

Do mothers' parenting attitudes and behaviors change with their first- and second-born?

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/Public Domain

New research reveals that mothers hold similar views and attitudes when parenting their first and second children, but their parenting behaviors with their two children differ.

In the study, published in *Social Development*, 55 mothers were observed interacting with their first child at the age of 20 months and again, using the same procedures, when their second child was 20

months.

First-born [children](#) tended to be more sociable and emotionally available to mothers than second-born children. Mothers' behaviors with first-born and second-born children were not similar in rank order (for example, mothers who engaged in a lot of play with their first-borns did not necessarily engage in a lot of play with their second-borns), but there was no systematic average difference in the amounts or qualities of mothers' interaction directed toward first and second children.

These findings suggest that, despite relatively consistent parenting beliefs over time, siblings behave differently from one another by 20 [months](#) of age, and [mothers](#) behave differently when interacting with their two children at the same age.

More information: Marc H. Bornstein et al, Continuity, stability, and concordance of socioemotional functioning in mothers and their sibling children, *Social Development* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/sode.12319](https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12319)

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