**KCTL Teaching and Learning Reading Group**

**Discussion Questions**

**October 26, 2011**

**M-391, 3-4pm**

Twenge and Campbell write in chapter 5, “When a group of 1920’s mothers listed the traits they wanted their children to have they named strict obedience … Back in 1958, however, people said that the second most important thing a child could learn was ‘to obey’ … The ranking of obedience reached an all-time low in 2004, the last year for which data are available” (p. 75).

* The authors use this and other data to argue that parenting has changed from loving a child to idealizing them and thus making a generation of narcissistic youth. While the authors view obedience as a top character trait for youth in families, is it what we want as a top characteristic in the college students we work with?

Twenge and Campbell write in chapter 5, “The movement towards parental involvement –for example, knowing your child’s teachers – has now turned into overinvolvement … Parents argue with teachers over the child’s grade instead of leaving that task to the child himself (or sometimes the adult himself; colleges have begun to report parents calling to complain about grades)” (p. 79).

* Have you seen evidence of this parental overinvolvement amongst your students you work with here at Kingsborough? Do you have examples of this type of interaction to share? How do you deal with parental overinvolvement on a college level?

In chapter 6 the authors note, “the weekly gossip mag is one of the few areas of print journalism that is actually growing,” (p. 90) and, “As Jake Halpern documented in *Fame Junkies*, the three network news programs spent more time on the Michael Jackson sexual molestation trial in 2005 than they did on the conflict in Darfur. The most-viewed stories on cnn.com – a rough gauge of what people find interesting in the news – are regularly topped by celebrity items” (p. 103).

* Are today’s college students under-informed about world issues and over-informed about celebrity culture? If yes, where do you see this most in your work with students? Are there particular topics raised in the classroom where you find yourself filling in the gaps or playing catch up?
* Is it possible to use students’ affinity for celebrity news to build learning moments in the classroom and/or in our work with students?

In chapter 7 Twenge and Campbell discuss Second Life a virtual roleplaying game where users create humanlike computer models of themselves (avatars) and act out scenes reminiscent of real social live. The authors argue for pros and cons with Second Life saying, “This seems very useful, and, for shy people, this might actually be therapeutic if the confidence they gain from Second Life can make their ‘first life’ better … At the same time, however, Second Life’s focus on looks and somewhat shallow relationships may promote narcissism” (p. 120).

* How can we best channel the potential of technology like Second Life to foster learning and social growth experiences at the same time that we minimize the narcissistic effects that Twenge and Campbell argue to come from such online activities?

In chapter 8 the authors argue, “In 2005, for the first time since the Great Depression in the 1930s, Americans spent more than they earned. It wasn’t always this way – in the early 1980s, Americans saved about 12% of their earnings. Now people under the age of 35 spend 16% *more* than they earn” (p. 124). Twenge and Campbell posit that in earlier decades the lifestyle and the image we would project would be kept in check by the actual wealth we possessed but in the era of permissive lending (over the last 35 years) that we saw a decrease an increase in keeping up personal appearances at great personal cost. At the same time the size of families decreased while we saw a 66% increase in home size (p. 132).

* As college faculty and staff part of what we promote is future material success as one benefit that comes through education. How can we help students keep future material success in perspective alongside the intellectual and social goals of education?
* Will this generation be willing or able to give back and/or help others working their way through the system when they will likely struggle with much higher rates of debt than previous generations?