

Southern Adventist University
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Self-Awareness Paper

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After reading the case scenario “A Change of Heart”, there were several points of potential interventions in which a social worker would have been helpful. The first would have been before they even gave the children up for adoption, the couple was said to have financial problems and did not want to return to the reservation. A social worker in this situation could have sat down with the couple and came up with different options about what to do with the children and find out why the couple left the reservation in the first place and did not wish to return. Clearly there were some underlining issues that needed to be dealt with before the couple decided to make such a decision. At this stage the biological parents should be offered unbiased counseling so they can become familiar with the options available to them before proceeding with the adoption.

Second after giving up the children, the couple could have turned to a social worker to act as a liaison between the adoptive parents and the biological parents in trying to form a dialog between the two. Forming a dialog with the adoptive parents would have enabled the individuals to sit down and talk about what was best for the children instead of what the parents wanted now that they had for the time being turned their life around. Another arrangement would allow a court to award custody to the adoptive parents, so that the children placement would not be disrupted but give the birth parents the rights to regular contact with their children.

Finally if a social worker would have been involved from the beginning they could have warned all individuals that any gifts, such as the fifteen hundred dollar check, to the birth parents could be used as grounds for disrupting an adoption. The worker could also give insight to the parents and the perspective parents about the ill effects of using the same lawyer. By using the same attorney the biological parents could claim at a later time that they were misled or coerced by the attorney. The birth parents should have been offered legal representation that could have

been paid for by the adoptive parents with the express provision that payment of attorney fees is not contingent on a concluded adoptive placement.

One issue in which I believe the client is being faced with is looking after the best interest of the child and maybe some adoption grief counseling. Usually two things must occur for an adoption to take place. First the parents must relinquish their parental rights and the acquisition of parental rights by the adoptive parents then must take place. In deciding where the child should go I'm sure the Judge would instruct a social worker to conduct a home study to determine if the place in which the child is living is the best place for the child to grow and mature.

Although the biological parents in this scenario has changed their mind and decided to move back to the reservation and try and regain their rights to the children I'm pretty sure this would not happen. Although the final adoption decree has not yet been issued by the court, in order to implement the Indian Child Welfare Act the biological parents must have shown that the children had significant social, cultural or political relationship with the tribe. Since the parents had moved off the reservation and were determined to not go back the ICWA would not apply.

In looking after the best interest of the children I believe the best place for the child to be would be with their adoptive parents where they have been for 18 months. Removing the children would be a traumatic event and not in their best interest. In keeping this in mind I think I would focus on the adoption grief counseling.

The impact of a mother being separated from her child is often severe and enduring. Due to the situations most people that put their children up for adoption often keep silent about the situation because their feelings of guilt and shame and this resulted in their grief becoming chronic. Adoption grief counseling is aimed at helping women or couples who have lost children

through adoption to understand their experiences in its total context. Adoption grief counseling addresses the external influences such as the environment, social attitudes, gender issues, legal constraints, cultural beliefs and values and the attitudes and decision-making processes that affected these individuals prior to and after the loss of their children through adoption. It is also aimed at helping these individuals to explore their feelings about their experience and to talk about their loss in a safe and non-judgmental environment (Robinson, 2002).

In this counseling I would meet with the parents on a weekly basis for approximately one hour over a period of 9 weeks, although this would largely be determined by the individual client needs. During these meetings I would try and get the parents to deal with their grief by understanding their experience and exploring the feelings associated with their loss. Other issues to look at would be why they left the reservation in the first place and what would be best for the twins now that it is almost two years later. My goal would be that the sessions would help the couple to explore the factors that influenced them at the time of their loss of the twins, the impact the loss has had on their life and their overall concept of their own relationship and those around them (Robinson, 2002).

I think it's important to remember that what is best for a child is not always what's best for the parents involved. In this situation we must look at the fact that even though the parents may try and impose The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) one must remember that the rights of the child are separate and distinct from those of the parents and the court must look as to what's in the best interest of the children involved and to protect these children from any additional traumatic events that will only cause the children more psychological and emotional injuries in their young life.

Robinson, E. (2002). Post-adoption grief counseling. *Adoption & Fostering*, 26(2), 57-63.

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