

National

Organization of

Mothers

Of

Twins

Clubs, Inc.

SUBJECT:

SOCIAL SKILLS OF MULTIPLES

RESEARCHER:

NOMOTC

DATE:

October 1993 - March 1994

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study was to gather information on the social development of multiples. There were also some comparisons made between multiples and siblings.

**METHOD:** A questionnaire was printed in *MOTC's Notebook* and a National Mailing. This survey was to be filled out by mothers of multiples whose multiples were at least one year old.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

This survey was completed by 280 mothers of multiples. 219 mothers had multiples who were 1-5 years old; 46 had 6-10 year olds; 6 had 11-15 year olds; 4 had 16-20 year olds; and 5 had multiples 21 or older. The twin types represented in this survey were: identical girls (31); identical boys (49); fraternal girls (54); fraternal boys (55); boy/girl (68); unknown - girls (7); unknown boys (10); triplets - same sex (2); and triplets - boy(s)/girl(s) (4). 123 of the moms had no other children besides the multiples; 100 had 1 other child; 40 had 2 other children; 10 had 3 other children; and 6 had 4 or more other children. About two-thirds of the time, the singleton children were older than the multiples. About half of the multiples were born prematurely, whereas only 10% of the singleton children were born prematurely.

### RESULTS:

1. With a group of their peers, their mothers characterized the multiples as being: all somewhat shy (15%); neither shy nor outgoing (30%); all somewhat outgoing (23%); all very outgoing (11%); one twin is shy and the other is outgoing (17%); and mixture of shy and outgoing triplets (4 of the 6 sets of triplets).
2. In peer group situations, the multiples tended to: join the group independently (69%); join the group only if they knew someone in the group (15%); hang back until someone asks them to join in (11%); and stay together away from the group and not join in (4%).
3. In social situations (such as birthday parties), the multiples tended to: always interact independently (43%); usually interact independently (53%); and rarely or never interact independently (4%).
4. 76% of the multiples almost always played together at home, but away from home (i.e., at school) only 34% almost always played together. 49% of the multiples always included their singleton sibling(s) in their play; only 4% rarely or never included their sibling(s) when they were playing.
5. With regard to friends, the multiples: each have separate friends (4%); have the same friends (33%); share some friends in common and have some separate (34%); and don't have many friends outside of the multiple relationship (29%). Compared to other sibling(s), the multiples had: more friends (13%); fewer friends (27%); and about the same number of friends (60%). 17% of the multiples had one best friend not shared by the other(s), while 41% of their siblings had one best friend.

6. In social situations with large groups of adults and children, the first-born multiple was characterized as: very shy (8%); somewhat shy (36%); cordial (10%); somewhat outgoing (28%); and very outgoing (18%). In the same social situations, the second-born multiple was: very shy (10%); somewhat shy (35%); cordial (15%); somewhat outgoing (27%); and very outgoing (12%). About half of the third-born triplets were somewhat shy, and about half were somewhat outgoing. In the same situations, the singletons were: very shy (4%); somewhat shy (26%); cordial (22%); somewhat outgoing (32%); and very outgoing (15%).
7. When meeting an adult for the first time, the multiples will: introduce themselves individually (17%); one of the multiples will introduce them all (11%); rely on another individual to introduce them (35%); show reluctance in meeting the person (35%); or attempt to avoid meeting the person entirely (2%).
8. 39% of the first-borns take the initiative in social situations; 34% of second-borns take initiative; and 26% share the initiative equally.
9. When compared to their siblings, the multiples were characterized as: more outgoing (23%); less outgoing (26%); or about the same as their siblings (51%).
10. In new settings and situations (such as the first day of nursery school/Kindergarten/high school), the first-born multiple was: clingy/frightened (13%); hesitant, but warmed to the situation (62%); or confident and eager (21%). In the same setting, the second-born was: clingy/frightened (20%); hesitant, but warmed to the situation (54%); or confident and eager (21%). About half of the third-born triplets were clingy/frightened and the other half were hesitant but warmed to the situation. When compared to their siblings, the multiples were: more accepting of new situations (32%); less accepting (21%); or about the same as the sibling (48%).
11. 91% of the multiples were not embarrassed by the extra attention given them as twins/triplets.
12. 46% of the multiples seemed to switch roles frequently (i.e. one more outgoing for a time, then another becomes the outgoing one); 46% did this sometimes; and 8% did this rarely or never.
13. 25% of the first-born multiples were more developed socially by school age; 30% of the second-borns were more developed; and 44% were equally developed. About half of the multiples were equal to their peers in social development according to their teachers; 5% of the multiple sets were socially behind their classmates; 8% of just the first-borns were behind; 3% of just the second-borns were behind; 17% of just the first-borns were ahead; and 19% of just the second-borns were ahead.
14. For opposite-sex multiples (or if siblings were opposite sex to the multiples), 19% said the males were more socially adept; 26% said the females were more adept; and 56% said they noted no difference.
15. 20% of the mothers frequently arranged play dates with other children for their multiples; 42% did this sometimes; 22% did this rarely; and 15% never did this. Of those who arranged play dates, 48% felt it helped their social development somewhat; 29% felt it helped very much; and 10% felt it didn't help at all.
16. 66% of the mothers felt that being a multiple aided their multiples' development; 14% felt that it hindered their social development; and 20% felt that being multiples had no effect on their social development. 83% of the moms who had other siblings felt that having siblings aided their multiples' social development, while 16% felt that it had no effect on their social development.

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## CONCLUSION:

1. More than two-thirds of the multiples had one sibling or none at all, so they had fewer opportunities to interact with other children in the home. This survey did not consider the impact of daycare on the social development of multiples.

2. Almost half of the multiples were born prematurely, as compared to less than 10% of the siblings, and the prematurity may have caused some delay in development of social skills.
3. Birth order did not appear to determine social skills as shown by the answers to this survey. First-borns and second-borns were not very different in social behavior and sometimes seemed to take turns being more outgoing.
4. About one-fourth of the families with both boys and girls noted that the girls were more socially adept.