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Elementary Classroom Placement Of Multiples

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ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM PLACEMENT OF MULTIPLES

A Dissertation

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Department of Educational and School Psychology

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Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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ABSTRACT

Parents of multiples seek practical advice in parenting. One area of great

concern expressed by parents of multiples is in appropriate classroom placement

decisions for their children. A great deal of anecdotal literature and folklore exists.

which suggests placement in separate classrooms is best. so that each multiple can

develop as an individual. rather than part of a set. There is. however. no research that

supports the appropriateness or effectiveness of this belief. Research does support the

merit of assessing each case individually when making classroom placement

recommendations (Emmons. 1976; Dreyer. 1991; Hay. 1991; LeRoux. 1992; Segal.

1992).

This study was undertaken to identify and explore the elementary classroom

placement decision-making processes in a typical Midwestern school district. The

exploration occurred through an "interpretive approach" to an ethnographic study.

which focused on uncovering perspectives held by parents and educators regarding

what the classroom placement processes for multiples are and should be. The goal was

to develop an understanding and comparison of the perceptions held by each participant

in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain insight into the

perspectives held by educators and parents of multiples.

The results of this study yielded divergent descriptions of the processes. when

comparing educator and parent reports. Educators and parents focused on different

variables and held different assumptions about multiples when making placement recommendations. None of the educators who participated in the study reported having a policy regarding the classroom placement of multiples. All of the participating elementary schools, however, reported routinely recommending separating multiples in school. Parent involvement in the decision-making process was limited beyond the kindergarten level.

Perhaps the most important purpose of this study serves to open dialogue between parents and school personnel when making classroom placement decisions for multiples. Both parents and school personnel may, as a result, engage in a critical examination of how each party can initiate, participate in, and evaluate such a dialogue.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the educators and parents who agreed to share their experiences in the classroom placement of multiples. Their dedication to education and research is evident.

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The greatest gratitude is given to my twin boys. Adam and Julian. as it was they who inspired the question of study. Finally. to my husband. Shawn. whose everlasting support has allowed me to accomplish this great task.

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The Research Problem

Researchers and laypersons have been intrigued by multiple births for centuries. Twins have been both revered and scorned throughout history. Within the last century. twins have been utilized to add to the understanding of humanity. Twins in research have provided greater knowledge about the importance of heritability and influences of the environment. During the last twenty years. multiple birth rates have risen over 300%. This rise has been attributed to the increase in available infertility treatments. delayed age of childbearing. and increased survival rates of premature infants due to advances in medical technology (National Center for Health Statistics. 1996).

Although the study of twins has added much to the scientific literature on humanity. parents have sought practical advice and guidance in parenting. As a result. there are a multitude of sources available for parents of multiples. including parenting books. magazines and bulletins. and mothers of twins organizations all over the world.

Twins Magazine (1999) surveyed subscribing parents to identify areas about which they were most interested in learning more. Parents identified school classroom placement more frequently than any other topic. Although parents expressed interest in learning more about classroom placement. little research based evidence exists to guide parents and educators in making informed decisions about whether to separate their

multiples or keep them together in the same classroom. Much anecdotal literature and folklore exist in the United States. which has historically suggested separating twins in school in order to promote individuality. Scheinfeld (1967. p. 98) pointed this out by stating. "of all problems involving twins. the one on which most attention has been focused may be summed up in the word 'individuality'." Scheinfeld (1967. p.121) added. "The idea of separating twins in school is in line with the whole theory of individualizing them." As a result. schools have held policies to place twins in separate classrooms as they enter school. The belief that separate is best has been challenged over the last twenty years. Researchers (Emmons. 1976: Hay. 1991: LeRoux. 1992: Segal. 1992) have concluded that classroom placement decisions should be made individually. and suggest that schools have no defined policy about the classroom placement of twins.

Federal law (PL 94-142. 1975) mandates that public schools in the United States provide a free and appropriate public education to all children. In addition. children must receive an education which is nondiscriminatory (IDEA. 1997). IDEA (1997) protects children with disabilities and minorities from being discriminated against. and requires due process in appropriate classroom placement decisions. There are also organizational guidelines and mandates at state and local levels that assist educators in balancing classrooms in number. gender and age of students. Educators and parents are. unfortunately. left to make classroom placement decisions for twins and other multiples as best they can with little assistance informed by theory literature. or guidance from local. state. or federal sources.

With the remarkable rise in multiple births, educators across the country will be faced with the challenge of placing these children in classrooms. As a beginning step, this study sought to identify the decision-making process followed by educators and parents in a typical county in the Midwest of the United States when placing twins and other multiples in the elementary classroom. An early bias of the researcher was to seek situations where educators were open to placing multiples either together or separately. By exploring the decision-making process for the classroom placement of multiples in elementary school, this study sought to provide open access to educators and parents alike when making such decisions.

Demographics

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) (1998) reported a tremendous increase in multiple births to a present-day all-time high. The number of triplet and other higher order multiple births rose 19% from 1995 to 1996. Thirteen hundred higher order multiple births were reported in 1980 while 5939 were reported in 1996, an increase of over 340% in just a decade and a half. This rate accounts for 29 multiple births per 100,000 in 1971, 56 multiple births per 100,000 births in 1987, 116 multiple births per 100,000 births in 1994, and 152 multiple births per 100,000 births in the United States in 1996. The NCHS also reported an increase in twin births. Twin births were up 4% from 1995 to 1996, and increased 37% from 1980. At the same time, the 3,891,494 total births in the United States declined in 1996, the lowest level in twenty years. In 1996 there were 100,750 live twin births, 5298 live triplet births, 560 live quadruplet births, and 81 live quintuplet or higher order multiple births.

The NCHS (1997) documented more triplets and higher order multiple births between 1990 and 1995 than during all of the 1980s. The NCHS provided information on multiple birth rates by state as ranging from a low of 55.9 multiple births per 100.000 births to a high of 215.9 multiple births per 100.000 births. For example. the state of Indiana obtained a rate of 157.6 multiple births per 100.000 in 1994. In 1996. the state of Indiana documented 83.157 live births. which included 2040 twins. 129 triplets and 18 quadruplets or higher order multiple births.

NCHS suggested this dramatic increase in multiple births is due to an increase in the use of modern fertility techniques. delayed childbearing age. and increased survival rates of premature births due to advances in medical technology. Questions have arisen about continued medical care for these children. who are often born prematurely. and at very low birth weights. One must also be concerned about the appropriate education of these multiples.

In the years 2001 and 2002. the multiple birth children reported by the NCHS in 1996 will reach school age. Singletons are placed in elementary classrooms every year by parents and educators. Educators are provided with guidelines and federal mandates to provide each student with a free and appropriate public education. Twins and other multiples present parents and educators with a challenge regarding classroom placement. Opinions of parents and educators vary. often based on anecdotal evidence and folklore. Such folklore often provides contradictory suggestions for separating multiples in school. and for keeping them together in the same classroom. This investigation sought to identify how placement decisions are made in a sample of the elementary schools in a typical Midwestern county.

Decision-Making Process

Some schools follow unwritten policies to separate multiples. Others approach each case individually in an effort to meet the needs of the individual set of multiples. Some believe identical twins should be separated, and some believe the separation should occur at a particular grade. Others believe twins should never be separated unless they ask to be separated. Much debate and varying opinions exist about which classroom setting is best for multiples. This debate was not challenged in this study, only the decision-making processes of the classroom placement of multiples were explored. An exploration of the decision-making process of classroom placement of twins and other multiples serves to add to the knowledge of parents, multiples and educators who are faced with the dilemma of separating or keeping multiples in the same classroom.

History of Twin Study

Interest in twins and multiples has existed for centuries. Legends of twins can be traced back to ancient times. Biblical twins Jacob and Esau were presented as fraternal twins with a strong rival relationship, ending in Esau's death. Romulus and Remus were twins in Roman mythology with a similar rivalry ending in the death of one twin. Other legends may be found in Greek mythology's Castor and Pollux, as well as in the zodiac sign Gemini. In ancient civilizations, twin births were greeted with both celebration and fear. Some African tribes celebrated twin births as a sign of

fortune from God. Other tribes in Africa, Asia and Japan feared the multiple birth as a curse and killed the twins and mother (Osborne, 1980).

Western culture of this century has been intrigued by multiple births as demonstrated by the fascination with the Canadian Dionne quintuplets, born in 1934. Tourists came from everywhere to see them. Scientists were filled with excitement about studying them (Scheinfeld, 1967). Since that time numerous sets of higher order multiple births have occurred. Newspapers, magazines and news magazine television shows have devoted a great deal of time to the coverage of multiple births.

The first actual scientific study of twins may be traced back to Sir Francis Galton, who in 1875 distinguished identical from fraternal twins. Galton's discovery that identical twins develop from the same egg, and that fraternal twins develop from two separate eggs laid the foundation for research on the nature vs. nurture debate over human behavior (Osborne, 1980). Twins have been used as subjects in medical, psychological, social and education research. These studies have broadened our understanding of the importance of heritability of certain traits, as well as the impact of environmental influences. Twin studies continue to provide volumes of information on individual differences research on such topics as intelligence and learning, personality, temperaments and attitudes, interests and vocations, development, mental and physical illness and health, among others (Segal, 1990).

Twins have been utilized to discover a vast amount of knowledge about human genetics, development and behavior. Much has also been learned about twin-bonds, and twin relationships. There exists, however, much less research using twin subjects to benefit twins themselves.

Classroom Placement of Twins

LeRoux (1992) reviewed literature on twin development and twin relationships to express the importance of educator understanding of twins as being different from singletons when entering school. LeRoux suggested that teachers and educators often lack this understanding, and as a result treat twins as singletons. Because of this, LeRoux noted that twins are often separated in classrooms as a matter of policy, without consideration of each twin's individual needs.

LeRoux listed reasons for separating twins, such as ability differences, personality differences, fostering individuality, avoidance of comparisons, reduction in twin competition, and identicals who are difficult to tell apart. LeRoux suggested that advantages to separating twins include the promotion of independence, assertiveness, better communication skills, greater ambition and wider array of interests.

LeRoux also noted several reasons for keeping twins together and concluded that twins placed together would have access to equal teaching. In addition, she believed equal abilities would motivate effort rather than competition if children were placed in the same classroom, as well as fostering the twin bond and support of one another. LeRoux recommended same classroom placement if the multiples had experienced recent significant changes or events that would warrant not creating another change in the twins' lives.

LeRoux concluded that there should be no policy to either separate or keep twins together. She suggested that teachers and educators make informed decisions of

classroom placement about each individual set of twins. on the assumption that twins have different needs from singletons.

Segal (1992) questioned 63 parents of twins and triplets about their satisfaction with school policies. and reasons they would support separate- or same-classroom placement. Segal found that 84% of twins were placed in separate classrooms and 16% were placed in the same classroom. More identical twins were in the same class than not. No sex differences were found. Ninety-six percent of mothers of twins in separate classrooms were satisfied with the placement. All mothers of twins in the same classroom were satisfied with the placement decision. Forty-three percent of mothers. however. were aware of mandatory school policies to separate twins and were not in support of such a policy.

Segal noted that 56% of mothers in support of separation stressed the importance of individuality and independence. One in five indicated reduced twin comparison and competition as another reason to support separation. Mothers in support of common classroom placement indicated that equality in education and feelings of security were important. Fifty-seven percent of mothers believed that separate classroom placement should occur during the elementary grades. and believed the best age of separation to be about five.

Segal concluded that school placement decisions should be made based on individual twin circumstances. with periodic consultation between the school and families to that ensure adequate decisions were made. Segal also indicated that twin zygosity. social relationship skills. intertwin relationships. intellectual abilities and other factors should be considered during the decision-making process.

The National Organization of Mothers of Twins Clubs. Inc. (NOMOTC) is a

network of over 400 mothers-of-twins clubs across the United States. NOMOTC was

founded in 1960 and identifies its purposes as research. education and group support.

NOMOTC published Placement of Multiple Birth Children in School: A Guide for

Educators (Dreyer. 1991). in an effort to assist educators and parents in making

classroom placement decisions for multiples. In preparation for the publication.

NOMOTC surveyed 1423 teachers and principals. One-half of the surveyed educators

stated that multiples should be separated in school. Among the remaining half were

educators who expressed uncertainty about issues relevant to educating multiples. Only

1% of educators responded that they had received training addressing educating twins.

Fifteen percent of the educators stated they had discussed issues related to educating

multiples while they were in college. Dreyer (1991) reviewed literature available on

classroom placement of twins and recommended that schools not have a defined policy.

It was suggested instead. that schools make decisions on an individual basis in team

approach. including principals. teachers. parents and twins. Dreyer provided a list of

suggested reasons to separate twins. as well as a list of suggested reasons not to separate

them in school.

> Separation is advisable when: constant togetherness is hindering the
>
> development of social skills in one or both: a division of labor exists: intensive
>
> comparisons have led to feelings of inadequacy in one twin: a child's problems
>
> are attributed to the fact that he is a twin: the twins form a power unit causing
>
> disruptive behavior: twins exploit the twinship to cheat or play tricks: one twin
>
> appears to resent the lack of privacy resulting from sharing a classroom: one

twin proves to be a constant distraction to the other: in opposite-sex pairs, the female twin is overprotective or mothering the male co-twin: in skill grouped classrooms where the abilities of one twin are far above his co-twin: twins want to separate....Reasons for not separating twins...major emotional upheavals have occurred in the family—i.e., death, divorce, a move, etc.: only one classroom is available: unequal education due to two different teachers employing different methods of teaching: twins are at or near the same skill level in a skill-based classroom:...twins who want to be together:...do not automatically separate twins in their first year of school:.... (Pp. 11-12)

Hay (1991) questioned 560 sets of twins, their parents and teachers about school placement, as part of Australia's La Trobe University twin study and found separation of twins to be the most common source of conflict between parents and teachers. Most teachers stated their schools had strong policies to separate twins. Upon investigation, however, Hay found this not to be the case. In fact many states had directed their schools not to have rigid policies and to make placement decisions based on individual needs.

Hay also noted that teachers reported having no special training in working with twins. While 90% of teachers reported reasons to separate twins such as fostering individual development, and improved social relationships, Hay noted there was no scientific evidence to support this belief.

Hay (1991, p. 29) concluded that all classroom placement decisions should be made individually, and that "the best policy is no policy." Hay suggested that a team

including parents. twins. educators and psychologist should make the decision. to help avoid a struggle of disagreement between parents and principals. Factors for consideration included dependency among twins. comparison and competition. differences in ability and achievement. multiple type. gender. age. social skills. previous experience with separation. interests. and physical development. among others.

In an unpublished doctoral dissertation. Emmons (1976) investigated attitudes of twins. parents and principals about elementary classroom placement. One hundred sixty-eight principals and 249 twin pairs and their parents were surveyed and it was found that 78.5% of parents and 83% of principals in supported separate classroom placement. Slightly more than half of the twins themselves preferred separate classroom placement. More than 75% of twins were actually placed in separate classrooms. School principals were identified as the person responsible for making the classroom placement decision. Just over 3% of principals expressed a willingness to be flexible in their placement of twins. Nine percent of principals stated they would send one twin to a different school if only one classroom was available.

A conclusion can be drawn from this review of literature. which suggests that schools should have no single policy for placing twins in the elementary classroom. The aforementioned researchers have recommended educators and parents work together to identify the classroom setting that will fit best with the twins' needs. These researchers have identified issues and variables to consider when making such classroom placement decisions. There is. however. no research that describes how. in practice. such decisions are made.

Leadership Theory

One way of understanding how classroom placement decisions are made for twins and other multiples. is in examining the leadership style of the school principal. The decision-making process of the school begins with the leader. Lunenburg (1995. p. 18) has concluded that "schools are only as good as their principals." Principals guide those within their respective schools by their philosophy of leadership. Formal and informal policies and procedures are in existence which direct teachers. counselors and other school staff in making decisions and recommendations to meet the educational needs of every student enrolled in the school. School systems are governed by a set of commonly held core assumptions. philosophies. and principles. These principles in turn guide every day practice and decision making.

Leadership style may be categorized according to principles of interpretive and structural theories of sociology (Lemert. 1993). Leaders following interpretive theory add a personal touch to leadership. They tend to believe that people within a system. such as a school. construct social interactions. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The whole is a result of the interaction between each and every part. In some systems. roles are based on the situation. and scripts are played out based on the roles that are assigned. In other systems. the focus of leadership is based on the needs of various individuals within the system. Structural theories of leadership are more bureaucratic in nature and more focused on keeping an organization working. Parts of the system work together to keep the system functioning efficiently. Training is

provided to each individual part in an effort to maximize efficiency and minimize malfunction. A brief examination of some of these leadership theorists follows.

Greenleaf (1996), an interpretive leadership theorist, suggested that growth is the key to successful leadership in any setting. In order to grow, one must balance the role of service to the organization and to the workers being led. A successful leader, who leads from an interpretive theory, is one who is able to identify the needs of others, and seeks to meet those needs. Another interpretivist, Covey (1989), emphasized the need for organizations to be continually adaptive and changing. He has argued that leaders must be thoughtful and reflective in their decision making. It is the leader's role to facilitate understanding and team learning based on shared beliefs within the organization.

Interpretive leaders such as Heifetz (1994) have recognized that leadership does not come with "easy answers." Heifetz suggested that effective leaders must identify the games that have to be played, in order to determine the best method for getting workers to play by the rules of the game. Leadership is thus situational. It is the leader's job to identify the informational maps and assumptions that are used to guide decision-making, and to ensure all workers are using the same maps.

On the other hand, Weber (in Lemert, 1993) saw successful leadership from a structural perspective as he identified six principles of a bureaucratic structure. To keep the system functioning, all six principles must be followed. First, there are rules or laws that govern fixed areas. Second, an official hierarchy exists with graded levels of authority that provides order for the system. Third, official documentation is maintained of activities within the organization. Fourth, leaders must hold specific and

specialized training. Fifth. all leaders must give full attention to their duties. Finally.

leaders should follow the designated rules and teach the rules to others within the

organization.

Silver (1983) described Hage's Axiomatic Theory of organizational structure.

Similar to that of Weber. Hage's theory emphasized the working. systematic structure

of an organization. The structure of an organization is believed to be the means to the

types of outcomes or ends. In this structuralist leadership style. the internal parts of the

system or organization work together to create an intended outcome. The leader of this

type of organization seeks individuals who will be adaptive to the system and produce

desired outcomes in the most efficient manner.

Leadership Style and Classroom Placement

In the school setting. the principal is the leader who must identify the needs of

teachers. counselors. and others working in the school. as well as the needs of students.

The principal must also attend to practical organizational issues. rules and laws. such as

PL 94-142. IDEA. number of classrooms. classroom size. and student gender and age

balance. among others. to keep the school functioning and running smoothly. As a

result. principals may often make leadership decisions out of a sense of best practice.

which includes individual experience as well as underlying theoretical beliefs. Silver

(1983) pointed out that theory leads to practice in leadership. Silver (1983. p. 14) also

noted that "educational administrators subscribe to many personalistic theories.

developed in the course of living and practicing administration that provide the

foundations of their actions." Silver further proposed that leaders may act based on

theoretical beliefs that may not be verbalized, or even within conscious awareness. On the other hand, Cibulka and Mawhinney (1995) pointed out that educational administrators cannot meet the challenges of today's schools by relying on theory alone. These authors stressed the importance of making informed decisions based on lessons learned in previous practice.

Because of PL 94-142 and IDEA, students are required to be placed in classrooms based on individual educational needs. Twins and other multiples present an additional factor that must be entered into the equation. Individual educational needs must be met, in addition to the consideration of the twin relationship, when placing twins in school. The purpose of this study was to identify actual decision-making processes used in a variety of schools in a typical Midwestern school corporation for placing twins and other multiples in elementary school. How does the leadership style of the principal affect this process? What informational maps do school officials use when placing twins in school? What beliefs are held? What questions are asked by whom? How are individual needs identified? How are these needs met? What roles are played and by whom in the decision-making process? What practical organizational issues are considered?

School-Family Involvement

An extensive body of research over the last thirty years has addressed the importance of school and family involvement in the education of children (Berger, 1991; Edwards, Pleasants & Franklin, 1999; Henry, 1996; Lightfoot, 1978; McGilp & Michael, 1994; Moll, 1992; Swap, 1987, 1990; Tharp, 1989; Vandergrift & Greene,

1992). Educators of today understand the importance of open and ongoing communication with parents. Schools, communities and families must work together to educate the children who are a part of each system. The message sent is that greater parental involvement with the school system can lead to greater student achievement. Educators acknowledge the importance of parent support in developing a positive learning environment for American school children. It is not just the importance of family involvement that is stressed. but also a team approach to education that encourages parents to become active team members in the education of their children.

Swap (1987. p. 7) noted that "90% of teachers polled believe greater parent-school interaction would be beneficial." Swap asserted. however. that we must "recognize the role tradition plays in keeping parents and teachers apart" (p. 10). Swap identified three common barriers that exist in schools. which prevent effective school-parent involvement. First is limited time. Teachers spend nearly every hour of their workday teaching. which prevents ongoing parent-teacher dialogue and conversation. In addition. teacher hours are often inflexible for working parents. Second. typical parent-school contacts are artificial. time-limited and rigidly structured. These include registration. open house. and 15-minute parent-teacher conferences. The third barrier is that parent-teacher interaction often occurs in response to a crisis. such as a behavior or learning problem.

Given this emphasis on increased parent involvement by school personnel. McGilp (1994. p. 1) declared that "Today's parents want effective involvement in the formulation of educational policy: and the importance of parental involvement is acknowledged in the vision and mission statements of schools and in school charters."

McGilp asserted that in order for this mission to be fulfilled, schools must "create a

climate of confidence and trust" (p. 39). This climate can be achieved if both parties

"affirm each other's contributions, build a successful repertoire, specify roles and

procedures, and ensure participation is open to all" (p. 39).

If parents are to become active team members in the process of education, then

educators must seek to understand parent perspectives. Because American schools are

made up of a diverse population of students, researchers have suggested that educators

incorporate understanding of this diversity and multiculturalism into the classroom

setting. Tharp (1989) suggested that schools must be culturally compatible with the

students and families they serve. Multicultural understanding, acceptance and

celebration have become part of a greater educational reform movement in the USA

spanning more than three decades. Schools must be fully aware of the differing

familial, racial, economic and social backgrounds of their students (Edwards, Pleasants,

& Franklin, 1999). Federal laws have been passed, in part, as a result of this

multiculturalism movement to ensure all children in the United States receive a "free

and appropriate" public education, which is nondiscriminatory (PL 94-142, 1975;

IDEA, 1997). In an ethnographic study of 10 Mexican families, Valdes (1996)

documented the extent of the cultural misunderstandings that American school

personnel have. Valdes pointed out that although schools are following a parent-

involvement movement, they cannot successfully reach their goals until the schools are

open to understanding differing cultural beliefs. Valdes suggested that rather than truly

involving families, and valuing their input, American schools try to change families to

fit within the school culture.

Swap (1990) discussed the link between student achievement and parent involvement. Swap noted that "even though educators may see parent involvement as desirable. they may not see it as essential" (p.13). Swap suggested there are three primary philosophies of parent involvement in American schools. The first and. according to Swap. most commonly held philosophy is referred to as "school-to-home transmission" which encourages parents to adopt traditional values of the school system. Second is a "philosophy of interactive learning" which suggests that important and valuable differences exist between home and school. An ongoing dialogue and reciprocal influence is encouraged to improve student learning. The third philosophy. which Swap advocated. is a "philosophy of partnership." This is built on a premise of mutual respect between parents and schools. There is shared power with clear and agreed upon goals for the children. Lareau (1989) argued that schools and parents who share the same values share an "interconnectedness" (p. 61). while schools and parents who do not share the same values experience more of a "separation" (p. 39). Lareau proposed that social class influenced school-parent involvement. Lareau's study suggested that upper-middle class families were more involved in the sense that boundaries with the school were less defined. On the other hand. there was a clear distinction between the perceived roles of lower middle. working class families and school personnel.

Edwards. Pleasants. and Franklin (1999) provided educators with a "path to follow" by listening to the "stories" parents tell. They suggested that despite what seems to be a common agreement about the importance of parent and school involvement. parents are not truly heard and understood by educators. Edwards et al.

acknowledged the vast amount of information parents can provide schools about their children's learning. social and personality styles. By really listening to the "stories" parents tell. educators can better understand and teach their children. Edwards et al. focused on the importance of the involvement of parents of minority and at-risk students in an effort to increase literacy outcomes for these children. It is further suggested. in fact. that listening to parent "stories" can benefit the education of all children.

Henry (1996) described the school as an "ecology of people and events that goes beyond the school walls" (p. 20). Henry advocated for school reform. From this reform. Henry believed an end would come to educator traditions of keeping parents out of the schools. and there would be an initiation of open. collaborative dialogue. Henry described a dichotomy that often exists in the belief that "teachers should teach and parents should parent" (p. 44). Teachers are accustomed to working with a room full of students. Despite the seemingly universal statement that parent involvement is desired. traditional teachers have difficulty accepting parents who "intrude on their educational turf" (Henry. 1996. p. 52). Teachers may argue that time spent away from the classroom is time in missed teaching. Henry also pointed out that schools are very resistant to change. despite the current political focus on school reform. Henry noted that principals often feel torn between empowering teachers and really listening to parents. Parents argue. in turn. that although their input is sought. they are not really heard. Henry argued for a change in the bureaucratic structure of American schools. This change would open the schools to input from parents. Decision-making would be

shared. Relationships would be collaborative. built on shared trust. dialogue and partnership.

Qualitative Research

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) described the features of qualitative research. First, qualitative research is naturalistic. The natural setting of the school is the source of data. with the researcher being the instrument of data collection. Information is obtained within the context of the problem being studied. Qualitative researchers believe the setting in which the issue occurs influences behavior. In order to understand the decision-making process of the classroom placement of twins. one must get into the school setting and interact with those involved in the process. LeCompte and Preissle (1993. p. 8) noted that "educational ethnography has been used to describe educational settings and contexts. to generate theory. and to evaluate educational programs." Qualitative research is thus inductive. Its purpose is not to prove or disprove a hypothesis. It is not assumed that enough is known to form a hypothesis before research begins (Bogdan & Biklen. 1998). According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993. p. 42) "deductive researchers hope to find data to match a theory: inductive researchers hope to find a theory that explains their data." In order to guide future decisions of classroom placement of twins. a description of the decision-making process at different elementary schools must be developed. Relationships within the data then serve to identify theoretical underpinnings of the process.

Second. the data are descriptive. Every detail is considered. and the results are typically presented in words rather than in terms of numbers (Bogdan & Biklen. 1998).

For example. quantitative studies have been completed using surveys to identify the status of classroom placement. parent. twin and educator satisfaction of the placement. As a result. the literature recommends no policy of classroom placement and suggests each case be considered individually. Since there is no information describing how such decisions are made. this study sought to describe the process in a typical medium-sized elementary schools in the Midwest.

Third. qualitative researchers concern themselves more with the process than the outcome. The goal is not to identify the end result. but to explore how decisions are made and how definitions are formed during the process (Bogdan & Biklen. 1998). The purpose of this study was not to identify which classroom placement decision is best for which type of multiple. Rather. the study was designed to describe the process and explore how the decision is made.

Finally. meaning is an essential component of qualitative research. The focus is on perspectives held by the people involved in the process under study. Qualitative researchers seek to identify the assumptions people hold. and how they go about making sense of their world (Bogdan & Biklen. 1998). LeCompte and Preissle (1993. p. 28) also note that ethnography and qualitative research designs are crucial in understanding processes that occur within the school setting. Researchers and participants interact in an effort to discover the "meanings which human beings use to structure and construct their existence." In order to describe and understand the decision-making process of the classroom placement of multiples. the researcher must identify and describe the assumptions and meanings that educators and parents hold. What variables do

educators and parents assume and believe necessary to consider when placing multiples in elementary school?

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) further suggest that qualitative research is a phenomenological approach to gaining understanding. It is based on an interpretive understanding of meaning. Phenomenological researchers understand that they do not know what things mean to the people they are studying. It is through qualitative research that this understanding comes, without previously set assumptions. The goal of qualitative research is to add to knowledge, not to "pass judgement" (p. 34). The goal of this study was not to identify whether placing multiples together in the same classroom or separating them is better. Rather, the goal was to add to the understanding of how decisions are made, while encouraging educators and parents to work together in identifying classroom placements to meet individual needs.

A variety of techniques exist for data collection within a qualitative design. These techniques include case studies, observations, interviews, and reviews of permanent products. This study utilized interviews of individuals involved in the decision-making process of the classroom placement of multiples. Information within the interviews is analyzed in an effort to identify relationships among the data.

Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggested that interviewing adds to understanding by allowing individuals to describe the topic of investigation in their own words. Interviewers explore issues that affect social, political and economic changes. Interview results are compiled to form explanations and theories in an effort to understand how people think and act in their lives. Interviews of educators and parents

allowed the participants to express areas of most concern to them when making the decision about classroom placement.

Rubin and Rubin (1995) identified a variety of interview types. Interviews may be structured, semi-structured or unstructured in format. With an "unstructured" interview, the interviewer suggests a broad topic for discussion, without specific questions prepared in advance. The goal is to obtain as much non-directed information as possible. "Structured" interviews are designed to obtain specific information on a particular topic. Questions are carefully planned and identified prior to the interview itself. Some interviews include a balance of both structured and unstructured portions, which is more focused, and referred to as "semi-structured." The interview may begin with a broad statement of the topic, allowing the interviewee to share ideas and background information. The interview is then guided by specific questions related to the topic and various statements made by the interviewee. The interviews in this study consisted of both structured and unstructured components. The goal was to identify and describe in detail how placement decisions are made. It was necessary to allow the participants the freedom to identify and describe what is important to them when making such decisions.

Interviews also differ based on the type of information being sought. "Cultural" interviews seek to identify how different people identify assumptions, values and standards for living, as well as how these standards are passed through generations. "Topical" interviews are used to learn about particular subjects or processes. "Oral history" and life history interviews are often utilized to gain understanding of a particular event in history. "Evaluation" interviews may be used to identify successes

or failures in a particular program or project (Rubin & Rubin. 1995). This study utilized topical interviews to identify and describe the decision-making process of classroom placement of multiples. Historical accounts of the process were elicited from educators and parents. Finally. parents of multiples not yet in elementary school were asked what they hope the decision-making process will include when their children enter school.

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to describe decision-making processes used in classroom placement of twins and other multiples in elementary school. Previous research has concluded that no policy is the best policy, and that classroom placement decisions should be made on an individual, case-by-case basis. There is some evidence to suggest that some local elementary school principals are aware of the current recommendation in the literature not to have specific policies regarding classroom placement of twins and other multiples. Seven of the twenty local elementary school principals stated that their school did not have a placement policy, and therefore they pursue each placement decision individually. There was a need to explore what this decision-making process consists of, who is involved, what variables are considered, how decisions are made, monitored and evaluated. Since there is no evidence of decision-making guidelines, the purpose of this study was to identify and describe what local elementary school practices are, how leadership style affects these decisions, and to what extent parent involvement exists.

Qualitative research methods were well suited to the question in this dissertation. Researchers have studied attitudes of parents, educators and twins about school placement issues. Researchers have also investigated school policy regarding placement of twins in school. A multitude of anecdotal information is available for parents and educators about twins, but very few systematic reports exist. Twins and

other multiples bring to the school setting individual characteristics and personal

experiences. as well as interaction characteristics and experiences that are not simply

additive in nature. Researchers have suggested that no single policy of classroom

placement can meet the needs of all multiples. Researchers have also stressed the

importance of parent-school involvement within the American education system. The

purpose of this study was designed to inform future classroom placement decisions so

that the individual needs of each student and family are met. This study was not

designed in an attempt to identify which classroom setting is best. for which type of

multiple.

Research Design

The principals of the 20 local elementary schools in the corporation were

contacted and asked if their school had a policy regarding the classroom placement of

twins or other multiples. Those school principals who stated that each case is examined

individually were asked to participate in the study. Because of this pre-set criterion. the

sampling procedure is referred to as "criterion-based selection" (LeCompte & Preissle.

1993. p. 69). The research design may also be referred to as a "multi-site study" because

the inquiry included more than one site of data collection (Bogdan & Biklen. 1998. p.

63). There is nothing in the research literature that effectively describes classroom

placement of twins.

Schools that agreed to participate were contacted at the beginning of the 1999-

2000 school year. An initial interview was conducted with the principal of each school.

Qualitative researchers often utilize "snowball sampling technique" or "network

selection" in which the initial interviewee recommends subsequent individuals appropriate for further interviews (Bogdan & Biklen. 1998: LeCompte & Preissle. 1993). A sample of the school personnel identified by the principal as being involved in the decision-making process was also interviewed.

Parents of multiples in elementary school as well as parents of multiples not yet in elementary school were interviewed. This was done in an effort to identify any differences in the actual decision making process and the process envisioned by parents of multiples not yet in school. Bogdan and Biklen (1998. p. 65) further characterized this method of sampling as "purposeful sampling": "you choose particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory."

According to LeCompte and Preissle (1993. p. 166). "key informants are individuals who possess special knowledge" about a particular area of investigation. These "key informants." who include educators. parents of multiples. and multiples. were interviewed separately. The interviews included both structured and unstructured components in an effort to gain information about how decisions are made regarding classroom placement from each of the key informant's perspective. Additional information was gathered concerning the evaluation process for the placement decision.

An explicit feature of qualitative design and ethnography is the potential for ongoing inquiry and revision in data collection strategies (LeCompte & Preissle. 1993: Bogdan & Biklen. 1998). This study included the potential for the investigation of new questions. and new data collection. should the initial data analysis warrant further investigation.

<u>Participants</u>

Prior to beginning data collection. an initial telephone call was placed to the Executive Director of Elementary Education. An inquiry was made regarding policy the local School Corporation may have about the classroom placement of twins and other multiples. A meeting was then held with the Executive Director of Elementary Education to review the research proposal and obtain written permission to interview school personnel. Telephone calls were then placed to the principals of the twenty local elementary schools. Each principal was asked whether his/her school has any policy. formal or informal. regarding the classroom placement of twins and other multiples. See the telephone interview schedule of questions in Appendix A.

There were seven school principals who affirmed that their schools did not have a policy. formal or informal. regarding the classroom placement of twins and other multiples. These seven principals also stated that the school assesses each case individually prior to making a classroom placement decision. All seven school principals were interviewed individually in person at their respective school sites. Five of the principals were female. two were male. Upon the recommendation of the principals. several classroom teachers and school counselors were added to the network of persons to be sampled.

A total of five teachers were interviewed. all of whom were female. Three were kindergarten teachers. two were fifth grade teachers. Three were regular education teachers and two were special education teachers. Two teachers were interviewed in their classrooms. two were interviewed in their homes. and one was interviewed over the telephone.

Two school counselors were interviewed, both of whom were female. Both school counselors were interviewed individually at their respective school offices. See the educator interview schedule in Appendix B.

A total of ten mothers of twins or triplets were interviewed individually. All parents were identified by word of mouth and referral from acquaintances, other participants and e-mail requests. Six of the participants were mothers of school-aged twins. The school-aged twins consisted of the following ages and multiple types: two sets of 6 year-old fraternal girl twins who were in kindergarten: one set of 6 year-old fraternal boy twins who were in kindergarten: one set of 7 year-old boy/girl twins who were in the first grade: one set of 11 year-old identical boy twins who were in the fifth grade: one set of 12 year-old fraternal girl twins who were in the sixth grade. Four mothers were interviewed individually in their own homes, one was interviewed in the home of the investigator, and one was interviewed over the telephone. Four of the participants were mothers of preschool-aged twins or triplets. The ages and multiple type of the preschoolers were as follows: one set of 3 year-old fraternal girl triplets: one set of 3 year-old fraternal mixed-sex triplets: one set of 3 year-old fraternal boy twins: one set of 4 year-old identical boy twins. Three were interviewed individually in their own homes, and one was interviewed in the home of the investigator. See parent interview schedule in Appendix B.

Data Collection Procedures

Each potential participant was contacted by phone and asked to participate in an interview to identify decision-making processes for twins and other multiples in

elementary school. Those individuals who agreed to participate were given and agreed

to a signed, informed consent to their participation in the study. Informed consent was

obtained at the beginning of each interview prior to asking any interview questions. All

face-to-face interviews were audio-taped, and hand written notes were taken as well.

Verbal informed consent was obtained by those individuals who were interviewed over

the telephone. Their written consent was obtained at a later date. Hand written notes of

the phone interviews were made. See informed consent protocol in Appendix C.

Interviews were conducted throughout the months of October 1999 – February 2000.

Principal and counselor interviews were conducted first, followed by teacher and parent

interviews respectively. Interviews varied in duration, and ranged from 20 to 60

minutes.

The interviews consisted of a semi-structured set of questions, which were asked

of all participants of both the educators and parents. However, the interview questions

were written in an open-ended manner to gain understanding of the participants'

individual perceptions. The interviews also included clinical interviewing techniques of

summarizing and reflecting on information received, which permitted inquiry and free

disclosure of individual circumstances and experiences that were not shared experiences

by all participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

An inductive data analysis procedure was implemented after all of the educator

and parent interviews were completed. This procedure follows the rationale of

ethnographic, qualitative designs that seek to describe the personal experiences and

insights of particular groups of individuals. A written transcript of all audio-taped interviews was created. Handwritten interview notes and transcripts were grouped by participant category: principal, teacher, school counselor, parent of school-aged multiples, and parent of pre-school-aged multiples. Interview transcripts were grouped by category (principal, teacher, counselor, parent of school-aged multiples, parent of preschool-aged multiples). Transcripts were read repeatedly by category in an effort to identify common themes. As themes arose, handwritten notes were made regarding emerging themes, and additional questions arose from the data.

Coding of the interviews was completed in two ways. First, interview transcripts were read by participant group to identify emerging themes within each group (principal, teacher, counselor, parent of preschool-aged multiples, and parent of school-aged multiples). The interviews were then coded by hand, by highlighting statements made by the participants that fit into various categories. For example, all the principal interviews were read and coded line by line, then the teacher interviews, then the counselor interviews, then the interviews of parents of school-aged multiples and finally, the interviews of parents of preschool-aged multiples.

The second coding method was completed with the use of qualitative data analysis computer software. Qualitative Solutions and Research is the company that created the software "Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing," commonly referred to as QSR NUD*IST. QSR NUD*IST allows the researcher to manage unstructured documents, create ideas and categories, and answer questions about the data.

All 23 interview transcripts were imported into the QSR NUD*IST program.

Each interview was coded line-by-line to replicate the previously done hand coding.

This resulted in over fifty individual codes within the data. Using QSR NUD*IST to

code the data allowed for more effective identification of emerging themes and

categories. The individual codes were then grouped into four broad categories titled by

the researcher as follows: placement-process, parent-perceptions-of-the-process, parent-

desired-process, and leadership-style.

The broad coding category "placement process" was subdivided during the

process of coding. Text within this category was coded to identify the "people

involved" in the decision-making process, how the process occurred, and the

"variables" considered during the process. Similar procedures were followed when

coding all initial categories. This data analysis procedure was reflective of Geertz's

(1973) notion that qualitative research goes beyond describing the surface layer of what

people say. Rather, it provides a "thick description," or in-depth analysis and

organization, of participants' perceptions and experiences.

Issues referring to people involved in the placement process, what information is

considered, and how information is obtained were collected into the placement-process

category. The parent-perceptions-of-the-process category includes all references made

in the parent interviews to people involved, what information is considered and how

information is obtained. The parent-desired-process category includes all references

made in the parent interviews to how satisfied parents were with the process, how they

would like to have seen the process, and what the parents of preschool-aged multiples

hope the process will include.

The leadership-style category includes references to leadership style as described in leadership theory. Two leadership styles were coded: interpretive and structural. Leadership style was coded as "interpretive" if references were made to both personal involvement between the leader and other individuals. and if the leader identified assumptions about twins and classroom placement. Leadership style was coded as "structural" if emphasis were made that focused on keeping the system functioning as it is.

Using QSR NUD*IST to code the data also allowed for more effective comparison of participant perceptions. For example. when coding "variables." the researcher was easily able to review what variables principals. teachers. counselors and parents considered to be important when making placement decisions. The computer program was also valuable in triangulating emerging themes by comparing different data pieces and sources.

The final step in data analysis was completed by hand. A report for each group of coded data was generated. These reports were then grouped into the aforementioned categories. Frequency counts were made to identify the areas of shared and divergent perceptions.

RESULTS

The initial purpose of this study was simply to identify and describe decision-making processes for the classroom placement of multiples in local elementary schools. Although quite limited, the literature on classroom placement of twins recommended that schools not hold policies about placement, but treat each case individually (Emmons, 1976; Dreyer, 1991; Hay, 1991; LeRoux, 1992; Segal, 1992). An initial question was whether local elementary schools were following this recommendation in practice. After interviewing commenced, other questions began to emerge. Do schools and parents perceive the decision-making process in the same way? What degree of parent involvement exists within the process? Do schools and parents consider the same variables about multiples when making placement decisions? Does principal leadership style affect the placement process? The ongoing process of data analysis was conducted in an effort to gain insight and understanding about the perspectives of the participants, as well as an attempt to answer the aforementioned questions.

In keeping with the open-ended methodology of qualitative research, as the interviewing process progressed, emerging themes were identified. After interviewing educators, and parents of preschool-aged multiples, the researcher made a critical decision to focus on two primary issues within the decision-making processes for the classroom placement of multiples. The first theme to emerge was how the leadership style of the principals guides decision-making in their respective schools. From this

emerged a second. critical issue of the roles each party plays in the decision-making process. More specifically. a theme began to emerge about the negotiation process between parents and schools as related to classroom placement of multiples in elementary school.

As data collection progressed the needs assessment of this study became more of an effort to open the collaborative exchange of information on behalf of the special circumstances of multiples. The data obtained through the interviewing process suggested a need to open up the process for both schools and parents to have equal access to information sharing. As a result. school personnel would hear the valuable information parents have to share about the learning styles. social competencies and personality factors of their multiple children before making classroom placement decisions for these children. It became clear that these children and their education are as important to their parents. as are minority. at-risk. gifted and every other child within the school system. for which special consideration is given.

Educator Perceptions of Placement Processes

Placement processes beyond kindergarten. The first step in understanding the decision-making processes of classroom placement of multiples was to identify how school personnel describe the process. Elementary school principals. teachers and counselors were asked to describe the classroom placement process in their respective schools. Information was gathered on what the process consists of. who is involved. and how the process progresses from kindergarten through all elementary grades.

There was uniformity in the general classroom placement process among the seven elementary schools. All seven principals described a process that begins in the spring of each year. Teachers are asked to provide the principal with information about their students. This information consists of ability and achievement levels, students receiving special services, behavioral problems, and student gender. This procedure varied somewhat across schools. In five of the schools, the teachers actually meet together as a group and make recommended class lists to the principal. In the remaining two schools, the teachers separately provide information on the students currently in their classrooms to the principal.

The principals in all seven schools stated that they send a letter in the spring school newsletter providing parents with an opportunity for input into the placement decision. Parents are required to make any requests in writing and to provide a rationale for their request, which must be for educational reasons. All seven principals stated that they then consider the information provided by the teachers and parent requests when developing classrooms which they seek to balance in terms of equal numbers of students across gender, ability and achievement levels.

Kindergarten placement processes. The placement process for kindergarten varies slightly since the school personnel do not yet know the children. All seven principals stated that kindergarten placement is purely an arbitrary assignment of students based on balanced numbers across gender and parent requests for morning or afternoon sessions.

Persons involved in placement processes. When asked to identify the people involved in the decision-making process, all seven principals included principal.

teachers and parents. When asked who else might be included in the process. one

principal suggested administrative representatives from the School Corporation. if

necessary. Four principals suggested the case management teams if children were

receiving special services of any kind. Four principals identified the school counselor

as a person who would be involved if he/she had worked with a child for any reason in

the past or if parent requests were in disagreement with school recommendations. Table

1 provides a summary of the placement processes as described by educators. Table 2

summarizes the persons involved in the processes as identified by the principals.

Table 1. Educator Descriptions of Elementary Classroom Placement Processes

Procedure	Principal (n=7)	Teacher (n=5)
Tchr. Recommendations	7	5
Newsletter to Parents	7	5
Prnc. Makes Class Lists	7	5
Kindergarten: AM vs. PM	7	5

Note. The frequencies refer to the number of persons who mentioned each procedure.
Tchr. = Teachers. Prnc. = Principals.

Table 2. Principal Identification of Persons Involved in Classroom Placement Processes

Person Identified	Principal (n=7)
Principal	7
Teachers	7
Parents	7
Counselor	4

Case Management Team	4
School Corporation	1

Note. Frequencies refer to number of principals who identified each individual.

Placement Processes for Multiples. The second step was to identify whether this general placement process differs in any way for twins or other multiples. Table 3 provides a summary of the placement processes for multiples, as described by educators. Six of the seven school principals stated that they prefer to separate the multiples, and that they make such a recommendation routinely to parents. Two principals indicated that multiples are treated as "two individual children, just like any other child" and are not considered differently. Three principals noted they honor parent requests completely at the kindergarten level. One principal said, "it is an adjustment for children to enter school: parents often want them (multiples) together to ease that adjustment." Another principal stated, "Parents know their children better than we do, so we simply honor their request at the kindergarten level." It is recommended beyond kindergarten to separate the twins, however. One principal acknowledged that twins are kept together in kindergarten because only one classroom is available. This principal added that if there were a choice, separation would be recommended. One principal said there is no preference, and that multiple children have been placed together or separated in that particular elementary school. This particular principal cited minimal personal experience with multiples as the reason for this. "We really haven't had many twins here." All seven school principals did state, however, that they would be open to discussing keeping multiples together "if that was best for them." Two principals listed "previous trauma" as a good reason to keep

multiples together. One principal declared he/she would be comfortable with multiples

remaining together with "all things being equal." in other words. if there were no

significant differences in ability. if there were an adequate sense of independence and if

there were no competition among them.

Table 3. Educator Description of Placement Process for Multiples

Procedure	Principal (n = 7)	Teacher (n = 5)
Rtnly. Rec. Sep. Classrms.	6	5
Open to Same Classroom	7	5
Honor Pa. Req. in K.	3	0
Multiples No Different	2	0

Note. Frequencies refer to number of educators who mentioned theme. Rtnly. = routinely. Rec. = recommend. Sep. = separate. Classrms. = classrooms. Pa. = parent. Req. = request. K. = kindergarten.

Three of the principals stated that if parents requested their multiples be placed

together they are still encouraged to separate the children. For example. one principal

said. "We persuaded her that we would like for them to have individual experiences."

Another principal noted. "We convinced them it would be in the children's best

interest" to be separated. A third principal said. "Usually we can discourage that."

referring to placement together. All three principals indicated. however. that if parents

continued to "insist." they would place the multiples together. One principal concluded.

"If we alienate the parent. we can't do anything for the kids."

Variables Considered During Placement Processes. Some educators identified

previous experience with multiples. as well as characteristics about the multiples as

important factors or variables they considered when making placement

recommendations for multiples. Table 4 provides a summary of these factors identified

by educators. Table 7 provides a summary of variables or factors considered about their

multiples when making placement decisions.

Table 4. Factors Cited by Educators That Guide Placement Decisions For Multiples

Factor	Principal (n = 7)	Teacher (n = 5)	Counselor (n = 2)
Prev. exp. w/ mult.	6	3	2
Individuality	3	2	0
Dominance	4	3	0
Compete/ Compare	2	1	0
Ability/Ach.	3	2	2
Dependency	2	5	2
Personality	0	1	0
Phys. Appearance	0	1	0
Social Skills	0	5	2
Gender	0	0	2
Multiple Type	0	0	2
Age	0	0	2
Multiple Bond	0	0	2

Note. Frequencies refer to number of educators who mentioned factor. Prev. = previous. Exp. = experience. W/ = with. Mult. = multiples. Ach. = Achievement. Phys. = Physical.

The six principals who said that they prefer separating multiples were asked

what variables about multiples they consider when making this recommendation. All

principals cited previous experience as guiding their decision. This previous experience with multiples has led them to general beliefs about multiples. Three principals indicated that they believe that multiples should be separated so they can develop a sense of individuality and their own identity. Four principals referred to personal experience with multiples and concluded that one multiple tends to be dominant over the other(s), which often leads to one being "overlooked." Three principals cited personal experience with one multiple being more advanced academically, as well as one multiple being dependent upon the other. A recommendation of separation for these reasons is thus believed to provide the less advanced multiple with opportunities to develop academic strengths of his/her own. It would also encourage the dependent child to develop more autonomy.

Since teacher recommendations were said to be considered by all seven principals, it was important to identify what variables teachers focused upon when interviewed about making placement recommendations. As indicated in Table 4, all five teachers indicated that they consider how dependent the multiples are on each other, as well as their social skills and peer relations. Two teachers noted they would consider the academic achievement level of each multiple. Other variables identified by teachers included personality characteristics, physical appearance (how much they look like one another), and whether there is any resentment among the multiples. All five teachers noted the importance of ongoing communication with parents throughout the school year. All five teachers acknowledged that they usually recommend separating multiples. Three of the teachers said they tend to recommend separating multiples because in their personal experience, they have found one multiple to be more dominant

and the other more dependent. Two of these three teachers acknowledged they tend to recommend separating multiples because of differences in academic achievement. Two teachers mentioned that they recommend separation so that the multiples can develop their own identities. apart from their siblings. Three teachers stated they would recommend keeping multiples together if the children were "extremely upset" about being separated. One teacher said she would recommend keeping multiples together either if parents were "adamant about keeping them together" or if "they were independent of each other."

School counselors may be brought into the decision-making process if they have knowledge about the multiples. or if parent requests are in disagreement with school recommendations. The counselors indicated that they would meet with the parents to gather information about how the multiples interact at home. They would also consider their own observations and knowledge of the multiples at school. Both counselors who were interviewed said that they would try to convince the parents to separate the multiples. but would encourage the school to abide by their wishes if the parents were "adamant" or "distressed." Variables the counselors mentioned that they would consider included social skills. dependency. academic achievement differences. gender. twin-type. developmental level. and twin bond. One counselor concluded that the goal would "not be to break the twin bond. but to increase other relationships."

Parent involvement during placement processes. The desirable extent of parent involvement throughout this placement process was described with some variation. which can be seen in Table 5. All schools send a newsletter home giving parents an opportunity to make a request for the following school year. All teachers interviewed

stated that they would meet with parents, usually at conference time, to discuss

placement recommendations. Counselors would meet with parents if they disagreed

with the school's placement recommendations. Four of the principals made

spontaneous statements indicating a desire to have parent support, valuing parent input,

and recognizing that parents have important information to share about their children.

For example, one principal said, "We work to get the support of the parents." Another

stated, "I try and let parents have some control over those decisions." A third principal

noted, "Parents know their children's personalities better than we do." One principal

stated he/she would want to know about how the children interact at home, and what

they said about school at home - whether they liked being together or not.

Table 5. Educator Description of Parent Involvement

Method of Involvement	Principals (n = 7)	Teachers (n = 5)	Counselors (n = 2)
Newsletter	7	0	0
Mtg. w/ parents	1	5	0
Mtg. @ pa. request	6	5	2
Value parent input	7	5	-
Persuade parents	3	-	2
Abide if adamant	3	-	2

Note. Frequencies refer to number of educators who mentioned theme. Mtg. = meeting. W/ = with. Pa. = parent.

Multiple involvement during placement processes. Six of the seven school

principals stated they had never included the multiples in the placement decision. One

principal said that he/she once met with a particular set of multiples who were upset

about being separated. but that he/she does not usually ask for the children's input

before making the placement decision. Two of the teachers noted that they would

consider including the children's wishes in the placement recommendation. However.

all five teachers stated they never had.

Parents of School-Aged Multiples' Perceptions of Placement Processes

Kindergarten Placement Processes. Parents of school-aged multiples

were asked to describe the classroom placement process for their children beginning in

kindergarten. Information was gathered pertaining to what the process consisted of.

who was involved. and how the process progressed from kindergarten through any

elementary grades. Of the three parents with twins in kindergarten. two stated the

decision was based completely on whether the parents preferred morning or afternoon

sessions. The third parent of kindergarten twins stated "there really was no process."

This parent stated that during enrollment she told the school she wanted her twins in the

same classroom and the school agreed. Table 6 summarizes parent perceptions of the

placement processes.

Table 6. Parent Perceptions of Placement Processes

Procedure	Kindergarten (n = 6)	Beyond Kindergarten (n = 3)
AM vs. PM only	4	-
Parent request only	2	1
Meeting with teacher	4	3
Meeting with principal	0	3

Meeting with nurse	1	0
School welcoming meeting	1	0
School rec. sep. up front	4	3

Note. Frequencies refer to number of parents who mentioned theme. Rec. = recommended. Sep. = separation.

Persons involved in placement processes. Two parents had met with the teacher only. One parent had met with the school nurse. One parent described a general school-welcoming meeting in which all new students were invited to visit the room. meet the teacher and principal. All meetings occurred during spring enrollment. or "kindergarten round-up."

Two of the three parents of kindergartners stated they were told the school prefers to separate multiples. but the schools agreed to keep them together. One parent stated. "I don't know how it works. There was no question. They were going in the afternoon." This parent reported that there was no discussion about whether to place the twins together or separately. It was a matter of available spaces. All six parents of twins stated that school personnel had told them they prefer to separate multiples. Reasons given were to develop individuality and to avoid comparison and competition.

The parent of the boy/girl twins in the first grade said her children were enrolled in a private school during kindergarten for the purpose of all-day kindergarten. They were separated during kindergarten. This parent noted that she contacted the principal by telephone for first grade enrollment. She reported that she requested separate classrooms and was told this was the school's preference as well. She added. "There really wasn't a process."

The parent of the twin boys in the fifth grade described a similar process for kindergarten placement. "For kindergarten it was really a non-issue. because there was only one kindergarten teacher. and the choice was either morning or afternoon. It was up to me." The parent of the twin girls in the sixth grade stated she was told the school prefers to separate twins. The school had only one classroom but offered a morning and an afternoon session. The school agreed to place the girls together in kindergarten. however. The mother expressed concern over the inconvenience of having one child in morning session and the other in the afternoon session.

Placement processes beyond kindergarten. Beyond the kindergarten level. both parents of the older twin sets were informed that the school recommended separation for first grade. One recommendation was made by the teacher. who suggested to the mother of the girls that one child should be promoted to first grade. and the other placed in transition. When the parents disagreed with this recommendation. a meeting was held at the parent's request with the teacher and principal. After an independent evaluation was completed. the twins were both promoted to the first grade. The principal informed the parents that it was "their policy" to have all twins separated "so the teachers wouldn't compare them." The parents agreed to this. The girls were placed in separate classrooms each year. There were no meetings or discussions about this after the kindergarten year.

The mother of the boys who contacted the principal by phone to discuss the first grade classroom placement said she requested to observe both first grade classrooms. After observing the classrooms. the mother indicated that she preferred one teacher's style to the other. She contacted the principal and requested that her boys be placed

together with the teacher whose style she preferred. The mother said the principal told her that the school did not keep twins together unless there was a "very good reason." The principal, according to the mother, declared that it was a personal "policy to separate them [multiples]." The mother said the principal refused to place the boys together. The mother then met with the kindergarten teacher who stated "it would be fine either way" (together or separate). Because the principal continued to refuse to place the boys in the same classroom, the mother decided to enroll her twins in a private school.

The twin boys were enrolled in a private school during first, second and third grade. They were re-enrolled in the public schools in the fourth and fifth grades after being tested and qualified for the "gifted and talented" program. There is only one classroom available for gifted and talented students where they are currently enrolled together.

Variables parents considered during placement processes. Five of the six parents of school-aged multiples cited convenience of morning or afternoon sessions as the primary variable for considering kindergarten classroom placement. The other parent requested that her twins be separated beginning in kindergarten because of dominance and dependency issues. This parent indicated that the girl of her boy/girl twins "tends to mother my son." She wanted her son to learn to do things on his own, and her daughter not to "worry" about her son. She also stated because "they spend all their time together at home. I wanted them to experience some things apart."

Beyond convenience issues in kindergarten, each parent considered different variables, based on their own children. The mother of the sixth grade girls noted that

she wanted her children to stay together in kindergarten to ease the adjustment "because they had never been apart." Beyond kindergarten. she felt the girls had adjusted to school. had made friends and "weren't afraid to be alone or of going their separate ways."

Five of the parents of school-aged twins stated they considered dependency. dominance. differences in interests. academic strengths and weaknesses. and social interactions with peers. Five of the six parents reported considering the experience their children had had in preschool. All were in the same classrooms during preschool. One-half of the parents of school-aged multiples identified twin-bond as a variable they considered about their children's initial and continuing classroom placement. In the parents' words. "they have a real special bond." "they do have a special bond. and always look out for each other." and "twins have a bond that is there."

The mother of the boys in fifth grade stated her twins were not dependent upon each other. but they did compare activities and experiences. She also considered their peer relationships. stating they had separate friends. and were not always playing together. She was concerned primarily with teacher style. and with her children being able to receive the same classroom activities. Two other parents identified the convenience of having one teacher's style to work with. one set of homework assignments and the same field trips.

All three parents of twins in kindergarten described their twins as "very different" in appearance. interest. and academic ability. They also described their children as playing well together and with different children. Because they saw their children as being independent and not dominating each other. two parents felt keeping

them together was fine. One parent stated she wanted her twins together because she

felt one child could learn from the other. Table 7 provides a summary of the

variables/factors considered by parents when making classroom placement decisions. A

comparison of responses made by parents of school-aged multiples and parents of

preschool-aged multiples can be made by review of Table 7. as well.

Table 7. Factors Parents Cited as Important to Consider about Multiples

Factor	Parents of School-Aged Multiples (n = 6)	Parents of Preschool-Aged Multiples (n = 4)
Convenience	6	3
Dependency	6	2
Dominance	1	0
Adjustment	1	0
Interests	5	4
Ability/Achievement	5	0
Social Skills	5	0
Preschool Experience	5	3
Gender	0	2
Multiple Bond	5	3
Multiple Type	5	4
Teacher Style	4	3
Age	0	2
Multiple Input	1	1

Note. Frequencies refer to number of parents who cited each factor.

Multiple involvement during placement processes. Of the six parents of school-aged multiples. only one of them involved the children in the decision-making process. This parent said she asked her children and they said they wanted to be in the same classroom. Two parents of kindergartners stated they would ask what their children wanted to do next year. Two parents reported having asked their children how they liked their classroom placement. Both said the children reported being happy with the placement.

Parent involvement during placement processes. None of the parents whose children were presently in kindergarten reported having discussed placement plans for the next school year with anyone from the school. The parent of the fifth grade boys initiated the conversation about first grade placement in the spring of their kindergarten year. The mother of the sixth grade girls was told at the end of kindergarten that one would be promoted to first grade and the other would require transition.

Four parents stated they felt involved and included in the decision-making process. These same four parents indicated that they believed the school would listen to their input and value their opinions. These four parents also noted that they had expected the school would recommend separating their children. Two of the three parents of kindergartners expected the school would recommend separating their twins in first grade.

Parent satisfaction of placement processes. Four of the six parents of school-aged twins stated that they were satisfied with the decision-making process for classroom placement of their multiples. Three of these four parents had children in

kindergarten. and the placement decision concurred with their choice. The remaining satisfied parent had boy/girl twins in the first grade and had requested that they be separated. This parent commented. "I think people tend to feel unhappy when they want their kids together. Then it seems like the schools don't listen. That is what I have heard anyway."

Changes in placement process desired by parents. All of the parents discussed things they would like to see be different in the process. which is summarized in Table 8. All parents stated they believe the process should require input from both parents and teachers. One mother said she wished the school would initiate more discussion with parents about the placement process. All parents noted that they believe the schools should consider what is best for each individual set of multiples before making a placement recommendation. One mother said. "I just would want to talk about my own kids. you know. Not to have the school tell me what has worked for other kids. but to figure out what will work for mine." Another parent indicated. "I think you just need to take each set of twins as they come and evaluate them individually. because they are different how they relate to each other." Two parents stated they think the decision should be the parents' choice: "They know their kids. They should ask the parents individually. each child's parent. what their feelings are."

Table 8. Parent-Recommended Changes in Placement Processes

Recommendation	Parents of School-Aged Multiples (n = 6)
Allow input from parents and teachers	6
Consider each multiple individually	6

Completely parent choice	2
School should initiate more discussion	1

Note: Frequencies refer to number of parents who discussed theme.

The two parents who were dissatisfied with the placement process reported that they were not concerned about whether their twins were together or separated, so much as how the process worked. Both of these parents were dissatisfied with the fact that the school made general recommendations for all multiples. These parents expressed a desire for the school to consider the individual needs of their children. These parents did not feel involved in the decision, nor did they believe the school perceived their input as valuable. Both parents expressed concern that no one person, whether a teacher or principal, should have complete control. Each recommended a team decision including parents, teachers and principals. Both of these parents had older twins, 11 and 12 years old.

Since all six parents recommended that the schools consider each set of multiples individually, what variables did they suggest schools consider about the children? Five of the six parents of school-aged multiples stated twin-type and/or physical appearance is important to consider. These parents believed if the multiples looked very much alike, teachers may have trouble telling them apart, and this could create a problem. All six parents cited the dependency among the multiples as an important variable to consider, having noted that dependency would be problematic if placed together. Five parents mentioned twin-bond as something they believe the children have, which should also be taken into account. These parents expressed concern that separation may negatively impact this twin-bond. Five parents suggested

investigating whether the children have different interests. which would indicate

whether the multiples were developing individuality. Four of the six parents stated

teacher style should be considered because certain characteristics of multiples may meld

better with a particular teaching style. For example. one parent noted that one of her

twins is more of a hands-on learner. while the other learns better from watching others

first. Four parents also indicated that the convenience of having one teacher and one

schedule to work with was important to them.

Expectations of Placement Processes by Parents of Preschool-Aged Multiples

The parents of preschool-aged multiples were asked to discuss what they hoped

would be included in the decision-making process for classroom placement of their

multiples. Their responses are summarized in Table 9. Three of the four parents stated

they hoped to have some sort of meeting or conference with the school to discuss

placement options. All of the parents stated they hoped the school would consider their

families and their children individually rather than making a recommendation solely

based on the fact that they are multiples. These parents wanted to meet with school

personnel to have a conversation about the needs of their children. They did not wish to

be told what the school has done with other multiples. One mother. who was also a

teacher. stressed the importance of ongoing parent-teacher communication. "I think it

would be important because as years go on. children change." One parent stated she

hoped to be able to match the teacher style to her children. "I know a lot of schools

don't let you do that. You are assigned a teacher and that's that. I don't want to just

throw them in there at the beginning and let them get lost in the shuffle. I think the

biggest thing is I hope the kids aren't just put into a pool. and assigned to a teacher and

that's that." Three of the four parents of preschool-aged multiples anticipated the

schools would recommend separation in general terms for all multiples. These parents

anticipated this recommendation even before school personnel met their children. One

parent stated. "I know that is going to be a battle."

Table 9. Parents of Preschool-Aged Multiples Expected & Desired Placement Processes

Desired/Expected Procedure	Parents of Preschool-Aged Multiples
	(n = 4)
Meeting with principal	3
Consider each multiple individually	4
Expect school will recommend separation	3

Note. Frequencies refer to number of parents who identified theme.

Variables to consider. What variables did the parents of preschool-aged children

identify as important to know and consider about their children? Three of the four

parents stated teacher style and convenience of one classroom were important to

consider. Two identified developmental and emotional maturity. as well as

dependency. among the multiples. Three cited the bond the multiples share as being

important to discuss. All four parents believed it is important to consider the multiple

type. fraternal vs. identical. as well as how much the multiples look alike. All four

parents also believed identifying whether each multiple has his/her own interests is

important. Three parents believed gender was an important factor to consider. For

example. one mother noted that "girls are more mature than boys." The mothers of the

triplets stated gender is an important factor in considering how to separate them if only

two classrooms were available. Both mothers of triplets also said they would want to consider the number of classrooms available. because they would want the triplets either all together or all separated. Two of the four parents identified dependency as important to consider. Three of the four parents stated they would use information gained during preschool to determine whether the children should be separated or kept together in elementary school. Three of the four parents of preschool-aged multiples stated they did not plan to involve their children in the decision-making process.

Leadership Style

The initial purpose of this study was to investigate and describe the decision-making processes for the classroom placement of multiples in elementary school. After several interviews were conducted. it became clear that the leadership style of the principals had a tremendous impact on how decisions were made within the schools. This led the investigation to describe what this impact is for multiples.

Table 10. Themes Which Categorized Leadership Style of Principals

Theme	Interpretive	Structural
Keeping system working	0	2
Placement for practicality	0	2
Multiples seen no different	0	2
Assum. abt. Multiples	5	2
Routinely separate	5	2
Parent input via newsletter	0	2

Note. Frequencies refer to number of principals out of 7 who discussed theme. Assum. = assumptions. Abt. = about.

The leadership styles of the principals were defined based on two sociological theories of leadership. Although leaders may demonstrate some behavior. which fits within both structural and interpretive style. there tends to be a better fit in one or the other style. The first leadership style category was one of structuralism. The system governed by this leadership style can be metaphorically compared to a machine or a human body. The goal of structuralists is ensuring the system runs and works efficiently and effectively. Each part of the system has its own function in order to keep the system running. It is believed that if one part of the system is not working. then the entire system will be affected. Leaders within this theoretical framework are focused on keeping the system working. maintaining the status quo. This structural system is often more bureaucratic. Efforts are focused to maximize efficiency and minimize malfunction.

Two of the principals were identified as structural leaders based on their statements during the interview process. Principals were identified as structural leaders for a number of reasons. First. there was an overall focus on keeping the system working. These principals described the classroom placement process as one based primarily on practical issues. such as balancing classrooms according to gender. number. student ability and special services.

Second. multiples in these schools were seen as no different from any other student in the school. so there really was no additional process for making classroom placement decisions. Multiples were assigned to classrooms just like two individual students coming into the system. Classroom placement decisions are made primarily

without considering the fact that the children are multiples. For example, one principal stated, "Kindergartners are usually together because the parent does not want to make two trips back and forth. After that there are usually two classrooms available, so they are apart."

There was no reported method of monitoring the placement of twins to ensure the system is working. As one principal said, "I don't think that just because they are twins they are handled any differently than the other students." These leaders focused on keeping the system running, and did not seem to think of a different way of doing things unless someone objected. Both principals stated they routinely place multiples in separate classrooms unless parents object. At that point, the principals reported that they had "convinced, or persuaded" parents to agree. One principal stated, "If you came in for enrollment today with twins, then I would put one in one class and the other one in another class. I would just probably do that even without having a conversation."

Reasons given for making these placement recommendations are based on "past practice" and seeing the multiples as "individual students." There was no spoken or identified theory which directs practice, other than to keep the system running as is. The emphasis placed on individuality is unquestioned.

Parents were given an opportunity to provide input into the placement decision via the spring newsletter. This was described as a step in the process, rather than a genuine opportunity for parents to be heard.

The second leadership style category is one of interpretivism. A primary characteristic of this philosophy is less emphasis on maintaining the status quo, or

running of the system. The organization led by the interpretivist can be metaphorically compared to a play. Each person within the organization has a role to play within the script. Individuals are placed in particular roles based on assumptions that the leader has about them. There is a more personal touch in this type of leadership. with the belief that people create interactions within the system. The leader determines what assumptions are held. identifies needs of various people within the organization. and assigns roles based on these needs.

The remaining five principals were identified as leaders from an interpretive style based on the information given during the interviews. The leadership style of these principals differed in a number of ways from the structural leaders. Like the structural leaders. four of the five principals identified as interpretivists stated they routinely recommend separate classroom placements for multiples. The difference. however. lies in the fact that the interpretive leaders held assumptions about multiples. Reasons were given for recommending separate placement based on these assumptions. The primary assumption held by all five principals was that multiples must be separated in order to develop individual identities and reduce interdependency. Four of the principals believed that one multiple is usually dominant over the other(s). Two principals stated separation is best to avoid competition among and/or comparison of the multiples. Three principals cited differences in academic achievement as another reason they recommend separation. These principals also imagined reasons for which multiples may need to be placed together. These reasons included if the children were very upset about being separated. if a recent traumatic event had occurred. or to ease the adjustment process and provide support to one another.

There was a clear sense of a personal touch to the leadership style of these five principals. All of them stressed the importance of obtaining parent input in one way or another. Two principals stated they would want to hear about how the children interact and behave at home. Three principals said they would meet with parents personally, and would want the placement decision to be a team decision. Two principals indicated that they work to get the support of parents. Two others commented that parents know their children better than the school. One principal stated s/he likes to give parents some control over decisions when possible.

DISCUSSION

Twins and other multiples have been the subjects of a great deal of scientific research during the last century. The results from this research have added to our knowledge and understanding of human development and the impact of heredity and the environment on our existence. Twins and other multiples have not, however, been the focus of as much research aimed at creating greater understanding for them. This study was designed to do just that.

Parents of multiples continue to seek practical advice in parenting. One area of great concern expressed by parents of multiples entails how to make appropriate classroom placement decisions for their children. A great deal of anecdotal literature and folklore exists, which suggests placement in separate classrooms is best, so that each multiple can develop as an individual, rather than part of a set. There is, however, no research that supports the appropriateness or effectiveness of this belief. Although limited, research does support the merit of assessing each case individually when making classroom placement recommendations, rather than routine recommendations for separation of the multiples (Emmons, 1976; Dreyer, 1991; Hay, 1991; LeRoux, 1992; Segal, 1992). However, in spite of this policy recommendation, only seven of twenty local elementary school principals stated that multiples were flagged as needing extra attention during the placement process. Only these seven principals indicated that they consider each multiple individually when making classroom placement

recommendations. This means that approximately two-thirds of local elementary schools routinely recommend separating multiples in school.

This study was undertaken to identify and explore the classroom placement decision-making process of these seven local schools. The exploration occurred through an "interpretive approach" to an ethnographic study, which focused on uncovering perspectives held by parents and educators regarding what the classroom placement processes for multiples are and should be. The goal was to develop an understanding and comparison of the perceptions held by each participant in this study. The researcher did not desire to engage in a "critical approach" to "unmask inequities in processes and phenomenon" (LeCompte & Preissle. 1993. p. 25). Perhaps the most important purpose of this study serves to open dialogue between parents and school personnel when making classroom placement decisions for multiples. Both parents and school personnel may, as a result, need to engage in a critical examination of how each party can initiate, participate in, and evaluate such a dialogue.

A primary characteristic of qualitative research is the inductive approach to discovering meaning in the data and the ongoing development of questions for investigation. The initial goal was to identify and describe how classroom placement decisions are made for multiples in local elementary schools. Are local schools making placement decisions individually? Which school personnel are involved in this process and which are the deciding factors in the decision to keep multiples together or in separate classrooms? Through the identification of the process, other questions began to emerge. Do parent perceptions of the placement process differ from the schools' description of the process? What degree of parent involvement exists in the process?

Does the process that parents of pre-school-aged multiples envision differ from the actual process? Finally, how does principal leadership style affect the decision-making process?

Perceptions of the Placement Process

Based on the results of a phone inquiry, seven of twenty local elementary school principals stated there is no formal or informal policy that guides classroom placement decisions for multiples. These seven principals reported that each case is considered individually before a classroom placement recommendation is made. Results of this study suggest that the intention may be to assess each case individually, but the actual general practice is to recommend separating multiples routinely. This practice is justified as a result of previous experience that principals and teachers have had when educating multiples. This experience has not been vast, as most principals reported no more than five sets of multiples enrolled in their schools. With the dramatic increase in multiple births over the last twenty years, schools will likely be faced with making placement recommendations for multiples at a greater frequency. Parents identified classroom placement as the area of most interest in a survey conducted by Twins Magazine (1999). Parents will look to the schools to help guide them in making the most appropriate classroom placement decision, based on the needs of their own children. If schools continue to make a routine recommendation to separate multiples, they should be prepared to justify this recommendation as being appropriate for each individual set of multiples.

Local schools described decisions about classroom placement for multiples as differing minimally from that for other children within the school. This process consists of teachers providing recommendations to principals. who make final placement decisions. Parent requests are honored at the kindergarten level. Beyond kindergarten. parents are given an opportunity to provide input via a school newsletter sent to all parents in the spring of each year. Cases are not considered individually unless parents initiate the conversation about placement options. or unless parents object to school recommendations. Lunenburg (1995) suggested that effective principals begin decision-making processes by first identifying the problem. The results of this study suggest that most school leaders do not identify classroom placement for multiples as a problem. Lunenburg (1995. p. 118) added that "the process of identifying problems requires surveillance of the internal and external environment for issues that merit attention." As a result. principals who seek input from parents might see classroom placement of multiples as warranting further investigation and decision-making.

Parents of preschool-aged multiples in this study unanimously expressed the hope that school personnel would sit down with them and discuss which classroom placement is best for their children. These parents will likely be disappointed unless they specifically request such a meeting. Even if they are successful in obtaining a meeting with school personnel. they are likely to be encouraged to separate their multiples from the beginning of their children's kindergarten year.

Principals focused on organizational issues. such as balanced classroom sizes. equal numbers of boys and girls. and an equal disbursement of students receiving special services. Teachers focused on academic achievement and social interaction

skills. Parents wanted their children to succeed. but they also considered the special bond their multiples share. Unless there is an opportunity for all parties to meet and share their concerns. some of these factors may be overlooked. An interesting finding in this study is that schools and parents alike do not routinely involve their children in the decision-making process. The majority of both parents and teachers indicated that the children were too young to include in the decision-making process.

School psychologists have a great deal of training in the area of child development. Unfortunately, school psychologists were not identified by any of the participants as being involved in the decision-making process. Some principals indicated that the case management team or "special ed. people" would be included in the process if one of the children has a disability. School psychologists may be able to provide an additional recommendation as well as guide discussions of which variables are important to consider about each multiple.

Parent Involvement

All seven principals who participated in this study referred to the fact that parents are provided with an opportunity to give input into the classroom placement process for their children. This procedure is in effect to allow all parents an opportunity to request particular teachers and is not in place specifically for parents of multiples. There is. in fact. minimal opportunity for parent involvement in making placement decisions for multiples. Parents may find themselves on the defensive with schools. trying to justify why they want a particular placement to occur. since all seven principals stated they routinely recommend separating multiples. Parents of both

preschool and school-aged multiples expected the schools to recommend separation. The results of this study suggest that parents who desire to have their multiples separated in school will not experience difficulty. Parents who desire to have their multiples in the same classroom. beyond kindergarten. should anticipate having a "justifiable reason" for such. The working assumption of the schools is to separate multiples.

Many of the principals indicated that they honor parent requests completely at the kindergarten level. Some principals acknowledged that parent requests at that time are due to convenience of having the children together. Others stated that placement may occur in the same classroom to ease the adjustment into school by having the multiples together. Other principals noted that parents "know their children better" than the school does at that time. After this kindergarten year. the school personnel hold an assumption that they are doing what is "best" for the multiples by recommending separation. The parents continue to "know their children." but the current system does not encourage an open dialogue between the two parties. The parents in this study did not have such a dialogue with school personnel unless the parents initiated such. Although four of six parents of school-aged multiples were satisfied with their level of involvement. three of these parents had children in kindergarten. and the placement choice was theirs alone. The other parent had twins in first grade and wanted them separated.

Two-thirds of the school personnel who participated in this study reported that they recommend separation so the multiples can develop a sense of individuality. The experience of these educators is that one multiple tends to be dependent upon the

other(s) when the multiples are placed together. Nine out of the ten parents who participated in this study described their children as very different in appearance. interest and even abilities. These parents also indicated that their multiples were not dependent upon each other. but did have a special bond. and looked out for each other. School personnel hold the assumptions that separation fosters individuality: that individuality would not occur without separation: that multiples who are "dependent" upon one another cannot develop a sense of individuality. Parents hold the assumption that the special bond that multiples share may be negatively affected by being separated. Nine out of ten parents in this study described their multiples as being very different from one another. and not dependent upon one another. In other words. they described their multiples as unique individuals.

The majority of the educators in this study stated they value parent input. want parents involved in the education of their children. and desire to have the support of parents. The parents in this study stated they want to converse with school personnel. Although educators and parents seem to have the same goals. the line of communication is broken somewhere. Educators should listen to what parents have to say about their children. as they have valuable information to share. Educators may want to provide opportunities in addition to the newsletter for parents to give input. They might consider welcoming the information parents have by asking for it in person. Parents must also take the responsibility to initiate conversations about their children. Parents should not wait for school personnel to initiate the conversation.

Redirecting Leadership

Leadership style certainly affects how decisions are made within organizations, schools included. The two primary types of leadership style found in this study were structural and interpretive styles. The principals who lead from a structural framework focus their energies on keeping the system running as it is. Efforts are directed toward improving efficiency and reducing malfunction of the various parts of the system. Multiples in these schools are seen and understood as no different from other children in the school. There is no effort or reason to treat them differently: they must fit within the system that exists. Parents who disagree with how the system works are persuaded or convinced to buy into the bureaucracy that exists. Those who do not buy in. like one parent in this study. may choose to leave the system. but the system will not change. The current system that exists does not allow for personal input from parents. One way of impacting these leaders is in convincing them that the system can still run efficiently if placement decisions are considered individually.

Koehler and Baxter (1997) recognized that many leaders in American schools of today make decisions based on hierarchical and bureaucratic models of organizational leadership. Koehler and Baxter (1997. p. 69-70) further acknowledged. "Old habits die hard. They are as old as the earliest models of organization. and inherent in well-established. if misguided. philosophical principals." These authors suggested that the most powerful leaders are those who act in collaboration with all parties who have an investment in a particular issue. Such collaboration. according to Koehler and Baxter (1997). would yield more autonomy within the organization. and greater satisfaction by all involved in the process. Although many principals in this study stated they like to

make "team decisions," balanced representation between school personnel and parents may result in more autonomous schools and higher degrees of satisfaction.

The current system in this midsize school corporation in the Midwest does not seek input from school psychologists. School psychologists are utilized primarily for making placement recommendations for special education students. School psychologists possess knowledge, training and skill in the area of consultation. Many school psychologists desire a change in their role and function which often consists of testing and retesting children (Fagan & Wise, 1994). Including school psychologists in the placement process for multiples would provide school psychologists with an opportunity for more consultation. It would also provide the school with an additional set of insights into the process.

Principals who lead from an interpretive style were in the majority in this study. These principals believed in a more personal approach to leadership. They valued team decisions and viewed the parts of the system as people rather than functions. They based decisions on assumptions that they have about the various people in the system and the roles they play. It is this group of leaders that is likely more flexible and open to change. Although these principals stated they recommend separation for multiples as well, they make these recommendations based on assumptions that they have about multiples, right or wrong. Parents who do not agree with the assumptions held by school personnel have opportunities to challenge these assumptions, and the process may be changed as a result. These parents are encouraged to take the initiative and responsibility to advocate for their children. Perhaps after reviewing the results of this

study, principals will reevaluate the assumptions they hold about educating twins and other multiples.

Limitations

First, because this study is an ethnographic inquiry, it sought to identify and explain the decision-making processes for classroom placement of multiples in local elementary schools, from the perspective of the participants. However, the results cannot be generalized beyond the participants in this study. The results of this study serve to identify experiences of educators and parents in an effort to encourage educators and parents to engage in an open dialogue which will lead to more collaboration in future decision-making. The study may be described as having "credibility or internal validity" but lacks "transferability or external validity" (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 324). LeCompte and Preissle (1993, p. 324) asserted that a qualitative study "can be trusted" if it demonstrates "a balanced representation of the multiple realities in a situation; a fresh understanding of something; a new appreciation of these understandings; courses of action are supported by the inquiry; and potential benefit of the inquiry to all concerned." This study is believed to have fulfilled these criteria, even though it lacks transferability.

Second, the participants were selected by using a network sampling technique. However, since the sample size is small, parents who were referred for participation may have been referred because they share common beliefs. This sampling technique may have affected validity as well. School principals were not included in the study if they stated during the phone interview that they recommend separating multiples, even

if there is no policy for such. These principals may have provided additional

information about the assumptions they hold in educating multiples. There are not

teachers represented from each school in the study. This is not considered a significant

limitation. however. since there was minimal variation among the responses given by

the five teachers who were interviewed. Parents who agreed to participate did not have

children in each school in the study.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) noted that qualitative research is frequently

criticized as lacking reliability. External reliability. according to LeCompte and

Preissle (1993) is nearly impossible to obtain in an ethnographic study. because a

different researcher cannot replicate the exact situation with different subjects. The

question of internal reliability may arise as individuals seek to determine whether

"multiple observers would agree about what happened" (LeCompte & Preissle. 1993. p.

337). LeCompte and Preissle (1993) suggested that internal reliability could be

enhanced by providing frequent "verbatim accounts of participant conversations."

which require minimal inferences in analyzing the data. LeCompte and Preissle (1993)

also noted that mechanically recorded data reduces misinterpretations and improves

reliability. This study maintained these measures to improve reliability. However.

categories and themes coded by the investigator were not made subject to reliability

coding by an external party.

Interviews were structured in the sense that each participant was asked the same

questions. The presentation of the questions varied. however. based on the specific

information shared during the interviews. Because of this. different interpretations or

meanings may have been attached to various questions.

The children whose parents were dissatisfied with the placement process would have entered kindergarten over five years ago. The experience these parents had may be reflective of a different attitude by the schools at that time. Schools may have been less flexible about placement recommendations than they are now. The parents also chose not to identify the schools in which their children were enrolled. The schools may or may not have been participants in this study.

Finally, the number of multiples in local schools is not significantly high. Because of this, the placement decisions made for multiples likely does not sit high on the list of priorities for school personnel. School personnel are likely more concerned with appropriate placement of disabled students, as well as nationally driven areas of concern, such as school safety.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study has provided a foundation for obtaining further understanding about how classroom placement decisions are made in some local elementary schools for twins and other multiples. A similar investigation in a similar school district might allow for a comparison of these results to information obtained in the future.

A major finding of this study was that although schools recognized the importance of parent involvement, there was little true open negotiation and collaboration in the decision-making processes. Additional inquiry into the collaboration process between parents and schools for placement decisions would be beneficial.

Since there is now an understanding of what the process consists of. further inquiry can be made about the effectiveness of the process. Investigations can be made which focus exclusively on improving parent involvement. selecting variables for consideration. and developing a model for educators and parents to follow when making placement decisions in the future.

There are areas of the country that have higher proportions of multiples than do local schools. An investigation of the placement process in one of these schools would provide greater insight. since there is likely a greater need for a more clearly defined process.

Finally. an investigation of perceptions held by the multiples themselves would add valuable information. Studies designed to question multiples at various ages would provide an opportunity for greater understanding of how multiples themselves view the placement process. Possible inquiries to consider include what involvement multiples had in the placement process: what involvement multiples want(ed) to have in the placement process: whether multiples were satisfied with the placement process: and whether the placement process had a positive or negative impact on their internal multiple relationship/bond.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Phone Interview

All twenty elementary school principals were phoned and asked the following questions. A general statement was made as an introduction of the dissertation topic and investigator.

1. Does your school have a policy (formal or informal) regarding the classroom placement of twins?

2. If yes, what is the policy?

3. If no, in each case the classroom placement decision is made on an individual basis. Would you be willing to participate in an interview about the decision-making process in your school?

APPENDIX B

Educator (Principal) Interview

An introduction was be made about the dissertation topic and the investigator.

The following questions were asked during the interview.

1. Please describe the process by which students are placed in classrooms. beginning with kindergarten. then in subsequent years and new enrollees after kindergarten.

2. Who is involved in the decision-making process?

3. What variables are considered?

4. Please describe the process by which twins/multiples are placed in classrooms. beginning with kindergarten. then in subsequent years and new enrollees after kindergarten.

5. Who is involved in the decision-making process? Do/should the twins/multiples have input in the process?

6. What variables do you think are important to consider?

7. What guidelines. if any are used in classroom placement of twins/multiples? How was it that you came to utilize the current decision-making process?

8. Once the placement decision is made for twins/multiples. how is it monitored. evaluated?

9. Have you ever made a placement decision and then changed it? If so, why, and what happened?

10. Has your school ever had a policy (formal or informal) about the placement of twins/multiples? When and why was the policy removed?

11. How many twins/multiples have been enrolled in your school?

12. Please suggest other individuals involved that I may contact to interview.

13. What do you think is easy/difficult for teachers who have twins/multiples in the classroom?

14. What do you think is good/difficult for twins/multiples when in the same/separate classrooms?

Educator (Teacher) Interview

An introduction was made about the dissertation topic and the investigator. The

following questions were asked during the interview.

1. What is your role during the decision making process for the placement of

   twins/multiples in the classroom?

2. What variables do you think are important to consider when making the

   decision?

3. Who is/should be involved in the decision-making process? Do/should the

   twins/multiples have input in the process?

4. Once the placement decision is made for twins/multiples, how is it monitored,

   evaluated?

5. Have you ever made a placement decision and then changed it? If so, why, and

   what happened?

6. How many twins/multiples have you had in the classroom?

7. What is good/difficult about having twins/multiples in the same/separate

   classroom?

8. What are some advantages/disadvantages for having twins/multiples in

   same/separate classrooms?

Educator (Counselor) Interview

An introduction was made about the dissertation topic and the investigator. The following questions were asked during the interview.

1. If you are brought into the decision-making process what kinds of things would you consider? What would you evaluate or want to know about when providing input?

2. Under what circumstances would you recommend placement together/separate placement?

3. What do you think is difficult/fun for teachers when teaching multiples together/separately?

4. How does the decision-making process work in your school?

5. Who is involved in the process?

6. Are the children involved?

Parent Interview

An introduction will be made about the dissertation topic and the investigator.

The following questions were asked during the interview.

1. Please tell me about your children? Age. gender. twin-type.

2. Please describe the decision-making process used (hope to use) when your

   twins/multiples were (are) placed in classroom(s) as they enter(ed) elementary

   school.

3. Who was (should be) involved in the process? How was it initiated?

4. What variables were (should be) considered during the process?

5. Was (should) the placement decision monitored and evaluated once the decision

   was made?

6. Was there (can you imagine) a change in the placement decision? If so. why?

7. How satisfied were (do you expect) you with the decision-making process?

   Would you change anything if you could?

8. Did you (do you hope to) feel involved. and a full participant during the process.

   was your input valued?

9. What input did/should your children have during the process? Why do you think

   they should have input?

10. What do you think is easy/difficult for teachers with twins/multiples in the

    same/separate classrooms?

11. What do you think is easy/difficult for twins/multiples in the same/separate

    classrooms?

APPENDIX C

Consent Form for Participation in Research Study

Educator Interview Protocol

You are being asked to participate in a research study to learn about how
decisions are made when placing twins and other multiples in elementary classrooms.
Robin Shamsaie is conducting the study as a dissertation. Ms. Shamsaie is a doctoral
student in School Psychology at Indiana State University. The dissertation is under the
guidance of a committee of faculty members at Indiana State University. During the
study, you will be asked to answer questions about the decision-making process for the
placement of twins and higher order multiples in your school. The interview will be
audiotaped. The interview will take approximately one hour. You will not be contacted
again about this study beyond September 2000.

The only foreseeable risks involved are that you may experience feelings of
discomfort, worry, fear, guilt, embarrassment or sadness as you disclose information or
recall events. You are not expected to get any direct benefit from the study. However,
your participation may lead to greater understanding about the elementary classroom
placement of twins and higher order multiples, and lead to the guidance of informed
placement decisions in the future.

Your participation in the study will be kept strictly confidential. The results will
be documented in the form of a dissertation for the School of Graduate Studies at

Indiana State University. All findings released on the study will be in group form and neither you nor your data will be identifiable.

Please sign this form after you have had all questions answered to your satisfaction. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time.

I, the undersigned, understand that I am being asked to voluntarily participate in a research study. I understand that I may decline to participate now or at any time and I will not be penalized in any way. The research team may discontinue my participation at any time. I understand that I may receive no direct benefits from the study, but that new information may be learned. I understand that my participation will be confidential and that all results will be released in group form. I have been given a copy of this consent, signed by the investigator. With this understanding, I willingly sign below.

_____   _____

Participant Signature, Title   Investigator Signature

_____   _____

Date   Date

Consent Form for Participation in Research Study

Parent Interview Protocol

You are being asked to participate in a research study to learn about how decisions are made when placing your twins or other multiples in elementary classrooms. Robin Shamsaie is conducting the study as a dissertation. Ms. Shamsaie is a doctoral student in School Psychology at Indiana State University. The dissertation is under the guidance of a committee of faculty members at Indiana State University. During the study, you will be asked to answer questions about the decision-making process for the placement of twins and higher order multiples in school. The interview will be audiotaped. The interview will take approximately one hour. You will not be contacted again about this study beyond September 2000.

The only foreseeable risks involved are that you may experience feelings of discomfort, worry, fear, guilt, embarrassment or sadness as you disclose information or recall events. You are not expected to get any direct benefit from the study. However, your participation may lead to greater understanding about the elementary classroom placement of twins and higher order multiples, and lead to the guidance of informed placement decisions in the future.

Your participation in the study will be kept strictly confidential. The results will be documented in the form of a dissertation for the School of Graduate Studies at Indiana State University. All findings released on the study will be in group form and neither you nor your data will be identifiable.