KCTL Reading Group May 4, 2009

The following are some questions that we prepared to guide our discussion of Clydesdale’s third and fourth chapters.

1. Clydesdale discusses the importance of parental, peer, and romantic relationships for students' first years out. Given Clydesdale's data about the importance of relationships for students, we were disappointed to read that faculty relationships and intellectually-grounded peer relationships do not seem to reach students' radars. We wondered, what would it mean for us to foster the sorts of relationships with students that made them want to learn and work harder because doing so would enhance a relationship that means something to them? How could we help students approach the classroom more relationally and inspire them to connect with each other over course material and 'big ideas'? What would be the revised 'teaching strategies' in this type of classroom? And if a relational approach did motivate students to work harder, would there also be drawbacks and/or concerns to this sort of approach (i.e., time, boundaries, difficulties with evaluation later on? See pp. 95-97.

2. How can we take Clydesdale's ideas seriously without becoming insensitive to the very real personal, social, and economic struggles that our students face? Can we steer students toward a larger social and political consciousness without asking them to disavow their desires to fall in love, feel secure in their relationships, and have a life? Can we help students draw a link between their micro-level concerns and the larger macro-structural issues that we'd like them to consider? Would a greater emphasis on relevant, "real world" service learning endeavors help students draw these connections between the personal and social commitments (p. 146)? Other ideas?

3. Let's discuss students' belief that community college is "thirteenth grade." Students told Clydesdale that attending community college allows them to maintain a full time work schedule because academic demands were so low (p. 141). Ultimately, these perceptions and approaches do not serve students since as we know, the majority do not graduate and/or go on to four year colleges. Nonetheless, they believe that they are doing fine and do not have to make school a priority because classes are so easy. Are they simply in denial or do community college faculty play a role in these perceptions? Perhaps we are not pushing students hard enough? If so, why is this? Do we believe they cannot handle it because they are working so hard on other endeavors? Or do some faculty not believe that their students are capable and do not push them for this reason? Among those of us who believe that students can learn and do need to be pushed, how can we make these beliefs and practices more widespread at the college? What is at stake?

4. How much do we want to know about our students' lives outside of the classroom? Clydesdale goes into some explicit details about students' sexual scripts. Is this solely voyeuristic or is there a point to it? For us, it raises larger questions about how much do we want to know and what do we do with it? What was Clydesdale's intent in sharing this? To illustrate another area that students manage relatively well? To tell us that it's 'not as bad' as others have made teen life out to be? Does it have any relevance to teaching and learning? See p. 99.

5. Do we believe that KCC students' consumption patterns and views of work are similar to those of the students that Clydesdale studies? While many students have iphones and ipods and other items that seem to indicate that they work to consume, what about those students who work to help their families pay rent and buy food? Moreover, if we agree with Clydesdale that students learn consumption practices from larger social and institutional structures (school, media, families), then do we (as faculty) consider it within our bounds to intervene and provide an alternative model? See pp. 123 and 146.