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## Hoverboards and “hovermoms”: helicopter parents and their influence on millennial students’ rapport with instructors

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Popular culture is all too familiar with the notion of the helicopter parent. Howe and Strauss (2007) characterized this parenting style as “always hovering, ultra protective, unwilling to let go, and enlisting ... ‘the team’ (parent, physician, lawyer, other counselors) to assert a variety of special needs and interests” (p. 1). This suffocating sheltering extends students’ adolescence and delays the development of independence (Price, 2010), causing millennials to rely on their parents for financial stability (White, 2015) and emotional support (Raphelson, 2014). Even in the midst of transitioning to college, millennial students “are often exceedingly close to their parents, who assume participatory roles in their children’s educational pursuits” (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007, p. 22). Because college years are a complex period traditionally defined by familial, interpersonal, academic, and organizational relationships (Terenzini et al., 1994), a constant, overbearing parental presence may affect students’ expectations for their relationship with their instructors. Thus, this increased sheltering of millennial students may ultimately lead to changing student needs, including a greater focus on the instructor–student relationship, and specifically, rapport (Jorgenson, 1992).

Research examining the impact of instructor–student rapport on student success has gained prominence in instructional research over the past decade (Frisby & Myers, 2008). Rapport is conceptualized as feelings of “mutual trust and harmony” in a relationship (Catt, Miller, & Schallenkamp, 2007, p. 369). Instructor–student rapport has been positively associated with a number of vital classroom variables, including student participation (Frisby, Berger, Burchett, Herovic, & Strawser, 2014), classroom connectedness (Frisby & Martin, 2010), and learning outcomes (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Frisby & Myers, 2008). Price (2010) noted that rapport is a central need for millennial students, as they are used to having their parents show genuine interest in their success. When it

comes to the classroom, students might expect the same attention from instructors, as they are more motivated to pursue learning outcomes when they develop a personal connection with them (Frisby & Myers, 2008); the influential role of rapport on student outcomes could be explained by these millennial expectations.

The nature of the millennial–parent relationship may influence how we visit instructor–student rapport in the future. First, the inclusion of new technologies and social media in the classroom may facilitate interactions between parents and instructors that bypass student moderation, even in the context of higher education where parents may be geographically distant. As stated by Condeni (2012), many parents “are going to college with their students, even if only in a virtual sense” (p. 31). Future research should consider whether increased communication between parents and instructors at the college level (i.e., email, written, social media) influences how instructors approach their relationships with students. Further, millennials’ close relationships with their parents may lead to increased resistance to authoritarian power structures (Price, 2010), shaping the instructor–student relationship. Instructors who abide by rigid course policies may decrease rapport and distance themselves from this generation of students. Thus, more than ever, the type of instructional policy, as well as the instructor’s intention to enforce policy, may ultimately influence a millennial student’s perception of trust and harmony with that instructor. Finally, future studies should consider instructor rapport-building behaviors beyond those identified in previous research (Frisby & Housley Gaffney, 2015). Instructional scholars have relied primarily on Frisby and Myers (2008) 11-item measure of rapport to operationalize dimensions of *enjoyable interaction* and *personal connection* between instructors and students in the classroom. However, changing millennial expectations may warrant the inclusion of additional concepts focused around instructors’ relevance to students’ culture, such as the ability to use technology or integrate popular culture into the classroom (Price, 2010).

If helicopter parents are truly delaying the growth, maturity, and relational expectations of their dependent children through constant hovering and ultraprotective parenting, future research needs to extend what is known about the importance of instructor–student rapport. Brownstein (2000) claimed that millennials are “poised for greatness on a global scale” (p. 71). By adapting instructional research to reflect the characteristics and values of this generation, instructional scholars will conduct better research, provide more practical findings, and offer a scholarly means by which we can help these students meet their great potential.

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## “Me”llennials and the paralysis of choice: reigniting the purpose of higher education

Marjorie M. Buckner and Michael G. Strawser

As opposed to the “place where you were forced to consider new ideas, to meet new people, to ask new questions, and to learn to think, to socialize, to imagine” (Fitzgerald, 2012, p. 20), millennial students view college as a financial rather than philosophical training ground (Berrett, 2015). Unfortunately, this perspective de-emphasizes learning and intellectual curiosity. Despite high motivation and desire to achieve, millennials look externally for direction and approval rather than taking responsibility for their own learning.

Faculty frequently note millennial students’ lack of academic responsibility (Cain, Romanelli, & Smith, 2012), which suggests academic entitlement (i.e., the belief that *instructors* are responsible for students’ outcomes and students’ desires should be met). However, scholars continually underscore students and instructors working *together* to achieve a fruitful learning experience. We propose that teaching millennials to embrace the learning process and academic responsibility will provide students greater agency in their learning. First, instructors must address two student characteristics associated with academic entitlement—external locus of control and grade orientation.