

Are feminism and attachment parenting practices compatible?

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What kind of mothers do feminists make? According to a new study by Miriam Liss and Mindy Erchull, from the University of Mary Washington in the US, feminist mothers endorse the importance of the time-intensive, hands-on parenting practices associated with attachment parenting - a child-centric parenting technique in which children's needs are ideally met on the child's schedule rather than the parent's. Their work is published online in Springer's journal *Sex Roles*.

Feminists are often portrayed in the media as anti-family and anti-motherhood and the stereotypical assumption that feminists are uninterested in caring for children has contributed to the backlash against the feminist movement.

Liss and Erchull looked at whether attachment [parenting practices](#), specifically, are endorsed by feminist women to help sharpen the conversation about whether or not attachment parenting is actually an empowering or an oppressive way to parent. They were also interested in whether stereotypes about feminist parenting matched the reality.

The researchers recruited 431 American women (147 feminist mothers, 75 feminist non-mothers, 143 non-feminist mothers, and 66 non-feminist non-mothers) who completed an [online survey](#) about [feminism](#) and mothering. The questionnaire assessed their own beliefs about three different practices associated with attachment parenting - breastfeeding for extended periods of time, co-sleeping, and carrying a child often - as well as their view of setting strict schedules for a child. The participants

were then asked to answer the questions as they believed a typical feminist would.

Results showed that feminists were more likely to support attachment parenting practices than non-feminists, and non-feminists were more likely to endorse strict schedules for children. These results suggest that attachment parenting is a type of parenting that is attractive to feminist women.

Interestingly, non-feminists, and mothers in particular, held [misperceptions](#) about the typical feminist who they saw as largely uninterested in the time-intensive and hands-on practices associated with attachment parenting. Non-feminists perceived feminists as less interested in attachment parenting than they were when, in fact, the feminists were more interested.

Liss and Erchull conclude: "Our results suggest that the pervasive stereotypes that feminists are in opposition to romantic and family relationships are incorrect. Our data indicated that feminist women are, indeed, interested in attachment parenting practices."

More information: Liss M & Erchull MJ (2012). Feminism and attachment parenting: attitudes, stereotypes, and misperceptions. *Sex Roles*; [DOI 10.1007/s11199-012-0173-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-012-0173-z)

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