National
Organization of   SUBJECT: **NAMING OF MULTIPLES**
Mothers
Of   RESEARCHER: National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs, Inc.
Twins
Clubs, Inc.   DATE: December 2001 - September 2002

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this survey was to collect data regarding the naming of multiple birth children.

METHOD: A survey consisting of 19 questions was printed in the March/April 2002 **NOMOTC's** *Notebook* and distributed in a National Mailing. The survey was to be completed by a parent of multiples.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. A total of 1418 surveys were received with 94.4% (1339) for twins, 5.2% (73) for triplets, and 0.4% (6) being completed for quadruplets.
2. 26% of the twin pairs were monozygotic (MZ) or identical, 68% dizygotic (DZ) or fraternal, and 6% of unknown zygosity. Identical multiples will be designated as MZ and fraternal multiples as DZ in this report. Only 4% of triplet sets were identified as MZ; 14% were a combination of MZ and DZ; 82% were all DZ. Of the quads, one set was MZ, 50% of the sets were identified as being a combination of MZ and DZ, and the remaining two sets were all DZ.
3. The multiples were divided into 35.2% all boys, 34.4% all girls, and 30.4% boy/girl combinations. Of the twins, 36.5% were pairs of twin boys, 35% twin girls, and 28.5% boy/girl twins. For higher order multiples, only 13% were sets of all boys with 25% all girls and 62% various boy/girl combinations.
4. Of the twin pairs, 28.5% were boy/girl, 11.7% MZ boys, 21.8% DZ boys, 14.2% MZ girls, 17.9% DZ girls, 3% boy pairs of unknown zygosity, and 2.8% girl pairs of unknown zygosity. 36% of the same-sex twins were identified as MZ while 56% of same-sex twins were designated DZ. 8% of the parents of same-sex twins were not sure of their twins' zygosity.

RESULTS

1. 19.5% of the parents chose names that started with the same letter for their multiples - 20% of parents of twins, 8% of parents of triplets, but none of the parents of quadruplets. 21% of the boy/girl twins had such names; 22% of MZ twins vs. 19% of same-sex DZ twins; 21% of the girl twin pairs vs. 18% of the boy twin pairs. 23% of parents of MZ girl twins chose names starting with the same letter.
2. 10% of the parents chose names that sounded similar to each other - 10.5% of parents of twins, 4% of parents of triplets, but no parents of quadruplets. 15% of parents of girl twins chose such names, but only 8% of boy twins and 9% of boy/girl twins were given similar sounding names. 18% of the MZ girl twins were named in that way.
3. 2% of the parents chose names that rhyme with each other for their multiples. 3% of the parents of girl twins chose rhyming names. None of the parents of quadruplets did so.
4. 6% of the parents chose names that are spelled similarly. Only 4% of parents of boy/girl twins chose such names while 8% of parents of girl twins did so. 12% of MZ girl twins was the highest subtotal. 6% of parents of twins and 9% of parents of higher order multiples chose names that are spelled similarly.
5. 24.6% of the respondents (25% of the parents of twins and 16.5% of parents of higher order multiples) answered yes to at least one of the preceding four questions. 8% of the respondents answered yes to more than one of the four questions. 75.4% of the parents did NOT choose either names starting with the same letter, names that sounded similar, names that rhyme, or names spelled similarly. 84% of parents of higher order multiples chose names that were not similar vs. 75% of parents of twins doing so.
6. 50% of multiples were named after family members or others special to the family. Parents of higher order multiples were more likely to use family names (68%) than parents of twins (49%). Only 39% of parents of MZ girls chose family names. 52% of boy/girl twins, 49% of boy twins, and 44% of girl twins were given family names. Some parents commented that family names were used for middle names only.

7. 62% of the parents checked "no one, we just liked the name" with some of those also checking other choices. The highest response rate was 66% from parents of MZ girl twins. Other categories of twins ranged from 58% to 63% for that choice with 62% of all parents of twins and 61% of parents of higher order multiples picking it.

8. 6% of the parents named their multiples after favorite characters in the media and literature. The highest response rates were 8% for MZ twins and 14% for triplets.

9. 8% of the parents named children after religious figures. 8% of the twins (9% boys, 6% girls and 10% boy/girl) and 13% of higher order multiples were given such names.

10. 12% of the parents chose names found in a baby name book. Parents of boy/girl twins and MZ girl twins (both 14%) were slightly more likely to do so. 12% of all parents of twins, 14% of parents of triplets but none of the parents of quadruplets chose such names.

11. 2% of the respondents indicated that none of the choices given applied to their children, and 35% put done more than one of the responses summarized in items 6-10. 34% of parents of twins checked more than one response while 49% of parents of higher order multiples did so. At least 1% of the surveys included comments that names that reflected ethnicity or family heritage had been chosen.

12. 88% of the parents (88% for twins and 90% for higher order multiples) chose names before the children were born. An additional 2% of parents marked both yes and no for that question which could be interpreted as indicating that at least one name had been chosen but not all.

13. When asked whether birth order influenced which multiple received which name, 61% of the parents of same-sex multiples (62% of parents of same-sex twins and 48% of parents of higher order multiples) answered yes. The highest positive response was 66% for parents of MZ twins.

14. Parents were asked whether their children prefer their given names. 31% said always; 19% usually; 6% sometimes; 1% never. 41% of parents responded as not knowing, and 1% had no response, but it cannot be determined whether their children are too young to have an opinion yet. Another 1% combined answers (always + usually, always + sometimes, and always + never) which could be interpreted as opinions differing between the multiples.

15. 3% of the multiples always prefer their nicknames; 6% usually; 26% sometimes; 19% never. 43% of the parents did not know, and 2% left the question blank. Many of the "do not know" or blank responses may be due to the young age of the multiples. 1% of the parents had combined answers indicating that the multiples had different opinions about their respective nicknames.

16. 38% of the parents chose their children's nicknames; 4% of the children chose their own nicknames; siblings chose 6%; other relatives 2%; playmates/friends 1%; unknown 2%. 40% of the parents said that the question about nicknames was not applicable to their multiples, and 3% left it blank. Another 4% combined answers with almost all indicating that it was a parent and another person involved in choosing a nickname.

17. When asked whether their multiples answer to each other's names, 15% of the parents responded yes, 64% no, and 16% sometimes. 5% left the question blank. Combining both the "yes" and "sometimes" responses as positive responses, boy/girl twins are least likely (23%) to answer to each other's names while MZ twins (43%) had the most positive responses to the question.

18. 5% of the parents gave their multiples the same middle name. 6% of the twins (9% of MZ twins but only 2% of boy/girl twins) and 4% of the triplets share the same middle name. According to some of the comments, the shared middle name was a family name.

19. 20% of the parents (20% for twins and 24% for higher order multiples) responded that initials were a factor in deciding what their children's names should be.

20. 37% of the parents (36.5% for twins and 43% for higher order multiples) had more than one multiple who is male. 6% of those parents (5% for twins and 15% for higher order multiples) named one of the male multiples after the father as a "Junior" or "II" or "III", etc. When asked whether that caused any problems among the multiples, 60% responded no; 13% not applicable; 27% left the question blank. None of the parents who had given such a name to one of their male multiples reported having any problems with it. When asked how the decision about which multiple would receive the father's name was made, 63% decided to give the father's name to the first male multiple to be born. 13% responded that the decision was made before the multiples were born and 13% after the birth, including two parents who also said that the first born received the father's name. 3% responded "other" to the question of how the decision was made, and 13% left the question blank.

21. 25% of the surveys were returned with additional comments from the parents with the comments ranging from a couple words (making a response to a question clearer) to describing in detail how the names of their multiples were chosen. 10% of the comments specifically mentioned individuality or each child needing "own identity" as a factor in the choice of names.

CONCLUSIONS

1.   Parents of multiple birth children approach the task of naming their multiples in many different ways. 25% of the parents completing this survey had chosen names that seem to emphasize their children's multiple birth status. Some of those parents pointed out that family traditions or just liking certain names (whether or not the names happened to look or to sound similar) were the reasons such names were chosen. 75% of the parents responding to the survey chose names that were not similar, but it is not clear how many did so specifically because they believe that dissimilar names promote individuality. It is clear that most parents chose names that do not bring attention to the fact that a child is one of a set of multiple birth children. The comments some parents enclosed with the survey revealed concerns with using equally desirable names as well as with each child having an individual identity.

2.   Choosing names that start with the same letter was the most popular method of naming multiples in a similar fashion with 20% of the parents responding to the survey having done so. Some parents also volunteered the information that they had a family tradition of starting all their children's names with the same letter. That such a high percentage of parents did choose names starting with the same letter could be interpreted as intentional. Rhyming was the least popular method of naming multiples similarly with only 2% of the parents surveyed having done so. 6% of the multiples had names that were spelled similarly, and 10% had similar sounding names. MZ girl twins seem to be slightly more likely to receive "twinny" names than other types of twins. Whether parents of older twins were more likely to use similar names cannot be determined from this survey.

3.   Avoiding confusion and being able to identify items belonging to each multiple were some of the practical reasons offered for beginning names with different letters. (Only 8% of the triplets were given names that started with the same letter vs. 20% of the twins.) Some parents said that they did not want to use the same initials for their multiples because of their own experiences as twins or parents of a previous set of twins.

4.   When asked whom their children were named after, the most frequently used response was "no one, we just liked the name." However, some parents included other responses with that one indicating that more than just liking the names was involved. The second most popular choice was naming after "family members or others special to the family" with some parents adding comments that "family names" were only used for middle names. More parents of higher order multiples reported using family names than did parents of twins. MZ girl twins were the least likely to receive family names. Although choosing "a name found in a baby name book" was the third most popular response, mostly it was combined with other responses. Naming multiples after religious figures and after favorite characters in the media and literature were the other specified choices with parents of higher order multiples more likely to use those sources than were parents of twins.

5.   Most of the parents had chosen names before their children were born. Some parents commented that they had assigned names before birth based on ultrasound while others said that they had waited until after birth in order to observe their babies before deciding which one would receive which name. About half of the parents of same-sex multiples indicated that birth order influenced which multiple received which name. Parents of MZ twins were slightly more likely to use birth order in assigning names to their multiples.

6.   More than half of the parents felt that their multiples "prefer their given names" although a few parents indicated that their multiples had differing opinions about their individual names. Only 1% of the parents indicated that the multiples did not "prefer their given names." That the remainder of the parents didn't know how their multiples felt about "their given names" may be mostly due to the age of the multiples.

7.   35% of the parents indicated that their multiples "prefer a nickname" at least some of the time while 20% responded that one or more of the multiples did not "prefer a nickname." Some parents had commented that they had picked short names to avoid nicknames. Parents indicated that they were the primary source of nicknames for their multiples.

8.   About two/thirds of the parents responded that their multiples did not "answer to each other's names" with boy/girl twins being the least likely to answer to each other's names. Parents of MZ twins were the most likely to report that their twins did answer to each other's name at least some of the time.

9.   Only 6% of the parents having more than one male multiple had given one of their male multiples the father's name as a "Junior" or "II", etc. None of those parents reported any problems resulting from having done so. However, some other parents of more than one male multiple volunteered that they did not do that on purpose or had already given that name to a singleton.