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A STUDY OF THE USE OF THE
GROUP MEETING FOR ADOPTIVE
APPLICANTS IN THE INGHAM COUNTY
BRANCH OF THE MCAS, WITH A FOCUS
ON COUPLES WHO FAILED TO ATTEND

Rachel Scheptowski

Sept. 1955



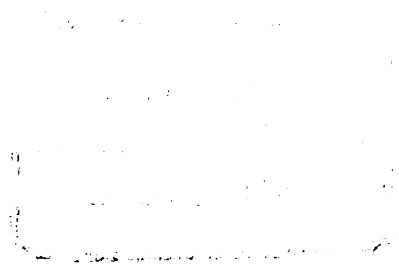
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A STUDY OF THE USE OF THE GROUP MEETING FOR ADOPTIVE
APPLICANTS IN THE INGHAM COUNTY BRANCH OF THE
MICHIGAN CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY, WITH A
FOCUS ON COUPLES WHO FAILED TO ATTEND

by

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A PROJECT REPORT

Submitted to the Department of Social Work
Michigan State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

September

1955

Approved:


Chairman, Research Committee


Head of Department

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Social Agencies which offer adoption services, are continually faced with the problem of receiving more requests for adoption than can be met with the number of children available to them for adoption placement. As adoption agencies become better known and assume more responsibility for the placement of children in permanent homes, demands made upon them require the improvement of their services as well as the most efficient use of agency time. This necessitates frequent experimentation on the part of social agencies and continuous self-evaluation.

Most agencies begin the process for adoption with a personal interview, and as there is a tremendous disproportion between the demands for children and the number of children available, screening may precede the interview as a device for saving time. A recent development has been the use of the group meeting for couples interested in knowing about the agency's adoption services. The purposes of this approach has varied with different agencies, but common to each, it has served as a screening process and has afforded more time for the home study and served as a means to acquaint interested couples with the disparity between prospective adoption parents and the limited number of available children.

Such agencies as the Los Angeles Adoption Institute, Louise Wise Adoption Center, New York, and Family and Children's Service of Pittsburgh and others, have been experimenting with such group meetings and see this as a valuable technique both in terms of service to clients and agency efficiency. Several of the agencies using the group approach have compiled reports on their way of handling this method of intake, but research studies as such, are not known to have been made that would enable a thorough evaluation of this approach with adoption couples.

Purpose of Study

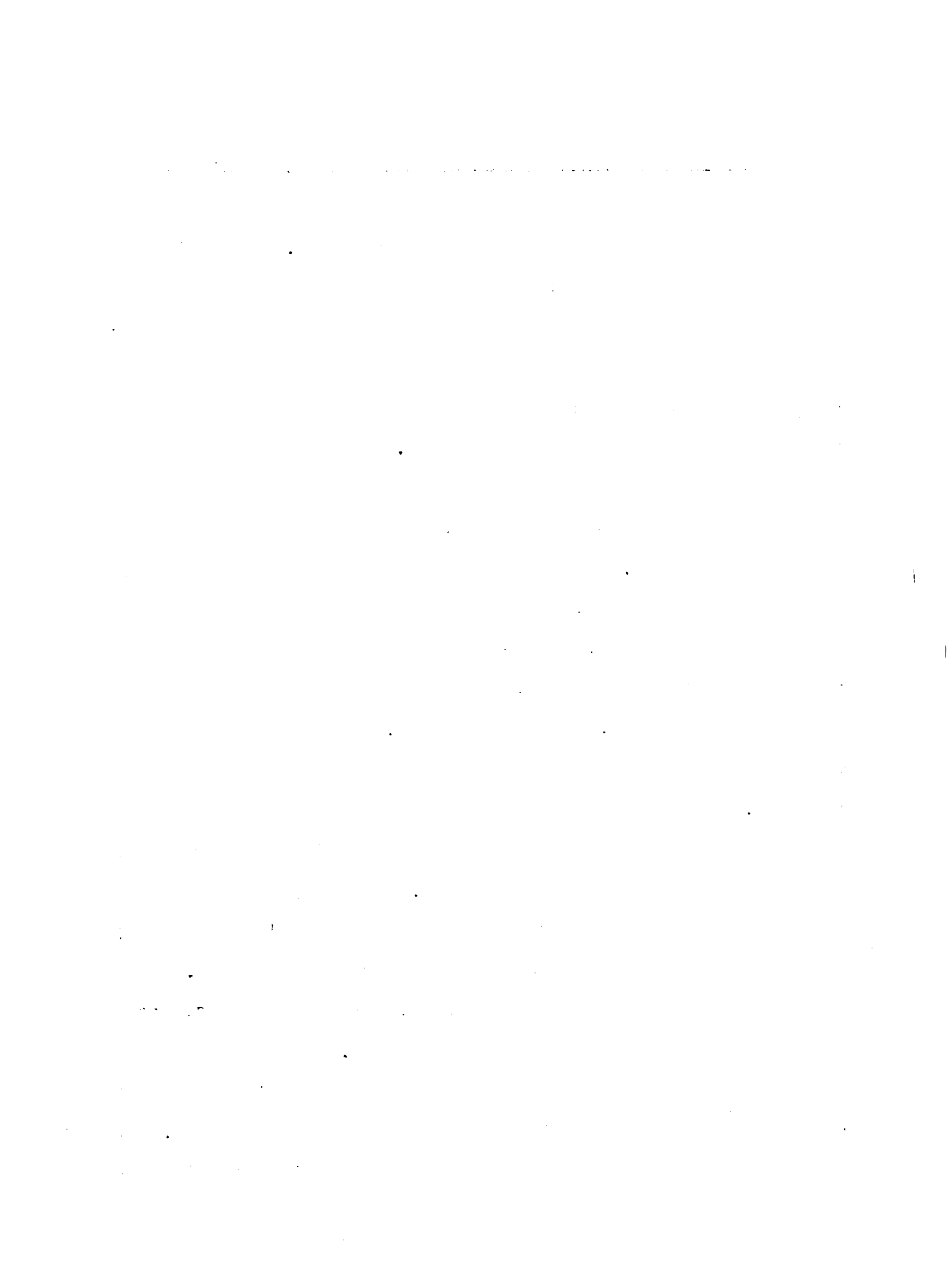
Methodology and Scope

The purpose of this current study was to help the Executive Secretary of the Ingham County Branch of the Michigan Children's Aid Society, in making an administrative decision, as to whether this group method was effective, and to find out why several couples who had been invited failed to attend the group meeting. The method of attaining this included interviewing twenty couples to find out their impressions and reactions to the idea of the group meeting, and if the lack of attendance indicated a negative reaction to the group approach. Further questions to be answered were, whether the group meeting was a barrier, which a personal interview would eliminate, and what additional areas would an agency need to consider, in order to use the group meeting more effectively.

The Ingham County Branch of Michigan Children's Aid Society began experimenting with the use of the group meeting with prospective adoptive parent, in July 1954. The initial purposes considered were: [1] to economize on time as it had been found that a great deal of staff time was spent in interpreting agency policy and the method of making the actual adoptive study, and [2] to improve the services that could be offered people interested in adoption.

The group approach has been flexible and changes have been in the process of being made, whenever a way of improvement is recognized. A record of attendance was not kept at the first several meetings, but during the months from October 1954 through February 1955, forty-nine couples were invited to these meetings and twenty couples, representing almost half of the total number invited, failed to attend. The Executive requested that a study be made concentrated on those absent from the meetings, and their reactions to the idea of the group approach, in order that it might be of help in evaluating the program and adapting more appropriate techniques.

The local branch of the Michigan Children's Aid Society, located in Lansing, has served Ingham County since 1919. Its staff includes the Executive Secretary, five caseworkers, and three positions held by clerical personnel. The Ingham County Branch is one among ten branch offices of a private non-sectarian child placement agency which operates throughout Michigan. On a state level the organization has been operating for sixty-four



years and offers the following five services: [1] adoption, [2] service to unmarried mothers, [3] boarding home care for children, [4] institutional care for teen-age girls at Chapin Hall in St. Joseph, Michigan, and [5] protective service in certain areas of the State.

At the annual meeting of the state organization held in Detroit in June 1955, it was suggested by the State General Secretary that all the branches consider the advisability of using the adoption group technique. In back of this was the hope that group meetings would save agency time and do a more effective job in general interpretation of adoption practices and policies. At the time of this study two branches are using the group meetings; the Ingham County Branch, as previously mentioned, and the Oakland County Branch at Pontiac. Because the group approach is of state wide interest, this study purported to point out aspects that might well be considered by any of the agencies in planning the use of the group meeting as a part of adoptive procedure. At the present time an extensive state wide study is being made, which will include an examination and evaluation of these areas of the organization: financing, service, staff, administrative aspects of Central Office and local branches, boards, both branch and state, public relations and Chapin Hall. This study, jointly sponsored by the Michigan United Fund, Michigan Welfare League, and the Michigan Children's Aid Society is being conducted by Mrs. Myrtle Reul, a member of the faculty at Michigan State University.

This project, concerned only with the Lansing Branch, covers the four meetings held during the period from October, 1954, through February, 1955. Prior to this time records of attendance were not available; and after this time the study was underway. It is recognized that a more extensive sampling or a survey type of study would probably offer more helpful conclusions, or that a comparative study based on interviews with couples who attended the group meeting and interviews with couples who failed to attend the group meeting might enable conclusions to be drawn, but due to limitations of time the scope of this study permitted it to cover only twenty couples and their impressions and contact with the agency.

Data concerning the agency's use of the group meeting were secured from records on file, through attendance at a group meeting and through consultation with the Executive Secretary and discussion with other workers who had taken part in the group meetings. An attempt was made to interview each member of the twenty couples who failed to attend the group meetings during the specified period of time. The writer's first communication with each couple was in the form of an introductory letter, explaining the purpose and nature of the requested interview. A telephone call was the follow-up to each letter and appointments were made for home visits. The average interview lasted approximately forty minutes and a schedule covering the main areas was used for each person interviewed. The five areas covered the following: [1] interest in adoption,

[2] contact with Michigan Children's Aid Society, [3] letter of invitation from Michigan Children's Aid Society to attend group meeting, [4] responses and impressions given for failure to attend meeting, and [5] further interest in adoption.

(See Appendix A.)

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURES AND EXPERIMENTS IN OTHER AGENCIES

Los Angeles Adoption Institute

The Los Angeles Adoption Institute a non-profit, fee supported agency, began the group meeting as a technique to help acquaint interested couples with the agency's method of handling adoption applicants. This was considered a way to prepare individuals for the interviews to follow.

In this agency the couple is first seen by the Receptionist who checks preliminary information such as marital status, residence, religion, race, size of family, citizenship and eligibility to adopt. The Receptionist assures the couples of its desire to be of service and explains the purpose of the meeting and that all general questions which they might have will be answered at this meeting. In addition she explains that other couples applying for a child will be present.¹

Usually ten couples are invited to these meetings. The meetings are handled by one of the staff members who acts as leader.² To avoid some of the self-consciousness of the

¹ Beatrice Pruski, "When a Couple Plans to Adopt a Baby," The Child, April, 1953, p. 127.

² Ibid., p. 127.

inevitable waiting period before the beginning of the meeting, the leader, at first asked couples to write their ideas about their adoption plans. Later a different plan was followed. The leader suggested that people write questions that they wished to ask. In addition she spent about ten minutes conversing with those who preferred to talk. The actual way of presenting information is kept flexible. It may follow the discussion stimulated by the questions formed during the first ten minutes or so, or it may be presented in outline form, with discussion following each point. The agency's procedure for applicants is discussed fully and a written statement is given each member to take home. This method is an attempt to solve the problem of a long list of applicants who have to wait an indefinite period of time. Each couple's application moves according to a specified time interval, and the applicants can know where they stand. In each group meeting, applicants are encouraged to offer their suggestions as to formulating better plans. Even when no suggestions are forthcoming, the agency feels that being asked to participate in such a discussion helps the clients to realize that the agency is doing everything in its power to show them consideration.³

The agency discusses frankly with the group what it is looking for in homes for children. The agency has observed that this discussion focuses spontaneously on the need of the child rather than on the needs of the applicants. The leader

³Ibid., p. 128.

may ask the question, "Suppose that you had to surrender a child of your own to be reared by strangers, what things would you want to be sure were present in that home and what things would you want to be sure were not there?" The answer from all groups has been to place personality and emotional traits first. Through experience with the group meeting the agency has concluded that keeping the discussion in general terms is better than presenting too detailed information, illustrated with examples. The agency has found that this tends to make some people uneasy and self-conscious in the subsequent interviews.

Beatrice Pruski states in her article, When a Couple Plans to Adopt a Baby, that personal anxiety is often relieved through group discussion. People are able to ask questions that it might be difficult for them to ask in a personal interview. Major anxiety seems to be in his concern for his qualifications and the reputed strictness of the agency's practice. It is very rare however, that a couple is so insecure that he withdraws. And after the group discussions is in a much more relaxed frame of mind.⁴

It has been observed by the Los Angeles Adoption Institute that frequently couples move closer together physically and sometimes hold each other's hands. These frank discussions seem to make couples more conscious of their unity. Couples

⁴Ibid., p. 129.

have told the workers that because they were made to feel that the agency cared what happened to them and would do its best by them, they gave much more freely the information about themselves.

The Institute attributes several values to the group meeting. One is that it contributes to its own thinking and clarification of policy. For example, the question of whether to place a child with handicapped parents; whether or not the child would be injured by community attitudes. This gives the agency the thinking and feeling of many applicants.⁵

One value achieved through the group meeting is the preparation for rejection. Couples are realistically faced with the fact that they are sitting among couples of whom only a few will be given a child because of the number available.

In general the group meeting has proved so successful that the agency's director is now considering the use of it with couples coming together for a discussion of child care prior to receiving a child, and with couples who are ready for adoption to discuss court procedure and questions of later child development.⁶

Louise Wise, Child Adoption Center

The Louise Wise Adoption Center of New York City has been experimenting with the group technique for about three years. The original purpose of this meeting was to orient

⁶Ibid., p. 134.

prospective parents to the agency and to help to relieve their anxiety, over rumors of long waiting periods. By May 11, 1954 the agency had held a total of 75 meetings. Fifteen couples were invited to each and the number attending ranged from six to fourteen couples. Meetings with ten or eleven couples have been most frequent. On occasions a wife or husband has come alone. When an individual has expressed an interest in adoption, the agency sends a letter inviting him to a meeting. The letter makes it clear that attendance at the meeting is voluntary and couples are given an opportunity to wait for individual appointments. Couples are invited according to their position on the waiting list, which has resulted in cross section representation of the community.⁷

The Executive held these meetings for the first several months, and then other staff members began taking part on a rotating system. The main purpose of the meeting is to give information so it is kept leader focused, and discussion is not encouraged.⁸ If questions are asked that are more appropriate for a private interview, the leader explains that these answers will be postponed. At the end of the presentation which usually lasts from twenty to twenty-five minutes, there

⁷Florence Brown, "The Use of Group Meetings for Prospective Adoptive Parents." Paper presented at the National Conference of Social Workers, May 11, 1954.

⁸Ibid., p. 4.

is a question period.⁹ There have been differences in group participation, in some groups the leader has had to make a special effort to stimulate questions, while at others, fifty to sixty questions may be asked quite spontaneously. At some meetings the entire group may enter into the discussion, and at others a few individuals may be the only ones to participate by asking questions.¹⁰

The following general topics are included in the presentation: [1] Statement regarding the agency in general and the kind of staff, [2] Eligibility requirements, including only such things as age of adoptive parents, geographic location, citizenship, and the fact that the couples must be childless, [3] What the next steps will be including the total time involved, the reasons for the delay in arranging the initial appointments, and the fact that within the near future they will be given an appointment for a joint interview with a social worker. Emphasis is put on the individual nature of the contracts, the fact that the number of interviews will vary, and that all decisions are made by a committee, [4] Some material regarding the children placed, and the fact that these children are legally surrendered. An explanation is given regarding the fact that the agency is authorized by the State Department of Welfare to do adoptive placement and that they have the legal

⁹Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 5.

right to take a surrender and to place the child for adoption without reinvolving the natural parent at the time of legal adoption. They explain that in private adoptions the natural parent must attend the adoption hearing and that the parent's legal consent to the placement is not given until that time. They also tell about the care of the children in boarding homes prior to adoptive placement, and the fact that these homes must be studied and licensed; [5] Their fee scale, [6] The limited number of children as compared with the very large numbers of couples applying.¹¹

The Louise Wise Child Adoption Center considers the group meetings now as a part of regular practice. From their experience they have found the best groups to be those with about ten couples. Groups with six or seven couples, or twelve to fourteen were more repressed and fewer questions were asked. Florence Brown's impressions are that in the smaller groups there was reluctance to ask questions because the individual may have felt "too conspicuous", whereas in larger groups they had a tendency to feel "too self-conscious to speak in front of so many people."¹²

The agency feels that these meetings have been valuable to clients, to caseworkers, and to the administration and to the community. Some of the responses given by members of the

¹¹Ibid., pp. 4-5.

¹²Ibid., p. 12.

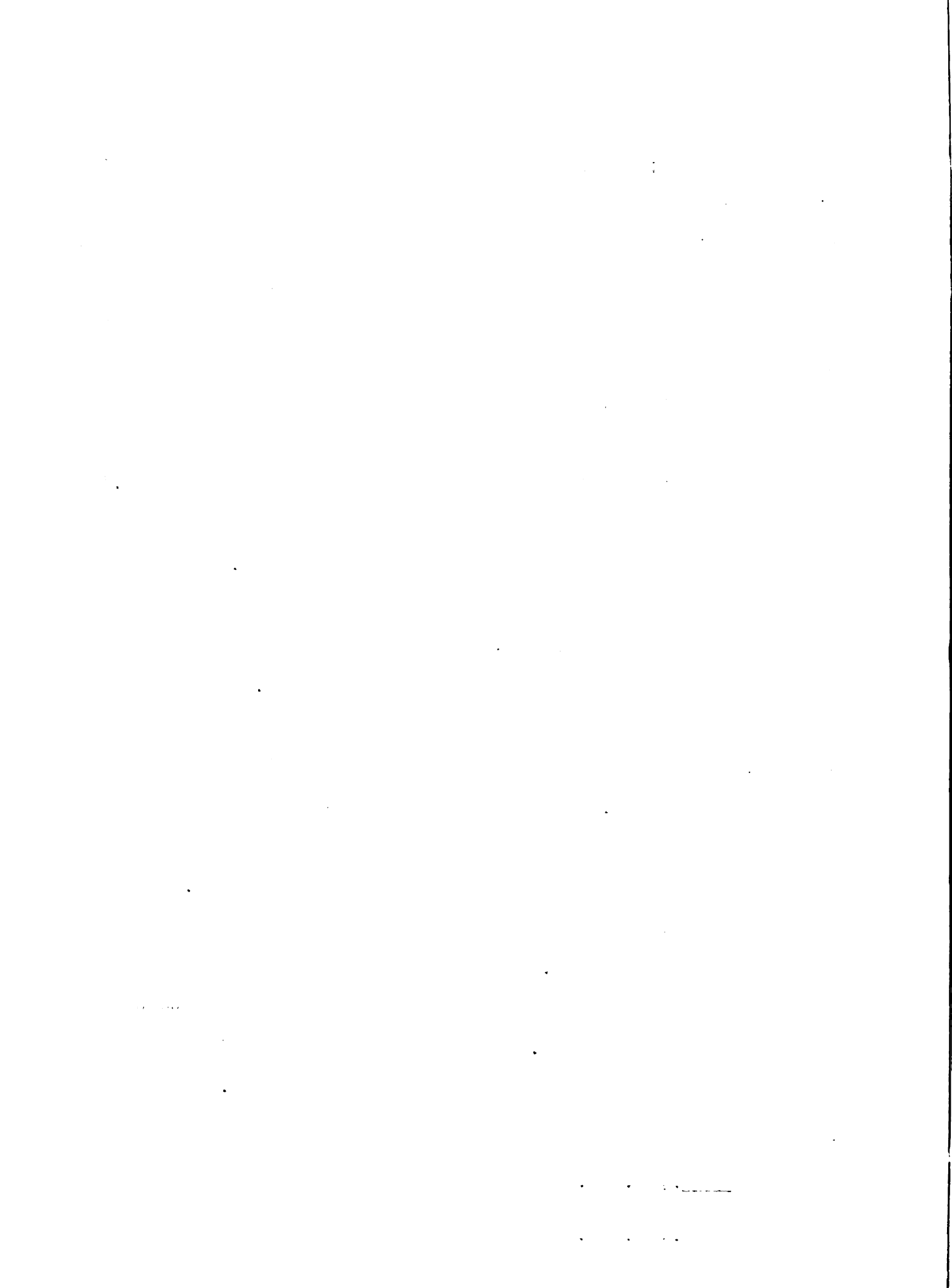
group have been; "many of the rumors about the agency had been dispelled; it no longer seemed so hopeless; it is good to know that they will actually give an appointment within three months, as they had heard that it might take five years; it gave one a good feeling to know that they are now in process; the waiting period does not seem so bad now since they know that if they do get a baby it will take only one to one and a half years; the information was interesting and informative; it is important to know some of this information before coming to the agency."¹³

Caseworkers have observed that couples who attend the meetings are more at ease at their first interview. They attribute this to the fact that much of the fear of coming to the agency has been overcome, and they have been able to see social workers as warm and friendly human beings. As this helps to relieve tension and put them in a more relaxed frame of mind, applicants are able to give more dynamic material to the first interview.¹⁴

A by-product of the group meetings which has been of value to the agency has been the withdrawal of couples. Out of 200 couples, who had attended meetings one-sixth did not continue with the agency. The agency looks upon this as a realistic way the couple has protected themselves from being turned down by the agency. This reduces the agency's load and the number of rejections it would be forced to make. In regard

¹³Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 12.



to community relations the agency has found that the group meetings give the couples an understanding of the agency's situation, which tends to soften the blow of rejection, as they are more able to believe that it is not a rejection of themselves but of limited circumstances.¹⁵

The Children's Home Society of North Carolina,
Greensboro, North Carolina

The Children's Home Society uses the group meeting with prospective adoptive parents as an introduction to the personal interview. Invitations are extended to couples to attend these meetings which are held in various parts of the state; but no pressure is put on people to attend. Thirty-five per cent of all applicants choose not to attend the group meeting.¹⁶

The agency first began the group meeting as a matter of public relations. A long waiting list had been developed and it was felt that the group meeting would be a way to acquaint people with the agency and with the basic reasons for their not being able to adopt a child as soon as they would wish. The agency also feels that these two hour sessions have given good public relations results. In addition, other values have been found. The individual is not made to feel so rejected when the statistics are discussed in a group with other

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 13-14.

¹⁶Harriet Tynes, Executive Director, of The Children's Home Society of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina. A letter dated July 4, 1955.

prospective couples. Any discouraging information seems to be absorbed with less shock by the group. The fact that the child comes first in every decision which the agency makes is entered into the discussion time and again and the Agency has been made to feel that this is understood and supported by the group. The agency also feels that the problem of infertility becomes less personal and disturbing when it can be faced frankly in a group which has come together through an organization, which does not place children in the home of parents who can have their own child.¹⁷ The agency's eligibility requirements are described and the group asked how they would determine these matters if they were responsible. The traditional fair-mindedness of the American audience comes into play at such points as the handling of priority of applicants, the reasonableness of the eligibility requirements, etc.¹⁸ One of the reactions that have come from the group which the agency feels is of value, is the understanding that many technical and professional skills are necessary to safeguard adoptions.¹⁹

Children's Services of Connecticut,
Hartford, Connecticut

The Children's Services of Connecticut applies the concept of giving to the adoption intake. The aim being to give

¹⁷Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 2.

prospective adoptive parents sufficient information for them to know whether they can meet the agency's eligibility requirements. The agency attempts to accomplish this through the following two steps: [1] A folder is sent to each couple who inquires about adoption from the agency, which includes basic information regarding the agency, advantages of adopting through an agency, and general requirements that will be expected. A letter accompanies the folder stating that they will be welcome at a group meeting, if after reading the material sent to them, they are still interested in adoption. The agency feels that many people withdraw as a result of the informative folder without any element of rejection; [2] Presumably then, those who attend the group meeting feel that they meet the basic requirements. The worker discusses with this group the home study, some of the problems commonly found, legal aspects and additional information about the agency. There follows a period for questions and discussion, but this is held to general topics and those present are not asked for any personal facts about themselves. At the end of the meeting they are told that they may get in touch with the worker to arrange for a personal appointment, if they are interested in continuing with their plans for adoption. The agency has found that many couples withdraw after the group meeting.²⁰

²⁰Ruth Taft, "Screening Through Group Meetings," Child Welfare, March, 1954, pp. 15-16.

Family and Children's Services,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

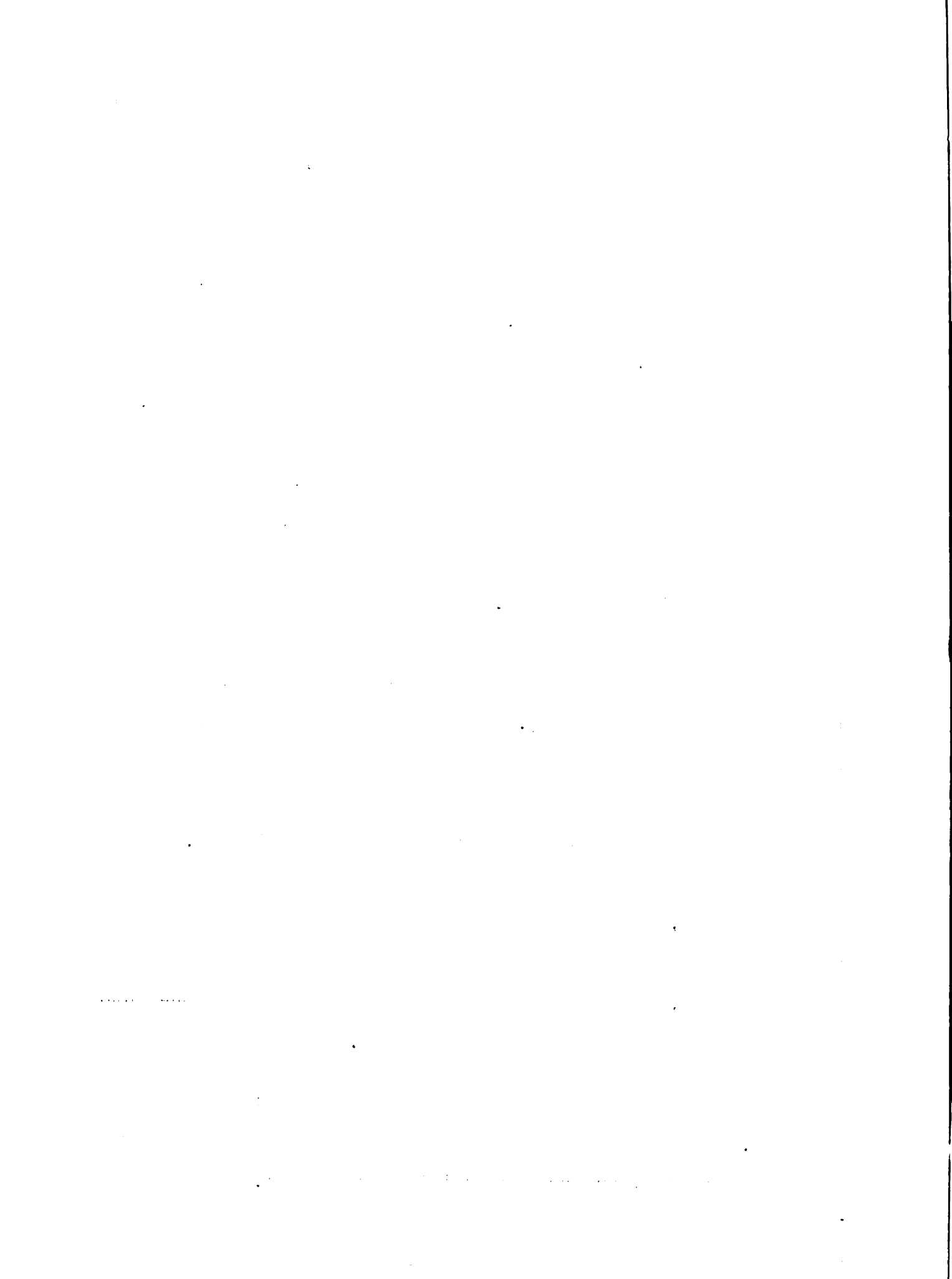
An adoption caseworker assumes the responsibility of taking inquiries concerning adoption, give information, clarify agency policy of eligibility, assist couples in completing their application, participate in group meetings and to make decisions as to the acceptance or rejection of applications. The agency reasons that the fact that one person handles the initial contact the client has with the agency, and follows through with participation at the group meeting, personalizes the contact for the applicant as well as insuring consistency with the work with the public.

Both husband and wife are expected to attend the group meeting which includes not more than fifteen couples, and is usually two hours in length. It is explained to the group that the agency expresses an interest in adoption because of its responsibility to those children who need homes and because of its respect for the applicant's request for children. The group is also told that the agency is interested in knowing them as people, and it is convinced that a child should know that he is adopted and feels that applicants should be informed of this belief, and that this is an area that will be gone into more completely in the personal interview.²¹

Safeguards established in the meeting plan:

- "1. In the material presented, the agency is revealing itself, but not the individuals present.

²¹Clare Fagrie, "The Use of Group Meetings with Adoptive Applicants." Unpublished typed paper. March 9, 1954. 30 pp.



2. The audience is encouraged to ask questions, but no one is given an opportunity to offer information about himself. Most people listen quietly and attentively and ask a few impersonal questions. Some go to the speaker after the meeting to ask questions that may be more personal
3. Individual interviews are planned instead of attendance at a meeting if for any reason this is indicated. So far, no one has voiced any objections to the group meeting.²²

After five meetings, the agency noted these values:

1. The plan eliminated the necessity for making casework service available for individual interviews with all people who wished information about adoption.
2. One two-hour meeting was substituted for ten to fifteen two-hour interviews.
3. The bulk of the casework time was then available for the individual studies, the point at which it was most needed.
4. The objective discussion of the agency and its methods of work were presented more completely in a meeting than in interviews. As the total story has already been told in the meeting, the study presented greater opportunity for the caseworker and the applicants to concentrate on those aspects particularly significant to the individuals involved.

²²Ibid., pp. 6-7.

5. The applicants had a preview of the emotional impact of a study and were better prepared for participation in the interviews when the study was undertaken.
6. At the same time, a group meeting was a situation, in which it was unnecessary for the applicants to react personally. The speaker might say, "you are here because you have a problem -- your inability to have children of your own." The individual did not need to defend himself. The statement has been applied to a group of people. This depersonalizes the threat which would be there if it were stated to the applicant individually.
7. Prior to the approval of the application, each step in the process was taken at the initiative of the applicant. He either decided to withdraw the application or proceeds to the next step toward eligibility.
8. Finally, the people who attended these meetings seemed to be pleased about them, and the staff members who conducted them were enthusiastic.²³

For the five meetings, seventy-three couples were invited, fifty-two attended, one-third failed to attend the first meetings to which they were invited. Of the thirty couples who attended the first three meetings, twenty-seven completed their applications. One-tenth voluntarily withdrew.²⁴

²³Ibid., 8-9.

²⁴Ibid., 9-10.



According to the above material, the majority of the agencies discussed, were influenced by the long waiting lists of adoptive applicants to plan a program that could reach these people more quickly, and to give them a realistic picture of the disproportionate number of couples wanting to adopt and the number of children available to the agencies. The adoptive intake interview usually takes two hours, the group meeting which can take care of from ten to sixteen couples in the same amount of time, was considered as a way to save the caseworker this time to be spent on the actual home study. Although the group approach has grown out of demands placed upon agencies by increasing number of applicants, and the limitations in number of trained personnel; agencies have noted values which suggest that in some aspects this approach may have advantages over the personal interview to the applicant, the agency and the community. The following points were considered to be values of the group approach by the agencies discussed: [1] More information can be covered in the group meeting than in a personal interview, and discussion of material can be more objective; [2] The applicants can be helped to understand that the child comes first, but that everything is being done by the agency that possibly can where the couples's interest is concerned; [3] With frank and objective discussion of the agency's policies, practices and expectations, individuals seem to feel less rejection of themselves as people; [4] Applicants are able to ask questions that they would not feel free to ask in a personal

interview; [5] The applicants can be helped for the involvement of the personal interview; [6] Saves agency time, and allows more time for the home study; [7] Voluntary withdrawals save agency time; [8] Helps to dispell false rumors about the agency; [9] In reducing the waiting list and securing the support of the applicants involved, serves as a factor in effecting better public relations.

CHAPTER III

USE OF THE GROUP MEETING MICHIGAN CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

All prospective adoptive couples, as well as individuals who have expressed an interest in knowing about the agency's adoption services are invited to attend an evening meeting. These meetings are usually held monthly, but when there are applicants to justify an additional meeting, two or more meetings may be held. For the first several meetings ten to sixteen couples were invited. However, the number at the present time is usually held to ten couples, with an average attendance of seven. The agency has found that a group composed of seven to ten couples, seems to afford a more relaxed atmosphere for couples, and allows them more freedom to ask questions.

Invitations to these meetings are precipitated by a contact, the individual has made with the agency, either by telephone or brief personal interview, usually arranged when the person drops in. It is agency policy for the Executive or Caseworker to make this contact and to secure preliminary information including, Name, Address, Age, and length of time married. Agency policies and specific area of interest may be discussed if there seems to be a need for it on the part of the client. Individuals are told that a letter will be mailed to them, which will be an invitation to attend a meeting with other

couples interested in adoption, where policies and procedures of the agency's adoption services will be discussed. The letter attempts to explain the purpose of the meeting and to leave the way open for other arrangements to be made if this is desired by the couple. A sample of the letter is shown on the following page.

The agency describes the group meeting as part of agency procedure, however, when it is recognized that persons are unable to attend a meeting, or where there are personal factors which make the interview more acceptable to the client than the group meeting, private interviews are arranged. An illustration of this is the scheduling of a personal appointment for a couple where one member had a physical handicap. In those few cases where Negroes have applied there has been an immediate need for such adoptive parents, and they have been given personal interviews in advance of a meeting that might have been attended. In other cases couples have chosen the interview and this has been granted. With all applicants, both husband and wife are expected to attend the group meeting, and this is explained to them in the initial contact. The agency feels that this is important in that it gives each the opportunity to receive first hand information, and may be helpful in their making a joint decision. If it is impossible for both partners to attend the same meeting, separate meetings may be attended, or one may attend a meeting, and the other be seen in an interview.

Dear Mr. and Mrs.

As you have indicated an interest in adopting a child through the Michigan Children's Aid Society, we are inviting you, along with several other interested couples, to attend a general group meeting for agency interpretation to be held in the third floor conference room of the Red Feather Building (615 N. Capitol) at 7:30 P.M. on

This general meeting is to acquaint you with the procedures of this and other adoptive agencies. There will be the opportunity to ask questions of a general nature. The more personal questions that you may have can be discussed in later individual interviews. Attendance at this meeting does not obligate you to place an application with this agency.

If, for some reason, you cannot attend this meeting, and you are definitely interested in adoption, please contact the agency to make other arrangements. If no other arrangements are made, we will consider your inquiry withdrawn.

Sincerely yours,

Executive Secretary

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The meetings are held in a conference room in the Red Feather Building where the agency has its offices. A case-worker greets the persons at the door and privately checks attendance with each person as he arrives. Individuals are then seated at a large conference table in "round table fashion." The Executive Secretary usually presents the material to the group, the content of which is informational and general in nature. To help to keep the meeting impersonal, there is no reference made to personalities present or recognition of persons, other than the introduction of staff members present. Board members are invited to attend, as the agency sees this as one way of helping to acquaint them with the way the agency's functions are carried out. No acknowledgement of board members present is made to the group.

The major areas covered by the presiding staff member are: [1] Odds for adoption; [2] Organization of agency; [3] Purpose of meeting; [4] The application process and steps in procedure; [5] Initiation of study; [6] What the agency is interested in knowing about the couples, such as family and community relationships; [7] References; [8] Time necessary; [9] Legal procedure; [10] Cost; [11] Priorities; [12] Arbitrary requirements, such as age limits, length of time married; [13] Other adoption agencies, including international adoption. The agency considers attitudes on part of the couple regarding illegitimacy, and telling a child he is adopted, as extremely important.²⁵ The agency therefore does not discuss its own

²⁵"The Policies Regarding Adoptive Applicants," published by the Michigan Children's Aid Society, mimeo. copy.

convictions on these issues, as it feels this might interfere with discerning the individual's genuine attitude. In the choice of material presented, the agency hopes to give each person a clear understanding of its philosophy, practice and the realistic limitations in the handling of adoptions. The presentation of this material usually takes from one and one-half hours to two hours, and is followed by a question period. Persons are encouraged to ask questions of a general nature, only, and to save their personal questions until they have an interview or until private discussion after the meeting. In several of the meetings the Director has requested that those present offer their impressions of the group meeting. The most common reaction has been an expression of the fact that they have been made to feel that they are all being treated alike. Other comments made have been equally favorable.

Some of the values that are considered to be derived at from the use of the group meeting are the following:

[1] It has been possible for Michigan Children's Aid Society to process more people, more efficiently. Agency hours have been saved; as ten couples can be given the necessary preliminary information about adoption simultaneously. In this way the caseworker is allowed more time for the actual home study and is able to serve the couple more quickly, thus avoiding such a long waiting period for the clients; [2] As mentioned in the paragraph above, applicants are made to feel that they are being treated alike, and leave the meeting with a better understanding

of the way adoptions are made, and a more objective conception of the agency's services. More information can usually be given at the meeting than can be given in a personal interview, and there is more uniformity in the material presented; [3] It permits the agency to invite persons interested in adoption but not necessarily interested in adopting, and who would probably feel reluctant to ask the agency for their time; [4] It permits the agency to interpret adoption practices and procedure to board members; [5] During temporary periods of shortage of trained staff, the group meeting can serve as training for workers, who can learn more about the adoption program of the agency by attending the meetings.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The following table indicates attendance at the group meetings for the period of time which this project covers.

TABLE I

ATTENDANCE AT GROUP MEETING FROM OCTOBER 1954
THROUGH FEBRUARY 1955 BY COUPLES

Month	Number Invited	Number Attended	No. Absent
TOTAL	49	29	20
October	10	5	5
November	10	8	2
January	16	9	7
February	13	7	6

An attempt was made to communicate with each of the twenty couples who failed to attend the group meeting to which they were first invited. Eleven couples were interviewed through personal contact; two couples did not permit a personal visit and were interviewed by telephone. Four couples reside outside of Ingham County, so letters containing questionnaires were mailed to them, from which one reply was received. Three

couples had moved, leaving no forwarding address, hence no contact was made with them. Fourteen couples out of twenty couples were actually contacted, and it is their responses and impressions that constitute the basis for the data presented.

TABLE II

CONTACT WITH ADOPTION AGENCIES

Agency	Number of Couples	
	First Contact	Second Contact
TOTAL	22	2
M. C. A. S.	12	2
Probate Court	4	0
Methodist Home	1	0
Television	1	0
Out-of-State	2	0

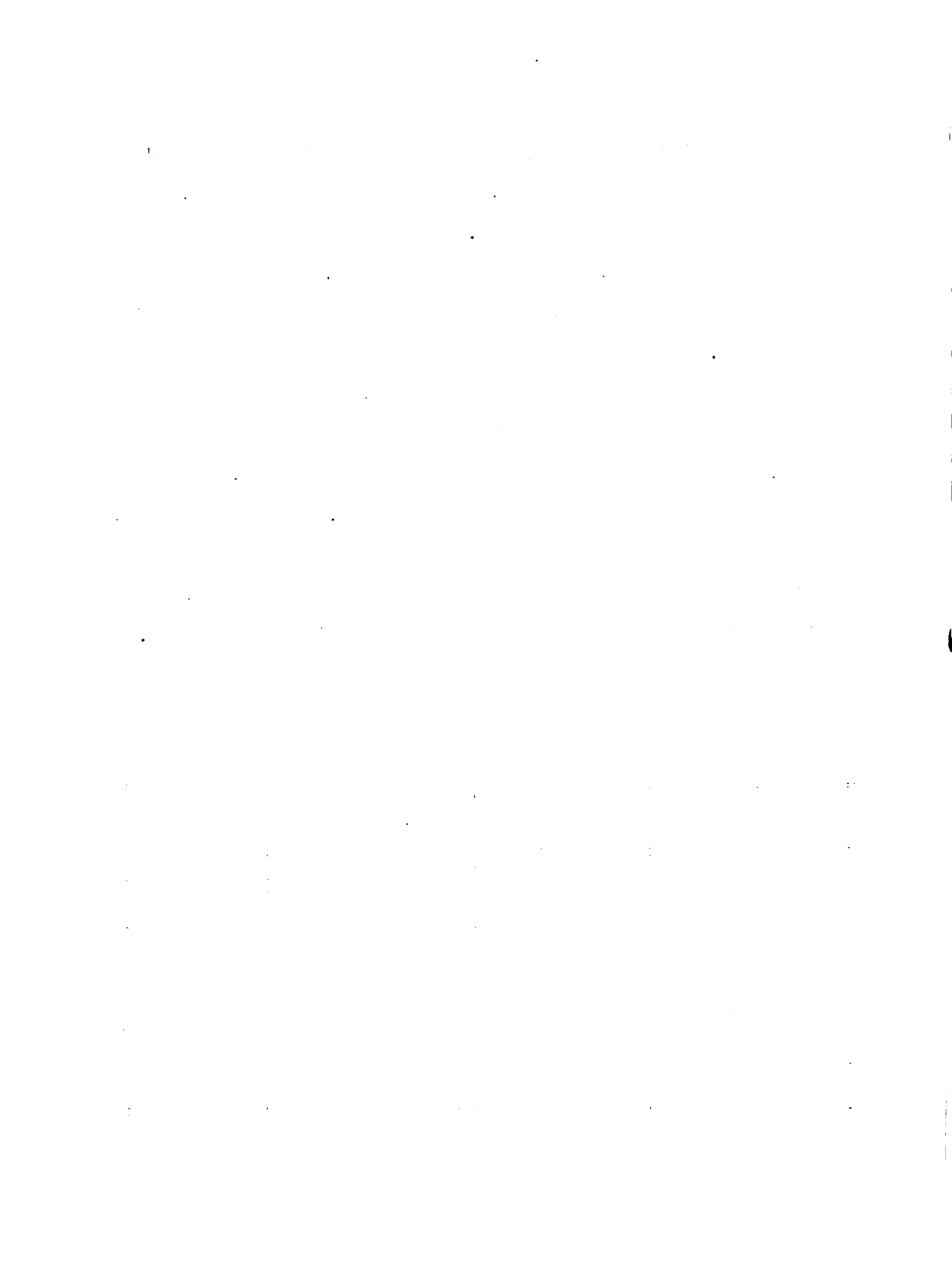
Each of the fourteen couples expressed an interest in adopting an infant or an older child through the Michigan Children's Aid Society, and there was nothing to indicate that any of these couples were asking for information only. As shown in Table II, two couples got in touch with the agency for the second time. In both cases, they were told at their original contact that they were too young, and were advised to return in a year or two.

The initial contact made with the Michigan Children's Aid by the persons interested, was in all cases but one, made by husband or wife individually. Nine individuals representing the fourteen couples, telephoned the agency, four dropped in and were seen personally, one couple wrote a letter requesting information. Although it is agency policy for the client to be seen by the Executive or a caseworker, there have been occasions where the Receptionist has talked to the interested person, either by telephone or face to face contact, when a professional staff person was not available. The six couples, as indicated in Table III who talked with caseworker or Receptionist were not always sure to whom they had conversed, so no definite distinction can be made to the specific situations.

TABLE III

INITIAL CONTACT WITH AGENCY

Staff Member	Total	Person Making Contact	
		Husband	Wife
TOTAL	14	4	10
Executive	7	0	7
Caseworker or Receptionist	6	3	3
Letter	1	1	0



It seems significant that eleven couples felt that they were not given a choice between the group meeting and the personal interview, and there was no alternative open to them. One husband felt that he was offered a choice and chose the group meeting on the basis that he thought it would be more helpful and informative. One couple who made their initial contact by letter, requested a personal interview and an appointment was made for them. One case involved the wife who telephoned the agency and was given the freedom of making a choice, and chose the group meeting after being told that this would probably offer the quickest way. The eleven couples who felt that they were given no choice gave what they considered to be their preference if they had been free to do so. Three wives and two husbands expressed no strong feelings of preference for either procedure. Eight wives and nine husbands indicated a definite preference for the personal interview.

TABLE IV

PREFERENCE OF INDIVIDUALS NOT GIVEN CHOICE

Preference	Husband	Wife
TOTAL	11	11
Personal Interview	9	8
Either Group Meeting or Personal Interview	2	3

The following responses were given by those who stated a definite preference for the personal interview:

[1] Found it difficult to talk and to be at ease in a group.

[2] Understood the meeting was to get acquainted with other couples interested in adoption; she didn't want everybody to know that she was adopting a baby, but would like most people to think it was her own.

[3] Did not talk so well in a group, felt he would be competing with other couples.

[4] Felt the Children's Aid would not get to know them as people.

[5] Considered the meeting as a "stall".

[6] Did not feel free to ask questions pertaining to things that he was particularly interested.

[7] Felt personal interview would save time.

[8] Preferred the personal contact of an interview.

There are many factors which may enter into an individual's reaction to being presented with an invitation to attend a group meeting by any agency through which he wishes to be considered for adoption. The writer recognizes that the reason given for not attending such a meeting is preconditioned by previous experiences, and individualized by the personality involved. The reasons stated in Table V for failure to attend the group meeting were arrived at by the interviewer from the material brought out in the communication made with the person, and



TABLE V

FAILURE TO ATTEND GROUP MEETING

Reason	Total	Husband	Wife
TOTAL	28	13	15
Business, job, vacation, etc.	8	6	2
Illness	1	1	0
Failure of spouse to attend	8	0	8
Failed to receive letter from M.C.A.S.	2	1	1
Withdrew -- understood did not meet agency requirements	2	1	1
Reactions to first contact with agency and to idea of group meeting	2	1	1
Reaction to idea of group meeting with feelings of rejection	5	3	2

represents what is considered to be the most outstanding reason for absence from the meeting. There are twenty-eight total responses, including those received through personal visits, telephone interviews and by letter. The majority of persons fall into the group who failed to attend for reasons of business, illness, failure of spouse to attend, and failure to

receive letter of invitation. There were four husbands and three wives for whom the group meeting was a strong influence in their discontinuance of plans for adoption through Michigan Children's Aid. This represents one-quarter of the total number of individuals, failing to attend the meeting. These couples are considered as couples A, B, C, and D and a brief discussion of their attitudes follows:

It was the second contact with Michigan Children's Aid Society for Couple A. In 1952, they were interested in adoption and were told by Michigan Children's Aid Society and the Probate Court that they were too young. At that time Mr. and Mrs. A. were 26 and 23 years of age respectively. They provided a boarding home for children for Michigan Children's Aid Society through a five month period. The A's had answered a television advertisement where a child was available for adoption, but were told that an income of \$10,000 yearly was essential. They were turned^{down} by a sectarian agency because they were not members of the denomination which was sponsoring the agency. Mr. A, especially, regarded the invitation to a group meeting as another rejection. He did not wish to attend the meeting, feeling that it would put him in a position of competing with other couples. Both felt they had been treated unfairly in having their age held against them. Both expressed a preference for a personal interview.

Mr. and Mrs. B. explained that they felt that the meeting was compulsory, and if they did not attend there would be no further consideration by the agency. They did not feel that they would be at ease in such a group, and would prefer a personal interview. Mrs. B. stated that she thought the meeting was to get acquainted with other couples.

Mr. and Mrs. C. are 40 and 39 years of age respectively. They came to Michigan Children's Aid Society out of an interest in adopting an older child. Mr. and Mrs. C. each expressed the fact that the group meeting had discouraged them. The first contact with the agency was made by Mrs. C. by telephone. She said that she explained that her husband would be out of town the evening of the meeting, but no alternative plan was offered to her. She and Mr. C. seemed to consider the meeting as a "stall". Mr. C. is a truck driver and it is necessary for him to be out of town frequently. He thought this might be a drawback as to his getting a child. The C's immediately applied through the Probate Court and have adopted a child.

Mrs. D. showed extreme feelings of hostility for the practice of adoption in Michigan in general. She had telephoned Michigan Children's Aid Society and described the feeling that the door was being slammed in her face. To her the idea of group meeting was "ridiculous". Mr. and Mrs. D. have made an adoption outside the State of Michigan and are in the hopes of making another. The writer was not permitted an interview with them.

Two of the fourteen couples are following through with their plans for adoption with the Michigan Children's Aid Society. Twelve couples, at the time they were interviewed by the writer, were not in contact with the agency. Table VI indicates the reasons for their not proceeding with their original plans. As shown in this table, three couples withdrew because they did not feel that they met the qualifications of the agency. One couple, where the husband was 54 years old and the wife 45, attended a meeting after returning from their vacation. After hearing the discussion of age requirements, they gave up all plans for adoption. The second couple attended one of the later meetings and disqualified themselves, when learning the agency policy of placing a child in a home where the parents already have a child of their own. [The state policy of the Michigan Children's Aid Society is to consider a couple who have one child but who are unable to have more, with the understanding that it may be next to impossible to find a child that will match their own child as well as the adoptive parents.] The third case in this category was a wife who withdrew after learning at her first contact with Michigan Children's Aid Society that the fact that a Protestant, married to a Catholic would be a discouraging factor. In the case of two couples, pregnancy was the reason for withdrawal. One couple withdrew because the husband could not attend the group meetings due to his job schedule. They had written to the agency, requesting a personal interview, but felt the

TABLE VI

REASONS FOR DISCONTINUING WITH
MICHIGAN CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

Reasons	Number of Couples
TOTAL	12
Withdrew -- not meeting agency requirements	3
Pregnancy	2
Unable to attend group meeting due to job schedule	1
After failure to attend meeting -- felt there would be no further consideration for adoption	1
After failure to attend meeting -- undecided as to next step	2
Reactions to agency, feelings of futility	3

agency had made no attempt to grant this request. One couple was unable to attend the meeting because the wife was working that particular evening. It was their feeling that failure to attend the meeting would forfeit any consideration that the agency might give them. This couple had also expressed that they would definitely not feel comfortable in a group meeting. Of the two couples who seemed undecided as to the next step to take, one desired to have the opportunity to attend a meeting but had not made this known to the agency. The other couple was also interested in continuing with the agency, but was not quite sure how to go about it. The last three couples mentioned in Table VI have been discussed in connection with Table V, in relation to their negative feelings for the initial contact with the agency and their reactions to the group meeting. Two of these couples have adopted a child through another agency.

Table VII gives the present status of the twelve couples who have discontinued contact with Michigan Children's Aid Society. Five couples communicated with the agency their reasons for not being able to attend the group meeting and expressed an interest in being scheduled for a later date. Three of these couples expressed very positive reactions to the group meeting, which they attended. They considered it highly informative and served to answer their many questions. They left the meeting very hopeful, two of these couples are following through, the other couple withdrew because of

TABLE VII

PRESENT STATUS

Status	Number of Couples
Communicated with Michigan Children's Aid Society and attended subsequent meeting	5
Contact with other adoption agencies	8
Given up adoption	5
Desire to continue with Michigan Children's Aid Society, but have not renewed contact	5

pregnancy. The husband and wife aged 54 and 45 respectively, said that they felt very self-conscious at the meeting, and attributed part of this to their age. The husband said he felt "ignorant" and thought that two or three people monopolized the question period. Both agreed that if they had been included in a meeting where there were other couples closer to their own age, and where there were couples interested in adopting an older child, that they believe that they would have felt more comfortable and free to ask questions. The last couple concerned, each member being aged 26, considered the meeting very helpful, but stated that they did not feel free to ask questions, and made the suggestion that there be

a division in age groups. This couple withdrew from the agency because of pregnancy. Eight of the fourteen couples have gone to other agencies, one couple has adopted a child through the Probate Court, and one couple had adopted through an out of state contact. Of the five who have given up adoption plans completely, two did so because of pregnancy, and three because they did not feel that they could meet adoption requirements. The five remaining who are still interested in adoption and would like to continue with Michigan Children's Aid were discussed previously in relation to Table VI.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In the period from October 1954 through February 1955 four group meetings were held by Michigan Children's Aid Society, with a total of forty-nine couples being invited to attend. Twenty couples, or forty per cent failed to attend the first meeting to which they were invited. However, the majority of these couples failed to attend for reasons which were not directly related to the agency, such as being out of town, illness, job obligations. Of these twenty couples it was possible to receive responses from fourteen couples. We may speculate that the sample of fourteen might be typical of the total population of twenty. Out of the six who were not reached, three had moved and could not be located, and three did not respond to the mail query. Of the fourteen couples, three and one-half couples expressed negative reactions to the idea of the group meeting, that is one-quarter of the total.

Continuing to speculate -- one-fourth of twenty equals five, one might say that only five couples out of the twenty who did not attend were negative. Three-fourths of the total of twenty couples who did not attend failed to do so for reasons other than negative reactions to the idea of the group meeting. Thus only five out of forty-nine couples, that is, about ten per cent of all the prospective parents were negative



to the idea of the group meeting. Some of this ten per cent may be considered good potential material for adequate parents, certainly, some would be among those to be inevitably eliminated. Observations on the part of the interviewer indicate that perhaps half of this ten per cent might be good material for adoptive parents. This indicates that from the agency's point of view, in its search for the most adequate parents, time should be given to this group for personal interviews. This suggests the following procedure: All new prospects should be told about the group meeting first. From this study results indicate that such a procedure might eliminate only about ten per cent of all prospects due to negative feelings to the idea of the group meeting. Furthermore, about one-half of this per cent may face rejection. Thus the portion of couples eliminated by this procedure might conceivably be only a small per cent of the total number of applicants.

However, because the number of couples negative to the group meeting approach is so small, it should be possible to give these couples personal interviews. It might be emphasized that only those couples who seem to be unable to accept the idea of the group meeting should be offered the alternative of the personal interview. Otherwise it is probable that a very appreciable per cent of the total number of applicants would choose individual interviews and this would again slow down the system of processing couples to spare them the additional anxiety of longer waiting periods. Obviously this places

extreme importance on the initial contact that the couple has with the agency. It is recommended that this first personal contact with the agency be handled in all cases by a professionally trained social worker, as it will demand the highest skill in understanding the client's feelings and attitude toward facing a group meeting and in creating an atmosphere that imparts to the client, ^{the feeling} that the agency will realistically and as objectively as possible do what it can for the individual or the couple concerned.

The preceding speculations were based on the results of this study, with the writer's recognition that the study represents too small a sampling of data to enable conclusions to be drawn. However, certain questions have been stimulated and certain areas deserving consideration can be pointed out, relating to the making of administrative decisions on the part of Executives using the group meeting or those who are considering the use of the group approach.

As a result of this study and the experience in interviewing these clients, the writer would like to emphasize the importance of carefully considering the following questions before a group interviewing plan is put into effect:

[1] Should the group meeting be compulsory, or should an alternative system be worked out? [2] Should the client's initial contact with the agency be with a trained Social Worker that would involve a screening process to precede an invitation to the meeting? [3] Should the initial contact

be handled by a Social Worker or the Receptionist? [4] Should introduction and invitation to the meeting be handled through interview, telephone communication, letter or brochure?

[5] Does the client understand the purpose of the meeting?

[6] Should it be compulsory for both husband and wife to attend? [7] Does the group meeting actually save time if it is effectively carried out? [8] Should the size of the group be limited? If so, how large? [9] Should there be divisional groups for older couples interested in adopting an older child, and younger couples interested in adopting an infant? [10] Does the leader of the group need an understanding and awareness of group interaction and group dynamics? [11] Should observations be noted by a staff member, who has an understanding of group dynamics, recording responses and charting the interaction of the group? [12] Is the presence of board members advisable? [13] How should the five or ten minutes waiting period which usually precedes each meeting be handled? [14] Should the group be encouraged to participate in the discussion of their attitudes and suggestions pertaining to the use of the group meeting? [15] What will be the effect both on the couples present and on public relations, if it is known that some couples were given a choice between the group meeting and the personal interview and some were not?

In concluding, it may be pointed out that any program of group interviews, must be focused not only upon giving an interpretation of the agency's policy to the prospective client,

but also upon the dynamic interplay of the group members upon each other and their use of the group leader. It is for this reason that agencies might consider that the worker involved in the adoptive group meetings be aware of the forces operating within the group. Although there are certain negative areas in the group technique for adoptive applicants, there are strong positive aspects as have been indicated by other agencies involved in using this approach. It is recommended that any future use and expansion of the adoptive group method within the Michigan Children's Aid Society be based on careful evaluation and consideration, both of the negative and the positive aspects of this type of procedure.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Age _____ Marital Status _____ Date of Meeting at which
attendance was expected _____

Interest in Adoption

Why are you interested in adoption?

Contact with Michigan Children's Aid: First _____ Second _____

Consideration of adoption with other agencies: Probate Court
MCI
Other

Nature of contact with other agencies and time involved:

Contact with Michigan Children's Aid Society

First contact with agency: telephone personal interview
Executive Receptionist

Choice given between personal interview and group meeting for
next contact: Yes No

Reasons for choosing the group meeting:

Letter of invitation from MCAS to attend group meeting:

Did you receive a letter from the agency inviting you to a meeting
where adoption would be discussed? Yes No

Reactions to letter:

Responses and impressions given for failure to attend meeting:

Impression of group meeting -- if attendance was made to a
later one:

Further interest in adoption:

APPENDIX B

May 24, 1955

Dear Mr. and Mrs. ____:

In connection with the Michigan Children's Aid Society and the Department of Social Work, Michigan State College, I have been requested to make an exploratory study of certain adoptive procedures carried out by the Michigan Children's Aid Society in Lansing. This is part of a state wide study now being made, to evaluate the total program of the organization as it operates throughout Michigan. The part of the study which I am particularly interested in, is the group meeting offered by the local agency to people who are interested in learning more about adoption. The purpose of this exploration is to assist the agency in arriving at a more helpful way of extending services to the community.

Through the Executive Secretary of Michigan Children's Aid Society, Mr. Clinton Justice, I have learned that you have expressed an interest in adoption. I would like to ask your help in evaluating this part of the Michigan Children's Aid program. Your impressions and thinking concerning the agency's approach to people interested in adoption, will be greatly appreciated. Any information given is completely confidential, as no names nor identifying information will be used in any way. I shall be getting in touch with you by telephone in the near future, in order to request a time that I may talk with you personally.

Looking forward to meeting you, I am

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs.) Rachael Schepkowski

APPENDIX C

June 7, 1955

Dear Mr. and Mrs. _____:

In connection with the Michigan Children's Aid Society and the Department of Social Work, Michigan State College, I have been requested to make an exploratory study of certain adoptive procedures carried out by the Michigan Children's Aid Society in Lansing. This is part of a state wide study now being made, to evaluate the total program of the organization as it operates throughout Michigan. The part of the study which I am particularly interested in, is the group meeting offered by the local agency to people who are interested in learning more about adoption. The purpose of this exploration is to assist the agency in arriving at a more helpful way of extending services to the community.

Through the Executive Secretary of Michigan Children's Aid Society, Mr. Clinton Justice, I have learned that you have expressed an interest in adoption. I would like to ask your help in evaluating this part of the Michigan Children's Aid program. Your impressions and thinking concerning the agency's approach to people interested in adoption, will be greatly appreciated. You can be of great help if each of you will complete one of the questionnaires enclosed and return to me. Any information given is completely confidential, as no names or identifying information will be used in any way.

Thanking you for your cooperation, I am

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs.) Rachel Schepkowski

APPENDIX D

POLICIES REGARDING ADOPTIVE APPLICANTS

Foreward

The placement of children for adoption is one of the most vital and one of the most difficult areas of social work. Tremendous are the responsibilities involved in arbitrarily choosing for a child, the family with whom he is expected to spend most of the growing years and the family he hopefully accepts as his own for life.

Many more couples are applying to the agency than we have children available for adoption. It thus becomes necessary to choose with care those couples who have the capacity to meet the specific needs of the children we serve.

Since individual children will require adoptive parents of widely differing characteristics, it is not possible to list specifically the factors on which a decision will be made as to whether a home will be accepted for study.

The following policies are an attempt to formulate a guide in dealing with adoptive applicants. It is not expected or desired that there shall always be strict adherence to every concept herein suggested. Flexibility is necessary in applying these policies, since, as a children's agency our first responsibility is to the children for whom we are planning. It may be necessary for any one of these policies to be given a liberal interpretation as we keep in mind our primary objective --to find for each child the home that seems best suited to him, the home which seems to have the ability to provide him with the necessary foundation for building a satisfying adulthood.

1. The first step in the process of identifying a problem is to recognize that a problem exists. This is often done by comparing current performance with a desired state or goal. For example, a manager might notice that sales are declining or that customer satisfaction is low. Once a problem is identified, the next step is to define it more precisely. This involves determining the scope of the problem, its causes, and its effects. For instance, a manager might define a problem as "a 10% decrease in sales over the last quarter, primarily due to a loss of market share in the competitive market." This definition helps to narrow down the focus of the problem and provides a clear starting point for further investigation.

2. The second step in the process is to gather information about the problem. This involves collecting data and facts that are relevant to the problem. For example, a manager might gather data on sales trends, customer feedback, and market conditions. This information is then analyzed to identify patterns and trends that can help to explain the problem. For instance, a manager might discover that sales are declining because of a new competitor entering the market or because of a change in customer preferences. This information is then used to develop a hypothesis about the cause of the problem.

3. The third step in the process is to develop a hypothesis about the cause of the problem. A hypothesis is a statement that predicts the cause of the problem. For example, a manager might hypothesize that the decline in sales is due to a loss of market share to a new competitor. This hypothesis is then tested by gathering more information and by conducting experiments or simulations. For instance, a manager might conduct a market survey to determine if customers are switching to the new competitor or if they are simply not buying as much. This testing process helps to confirm or refute the hypothesis and provides a basis for developing a solution.

4. The fourth step in the process is to develop a solution to the problem. This involves identifying the actions that need to be taken to address the problem. For example, a manager might develop a solution that involves increasing marketing efforts, improving customer service, or developing new products. This solution is then implemented and its effectiveness is monitored. For instance, a manager might implement a new marketing campaign and track sales over time to see if there is an improvement. This monitoring process helps to evaluate the success of the solution and provides a basis for making adjustments if necessary.

5. The fifth and final step in the process is to evaluate the results of the solution. This involves comparing the current performance with the desired state or goal. For example, a manager might evaluate the results of a solution by comparing sales trends with the desired state. This evaluation helps to determine if the solution was effective and if the problem has been resolved. For instance, a manager might find that sales have increased and that customer satisfaction is higher, indicating that the solution was successful. This evaluation process provides a basis for learning from the experience and for improving future problem-solving efforts.

ADOPTION: POLICY

I - Inquiries and ApplicationsA - Procedure:1. Intake Interviews:

In areas served by Branch offices, every couple interested in adoption shall be entitled to an office interview in which the policies and procedures of the agency will be explained and the situation and attitudes of the potential applicants explored. This concept shall not preclude the preliminary exchange of written information between the agency and the inquiring persons when this is indicated.

In areas served by the M.O. staff, the distances involved may necessitate a preliminary exchange of information. Whenever possible, however, arrangements will be made for an interview by a field representative in the Detroit office or in a Branch office adjacent to the home of the interested couple.

2. Application

An application blank will be provided when decision is made that a home will be accepted for study.

The initial interview will usually allow a tentative decision of this kind though in certain situations, additional interviews may be required to determine the desirability of accepting a formal application.

When it appears that a home may be accepted for study, potential applicants will be advised that an application blank will be mailed to them when the information they have given concerning their health and cause of childlessness is substantiated by the statement subsequently provided by their physician.

3. Recording

Since the content of the initial interview has great significance in evaluating the capacity of a couple to become good adoptive parents and since a considerable period of time usually elapses between the intake process and the initiation of the subsequent home study, the intake interview or interviews should be recorded in detail.

B - Policy

The primary purpose of the adoption program is to secure permanent homes with capacity to meet the specific needs of children available for adoption. Since individual children will require adoptive parents of widely differing characteristics, it is not possible to define precisely

- 2 -

the factors on which decision will be made as to whether a home will be accepted for study. In such decision, however, the following factors will be important.

1. Age of Applicants

The needs of young children can usually be met most adequately by young parents. Since staff limitations do not currently permit the prompt completion of studies, it is desirable for administrative reasons, that homes be formally accepted for study only when there is some assurance that the age of the applicants at the completion of the study will not preclude a recommendation that a child be placed in this home.

In general, formal applications should not be given to couples wishing to adopt a first child less than two years of age when the potential adoptive parents are more than 38 years of age.

When a couple expresses interest in the adoption of an older child, an application may be accepted if the age of the applicants does not exceed the age of the child requested, by more than 38 years.

Deviations from these age limits may occur when it is recognized that this home may have value for a child with special needs.

When the age of an interested couple precludes the acceptance of a formal application, they may be advised that the identifying data they have provided will be recorded for future reference and their continued interest explored if their home seems suitable for a specific child.

2. Health

Reasonable life expectancy, freedom from communicable disease and sufficient physical vigor to provide a child with good physical care and a sense of security in his placement are essential prerequisites for the acceptance of any application for adoption.

3. Sterility

Although we are not yet prepared to establish proof of sterility as an essential factor of eligibility for adoptive parents, a formal application will not be accepted until (1) medical advice has been obtained, (2) any recommended treatment secured and (3) a statement provided by the examining physician relative to the probable cause of childlessness and the possibility of future conception. When sterility is not established, a formal application will be accepted only after careful consideration of all factors which would affect the placement of a child. (Attitudes toward childlessness, reasons for wanting a child, length of marriage, quality of the marital relationship, etc..)



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4. Length of Marriage

In no event will an application be accepted from a couple whose marriage has been of less than two years' duration. If proof of sterility has been established and there is evidence that this is a stable union of mature persons, an application may be accepted from couples who have been married only two years.

If a marriage has been of long duration, the acceptance of an application will need to be preceded by careful evaluation of the ability of this couple to meet the needs of a child. In such evaluation it will be necessary to explore the reasons why a child was not adopted at an earlier date, why a child is desired now, and what it would be like for a child to live in a home in which a different pattern of living has prevailed for so many years. (If the information provided at intake is not wholly negative in its implication the application may be accepted and the exploration continued in the study process.)

5. Religion

In general, applications will only be accepted for the placement of a child of the same religious faith as that of the applicants.

Applications for a Catholic child can be accepted only when Catholicism is actively practiced in the home and the marriage is recognized by the Catholic Church.

6. Financial Security

Adequate financial security is of primary importance in insuring good physical care, opportunities for education and freedom from emotional tensions. Applications will not be accepted when there is evidence that such security is not currently present or might not be present when the family expenses are augmented by the needs of a child.

7. Prior Adoption of a Child

The agency continues its belief that the placement of a second child for adoption has value when the background, characteristics and adjustment of the first child are known and can be carefully evaluated and matched in the placement of a second child.

In most instances, applications for a second child will be accepted only from adoptive parents who have received their first child from this agency. An exception to this policy may be made, however, when adoptive parents who have received their first child from another agency (1) appear to have so much to offer a second child that rejection of their application seems undesirable and (2) complete information concerning the first child is available from another agency.

Only in rare cases will applications be accepted from any couple who have previously adopted two children.

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Prior Application to Another Agency

The filing of an application with another agency will not preclude our acceptance of an application, but such applicants should be encouraged to remain with the agency of original application. Applicants should be asked to provide assurance, however, that they will report the initiation of a study of their home by another agency in order that their application with us may be considered withdrawn.

II - Study of Adoptive Homes

A. Procedure

1. Priority

In general, the chronological order in which applications are accepted will govern the order in which a study of the home is initiated. The agency reserves the right to study out of chronological order, however, those homes which seem to have capacity to serve specific children requiring placement.

2. Method

If a considerable period of time has elapsed between the intake process and the date in which it proves possible to initiate a study of the home, the continuing interest of the applicants will first be explored by letter and interested applicants will then be asked to return to the office for a joint interview. If this interview results in a decision to continue the study, arrangements will need to be made for separate office interviews with each of the applicants either before or after a joint interview in their own home. (In most instances these separate interviews will precede the home visit in order that the agency can have an opportunity to explore the feelings of each applicant about adoption, before their home is subjected to scrutiny or an attempt made to evaluate what it will be like for a child to live in this home.

When applicants live in out-lying areas served by the Main Office, it may be necessary to substitute home visits for office interviews in some cases.

Reports from references and current verifications of health will usually be secured only after the agency has gained some assurance that this is a home in which a child could be placed for adoption. Whenever practical, references will be interviewed personally.

When the study has been completed, applicants will be advised by letter or by personal interview of the decision made with respect to the approval of their home for the placement of a child.

B. Policy

The focus of any study should be on the applicants as individuals, as part of a family group and as members of a community. The ultimate purpose of the study will be that of reaching a valid conclusion as to whether this home can be recommended for the placement of a child.

In reaching such decision the following factors will need to be carefully evaluated and if present in a significant degree, will be considered cause for rejection of the application:

1. Marital incompatibility or friction.
2. Rigid attitudes in areas of religion, sex, child discipline, recreation, education, etc..
3. Intolerance in areas of nationality, race and social deviations such as illegitimacy, etc..
4. Over-concern about cleanliness, orderliness, possibility of illness or accidents, etc..
5. Probable inability to allow a child freedom to develop in accordance with his own needs and capacities.
6. Evidence that a child is desired to help the applicants solve their own problems of frustration and thwarted desires.
7. Probable incapacity to demonstrate warmth and patience in a relationship with a child.
8. Evidence of emotional instability indicated by alcoholism, frequent changes in employment, irresponsible handling of financial or other obligations, etc..
9. Evidence that prior obligations, financial goals or fluctuating income affect adversely the financial security of the family.

When a home is recommended for the placement of a child, the record of the study should provide conclusive evidence that, to a substantial degree, this couple possesses the attributes set forth in the following quotation:

"We seek parents who are physically and emotionally healthy; uncrippled by their own experiences in life and competent to meet normal hazards in the future; people whose marriage is on a firm foundation, who have been able to face and handle the disappointments and frustrations of their own childlessness without undue bitterness or recrimination; who can turn to adoption with comfort and happiness; who are limited in the desire to adopt; who want children more for the joy of giving than for the pleasure of receiving; who are competent not only to provide for normal physical needs but to nourish, stimulate and derive satisfaction from the emotional and spiritual growth of their child toward a secure and independent adulthood."



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