute those primary findings. Their feedback enhanced the trustworthiness and credibility of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Of the six descriptions composed by the researcher for review by adoptive fathers, all adoptive fathers reviewed their respective narratives and provided feedback. Three adoptive fathers indicated that the descriptions were accurate without any revision. Three participants discussed their descriptions. The discussions provided a variety of information representing the viewpoints of adoptive fathers. Based on the corrective feedback, adoptive fathers’ individual descriptions were revised.

For example, the researcher intuited one theme explicating the importance of an adoptive father and son relationship. It was described as a mutual connection and central to an adoptive father’s daily life. Daily schedules and activities were prioritized around his adoptive son’s. In response to the description, one adoptive father responded:

You know, I mean, he was moved between several foster homes and finally went to an orphanage before we adopted him. So, you know, he really didn’t bond with anyone and as he got older, you know, it became obvious. I mean, you know, we were told in our adoption classes what to expect, but, you know, um, I mean, it’s not that easy when you have to deal with all the anger and defiance on a daily basis. I mean, he had severe behavior problems both at home and at school. The problems at school got really bad during third and fourth grade, you know. It was, I mean, so we decided to home school him. We had a tutor come in the mornings and he went to a babysitter in the afternoon. [laughter] I mean, we went through several tutors because they could not, you know, could not handle his behaviors. But, yeah, you know, we found one who worked with him and they got along well and she helped us a lot. And, so, because the tutor came in the
mornings, I stayed home with him in the mornings, you know, because my job was more flexible than my wife’s. There were lots of struggles during that time, yeah a lot of struggles. I have a hot temper and so does he, and, I mean, we got into a lot of arguments. There were tough times, you know, back then. But there were many good times also, you know. I mean, we would do things together, go on walks, sled ride and just play together, you know, so that time had its gratifying moments . . . it wasn’t all bad. I guess, you know, what I’m trying to say, you know is that spending time back then was not a choice, I had to because of the circumstances. I don’t regret spending that time and I can say now that it was worth it and wouldn’t change it, you know. But, I mean, I had to schedule my day so I could stay with him during the morning because that was when the tutor was working with him.

Results of the Interviews

Analysis of the Interview Data

Using the semi-structured interview guide, all participants were asked the following questions: “What are some words that capture your experience as an adoptive father raising an adopted Korean son?” “Who were the people that influenced your role as an adoptive father?” “Describe how your role as an adoptive father has evolved over the years.” “Describe the benefits of adoptive fathering that you have experienced over the years.”

Descriptions of the lived experiences of adoptive fathers were examined. Three overarching themes supported a structural description. The structural description was
intuited to explicate gained life satisfaction bringing up Korean sons as reported by adoptive fathers, shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Structural description with themes and clusters

**Theme One: Having a relationship with their adopted sons.** In the current study, narratives of adoptive fathers reflected that having a relationship with their adopted sons was important. Adoptive fathers expressed having a relationship with their sons as a fundamental role. They believed that having a relationship was one essential part of their role as an adoptive father. Having a father and son relationship involved an active father and son participation—a shared experience. That experience sometimes reflected a stressful process, emerging from pre-adoption factors. Many emotions surfaced during those stressful times. Adoptive fathers found comfort from their wives. Sharing those experiences with other fathers or families within their communities were limited. One father explained how he viewed other fathers as having “perfect children.” Other fathers would not be able to empathize. The narrative may illustrate a natural tendency to compare oneself to another. It also described how the process of comparing prohibited conversations with other fathers. The word “perfect” described how other fathers were viewed as having peaceful father and child relationships and unable to share
the experience. Pre-adoption factors impacted the quality of bonding and subsequent father. One adoptive father described the challenges he experienced of bringing up an adopted Korean son.

He was moved between several foster homes and finally went to an orphanage before we adopted him. So, you know, he really didn’t bond with anyone and as he got older, you know, it became obvious. . . . There were lots of struggles during that time, yeah a lot of struggles. . . . There were tough times, you know. But there were many good times also, you know. . . . I guess, you know, what I’m trying to say, you know is that spending time back then was not a choice, I had to because of the circumstances.

Active father and son participation was described in several ways. Physical activity was one way fathers and sons related with each other. As one adoptive father described:

When they were just toddlers, I worked a four-day week and stayed, stayed home with them one day a week. That was a very good experience. It was very fun. Um, we had, we did a lot of things together during that period . . . We’d go for, we’d go for walks—like we’d go to the wilderness center and take walks. We’d, when it was snowing, we’d go out and go sledding. We’d just go outside and play and things like that, um . . . it was, it was a lot of fun, um . . . It was mutual participation or doing things together in an activity—“the two of us.” He and I have a really fun time over a variety of things, whether playing sort of games. My son loves board games, board games like Risk and war-games . . . that kind of
engagement is the two of us playing and talking at the same time. So we engage in that way.

An adoptive father and son spending time in conversation illustrated another manner of participation. As one adoptive father described:

There’s been an increasing debate that he is trying out on me ideas. So he wants to talk politics. He wants to talk about why I think the way I do. He wants to argue the other side quite a bit. He will often say, “I don’t know if I agree with that,” or “I don’t know if I am as much of a liberal as you.” I don’t know if it has to do with much of whatever. It is that he wants to have that conversation about something he is thinking about at the time. He comes toward me with some intellectual talk. In school, he is doing trigonometry, which I am absolutely baffled by it. It’s funny, because in our family, I am the one that does not do math. So, conversations about math is sort of fun because he has the upper hand . . . but I think it’s kind of neat and fun to share back and forth.

Adoptive fathers enjoyed the time spent with their son and desired to spend time together. It was experiencing the benefit that comes from them.

I mean it is being able to enjoy your kids, spending time with them, seeing them grow up and become independent, successful people. I guess to answer your question. It is watching my son succeed in his own right. We go to a concert together, which my son and I really enjoy. I mean, I have enjoyed doing things together with him and watching him succeed in his particular endeavors. I mean, he is very talented in art, and so we have attended many art shows that have
displayed my son’s art. In high school, many of his artwork had been submitted by his teachers to some state reviews. We have attended art shows. When his work has been displayed, certainly as a family we go to see them. We have enjoyed going to activities, both where his work has been displayed, as well as musical events that he enjoys. It is seeing him grow as a person. It’s all the little things that make life satisfying. It’s kind of that journey down the road.

Adoptive fathers were steadfast in their devotion to spend time with their adopted sons. It was a responsibility told by adoptive fathers that they held in value: a value that “fatherhood by far my most important responsibility here on this planet by far—the most important responsibility that I have.” Another adoptive father commented on the value of the father and son relationship:

I saw the value of time, spending time with him being with him. I don’t know if it’s that I’m older or wiser. Just spending time with him. When he talks to us, we look at him in the eyes to show him we’re listening to him. Often, he shares his imagination and the things he’d like to do. Recently, he talked about building a suit of armor. I listened to him. I don’t say he’s dumb, or it’s dumb. I just listen to him and to what he says.

Adoptive fathers demonstrated their value system in several ways. As one father described:

I watch him participate in games and also go to his practices. If I’m not there, he wants to know why I’m not there and someone. It’s also just sitting in a room with, just sitting with him and watching crazy cartoons. Just knowing that I’m
there, means a lot. He knows that I’m there, and I will listen to what he has to say. Going on vacation and taking trips. It’s doing things together . . . Your kids don’t care, at least in our opinion, he doesn’t care if you’re out making money buying them a toy or not. He wants you there. When he’s sick with a cold, he wants you there. He could care less at least when he was younger, what toys he had. He wants you there.

The adoptive fathers recognized early on that their sons’ personalities were quite different from their own. Those differences enhanced the father-son relationship. Each adoptive father deliberately recognized his son’s unique personality and supported him. Adoptive fathers looked for ways to develop those interests and talents.

It’s been a blast to see these new characteristics I didn’t possess. My adopted son to be very athletic and outgoing and, you know very daring. I am very cautious. Just to see the new experiences and new characteristics God put in him that I don’t possess, I admire them because I don’t have them. That’s cool. That’s really cool because you don’t know what you’re gonna get. It’s weird. I think yeah it’s cool to see like my adopted son, as he’s getting older, I see so many characteristics. It’s cool to see so many new ones . . . it’s seeing what someone is good at and developing that. So it’s really cool to see them go off and do things than my biological son does. It’s so cool, because I don’t possess that passion for sports that my adopted son does. So, to see him have that passion is cool and to have that gift and develop that gift is a fun experience.
Adoptive fathers believed that supporting and developing their son’s unique interests and talents influenced their son’s self-esteem.

And just really find them, so they have their own self-esteem that they need, especially in young adulthood that they really need to feel good about themselves . . . because I think that’s where so much trouble comes in to play. If they don’t have good self-esteem, don’t feel good about themselves, then go into wherever they fall into or whoever will take them. And I think that’s obviously a dangerous situation for anybody.

However, for some adoptive fathers, their recognition and acceptance of their son’s difference in personality, interests, and talents was not always immediate. For some adoptive fathers, recognizing and accepting differences was a challenge.

Probably the biggest challenge is, is um, is letting the children be who they are. Ah, there’s a little bit of grieving involved in not having your child be who exactly you thought they were gonna be. Um, you know, you’re idealized vision of them. Um, you know, and if that doesn’t, if that isn’t realized, um . . . ah, being able to let go of that. And, and to love and accept your child for who he is.

The challenge was rooted in a preconception that a son would naturally share an adoptive father’s interests.

Well probably the, the biggest thing is that my son has always been, um, very attuned to any electronic image, TV or something like that. I mean it’ll, it’ll, it, it just pulls him right in. Ah . . . and he, and so consequently, electronic games are very, very, ah, big with him. Ah, and you probably couldn’t find anything more
opposite of what I like to do, then that. I, I’ve never liked electronic games and, ah, I never played it much. Ah, and . . . ah . . . so, I mean, those interests, our interests just really aren’t that much alike. And, you know, of course, you always think that, you know, as he’s going to growing up that he’s gonna have your own . . . your same interests, you know. And that, that just, you know, that just doesn’t necessarily work out.

When their son resisted, it meant that adoptive fathers had to let go of those preconceptions and accept the differences. The process of letting go was a challenge. You, you kick against it for so long and then finally you just give up and say, you know, hey it’s not going to work, you know. It’s not gonna, yeah, I mean, you can try, um, to get some, you know, but if he doesn’t connect with, you know, with your interests, then it just doesn’t, it’s just not gonna work. You know, you have this idealized image, you know, before you go into it. And as, as you go along, you have to realize, you know, you realize that, you know, that idealized image, isn’t gonna, it’s not gonna work that way. It’s not gonna, you know, that’s not what’s gonna be, that’s not what he’s going to be. Ah . . . so um . . . there’s something, I mean, there’s a little bit of, you know, you got to let go of what you, if you’re preconceived ideas and allow him to be who he is. Ah, and that can be good, and that can be tough, you know.

The process of recognizing the differences was a process of unfolding and evolving. It was a process of recognizing their strengths and setting their sons up for success. One adoptive father’s comment seemed to sum it all up:
My son does not do sports, but, so we made sure that he got involved in music. You just try to get him involved in other activities you know, that he can be successful at. Maybe it’s, I mean, you just make different choices in things that you get him involved in and support him in line with where his ability is. I mean, I wasn’t going to push him to get involved in Little League, but I was very active in music as a child through high school and beyond. And so music was something, you know he wanted to do and does well. So we encouraged him to do that. It was just a matter of understanding the strengths and weaknesses. Like you would do with any child, and hopefully get them involved in situations that they can be successful at. So they can, you know, gather enough confidence as a kid. So they can move on in life . . . You know, you become aware of it. Just in the course of observing your kid, you know, everybody has an aptitude strengths and weaknesses so as a parent, we try to observe those in our son and support him in those endeavors. So he can enjoy and be successful at, I mean, learning about my son’s strengths was more observational rather than me claiming credit for it.

Adoptive fathers described a broadened view of having a relationship with their son. Adoptive fathers recognized that shared time together could not be forced. It had to occur naturally and be initiated by their sons. Adoptive fathers had to be flexible with their own time to realize those unexpected moments. As an adoptive father commented, Probably the best way to connect with him is to just let him be who he is and just be there when he wants me to be around and, you know, give him space. And . . just being there.
When there was not a planned activity, the time shared together between an
adoptive father and son was unplanned. The shared time between an adoptive father and
son occurred unexpectedly.

Being there, getting a hug, unexpectedly. Um, you know, cracking jokes just out
of the blue [laughter]. You know, I mean, I mean, you can have, especially with
teenagers, you know, you can pass each other, and suddenly, you can connect,
and, and that makes it worth it. I mean, you go out and work all day and interact
with others at work and do the things that you do at work. It’s just good at the
end of the day to have that time. I mean, it may not happen all the time or every
day. I mean, it’s just those unexpected times, when we laugh at silly stuff. I
mean, get the same sense of humor out of it. You know, for me that makes going
to work worthwhile. It’s just been part of my life. In some ways, my son is my
life.

The father-son relationship also reflected an emotional connection. Being
together also meant connecting emotionally, learning about their son’s unique personality
and knowing “how they tick.” As one adoptive father described, “I find very satisfying I
mean, knowing how he works or how he ticks I’m kind of happy about that and satisfied
about that.”

Another adoptive father described how learning about his son’s personality
brought both amazement and wonder.

I don’t know how to compare my feelings with something else, because he’s our
only son. So, having him as our only son, he is bright, energetic, and sort of a
driven guy. I think, and . . . somewhat has always been. I mean, there’s a part of him that’s always been tightly wound. But still it has been something amazing. I’ve always been conscious that my son has not been of my birthing. We didn’t birth him, but it’s been amazing to see him unfold and grow and amazing to be a part of something, you know, you are impacting. I know that he’s got some impact from us. But there are things about him that I will never know. I don’t know where they come from. I mean the fact that he’s tightly wound and energetic. The competitiveness, sometimes the edginess, you know, I don’t know if that’s from us, from me as his dad or if it’s just a part of him. So there’s an air I guess, and maybe it’s true for all parents but something that’s kind of mysterious about him that I don’t always know. Now is this something that’s part of my son, because of me? Is it because my son is just this way, or is this way? So it’s been both amazing and mysterious . . . I wonder, if that is his personality, is just naturally a part of him. I think maybe to some degree. I think that his personality is something that’s just in his bones. He’s always been like that as a little kid. He would be up early in the morning and want us to read to him. He would say, “get up, get up” and be ready to go. He’s just been that kind of a person. I don’t think of myself quite in that way or that way when I was a little kid.

Some adoptive fathers expressed their telling of the adoptive father and son relationship brought about strong emotions. Those emotions reflected deep love for their son. Their passion was very touching. One adoptive father shared a narrative of a personal nature:
It’s wonderful. It’s very, I mean, yeah. There’s an aspect of my son that makes me very emotional to think about it. But I want to say it. It is very emotional, that one of the things about my son being adopted. I have a sense of him. I don’t know if it’s on loan, a gift, you know. I think there are those who would say that all parents, if you are wise you realize that your children come and go. Your child is a gift, who comes in and out of your life. You may have given them genetic material. That’s how that got started for you. But in my case, it didn’t yet. I am just aware of that. My son, quite often, that you know, he’s only here for a while in the house and I don’t know. I have a respect for that. It makes me emotional to think about that.

Another adoptive father shared a narrative of personal nature:

Our relationship and our connections with each other has been in some ways a great part of my life. Yeah, I am just having a little difficulty with this, because it brings up strong feelings. Our interactions seem to have come very naturally. Regardless of what my day was like or what I was doing, I would always think about how my son was doing. Especially now as he gets ready to go to college, I think about him more. We’ve always been joined at the hip. I don’t know, I just feel like we’ve always been connected . . . thinking about him and him thinking about me, in some way, and connecting. To make all this, times looking forward to spending time together, joking and laughing and now moving on to his next stage in life, to make all this come together properly. It just seems, it just seems very, we’re very integral to each other.
In the current study, narrative of adoptive fathers reflected that having a relationship with their adopted sons was important. It was mutual participation or doing things together in an activity or event—“the two of us.” Pre-adoption factors that were out of the adoptive father’s control sometimes impacted the quality of the father and son relationship. The experience provided a challenging time filled with stress and difficulty. Many emotions surfaced during those stressful times. Sharing those experiences with other fathers or families within their communities were limited. Emotional connection reflected the affective aspect of the father and son relationship. Adoptive fathers recognized early on that their son’s personality was quite different from their own. Some adoptive fathers looked for ways to develop those interests and talents. For other adoptive fathers, recognizing and accepting differences was a challenge. Adoptive fathers recognized that shared time together could not be forced. It had to occur naturally and be initiated by their son. Adoptive fathers had to be flexible with their own time to realize those out of the blue instants of connecting. It was described as “being there when he wants to interact.”

**Theme Two: Life fulfillment.** In the current study, narrative of adoptive fathers reflected how having an adopted son impacted their own life in multiple dimensions. Adoptive fathers described how they valued being a family because having a child naturally was hard, difficult and emotional.

The experience of trying to have a child naturally and not working . . . I mean, my wife had five miscarriages. Wanting to be a dad and you know, trying to have a child naturally and not working. You would see people who have children and...
you would think there’s something wrong here in the world that we can’t have children . . . it was very hard to deal with. And then being able to adopt and have that fulfillment of having a son, that’s fulfillment.

Family was a priority in life and the importance of family surpassed everything else—all other duty, obligation, or activity. It solidified an adoptive father’s personal responsibility—responsibility to his family first and foremost.

I think I just saw the value and investment in the family was more important. I mean, I just thought, you know, love is where your time is at and seeing the value of the family life. Yeah, I put a value on that. Some people base excess on money and homes and different things, materialize wise, but I think your family should be your real measure of success. I mean that’s what you leave behind. Your stuff, they all fight over when you’re dead, anyhow, ha, unfortunately . . . I think it’s just, you know that’s where my priorities have gone—to help develop them and spend time with them and see them grow mature—raising them to be responsible adults. So, So I measure my success on my family and not on what my business is worth or what it will be worth when I’m dead.

The narratives of adoptive fathers reflected how having an adopted son impacted their own personal identity and growth. Adoptive fathers identified themselves as fathers without reservation as well as how being an adoptive father impacted their personal development.

I want to say something that’s very important, I don’t look at my son as being adopted or being Korean. I look at my son as my child . . . you treat your child
the way you would treat your own biological child. We don’t look at him differently just because he’s adopted. It just means that we did not have our son naturally, you know, you adopted your child, but he’s still your child. You know, I personally have a hard time between calling myself adoptive father and father. And that’s just me personally . . . I can’t imagine life without my son in it, you know, just having him around the companionship having fun having the anger at different times, but it goes with the package. You know, but I wouldn’t change it for the world. I wouldn’t change it . . . we were not able to have children on her own and going to adoption route has been the best thing. He has added a sense of family you know. He provided a sense of family that we were not able to do on our own. He brings a whole gamut of emotions like I said before, he brings joy and happiness, excitement and anguish. I mean, he has really caused me to step outside my comfort zone . . . I wouldn’t change or trade any of it. He has brought joy to our lives, being happy, you know confiding in us and things crying on her shoulder you know, to me. He’s just a normal kid. Like I said I don’t see him as adopted. He is my son and a part of our family. His heritage may be Korean, but that’s it; he is my kid.

Adoptive fathers commented how they would not know what they would do if they were not a dad.

I don’t know what I would do if I wasn’t a dad, really, to tell you the truth. Um, I guess it just, it just takes a lot of your time. I mean, it just, it just fills up a period of time in your life. And, if it wasn’t there, I, I don’t know what I’d be doing. I
don’t know, you know, it would, there would just be something missing there. It’s just, it’s just the right thing.

Another father commented:

I would say it has added to my life satisfaction, profoundly. There is a big impact on my life satisfaction. It is a big part of what I’m doing right now in my life. It is how I identify myself or who I am I mean, if someone said, “how would you describe yourself?” I would say father in my description. So it’s a way that I identify myself.

Their identity as an adoptive father involved a process of change. Adoptive fathers described how having an adopted son changed their lives and contributed to their personal emotional development. As a result of being a dad, they had become a deeper and fuller person.

It has definitely, um, made it deeper, fuller. If I wasn’t a dad, then I would just be shallower. I wouldn’t have to come up with it, because, I mean, you wouldn’t have to, you know. It just wouldn’t be as much. There wouldn’t be as many personalities involved. There wouldn’t be as much activities involved. There wouldn’t be, but there also wouldn’t be the reciprocal of that coming back. So, that’s what, that’s why it’s been a good experience. It has been just a great family experience, and you get the benefit of being able to build a family that might not have arisen. When I sit back and take a look at these eighteen years, and look at the future. I would not want to be looking out into the future, if we had not
connected eighteen years ago, you know, I would not be looking at the same future. I think that’s the best way to put it.

The adoption process could be lengthy, and involved many pre-adoption phases. Parents attended courses and lectures, and engaged in self-study programs during the pre-adoption phase. Some parents met and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of adopting privately with other individual who had adopted internationally. As one adoptive father commented:

Before we arrived at the adoption agency, we went through, we went through a series of classes and lectures that individuals who had adopted internationally, and there was one particular family that lived in Kent, Ohio. We drove up one night, and the thing that they said, which was really, really important to my wife and I and I can remember this explicitly. But they said, “you need to understand what you can handle and what your responsibilities are and you know just stay within your limits. You can’t get emotional in the process. You need to know what you can handle and what you can’t.” For some reason, their advice that evening was really, really important for us to hear.

In the current study, narrative of adoptive fathers reflected how having an adopted son impacted their own lives in multiple dimensions. Adoptive fathers described how they valued being a family because having a child naturally was difficult and emotional. A family was a priority in life and the importance of family surpassed everything else—all other duties, obligations, or activities. A family life involved both the good and the struggles. They gained value through struggles and would not change any part of
their life experiences. Adoptive fathers shared how having an adopted son impacted their own identity. They would not know what they would do if they were not a dad. Having an adopted son changed their lives and contributed to their personal emotional development. As a result of “being a dad,” they had become a deeper and fuller person.

**Theme Three: Developing a legacy.** In the current study, narrative of adoptive fathers reflected that creating long lasting memories of the father and son relationship was important. Adoptive fathers described an active and intentional effort to create a memory of a father and son relationship different from an adoptive father’s own experience with his own father.

You know, like I say my father really wasn’t involved with the family that much and so, um, maybe that’s one reason that I felt that I wanted to be more involved with the family, um . . . And so that’s probably, I mean if anything, we’ve kind of had maybe our role model was kind of a reverse role model. I mean we kind of wanted to do things a little differently than what had happened in our families. Um, that’s probably more motivation than anything . . . I don’t feel that he was a good father. So better, I think I try to be a better father than him. I feel that my son should be a better father than I was . . . you know, that can go out and pass on to his children, you know, as an adult.

Another adoptive father commented on the impact of his experience with his father and how it influenced his own role as an adoptive father:

I mean, he was an absent father most of the time, because he worked an awful lot and didn’t see him much. More than that, but other than that, not a lot of
memories, you know, doing things together. I just saw I didn’t have a relationship with my father. I didn’t have the relationship that I would have liked to have. And so I made sure it’s different with our kids.

Another adoptive father commented:

I never had a close relationship with my father growing up. You learn from mistakes. I want to be there for my kid. I just don’t want it to be like “here he is; here’s my dad.” Thinking, I have to do this for the next 18 years. I don’t want that on my end, and I don’t think he wanted on his end. So it’s that making connection where you enjoy spending time with each other you know.

An adoptive father made an effort to be engaged emotionally, based on his own memory of wanting that and not getting it.

I am an emotionally engaged father. And by that I mean, I celebrate, and rejoice with my son. When he has a success, I get excited and delighted. I also get mad and angry and sometimes I yell, much more than my dad ever did. He was just distant. He was that way when conflict came and there was the possibility of a problem or frustration. He tended to check out disappear or become evaporated emotionally and move away. I wished for that with my father. I wished for that emotional engagement. You know, dad fight with me. Come on, you know, engage me. Do you notice me? That’s how it was with me and my dad and I think with my son and me. I think my son would say I am pretty engaged.

In their role as adoptive father, they hoped they had an influential part in shaping their adopted sons’ future experience as both a father and a person. Adoptive fathers
established an active father and son connection that provided the foundation on being a father. Adoptive fathers viewed their own role as fathers to be better models than that with their fathers. In turn, adoptive fathers anticipated their role model would have positive impact on their sons’ future experience as a father. Adoptive fathers believed their responsibility of character development was critical. Parenting their sons, adoptive fathers provided both discipline, and encouragement in hope of teaching right from wrong. It was a desire to have had an influence on their sons’ future value systems and successes as an adult. It was to make sure they had provided their sons with a foundation for making future decisions and choices in life.

Having a child have successes . . . having some things go well for my son and being able to say, “Yeah, I was a part of that.” It feels really good, you know. It’s knowing that I have had an impact on him and I had a hand in who my son has become. I find it satisfying knowing that all that we went through as parents. Disciplining, setting strict limits to some things and him arguing about it, it is satisfying to know that doing all that we did as parents, and all the time, energy and emotions, I am glad that we invested in him. I don’t know if that makes a whole lot of sense, but I find satisfaction in that.

Adoptive fathers described that their influence would have a positive impact for future success, as well as maintain a father and son connection.

Basically, what it boils down too is that you hope, is that you want to see him well adjusted, happy, productive adult. And who still is connected with you. I guess
the whole thing is that as he continues to grow, as his life continues to develop that he will continue to be a part of our lives.

However, adoptive fathers accepted that there were limits to their influence and that they had limited control. As one adoptive father commented:

I think every parent thinks that they are gonna make a big impact in their child’s life. And I think as you, the longer you parent the more you realize that not everything is in your control. A lot of things aren’t and a lot of things that your child will do, they will do. And it is not necessarily your, you don’t necessarily have control. You have influence. You have some influence. But when it really comes right down to it, it’s their life and they will do as they will. A lot of times, that’s what it really comes down to. And so it’s gratifying when you see that they’re on the right road. Because you realize there are limits to how much your influence is. It’s good to see that your influence sometimes does have some effect. Or they make good choices because of your influence or maybe even some other influence from their teachers and others. It’s nice to see that road and they’re heading the right way.

Several adoptive fathers described how outside influence had an impact on their son’s decision making process.

I realize that it’s not just our influence as parents. There’s a lot of influence from peers, and I think they make a big difference in their lives—especially once they start hitting high school and stuff. So to see him not hang around people who are going to get him in trouble is good to see. Like I said, you can have a little bit of
say in some of those things, but really cannot necessarily control everything. It just doesn’t work that way. [Laughs] They are their own person.

Another father elaborated on the influence of outside forces:

I mean, I guess one word, that would sum it up would be lucky, in the sense we have really, really good kids. And I don’t think my wife and I take complete responsibility for our kids. I mean, we’ve tried to be good parents. But you need a certain amount of luck in addition to parenting skills in the course of having kids. So lucky is one word. Fortunate would fall in the same category as lucky. But I would say just the realization that trying your best. I mean, there are outside forces, beyond trying your best bet will impact your parenting. When I say outside forces, I mean other people, like grandparents. I mean, I think that having friends and that will identify with your kids, and will influence their kids in a positive way. My wife and I have very close, several couples and their families are very close too. I think they have had impact on him. Our church, and we’re not overly religious people, but we have coerced our kids, and I do use the word coerced to go to church. And not so much for the religious standpoint, but a lot of the people in our church are community oriented. And being part of that, they have been very supportive of our kids from very young ages on up. So certainly, a church community outside the religious component of it. I think the church experience has been a very positive thing and has influenced our kids’ lives. I think that sums it up: grandparents, friends, and church community have been important outside forces.
In the current study, narrative of adoptive fathers reflected that creating long-lasting memories of the father and son relationship was important. Adoptive fathers described an active and intentional effort to create a memory of a father and son relationship different from an adoptive father’s own experience with his own father. Having had a direct influence in the development of their son’s values and future success was important. However, adoptive fathers accepted that there were limits to their influence and that they had limited control.

**Invariant theme: Racism.** Invariant themes were words, phrases, or statements idiosyncratic and did not seem to fit the general whole of adoptive fathering experiences. Although invariant themes were considered as relevant to the participants’ lived experiences, they deviated from the categories of meaning explicated from the narratives (Giorgi, 1985). The theme of racism was considered an invariant since it did not seem to fit an identified meaning unit. It was considered to be idiosyncratic. Yet, the theme of racism was considered relevant to a couple adoptive fathers and their lived experience raising their Korean son.

Adoptive fathers recognized their sons’ Korean heritage. Rojewski and Rojewski (2001) cited the nature and form of racism that many intercountry adoptees experienced. Those encounters involved overt actions such as teasing, insulting comments, racial slurs, and physical attacks. Less overt racism was described as looks and stares. Some forms of racism were experienced as unrealistic expectations or stereotyping such as the expectation to be docile or the stereotype of high intelligence or superior math ability. Many adoptive parents described their experience with racism as both direct and indirect
(Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). Recounting their experiences, some adoptive parents revealed experiencing criticism from others for not adopting from the United States and having their motives questioned, while others sensed rude stares or expressions (Wager, 2000).

In the present study, one adoptive father made references to experiencing behavior from others in their community that seemed like racism. The community in which they lived could be inclined to racial prejudice (Kim, 2002; Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). When his adopted son was an infant, one father described how people would stop him and his wife and call their son cute or adorable. There was a felt sense by the adoptive father that people perceived his son as a “china doll.” As his son got older, one adoptive father described experiencing more negative feelings and attitudes. His son was not getting invited to birthday parties, and other things. Although his son was playful and kind, the adoptive father observed frequently that his son was left out.

We lived in the state in an area where there was almost no Koreans, Korean Americans at all, and very few Asian people and very few people of color. As we lived in that area, we realized that he was getting very isolated. The kids thought he was cute, adorable, and other moms, and that thought he was adorable when he was little, but then, he was becoming just kind of that rambunctious boy. I would think to myself he is not just a china doll. Comments from people were not derogatory things, but sort of patronizing things. The things people would say were becoming what we thought were more sinister, to us more negative. My son was not getting invited to birthday parties, and other things. My son is a nice kid,
and it didn’t make sense. He was playful and kind boy. How come we are seeing him not included in the parties, games, and it got to the point where we as a couple that it was time for us to move. We decided to make a move. It was getting to a point in my career, where I felt like it was time for a move too. But it really was a drive to get somewhere with more diverse population. More people that look like us. Families with more people for him to look at, and be included and that has happened here. It was positive to come here. We felt like it’s gotten, it’s been much better here.

The behaviors were not derogatory, but there was the feeling of being patronized. Many times behaviors were not overt, but the fathers described gut feelings that made them uncomfortable. The physical reactions such as gut feelings or grinding in the stomach did not develop immediately, but over time as certain behaviors were experienced. The experience over time caused fathers to second-guess or question the motives of others. For example, when one father’s son was involved in Little League, there was always a worry or fret as to whether his son was being treated unfairly.

It grinds in my belly. That’s just part of being the dad that I am of the son that I have, because some of the stuff is not possible to second-guess. I am thinking about a particular circumstance where my son was involved in some sports in competitive teams and worrying fretting and feeling concerned. Is my kid getting a fair shake or is my kid getting treated differently, whether it’s because he is Asian, or because he is adopted. I have felt that gut feeling at times, that and I maybe just remembering from being a child that kids who were adopted. There is
a certain stigma that goes with kids who are adopted, that these are kids that there is something wrong with them or that there is something bad about these kids or that one he is adopted. I remember that as a child, and now as a parent of an adopted child who happens to be a different color than me, and different shape and size than me. Sometimes I get this double whammy about this. Do you assume the worst about this kid, because he’s a really great kid. That’s the way I go internally with it. There is more just worrying fretting and feeling kind of powerless about these things. I feel there’s not much a dad can do. You know, you almost have to be able to nail it to say. You have been unfair to my kid, because of this or that. So there is a certain frustration about that.

In response to prejudice, many parents maintained an active advocate position of their adopted child (Weir, 2001). In the presence of community intolerance, adoptive parents were either active advocates who confronted and defended, or kept their attitude and viewpoint personal and private. In the present study, one father chose proactive approaches. He volunteered to talk with his son’s classmates at school for several consecutive years. He discussed some things regarding adoption and intercountry adoption from Korea. He also talked about what it meant to be a mixed-racial family. Although he felt positive with the discussion, he would always wonder if his efforts made any difference.

Well, what we’ve done over the years is try to be really proactive. I don’t know if it’s worked or not, but it’s something that my wife and I have done together. And I think my wife has been more proactive towards school. When we lived in
Wyoming, we went into my son’s classroom. We volunteered to go in to my son’s classroom and teach about adoption and talk about being a mixed race, family. The receptive response of the students was pretty good when the kids were small. Lately, what we’ve tried to do has been to keep on reassuring my son that we love him and talk to us about racism. He doesn’t talk to us about it and act as if it doesn’t bother him. He says, “It doesn’t bother me like it bothers you.” But I get the sense that it does. He keeps it within him.

In the present study, an adoptive father made references to experiencing behavior from others in their community that seemed like racism. It was believed that local cultural context had much to those behaviors. The local cultural language and vocabulary symbolized conversations shared among community of people (Geertz, 2002; Gergen, 1999). Without shared cultural language and vocabulary, conversations reflected various lived realities. Conversations of intercountry adoption events or conversations of experiences as a multiracial family required sharing of similar vocabularies. When his adopted son was an infant, one father described having experiences in public place where people stopped him and his wife. Their conversations seemed to do more with race than family life. Conversations with other people reflected stereotypes of Asians. As his son got older, an adoptive father described experiencing negative feelings and attitudes from others. He felt that his son was not getting invited to birthday parties, and other things for racial reasons. Although his son was playful and kind, the adoptive father observed frequently that his son was left out.
In response to prejudice, adoptive parents maintained an active advocate position of their adopted child (Weir, 2001). In the presence of community intolerance, they were either active advocates who confronted and defended, or kept their attitude and viewpoint personal and private. In the present study, one adoptive father chose proactive approaches. He volunteered to talk with his son’s classmates at school for several consecutive years. He discussed some things regarding adoption and intercountry adoption from Korea. He also talked about what it meant to be a mixed-racial family. Although he felt positive with the discussion, he would always wonder if his efforts made any difference.

An adoptive father’s sense of uncomfortable social interactions seemed related to racial differences of his adopted son. Important in this narrative was the fact that racial, as opposed to adoptive, issues punctuated his experiences. Race seemed to overshadow adoption, which seemed to do largely with the local cultural context. Adoptive fathers sensed that racism was an issue for their sons and heightened their sense of being different. There was a greater sense to protect their sons from racism when the local culture was viewed as insensitive to people of color. When it was decided that the local culture practices isolated their adopted Korean son from social interactions, finding a community with other people of color became necessary.

**Invariant theme: Cross culture experience.** The theme of cross-cultural experience was considered an invariant since it did not seem to fit an identified meaning unit. It was considered to be idiosyncratic. Yet, the theme of cross-cultural experience
was considered relevant to couple adoptive fathers and their lived experience raising their Korean son.

In the current study, narrative of various adoptive fathers reflected their different experiences of raising their adopted Korean son. One cross-cultural aspect involved teaching their Korean son about his heritage and culture. Open adoptive father and son communication was valued and supported. Adoptive fathers discussed openly with their son about their son’s Korean heritage and culture.

Honor that you have a child who comes from a different culture. I think that’s an important part in, some people get into it further than others. But we made it a point with our son, at least to acknowledge his given name that is foster parents had given him in Korean. So we’ve, so we’ve retained them and used it as his middle name. So, he has a little bit of a connection there, and his name. For instance, my son’s middle name is Kyun, and there’s a part of that, that I think is really important. His first name is American and every day is called by his American name. We value our sons, Korean connection, and I think he values that and shares with other Korean adopted kids. It’s important that he knows and has a network of people. Now, he’s not preoccupied by it. He just enjoys it so I think. If you’re going to go into this and think about this as a father. I think you need to go into it, recognizing that that person needs to understand who they are and where they came from. Obviously, the child will know that he was not a child, who was naturally born to your family. Your birth family, but that he is every bit as part of your family and your child. Right from the beginning, we try
to make sure he understood who he was before he was even talking. I think that’s an important part of raising your child, whether he is Korean, or any other international child adopted from another place. Their culture is an important thing. This is not to say that they should someday search for their natural parents. But I think your child having a sense in the world is an important thing.

Despite the encouragement and exposure to Korean heritage, not all of the adopted Korean sons voiced an interest in learning about their Korean heritage. One adoptive father described:

You know, certainly over the years, we have encouraged my son’s interest in his Korean heritage. I mean, we have attended a Korean culture camp for many years, which we really enjoyed. But my son really, you know, doesn’t have an awful lot of interest and never express much of an interest in going back to Korea. I mean, we’ve talked openly about going back to Korea and visiting, but he has never express an interest at all. Even though we have encouraged and have talked about exploring his heritage, you know. We have never pushed it. We’ve really tried to encourage it and talking about his Korean heritage openly, you know. My son never has had an interest in learning a great deal about his Korean heritage. The Korean thing has never been something you show a lot of interest in.

Difficult subjects could be brought to fore during discussions, which typically surrounded the question of “why was I put up for adoption?” Those discussions were described as difficult and challenging. Adoptive fathers believed that regardless of its sensitivity, honest answers were provided.
I think my challenges have been the challenges of why. “Why was I put up for adoption?” If there are siblings, the questions about having siblings that may not share the same culture or ethnic background. Answering the question, why was I put up for adoption is a huge challenge. As your child matures, and goes through different developmental stages. The questions of why become deeper and require an answer that meets your child’s level of curiosity. There are questions like, “why did my parents send me to an orphanage?” Those are the questions you have a hard time answering, because you really don’t know the answer of why. My son has a sibling who was older. So when his mother got pregnant with my son. His father did not want to raise another boy. His father left the marriage, so his mother did not have a husband. In the Korean culture, if a woman gives birth to a child without a husband that woman and her child would be considered an outcast. So his mother put my son in an orphanage. I don’t know if the birth father came back into the picture or not, but answering the why questions are tough conversations. I often say, “I don’t know honey, but I’m glad she did, because we wouldn’t have you, if she didn’t.” So it’s those types of conversations or the conversations of why me. Why did you pick me? So that’s the most difficult conversations to have. But even though there’s difficult, you must be honest with them. Don’t hide things, because if you do, and your child learns about it later on he will come back to haunt you later in life. Give them snippets of information to ease their curiosity, and then the older they get. They will want more information. Giving them snippets early on is not lying to them. It is giving
them information that they can handle for their mental state for their age. At this point, my son knows as much background information that was shared to me during the adoption process...

Adoptive fathers educated themselves of the Korean heritage. They involved themselves in the study of the Korean culture and participated in Korean Culture camp as a family.

It’s been a joy having the experience of learning about the Korean culture, intentionally learning about the Korean culture—the food, music, ethnic tradition and cultural holiday, traditions and habits. It’s been intentional, to make that a part of our lives, to be an international sort of family. And we have had fun with it. I would have never gone down that path, without having my son. So that’s been awesome and fun. I mean, we would have been just German with fried potatoes. I mean, that’s what my wife coming from a Swedish family. We would have been just that a Swedish and German. And when we got married, that was the extent of a mixed marriage. So having the experience of learning about the Korean culture has been fun. I love so much of the culture and all that. It’s really fun. Me and my wife really enjoy it as a couple.

One adoptive father described how the Korean culture camp provided him and his Korean son a network of lifelong friends. Over the years, his Korean son developed close friendships—friends with whom he could share things that he could not share with his adoptive parents. Korean camps became a community that provided a sense of
belonging. Adoptive fathers also felt a sense of community wherein adoptive fathers shared with other adoptive fathers stories of their lived experiences.

You know, for us and great learning about another culture, and experiencing a lot of families who have adopted Korean children. If you’re looking for an international experience, and experiencing the positive that other families have experienced finding positive people through support groups. Sort of thing I would say being a community with others who share your experience and at the same time provide an experience for my son to be with other children who are like him. I am sure there are communities for others, who have adopted Russian kids, for example. So, I don’t know what it was like adopting a different child internationally, but for me. It is then a positive experience over the past 17 years. We have developed quite a network of friends that we have met through Korean camps. They are families that will be friends for life and their children will be friends with my son for the rest of his life. He opportunity for a shared experience for us and my son. Yeah, has been tremendous. I mean, I’m not saying that every family should do it for me and my son. It’s been wonderful. For us, and my son going to Korean culture camp is the highest point of our summer and it’s been all good. I mean, it provides the opportunity to share things with others that he might not share with us. I know it’s been sort of, his place. It’s been his time to talk to and share things with his counterparts. Yeah it’s been really positive for all of us.
In the current study, narrative of various adoptive fathers reflected their cross-cultural experiences of raising an adopted Korean son. One cross-cultural aspect involved teaching their Korean sons about their heritage and culture. Not all of the adopted Korean sons voiced an interest to learn about their Korean heritage. Adoptive fathers discussed openly with their sons about Korean heritage and culture. Difficult and challenging subjects could be brought to fore during discussions, which typically surrounded the question of “why was I put up for adoption?” Adoptive fathers educated themselves of the Korean heritage and participated in Korean Culture camp as a family. The Korean Culture camp provided adoptive fathers and their Korean son an opportunity to share with other adoptive fathers and adopted Korean friends stories of their lived experiences.

Korean camps were a large part of the cross-cultural experience for adoptive fathers. Korean camps helped create a “sense of community” because there were “more Korean adoptee families and children in one place.” Through Korean camp, Korean sons were able to experience a place “where they could share things with other adopted Korean children.” One adoptive father described how the experience of Korean camp brought them closer to something personal shared by both adoptive fathers as well as adopted Korean sons. It was a community of shared experiences and a place that provided a sense of belonging.

**Summary of the Results**

The data were obtained from six adoptive fathers raising adopted Korean sons. The adoptive fathers provided a structural description of their lived experiences of raising
an adopted Korean son and the meaning of that experience. As previously stated, the main research questions guiding the study were as follows: (a) how do adoptive fathers describe their gained life satisfaction in connection to their lived experiences bringing up Korean sons? and (b) what are the themes of life satisfaction as illuminated, explained, and described by adoptive fathers?

This chapter provided a detailed description of the lived experiences of adoptive fathers raising adopted Korean sons, and the structural description with overarching themes. Data were analyzed to determine the themes and categories that had emerged during the interviews.

The next chapter provides a general discussion of the themes, and the limitations of the study. It also presents implications for counseling practice and counselor education, and suggestion for future research.
CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The aim of this qualitative research was to develop an understanding of the lived experiences of adoptive fathers bringing up adopted Korean sons. The main research questions guiding the study were as follows: (a) how do adoptive fathers describe their gained life satisfaction in connection to their lived experiences bringing up Korean sons? and (b) what are the themes of life satisfaction as illuminated, explained, and described by adoptive fathers?

In summary, the process of narrative inquiry as the basis of data analysis included reading through each of the interviews to develop a general impression and identify relevant verbal statements and phrases related to the lived experience of adoptive fathers. It was necessary to re-read the data several times to fully understand responses and the meaning those statements or phrase implied. The third step involved constructing and developing the meaning units into themes. In constructing themes, the researcher clustered words, phrases and paragraphs. Those clusters were classified as evidence supporting and justifying each theme. Then the themes were explicated according to the general whole. Finally, the themes of lived experiences of the adoptive fathers were intuited describing a general structural of overarching themes.

In this chapter the results are discussed and interpreted, implications of the study, its limitations and suggestions for future research are provided.
Implications of the Study

The findings from the current study and the comparison to the existing literature yielded implications for research and application. Implications for application include recommendations for the practice of counselor educators.

Theme One: Having a Relationship With Their Adopted Son

Several studies of adoptive fatherhood have focused on the relationship between the adoptive father and adopted child (Baumann, 1999; Severson, 1994). Severson investigated the quality of attachment between fathers and their adopted children. The data suggested that adoptive fathers had difficulty committing to and feeling affection for their adopted child. According to Severson, the lack of biological tie with the adopted child was reported by fathers as the prominent impediment to their emotional attachment.

The above findings were not supported in the present study. Fathers expressed quite the opposite. Although there was not a biological tie, fathers felt an emotional connection with their adopted sons. They felt interconnected with their sons. A father-son relationship was expressed as important and integral. Relationships were often described as natural and normal. Pre-adoption factors impacted the natural bonding process and the adoptive father’s attempt to foster a father and son relationship. Those factors were out of the father’s control and provided stressful experiences bringing up their adopted Korean son.

The ability to understand their sons’ physical and emotional needs was related to emotional attachment and feeling of affection. It was important for adoptive fathers to recognize their son’s determination as well as disappointment. There was a clear sense of
motivation for adoptive fathers to possess an emotional attachment with their son. In some cases, fathers experienced struggle and challenge raising their son. Fathers described struggles and challenges as a normal function of raising a child. When pre-adoption factors were the source of stressors and challenges, parenting became a balancing act between work and child care. Although the father-son bond helped adoptive fathers endure through those difficult times of struggle and challenge pre-adoption factors added bonding issues to daily challenges. There was a felt sense of value in the enduring relationship among fathers through the good and bad times.

**Theme Two: Life Fulfillment**

Confronted with childlessness, some fathers found that the possibility of raising a child through adoption offered a sense of renewed hope for a family (Daniluk & Hurtig-Mitchell, 2003). For many fathers, in the present study, the decision to adopt followed many attempts to birth a biological child unsuccessfully. The experience of trying to have a child naturally and it not working was difficult for many fathers. Fathers described a felt sense of anguish trying to have a child naturally and not being successful. Being able to adopt a son fulfilled the desire of fathers to have a family. Fathers felt fortunate to have adoption as a way to have a family. Family life was something fathers desired. It was a positive experience to be a family and do things together like any other family.

to provide prospective adoptive parents with a minimum of 10 hours of training (independent of the home study) that included topics on the adoption process, developmental risk factors, and attachment disorders, in addition to training in preparation for the adoption of a particular child.

When parents arrived at the adoption agency, many were prepared to begin the process of adopting. Those parents have endured the pre-adoption phase and were set to adopt a child. The adoption process can be a financial as well as an emotional undertaking. In the present study, adoptive parents attended courses and lectures, and engaged in self-study programs during the pre-adoption phase. Some parents met and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of adopting with other parents who had adopted internationally. Adoptive fathers expressed that the end result of adopting a son overshadowed pre-adoption issues. Despite the good and the bad of the adoption process, fathers would not change their decision to adopt a Korean son. They would do it again. Those descriptions agreed with the findings of Sook-Bergquist et al. (2003). Adoptive family reported contentment with their decision to adopt a Korean child. Adoptive parents reported that they would repeat their decision to adopt their Korean children.

To the participants, adopting and raising a Korean son enhanced their appreciation and fulfillment of life as an adoptive father. Fathers reported that raising their son has changed their lives. There was a felt sense that fathers found fulfillment in life as a result of raising their son. Fathers expressed that there would be something missing in their lives. Those descriptions agree with the findings of Paquette et al. (2000). Adoptive fathers’ involvement with their son led to a direct sense of life satisfaction. Fathers
reported that their experience of fatherhood made them more humane and sensitive. Adoptive fathers described gaining personal benefits as a result of involvement with their children. Fathers described how being an adoptive father has made a major difference in life.

Drawing on data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), fathers gained personal life satisfaction from their fathering experience. Eggebeen and Knoester (2000) reported that fatherhood directly correlated to better psychological health, greater social connections, closer intergenerational family ties, and higher commitment to work. Those findings supported Tanfer and Mott (1997) where fathers reported an increase in life satisfaction as a result of fatherhood. Due to fatherhood and involvement with their children, many fathers reported that they had become better people (Palkovitz, 2002).

Regarding the priority fathers placed on the role of father, Palkovitz (2002) suggested that it was a daily challenge for fathers struggling to balance what really mattered and the distractions that competed for attention. Despite the overwhelming challenge presented to fathers, they conveyed a remarkable commitment to their father role. In the present study, fathers, unequivocally, placed their role of father as their highest priority in life. For many adoptive fathers, it was how they identified themselves. For many fathers, anything else they did in life paled to being a father. Many adoptive fathers made no distinction between adoptive father and father. They described themselves as father.
Placing a high priority on the role of father evolved. Fathers described having placed less of a priority at the early stages of raising their son. This priority increased over time. The shifting priorities of a father’s role may have been partly due to the developmental factors. According to Palkovitz (2002), variations existed because fathers adapted interactional patterns and responsibilities in consideration for the psychological and developmental needs of their boys and family. Fathering reflected adapting parenting roles within the developmental context of their children. Variations in parenting involvement and responsibilities were viewed as expected and in accordance with changes in the family life cycle.

Shifting priorities could have been a result of changing cultural expectations regarding the role of a father. According to Palkovitz (2002), the expectations of fathers and their role have evolved. Fathers have become more involved in raising their children, spending time with them, and sharing with household chores, which differed distinctly from father’s involvement with child-rearing and household duties of yesterday. The change has taken place over the years supported by the encouragement that fathers played an important role in families—both in the context of childrearing and in a general developmental sense.

**Theme Three: Developing a Legacy**

At the outset of raising a son, the fathers all expressed that their own father was the main influence on their father role as well as their participation in family life. According to Condon et al. (2004), many first-time fathers lacked a mental image regarding the role of a father. Fathers described that their experience with their own
father provided an insufficient example of fatherhood. Although many men desired to create an experience with their future child different from those with their own fathers, they lacked an alternate model of father involvement which could provide a foundation (La Rossa & Sinha, 2006).

In the present study, adoptive fathers made reference to their experience with their father. Fathers described that their experience with their own father provided an insufficient example of fatherhood. All the fathers desired to create an experience with their son that was different from those with their own fathers. The fathers made no reference to experiencing anxiety or dilemma as a result. In their present role as father, they hoped that their example as father would provide a positive and lasting example of fatherhood for their son. As their father modeled an example of fatherhood to them, adoptive fathers hoped that their example of fatherhood would influence their adopted son’s future role as father and lasting sense of fatherhood.

**Invariant Theme: Racism**

Adoptive parents recognized their son’s Korean Heritage. Rojewski and Rojewski (2001) cited the nature and form of racism that many intercountry adoptees experienced. Those encounters involved overt actions such as teasing, insulting comments, racial slurs, and physical attacks. Less overt racism was described as looks and stares. Some forms of racism were experienced as unrealistic expectations or stereotyping such as the expectation to be docile or the stereotype of high intelligence or superior math ability. Many adoptive parents described their experience with racism as both direct and indirect (Rojewski & Rojewski, 2001). Recounting their experiences,
some adoptive parents revealed experiencing criticism from others for not adopting from the United States and having their motives questioned, while others sensed rude stares or expressions (Wager, 2000).

In the present study, one adoptive father described uncomfortable social interactions because of racial differences of his adopted son. Important in this narrative was the fact that racial, as opposed to adoptive, issues punctuated his experiences. Race seemed to overshadow adoption, which seemed to do largely with the local cultural context. Fathers sensed that racism was an issue for their sons and heightened their sense of being different. There was a greater sense to protect their sons from racism when the local culture was viewed as insensitive to people of color. When it was decided that the local culture practices isolated their adopted Korean son from social interactions, finding a community with other people of color became necessary.

One adoptive father made references to experiencing behavior from others in their community that seemed like racism. When his adopted son was an infant, he commented how people would stop him and his wife and describe their son as cute or adorable. There was a felt sense by the father that people perceived his son as a “china doll.” As his son got older, one father described experiencing more negative feelings. His son was not getting invited to birthday parties and other things. Although his son was playful and kind, the father observed frequently that his son was not being invited to parties.

The behaviors were not derogatory, but there was feeling of being patronizing. Many times behaviors were not overt, but the fathers described gut feelings that made them uncomfortable. The physical reactions such as gut feelings or grinding in the
stomach did not develop immediately, but over time as certain behaviors were experienced. The experience over time caused fathers to second-guess or question the motives of others. For example, when his son was involved in Little League; there was always a worry or fretting as to whether his son was being treated unfairly.

In response to prejudice, many parents maintained an active advocate position of their adopted child (Weir, 2001). In the presence of community intolerance, adoptive parents were either active advocates who confronted and defended, or kept their attitude and viewpoint personal and private. In the present study, one adoptive father chose proactive approaches. He volunteered to talk with his son’s classmates at school for several consecutive years. He discussed some things regarding adoption and intercountry adoption from Korea. He also talked about what it meant to be a mixed-racial family. Although he felt positive with the discussion, he would always wonder if his efforts made any difference.

**Invariant Theme: Cross-Cultural Experience**

Several adoptive fathers regarded bi-cultural socialization important. They acknowledged the importance of their adopted Korean son’s ethnic heritage and determined an appropriate approach to bi-cultural socialization was their son’s choice (Rojewski, 2005). Some Korean sons chose to celebrate their Korean heritage. One Korean son had no interest. Open communication between adoptive father and his son was valued and supported. Adoptive fathers discussed openly with their son about their son’s Korean heritage and culture. Difficult subjects could be brought to fore during discussions, which typically surrounded the question of “why was I put up for adoption?”
Those discussions were described as difficult and challenging. Adoptive fathers believed that regardless of its sensitivity, honest answers were provided.

Adoptive fathers believed confidently that maintaining the Korean heritage had important contributions to give, particularly giving their Korean son “a sense in this world.” Adoptive fathers celebrated their Korean son’s ethnic heritage. They maintained the intercountry adoption in a highly favorable light (McDonald et al., 2001). Adoptive fathers educated themselves of the Korean heritage. They involved themselves in study of the Korean culture and participated in Korean Culture camp as a family. The Korean Culture camp provided adoptive fathers an opportunity to share with other adoptive fathers stories of their lived experiences.

Korean camp helped create a “sense of community” because there were “more Korean adoptee families and children in one place.” Through Korean camp, Korean sons were able to experience a place “where they could share things with other adopted Korean children.” One adoptive father described how the experience of Korean camp brought them closer to something personal shared by both adoptive fathers as well as adopted Korean sons.

Adoptive fathers recognized that their Korean son had his own personal stories, which could only be understood by his peers. Adoptive fathers educated themselves of the Korean heritage. They involved themselves in study of the Korean culture and participated in Korean Culture camp as a family. The Korean Culture camp provided adoptive fathers an opportunity to share with other adoptive fathers stories of their lived
experiences. It also provided their Korean sons a community of peers and a place where personal stories could be shared, which could only be understood by his peers.

**Implication for Counselor Education**

Although the sample was small and findings preliminary, new information was contributed to the adoption literature. Methodologically this research was noteworthy because it was based on descriptive phenomenology of how adoptive fathers described life satisfaction bringing up adopted Korean sons. The study expands available counselor education literature by adding data based on the lived experiences of adoptive fathers.

Research has been integral in Counselor Education, advancing knowledge in the field of counseling. According to the American Counseling Association (2005), the practice of professional counseling respected and promoted diversity when working with clients. Counselors continually monitored their cultural competence and engaged in continuing studies to maintain their professional competence. When working with adoptive fathers, professional counselors required a grasp of the diversity and complexities of fatherhood—to provide therapeutic approaches with efficacy and effectiveness. The counselor uses prevailing theories and empirically validated therapeutic practices to assess problems and determine solutions. Counselors incorporate prevailing theories and assumptions to interpret and offer advice in order to change what is wrong and bring about a solution.

The adoption process has been shown to be stressful for adoptive parents, during both pre-adoption and post-adoption periods (McDonald et al., 2001; McGlone et al., 2002). Counselors should be mindful that adoptive mothers and fathers manifested and
experienced psychological stress differently. Adoptive mothers and fathers presented different clinical profiles (Condon et al., 2004). Judge (2003) investigated variations in parents’ assessment of parenting stress among 109 mother-father pairs who adopted children from Eastern Europe. The type and quality of stress reported were found to be significantly different between mothers and fathers. Mothers reported initial concerns regarding their reduced time to bond with a child, as compared to the process of pregnancy, whereas fathers raised concerns regarding anticipated changes to family functioning and family life.

Condon et al. (2004) suggested that the transition and subsequent series of related changes for first-time fathers caused men significant distress. Psycho-educational therapeutic approaches based on fathering skills were suggested as an appropriate way to reduce their stress (Condon et al., 2004). According to Condon et al., some of the distress stemmed from issues beyond fathering skills. Many first-time fathers who manifested extreme distress lacked a mental image regarding the role of fatherhood. Distress emanated from the belief that their experience with their own father provided an insufficient example of fatherhood.

Fathers have a significant role in determining counseling outcome. Carr (1998) conducted an overview of research addressing the relationship between father involvement and family therapy outcome. Intentional efforts to engage fathers in the counseling process had a direct impact on family therapy outcome. Compared to counseling with little father involvement, when counselors purposefully involved fathers in the therapy process, those families showed higher rates of improvement. It also
affirmed that adoptive fathers should not be considered as a silent participant, but rather actively involved in counseling—through the intentional efforts by the counselor if necessary. It affirmed that the counseling process benefited by involving the unique insight of parenting from the perspective of adoptive fathers. It affirmed the importance of engaging adoptive fathers in the counseling process.

Baumann (1999) suggested the quality of attachment between the adoptive father and adopted child was correlated to the circumstances surrounding the decision to adopt. Infertility has been one factor, which led to adoption as an option for child-rearing. The news of infertility produced varying degrees of emotional distress for both husband and wife. When the decision to adopt was due to infertility, Baumann suggested that men and women experienced the news differently. Although the traditional definition of parenthood assumed a biological connection between parents and children, female respondents stressed motherhood as an important part of their self-development. Despite infertility, women viewed motherhood through adoption as worthwhile. The possibility of child-rearing through adoption gave women a new perspective on personal growth and fulfillment. Based on the present study, the result suggested that adoptive fathers found life fulfillment raising their adopted Korean son.

While women tended to be interested in the possibility of adoption as meaningful for self-development, men tended to attribute their infertility as a reflection of their masculinity. According to Baumann (1999), in general, infertility altered those fantasies of being transformed through biological reproduction and a second chance to fulfill dreams and goals through their biological son. Infertility threatened fantasies of being
reborn, of creating a better version of oneself or of filling a void as expected. Baumann suggested that men’s difficulty adjusting to their infertility adversely impacted their ability to bond with their adopted child. Based on the present study, fathers told of their emotional frustration of infertility and found hope through adoption. They valued their adopted Korean son and the fulfillment of a family.

While some fathers found it difficult to accept their infertility, other fathers became motivated to adopt in the dawn of childlessness. One study suggested that some fathers, who experienced feelings of loss due to their infertility, found that the possibility of raising a child through adoption offered a sense of renewed hope (Daniluk & Hurtig-Mitchell, 2003). The researchers suggested that those adoptive fathers anticipated establishing a father-child bond with their future child. Through a natural process of discovery, adoptive fathers looked to discover similarities between them and their adoptive child’s temperament, humor, talent, and intelligence. The spirit of their childrearing approach was to realize compatible social characteristics and features of their adopted child and disregard any differences in physical characteristics. Based on the present study, those findings were supported by adoptive fathers.

Studies pertaining to adoptive fatherhood have focused on the relationship between the adoptive father and adopted child (Baumann, 1999; Severson, 1994). Severson investigated the quality of attachment between fathers and their adopted children. The data suggested that fathers had difficulty committing to and feeling affection for their adopted child. Adoptive fathers demonstrated significant difficulty bonding with their adopted child. According to Severson, the lack of biological tie with
the adopted child was reported by fathers as the prominent impediment to their emotional attachment.

Quantitative data can provide information, but cannot provide what life satisfaction feels like to be an adoptive father or understand how life satisfaction emerges out of adoptive fathers’ lived experiences bringing up adopted Korean sons. A one-dimensional investigation into the role of adoptive fathers overlooked the phenomenon of adoptive fatherhood based on their lived perspective. A traditional research approach did not capture fully the multiplicity of cognitive, evaluative, and affective expressions embedded within each adoptive father’s own experience. A traditional research approach of adoptive fatherhood overlooked the intersection of meaning and social interaction between adoptive fathers and their Korean sons.

A one-dimensional conceptualization of adoptive fatherhood had limitations. For example, the counselor uses prevailing theories and empirically validated therapeutic practices to assess problems and determine solutions. Counselors incorporate prevailing theories and assumptions to interpret and offer advice in order to change what is perceived to be wrong and bring about a solution. In such a scenario, adoptive fathers learn a scripted plan on how they should sort through life. A counselor’s scripted plan defines how the adoptive father’s lived experiences should or ought to be. Adoptive fathers may achieve goals set forth, but may not have a sense of personal agency (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

The findings of this study have implications for the inclusion and integration of phenomenological procedures into understanding the psychological issues adoptive
fathers bring. The data gathered by understanding the adoptive fathers’ lived experiences represents the meaning of life satisfaction as a whole. Appreciation of lived experiences provides unique understanding into how adoptive fathers sort through life in the process of gaining life satisfaction bringing up their adopted Korean sons. It is those lived experiences that furnish rationale for examining adoptive father’s vocabulary of descriptions, and explanations for what is observed. If counseling is a process of interactions, then the process needs to involve the adoptive father. The best source of information regarding what brings life satisfaction to an adoptive father is the adoptive father himself. The data gathered by understanding the adoptive fathers’ lived experiences represents the meaning of life satisfaction as a whole. Life satisfaction and its meanings are defined by the adoptive father according to lived experiences and not the counselor preconceptions of how life satisfaction ought to be or should be.

The findings from this study show that the data gathered directly from adoptive fathers represent a rich description into the meaning of life satisfaction. In order to achieve those ends, the counselor must become self-reflective of preconceptions. Phenomenology challenges us to examine preconceptions and heed the scientist/therapist role. If our goal is to seek a holistic understanding of psychological issues adoptive fathers bring, the best source of information is the adoptive father. One adoptive father’s narrative will not be the same as a different adoptive father’s. There are multiple perspectives (Gergen, 1999) and adoptive fathers have their own unique lived experiences. The interactive dynamic between the counselor and adoptive father constructs the language, meaning, and change. The narratives provided by adoptive
fathers illuminated those shared realities as well as divergent ones experienced by adoptive fathers—reflecting the common and diverse qualities of each adoptive father’s unique experiences and individual cognitive processes.

In the field of counseling, the focus of research recognizing the lived experiences of people were essential in order to understand the qualitative nature of psychological issues. Descriptive phenomenological inquiry methods emerged as a way for researchers to capture and understand the phenomenon under study based on narratives given by persons from their lived experiences (Wertz, 2005). In general, descriptive phenomenology as a method of inquiry gained greater acceptance for investigating the psychological struggles and human experiences within the field of counseling. In a practical sense, descriptive phenomenological methods captured and provided insight into the shared experiences between the client and counselor. According to Wertz, descriptive phenomenological methods were well-suited to study the conscious and experiential processes experienced in the counseling process. Capturing and understanding those descriptions based on both the counselor’s and the client’s point of view helped align goals and therapeutic objectives.

Phenomenology, as a vehicle to understanding the counseling process, provided insight into the experience between the counselor and client as well as appreciating the meaning each brought to the counseling experience. The reality and meaning of the therapeutic process and psychological issues was a co-construction between the counselor and client. Counselors had a way that could allow them to consider and respect both
personal assumptions as well as their client’s perceived and lived experience through phenomenological processes.

When working with adoptive fathers, professional counselors required a grasp of the diversity and complexities of fatherhood—to provide therapeutic approaches with efficacy and effectiveness. It has been suggested that therapists begin with an already created meaning, which emerges out of preconceptions (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). Those preconceptions can have a prejudicial impact on the counseling process and limit the full meaning of the client’s description of his or her experiences. When we approach counseling from the perspective of the counselor as specialist or expert, the counseling process can become mechanistic or unilateral. It is the counselor who defines what life satisfaction should or ought to be.

The data gathered by understanding the adoptive fathers’ lived experiences represents the meaning of life satisfaction as a whole. An understanding of the experiences that adoptive fathers bring to counseling provides the foundation useful to the development of a treatment plan. Understanding the experiences and associated perspectives of adoptive fathers are critical processes that can impact the therapeutic course of action. The experiences that have influenced adoptive fathers afford counselors a valuable knowledge base.

**Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this study is related to the diversity of the sample. The sample involved six adoptive fathers, ranging in age from 45 to 57. All fathers were Caucasian and lived in Ohio. Their educational level ranged from an Associate’s degree to a
Doctoral degree. Finally, all the fathers had adopted Korean sons, who ranged in age from 12 to 19. The results of the current study are not meant to be generalized to all adoptive fathers who are raising Korean sons. The findings therefore can only be said to be valid among the six adoptive fathers.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Research considering the phenomenon of adoptive fathering is limited. Research is further limited when the parameters are narrowed to the consideration of adoptive fathers raising adopted Korean sons. The limited discourse on this topic suggests a need for more research addressing the lived experience of adoptive fathers based on their perspective. The results of the current study converge with theories of fatherhood, but also add a new perspective. According to the study, adoptive fathers share some common views that include the importance of having a father-son relationship, the impact of adoptive fathering on life fulfillment, and the hope that adoptive fathers had an enduring, positive influence on their son.

Future research should investigate the current findings of the study and build the knowledge base of adoptive fathers and intercountry adoption. Continued discourse on the topics would lead to an increased understanding of adoptive fathering and intercountry adoption. However, multiple possibilities exist for future research. This study addressed the lived experience of adoptive fathers raising adopted Korean sons. Further research of each component might be investigated. Those areas include but not limited to research of adoptive fathers, adopted sons and daughters, and international adoption.
Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to develop an understanding of the lived experiences of adoptive fathers bringing up adopted Korean sons. The main research questions guiding the study were as follows: (a) how do adoptive fathers describe their gained life satisfaction in connection with their lived experiences of bringing up adopted Korean sons? and (b) what are the themes of life satisfaction as illuminated, explained, and described by adoptive fathers?

Research of adoptive fathers, as it is presently represented in the literature, has been underrepresented. This study contributed to the field of counselor education. The role of adoptive fathers who were raising Korean sons was structured within a phenomenological methodology. The goal of the study was to understand the phenomenon based on the lived experiences of adoptive fathers as described by them. The lived experiences of the adoptive fathers reflected a multiplicity of meaning and value (e.g., life satisfaction). The narratives of the lived experience of adoptive fathers captured their experiences within his various social systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006) and mental proceedings (Geertz, 2002; La Rossa & Sinha, 2006; Rice, 1980). A phenomenological approach captured the narratives of adoptive fathers based on their perspective and lived experiences. Second, this study provided information on ways adoptive fathers described life satisfaction gained from their fathering experience. Third, the narratives captured the unique lived experience of adoptive fathers and provided them a voice. Adoptive fathers described their lived experiences as well as the life satisfaction gained from raising their Korean son from a
personal perspective. Finally, the study provided seminal, qualitative understanding into the phenomenon of cross-cultural adoption and paternal parenting.

Strength of the study was the ability to add to available literature discussion of adoptive fathering based on their lived perspective. The researcher was able to capture descriptions of the lived experience of adoptive fathers who were raising adopted Korean sons. The structural description with three overarching themes that were explicated from narratives added understanding to available literature in counselor education of life satisfaction adoptive fathers gained bringing up adopted Korean sons.
APPENDIX A

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW FORM
Appendix A

Human Subjects Review Form

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL TO USE HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
Send completed forms to one of the reviewers designated for your Department or Katherine Light, Research and Graduate Studies, 125 University Auditorium

Form can be downloaded from http://www.kent.edu/rags/Forms/Human-Research-Participants.cfm

Please type all information. HANDWRITTEN FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Move through the document using TAB or Mouse. Do not use the enter Key. To mark a box, click with the mouse.

Name: Alexander L Millemann

Telephone: 3304470107 Address: 441 3rd Street NW, New Philadelphia, OH 44663 Email: amillem an@yah oo.com

Department: ACHVE Faculty Rank/Student Status: Doctoral

Project Title: PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ADOPTIVE FATHERHOOD: DESCRIPTIONS OF LIFE SATISFACTION PROVIDED BY ADOPTIVE FATHERS BRINGING UP ADOPTED KOREAN SONS

Type of Project: □ FACULTY RESEARCH □ External Funded (Agency: ) Include copy of proposal

STUDENT DIRECTED RESEARCH (Advisor: )

□ Thesis □ Dissertation □ Course Requirement (Course #: )

□ Other (Specify: )

Duration of Project: Starting Date: 04/2009 (But not before approval is obtained)
Ending Date: 05/2010

I certify that the research procedures for this project and the method of obtaining consent (if any), as approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board, will be followed during the period covered by this research project. Any future changes will be submitted for Board review and approval prior to implementation.

If this project involves approval/permission from other institutions, the principal investigator (and the faculty advisor if the PI is a student) must sign below to certify the following statement: “I/we will not begin research at other institutions before having obtained their permission to do so.”

________________________________________ _____________________________
Principal Investigator Date Faculty Advisor (If PI is a student) Date
Action Taken:
By REVIEWER: By KSU INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD:

☐ Level I, Category ______  ☐ Approved, Level I
☐ Level II, Category ______  ☐ Approved, Level II
☐ Level III, To Full Board IRB Comments:

Project Involves:
☐ Deception  ☐ Identifiable medical information
☐ Waiver of Consent

_____________________________________________
Primary Reviewer Date Administrator, IRB Date

_____________________________________________
Co-Reviewer (Level II) Date

IRB Level III Action:
☐ Approved ☐ Disapproved ☐ Contingent Approval (Comments or Contingencies):

_____________________________________________
Chairperson, IRB Date
PART I: Please answer the following by checking the correct response:

☐ Yes ☒ No 1. Will participants be identifiable to anyone other than the researchers through records, responses or identifiers linked to the participants?

☐ Yes ☒ No 2. Could participants be at risk of criminal or civil liability, damage to employability or to financial standing, or undue embarrassment, if responses became known outside this research project?

☐ Yes ☒ No 3. Does research deal with sensitive aspects of participants’ behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol?

☐ Yes ☒ No 4. Does research involve the collection or study of existing data from sources not publicly available? (existing data can be documents, records, pathological specimens or diagnostic specimens)

☒ Yes ☐ No 5. Will participants be ____ video taped? ☒ audio taped _____ photographed?

☒ Yes ☐ NA 6. Are participants free to withdraw at any time without penalty?

☐ Yes ☒ No 7. Is there deception of participants? (If so, answer questions #23-33 on page 5.)

☐ Yes ☒ No 8. Does research deal with participants who are children under eighteen years? (If so, answer question #18 on page 4).

☐ Yes ☒ No 9. Will identifiable medical information be collected?

10. Does research deal with participants who are:

☐ Yes ☒ No _ not-legally-competent adults

☐ Yes ☒ No _ mentally disabled

☐ Yes ☒ No _ physically challenged

☐ Yes ☒ No _ pregnant women

☐ Yes ☒ No _ prisoners

11. Does the project involve:

☐ Yes ☒ No _ administering drugs

☐ Yes ☒ No _ administering alcohol

☐ Yes ☒ No _ administering nutritional supplements

☐ Yes ☒ No _ drawing blood

☐ Yes ☒ No _ taking tissue samples

☐ Yes ☒ No _ giving injections

(If yes, answer question #16 on page 6).
PART II: Summarize proposed project including goals of present project, purpose of present study, and procedures to which humans will be subjected. (DO NOT WRITE “SEE ATTACHED”) Consent form(s), questionnaire(s), etc. should be included with the application.

1. Over the past few decades, research has been conducted covering a broad array of topics on the state of fatherhood and related issues. Most studies focused on traditional definitions of fatherhood based on biological fathering. Adoptive fathering, as a focus of study, gained less attention of researchers. Whether studies explored topics related to traditional or adoptive fathering, many of those were based on traditional research methods using standardized observations and questionnaires. Traditional research methods offered limited understanding of the experiential aspects of fatherhood from the perspectives from the father’s point of view. The voice of adoptive fathers has been minimal and underrepresented in research. In this study, the investigator aims to provide a voice to adoptive fathers and capture the descriptions as told by adoptive fathers from their personal perspectives and lived experiences.

2. The purpose of this study is threefold: 1.) to conduct a research using phenomenological inquiry and narrative analysis procedures, 2.) to conduct in-depth interviews with six adoptive fathers of Korean sons regarding their lived fathering experience—bracketing researcher’s bias or prejudice, and 3.) to capture narratives of participating adoptive fathers regarding their fathering experience and life satisfaction associated with the fathering experience in its purity.

3. In the study, a pool of potential participants is developed through purposeful and snowball sampling methods. All potential participants complete a general demographics form. Those who meet the requirements of the study are asked to volunteer for in-depth research interviews. Data collection occurs over two in-depth research interview sessions. Each interview is audio tape recorded. Field notes of the researcher’s reflections and thoughts are written down after each interview. Member checking is used to lend to the credibility of research data and ensures that the researcher’s analysis of the data reflects the intended meaning and essence of their individual fathering experience—to ascertain that the investigator captured the essence of the participant’s responses. Each participant will be contacted by email or telephone for clarification as needed during steps of data collection and data analysis as well as at the end of data analysis.
PART III: Please answer all of the following items. Spaces will expand to accommodate your descriptions.

Participants
11. Briefly describe the characteristics of your population(s) and your subject selection procedures. Describe the size of your sample, the ethnic background, sex, age, state of health and the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of participants. (Include rationale for use of special classes of participants such as pregnant women, children, institutionalized mentally disabled, prisoners, or those whose ability to give voluntary informed consent may be in question.) If your population is all one gender or ethnic group, please explain.

The sample of the study includes six participants (adoptive fathers), who are raising Korean sons. The participants will be Caucasian and have at least 5-years of lived experience of adoptive fatherhood. The researcher will use purposeful sampling procedure to obtain participants and may find six qualified participants within Ohio. Therefore, the data may reflect regional and geographic limitations.

Since the goal of the project is to investigate the phenomenon of fatherhood and gain academic appreciation of the lived experiences of the participants and life satisfaction associated with fathering, the sample group reflects only men.

The adoptive father and his Korean son both live at home in families. The adoptive fathers will participate in two interviews and will be asked general as well as specific questions regarding their lived adoptive fathering experience. Bracketing is used to put aside researcher’s bias and presumptions in order to capture, in purity, rich and thick descriptions of their lived experience and life satisfaction associated with fathering.

Each adoptive father will participate in two in-depth interviews with each participant. An interview guide with interview questions will be used, which has been carefully designed to refrain from leading questions regarding attribute, qualities, and descriptions of life satisfaction. The goal of the interviews is to collect narratives from adoptive fathers discussing their lived experience and life satisfaction gained from fathering. The goal of the interviews is to obtain narratives reflecting the lived experience of each adoptive father from his perspective without bias or prejudice.

12. Who makes the initial contact with the participants? (If you want to use patients/clients of another professional, the initial contact must be made by the other professional, to protect patient confidentiality).

This investigator will initiate the initial contact and will remain the sole contact person during the interview process and until the conclusion of the project. The participants will understand that although this investigator made the initial contact and the interview process will extend into a second contact between the investigator
and participant, they maintain the procedural safeguard to voice questions regarding their participation, the interview process, and/or the project goals secondary to the investigator with Dr. Betsy Page, Dr. Marty Jencius and/or Dr. John West—as stated in the CONSENT FORM.

Risks/Benefits
13. Identify any risks (here and in the consent form) -- physical, psychological, and/or social -- to which your participants may be exposed as a result of participation in your project (beyond the risks normally encountered in everyday life).

The primary risk to the participant could be that reflection on fatherhood might raise negative emotions or regrets. Each participant will be provided a personalized list of local counseling agencies approved by the State Board of Counseling. The limits of confidentiality will be explained.

The possibility of information being disclosed that must be reported, e.g., child abuse, may surface during an interview. As a mandated reporter, this investigator is required by law to report if the suspicion or knowledge that child abuse is occurring or may have occurred. Confidentiality will be maintained to the limits of the law. Confidentiality may not be maintained if the participant indicates that he may do/have done harm to a child.

a). What safeguards will you use to protect the participants from these risks, as well as to protect their rights, welfare and privacy? (Never answer “NA”.)

Each participant will be provided a personalized list of local mental health resources that are available within respective regions and approved by the County Mental Health Board

b). Participants will be informed of the risks through:
   - consent form (include copy)
   - verbal (include script)
   - assent (for children 12 years of age and under) and consent from the children’s parents/guardians.

14. Describe any form of compensation to participants. (i.e., money, grade, extra credit, etc. If money, extra credit or grade is given to students who participate in the project, what opportunity for extra credit or grade is provided to students who choose not to participate?)
   NOTE 1: If the research is a class requirement, then alternative compensation is needed. If not a class requirement, then no alternate compensation is needed. NOTE 2: For multi-phase projects, compensation should not be contingent upon completion of the whole project. Rather, some compensation should be given for each phase of the project. The nature of the compensation should be stated in the consent form.

There will not be any form of compensation provided to participants as a result of participating in this project.
15. Were alternative procedures considered?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  Explain:  Research procedures using questionnaires were considered but traditional research methodology would not allow the participants to express the depth and breadth of their fathering experience and life satisfaction.

16. Describe the qualifications of the person administering drugs, alcohol, or nutritional supplements, or drawing blood, taking tissue samples or giving injections. (Note: 1) persons doing venipuncture must provide a copy of their certification to draw blood and proof they completed a blood-borne pathogens training course. 2) Indwelling venous catheters and lines can only be done by licensed/registered/certified medical personnel such as physicians, RNs, and EMTs. Proof of certification is required. 3) Arterial blood sampling can only be carried out in an appropriate medical facility such as a hospital, clinic or the KSU Health Center. The procedure can only be carried out by qualified personnel under the direct supervision of a licensed physician.)

Those procedures are not used in this study.

17. Describe the benefits expected to be gained from this project. (This should include any direct benefits to the participants as well as any general gain in knowledge.)

Participants may gain satisfaction they have shared information that may well have increased insight and appreciation of the fathering experience as well as the personal life satisfaction gained as a result of fatherhood. The study will provide a voice for the participants regarding their lived experience as adoptive fathers and may provide information that could improve academic insight and understanding of adoptive fatherhood. The study may also improve understanding of cross-cultural adoption and parenting. The possibility of expanding the present academic knowledge of adoptive fathering as well as cross-cultural adoption and parenting in the field of counselor education is a great benefit.

Children

18. If you will be using children under 18, explain in detail how you will obtain parental consent and assent (for children under 12; see page 8) or consent (for children 12 to 18). If assent/consent will be obtained orally, supply a script of what you will say and how you will give the children the opportunity to say “yes” or “no”.

No, children are not included in this study.

Records

19. In which Kent State University faculty or departmental office will the signed consent forms be kept? (Consent forms must be kept on campus, not in a private home or office.) If the study does not involve consent forms, answer “NA”.

The consent forms will be kept in the office of Dr. Betsy Page, 310 White Hall, Department of Adult, Counseling, Health, and Vocational Education, Counseling and Human Development Services Program
20. What do you intend to do with the data collected? (i.e., publish data, present paper, erase tapes, etc.)

The data will be the basis for my doctoral dissertation. Results of the study will be presented at professional presentations and published with the names of participants removed. Finally, the original tapes will be erased of their contents after the completion of the dissertation, but the information gained from the study may be published as well as lead to further research.

21. a). If the participants’ personal files (school, medical, etc.) will be read, where are the files kept (name the place, e.g., doctor’s office, hospital, clinic, etc.) and who will gather the information?

No files will be read.

b). Has permission been obtained to gather this information? (Attach documentation)

c). Do the participants (and/or their parents or guardians) know that these files will be read? If no, explain.

22. a). Will test results be disseminated to the participants (and/or their parents or guardians)?

b). If so, explain the qualifications of the person(s) interpreting the results.

23. Does the proposed study involve deception?

☐ Yes  If yes, fill out deception page.
☒ No
APPENDIX B

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
Appendix B

General Demographic Information

Please answer the following demographic information:

1. Participant’s Age in Years: ____________

2. Participant’s Email Address: ______________________________________

3. Race/Ethnic Origin of the Participant:

   □ .....White/Caucasian:          □ .....Asian Indian:
   □ .....African American:         □ .....Chinese:
   □ .....American Indian and Alaska Native: □ .....Filipino:
   □ .....Native Hawaiian:          □ .....Japanese:
   □ .....Guamanian:                □ .....Korean:
   □ .....Samoa:                   □ .....Vietnamese
   □ .....Other Pacific Islander     □ .....Other Asian
   □ .....Mexican:                 □ .....Biracial or Multiracial
   □ .....Puerto Rican:            □ .....Other Hispanic or Latino:
   □ .....Cuban:
   □ .....Other Hispanic or Latino:

4. Educational Attainment:

   □ .....Less than 9th grade
   □ .....9th to 12th grade
   □ .....High school graduate (includes equivalency)
   □ .....Some college, no degree
   □ .....Associate degree
   □ .....Bachelor’s degree
   □ .....Graduate or professional degree
GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please answer the following demographic information regarding your adopted child:

5. Age at Time of Adoption in Years: ____________

6. Present Chronological Age in Years: ____________

7. Are There Other Siblings at Home: □...yes □...no

8. If yes, complete the Following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Sibling</th>
<th>Gender of Sibling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ADOPTIVE FATHERHOOD:
DESCRIPTIONS OF LIFE SATISFACTION PROVIDED BY ADOPTIVE FATHERS
BRINGING UP ADOPTED KOREAN SONS

I want to do research on adoptive fatherhood. The purpose of the study is to give voice to adoptive father, which has been underrepresented in research. Therefore, the study will be based on interviews in order to capture the lived experience of adoptive fathering from the perspective of adoptive fathers.

I am conducting this research as part of my doctoral dissertation and would like you to take part in this research. If you decide to do this, you will be asked to fill out a generic demographic information form and take part in an interview process. The interview process will take place over two periods. The initial interview—the first meeting—will be a face-to-face interview and may extend over one to one and one-half hours. The interview questions will ask you to share your story of those lived adoptive fathering experiences—including important events, family traditions, and community interactions. A follow-up interview will take place approximately one week later. The follow-up interview may extend over one-half to one hour—either a face-to-face meeting or a phone conference. It is possible that E-mail may be the most optimal follow-up format. The purpose of the follow-up interview will be to clarify a word, phrase or statement of description in order to maintain accuracy of the narratives. During the follow-up, you may want to add additional information you remembered during the week, and/or refine details of your lived fathering experience. If a phone conference is desired, it will be held at your convenience. All procedural safeguards for maintaining confidentiality as well as privacy will be observed.

During an interview, information disclosed that leads to suspicion or knowledge of child abuse must be reported. As a mandated reporter, this investigator is required by law to report if the suspicion or knowledge that child abuse is occurring or may have occurred. Confidentiality will be maintained to the limits of the law. Confidentiality may not be maintained if you indicate that you may do/have done harm to a child.

Near the conclusion of the study, you will be contacted to provide feedback on whether my findings captured the essence of your words, phrases and statements accurately.

Your participation in this study will be anonymous and identifying information will be excluded in any of the related research material. In order to identify and organize all related research documents, a number coding system will be used. Procedural
safeguards will be in maintained, during the study and after. All written and tape recorded materials will be kept in a locked file. Recorded tapes will be erased at the end of the study.

If you take part in this study, you might experience negative feelings or regret as a result of your reflections on fatherhood. Therefore, you will be provided information at the beginning of the interview process a personalized list of local counseling agencies approved by the State Board of Counseling.

You may well experience increased insight and appreciation into the personal life satisfaction you have gained as a result of adoptive fathering. Your story of lived adoptive fathering and experiential perspective will provide a voice of adoptive fathering and may also provide data that could enhance academic insight and understanding of adoptive fatherhood. You will share in the appreciation of possibly expanding the present academic knowledge of adoptive fathering in the field of counselor education.

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you, and no one will hold it against you if you decide not to do it. If you take part, you may stop at any time.

If you want to know more about this research project, please call me at (330) 447-0107. You can also contact Dr. Betsy Page at (330) 672-0696 or Dr. Marty Jencius at (330) 672-0699 with questions about study. This project has been approved by Kent State University. If you have questions about Kent State University’s rules for research, please call Dr. John West, Vice President of Research, Division of Research and Graduate Studies at (330) 672-2704.

You will get a copy of this consent form.

The signed consent form will be kept on file in Dr. Page’s departmental office at Kent State University.

Sincerely,
Alexander L. Milleman, M.Ed., Ed.S.

B. CONSENT STATEMENT(S)
1. I agree to take part in this project. I know what I will have to do and that I can stop at any time.

________________________  __________________________
Signature                        Date
APPENDIX D

AUDIO TAPE CONSENT FORM
Appendix D

Audio Tape Consent Form

PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ADOPTIVE FATHERHOOD: DESCRIPTIONS OF LIFE SATISFACTION PROVIDED BY ADOPTIVE FATHERS BRINGING UP ADOPTED KOREAN SONS

I agree to audio taping of the initial and follow-up interview sessions on the research project “PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF ADOPTIVE FATHERHOOD: DESCRIPTIONS OF LIFE SATISFACTION PROVIDED BY ADOPTIVE FATHERS BRINGING UP ADOPTED KOREAN SONS.”

Signature Date

I have been told that I have the right to hear the audio tapes before it is used. I decided that I:

_______ want to hear the tapes

_______ do not want to hear the tapes

Sign now below if you do not want to hear the audio tape. If you want to hear the audio tape, you will be asked to sign after hearing it.

Alexander L Milleman and other researchers (e.g., peer reviewers, transcriptionists) approved by Kent State University may / may not listen to the tapes made of me. The original tapes will be erased. However, information obtained from those tapes may be used for:

_______ this research project _______ teacher education _______ presentation at professional meetings

Signature Date

Alexander L. Milleman
APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE
Appendix E

Interview Guide

- What are some words that capture your experience as an adoptive father raising an adopted Korean son?

- Who were the people that influenced your role as an adoptive father?

- Describe how your role as an adoptive father has evolved over the years.

- Describe the benefits of adoptive fathering that you have experienced over the years.
APPENDIX F

SAMPLE EMERGENT CATEGORIES
Appendix F

Sample Emergent Categories

Question 1: What are some words that capture your experience as an adoptive father raising a Korean son?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good experience</td>
<td>Watching him grow</td>
<td>Our interests really aren’t that much alike . . . it just doesn’t necessarily work out that way . . . the best way to connect with him is to just let him be who he is and just be there when he wants me to be around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing things together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Play together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worthwhile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stressful at times</td>
<td>Struggles</td>
<td>But overall I’d have to say that if we had to make the decision over again (adopting son) I’d say “yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tough times</td>
<td>“…there wouldn’t be value in it, if there wasn’t some struggle in it”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning experience</td>
<td>Worthwhile</td>
<td>“…he can drive you crazy, but he can also really make you proud. Really make you happy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realistic expectations</td>
<td>“…you let go of your preconceived ideas and allow him to be who he is”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bonding emotional connection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>I just love it. My adopted son to be very athletic and outgoing and, you know very daring. I am very cautious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mannerisms</td>
<td>“…you see something different about him then myself is”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>I think that the priorities of my life, as opposed to a business and materialism, has focused more on that, because it's been such a fun trip so far. I think it’s just, you know that’s where my priorities have gone—to help develop them and spend time with him and see him mature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Priorities</td>
<td>God brought our adopted son to this household and that's the way he had it intended to be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appreciate</td>
<td>We had such a hard time, I think, having children that when we saw him. We really valued him because it was such a thing we wanted so badly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>the relationship that we have is tighter, closer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tighter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worth it</td>
<td>I’m gonna be with you, spend time with you...because you're worth it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>love is where your time is at.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>“…I just saw the value and investment in the family was more important.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazing</td>
<td></td>
<td>it’s been amazing to see him unfold or grow amazing to be a part of something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Amazing experience**

Well change my life having my son. It's been a
I don't know what I expected. It's been an amazing experience.
Just having my son is a part of my life.

**Part of my life**

**Satisfying**

It's just so satisfying to be a part of his life and being involved

**Gift**

I have a sense of him . . . he's a gift.
APPENDIX G

SAMPLE MEANING UNITS (SPENDING TIME)
Appendix G

Sample Meaning Units (Spending Time)

SPENDING TIME
1. Priority
2. Planning
3. Scheduling
4. Prioritizing
5. Experiencing struggles
6. Experiencing joy
7. Letting the relationship unfold naturally
8. Not forcing idealized version
9. Supporting/encouraging son’s interests
10. Supporting his talents
11. Celebrating differences
   a. Personality
   b. Interests
   c. Talents
   d. Heritage
12. Desire
13. Life revolves around son
14. Involved
15. Participating
16. If I didn’t love, I wouldn’t care…
17. Understanding
18. Intimacy
19. Mutual participation
20. Flexible
21. Emotional
22. Anticipate
   a. Look forward to spending time
23. Connections
   a. Interests
   b. Time
   c. Emotional
APPENDIX H

SAMPLE FIELD/PROCESS NOTE
Appendix H

Sample Field/Process Note

Field Note (P#,###,###/####/#######)

We conducted the interview on the porch. I answered questions regarding my study and purpose of the interviews. “I hope I can be Helpful” was one of his first comments. The same comment was made at the end of the present interview. During the interview, there seemed to be some anxiety. Perhaps, those comments along with the felt anxiety reflected the discomfort we felt of discussing personal lived experiences. Most of the responses, at least early, described concrete, objective-like experiences. As we went further into our discussion, the tone became less behavior oriented more of emotional content. The described emotions were joy, gratefulness, excitement, as well as anxiousness and anger. Those unspoken emotions told of sadness and grief. However, it was difficult for me to understand those unspoken emotion as I seemed to be drawn in. I found myself being pulled into the experience and sharing those emotions. And even now, I am having difficulty reflecting on emotions or describing them within the context of our present discussion.

What emotion was I feeling? And “were my emotions affecting my process of inquiry.” Hopefully as I discuss this with my peer reviewer, I can get perspective into what may have been happening. Perhaps, the emotionally laden lived experiences and pursuant interpersonal connection as fathers minimized any preconceived ideas of interviewer/interviewee relationship. The lived experience is a personal account of the positive and negative. I become part of that human experience, as it is described as becoming part of the adoptive fathers lived experience. Although I expected an array of personal experiences, it is difficult to be objective. Objectivity is supposed to be suspended, but there is discomfort losing that objectivity and trying to suspend my own experience as a father.

The statement, “compared to the other fathers who seemed to have perfect children.” The process of comparing yourself as a father to another is likely a common phenomenon. It is as probable that you would consider other fathers more highly than yourself. There may be a cultural component of viewing the role as father, an adoptive father, within the context of locally defined fatherhood. The cultural practices represented by “every father think that his child will be perfect.” In today’s discussion, a father self-reflects and decides that his struggles are best kept inside. Inner strength holds him together. There is a positive tone, one that reminds him of what’s worthwhile. Though he may not share “perfect,” he does find solace in knowing that “it is worthwhile.” However, the words “struggle” and “stress” were frequently used to describe early father-son relationship. I can’t help but think that there is pain and guilt involved although we did not bring those possibilities up during discussion. It may have been almost unethical to enter those areas knowing the possibility of evoking intense feelings. Body language, shifting in his chair, and burst of laughter provided sufficient anecdotal information. The phrase, “letting go of those idealized preconception” was also telling.
APPENDIX I

PEER REVIEW PROCESS SUMMARY
Appendix I

Peer Review Process Summary

Peer Review Process Summary (7/09 to 7/11)

The purpose of the peer review process was to develop understanding between my study, my research procedures within the context of phenomenological procedures and narrative analysis.

Main Points of Discussion and Associated Topics introduced by Peer Reviewer

1. Research Methodology
   a. Interpretive and Descriptive Phenomenology
   b. Hermeneutical Phenomenology
   c. Existential Phenomenology
   d. Transcendental Phenomenology

2. Bracketing and suspending
   a. Setting aside personal biases (How will my personal experiences impact the study? Am I being neutral?)
   b. Allowing voice of participants to emerge without making hasty assumptions
   c. Allowing the data speak for itself

3. Research Questions
   a. Developing Interview Guide
   b. Connecting purpose of study and interview questions
   c. Evaluating words and phrases
   d. Avoiding questions with confusing variables
   e. Open ended questions

4. Interview Process
   a. Face to face interviews, phone interviews, and emails
   b. Pros and drawbacks of each

5. Data Collection
   a. Methods of narrative analysis
   b. Reading and rereading transcripts
   c. Explication of data

6. Explication of Data
   a. Simplify/breakdown research questions
   b. Reflect on the complexity found in the narratives
   c. Describe the lived experiences according to adoptive fathers own word and view
APPENDIX J

MEMBER CHECK COVER LETTER
Appendix J

Member Check Cover Letter

I write, first, to express my thankfulness for your willingness to have participated in my study and contribution to the development of a dissertation. There are no words that can truly convey my gratitude.

As I read through the narratives, your personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences of raising your adopted son were truly moving. The process of analyzing the narratives began in an attempt to capture your voice as an adoptive father. In the end, the goal was to understand the life satisfaction gained through your lived experience of raising a Korean son.

The process of analyzing, interpreting, and summarizing the data presented in the narratives could not be described as an exact science. One way to increase the validity of the data analysis process is to have you review my interpretation and obtain comments.

At the conclusion of the second interview, we discussed how my goal was to identify themes based on your lived experience as an adoptive father. I would be asking you to check my interpretation and how I identified themes based on your lived experience as an adoptive father. The process of having participants review and provide feedback is one method of validation, known as a member check. In the role as a member check, please review the attached document, which outlines my description of meaning and themes of life satisfaction. As you read my descriptions and the attached transcript of our conversation, you will be asked to provide additional information, clarification, as well as point out areas that were unclear or misleading.

I have attached those documents for your review in the present email.

First, the process of data analysis used in the present study is provided.

Next, it summarizes the subcategories of meaning, categories and themes based on interviews with all participants. Those categories and themes reflect core themes delineated from commonly expressed statement found among the narratives.

Third, a preliminary description of overarching categories and associated themes is presented. It is possible, as you review the descriptions as well as the transcript of our conversation, the process may call to mind experiences that have not been expressed or ones you wish to clarify. Comments regarding your experience or clarification would enhance the final description of the whole experience of adoptive fathers and gained life satisfaction from raising your sons.

Finally, I will call you within two weeks after sending this email to facilitate the member check through a phone discussion. I look forward to the conversation.

Again, I appreciate all of your time and commitment to my dissertation.

Best Regards,

Alexander L Milleman, M.Ed., Ed.S.
REFERENCES


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