

## Kids as a Force for Positive Social Change:

Ground-breaking insights with potential to change the way both corporations and cause-based organizations do business.

- By Suzanne Martin, Ph.D.

In a perfect world, every child's needs would be met, every cause would be well-funded and every business would exceed its revenue goals. This inaugural issue of Kidformation focuses on a research-based marketing model that will bring us closer to that "perfect world." In order to support its mission to change kids' world for the better, Just Kid Inc.'s research division recently completed a series of studies in order to bolster our understanding of kids as a force for positive social change. The studies consist of an environmental scan of programs that give youth an opportunity to serve, focus groups with service and non-service kids, and two nationally representative online surveys of 600 moms of 6-14 year olds and 2,000 6-14 year olds resulting in the major findings below:

- Kids' desire to give rivals their desire to get – their altruistic impulse is strong
- There is a huge unmet need for service opportunities for kids
- Brands that affiliate with a cause and tap into kids' desire to give can generate stronger consumer relationships with kids and strong brand trust with parents
- Non-profits have a reason to knock on the door of marketing departments rather than just a corporation's foundation to search for funding

In the following pages, we will provide a more in-depth description of each of these findings and a sampling of supporting evidence from our research.

### How big are children's altruistic desires?

#### The state of child service

About 9 out of 10 kids believe that it is extremely, very or somewhat important to help others or give back to their community. Many have displayed the important role of service in their lives over the past year, through their service activities such as:

- donating food, toys or clothing to people who need them **(71%)**
- recycling **(64%)**
- raising money for an issue or cause they care about **(44%)**
- giving or donating their own money to something they care about **(39%)**
- volunteering or helping out themselves **(38%)**
- watching a TV show about an issue or cause they care about **(35%)**
- talking to friends, family, or teachers about an issue or cause they care about **(32%)**
- purchasing/asking for a product that supports or gives money to something they care about **(21%)**

Girls, in general, are more likely than boys to feel empowered to make changes in their world, as reflected by their choice of the following statement "I believe that all it takes is just one person my age to make a positive change in the world" well ahead of the alternative: "It's too hard for just one person my age to make a difference in the world" (56% girls vs. 51% boys). An even greater gap was seen among 6-8 year olds (52% girls, 45% boys).





## How many kids are volunteering?

The need for better, more child-friendly opportunities to give back.

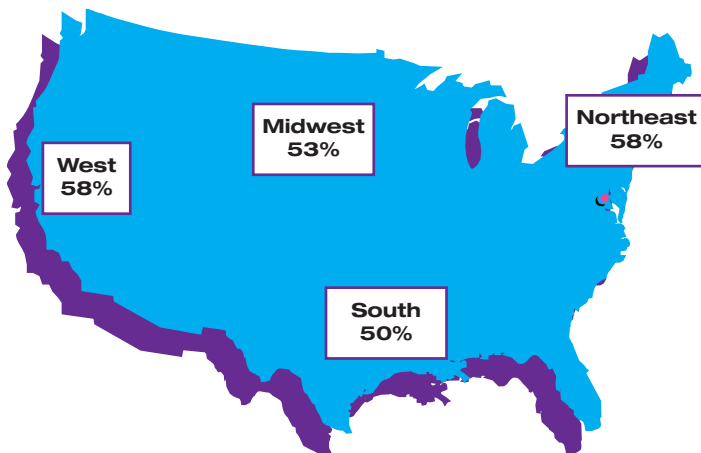
Though almost all kids would like to be more involved, only about half are actually participating in giving back to their community. There is much less opportunity for the younger kids to fulfill this need to give in their community and they simply can't take this initiative on their own. Youth need to be led to service; although more often than not it's someone else's idea to help (63%), they are genuinely glad to do it from the start (88%) rather than having to be convinced to help by someone (12%). Rather than being initiators of volunteer activities on their own (19%), youth participate in an existing group that gives them a chance to help (81%). Overall, youth also tell us that they would be more engaged in service if their friends were involved (49%), if there were more programs or opportunities for kids their age (42%), if their family was involved (40%), or if someone asked them to help (37%). Thirty-seven percent (37%) of kids, 44% of tweens and 46% of teens express they would do more in their communities if they were given the opportunity. When it happens, almost all youth (99%), report being at least somewhat satisfied with their chosen service activities.

the likelihood of child service.

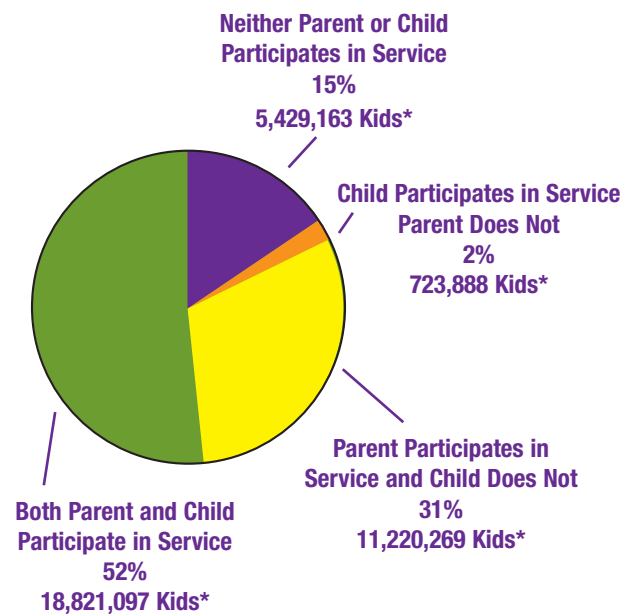
Forty-three percent of children whose parents are aged 20-29 report participating in service versus 63% percent of children whose parents are aged 60-69.

Parents' service status has a big impact on the child. If a parent takes part in some community service their children are most likely to follow suit. Children definitely do not initiate service activities on their own; only 2% of kids participate in some sort of service if their parents are not active. If kids are taking part in service they are usually joined by their family (52%), followed by people from their school (45%), their church, synagogue or mosque (35%), their friends (29%), an organization or club (25%) or else they serve alone (14%).

### Parental Service Participation Affects Child Service Participation



Youth service varies by age, gender, household income, parental age and even the region of the country in which a child resides. The greater a child's household income, the more likely kids are to give back to their community (household income \$175,000 or more has 75% involvement vs. household income of less than \$20,000 with 46% involvement). Also, as parental age increases, so does



\*Number of kids is projected based on the 2007 population estimate from the 2000 U.S. Census

Community service enables our youth to feel pride in what they accomplish, whether that be learning new skills or achieving a goal, along with meeting important social needs such as having fun and meeting other people. Causes that youth are likely to support vary slightly by age and gender though issues most vital to kids are hunger (60%), pet safety (59%), and safe places for kids (58%).

**Why do you volunteer, help others, or give back to your community?**



Among Volunteers	6-8 n=315	9-12 n=501	13-14 n=290
(Top Responses - 30% answering and above)	%	%	%
<b>It makes me feel good inside</b>	73	75	73
<b>I have fun doing it</b>	63	60	59
<b>I want to make the world a better place</b>	57	62	57
<b>Someday I may need help myself</b>	40	43	39
<b>I get to meet new people</b>	41	39	40
<b>I get to learn new things and develop new skills</b>	36	39	35
<b>I get to be with my friends</b>	42	34	34
<b>It makes my parents happy</b>	40	35	32
<b>I am very interested in the issue or cause</b>	30	37	34

## A major opportunity for commercial brands

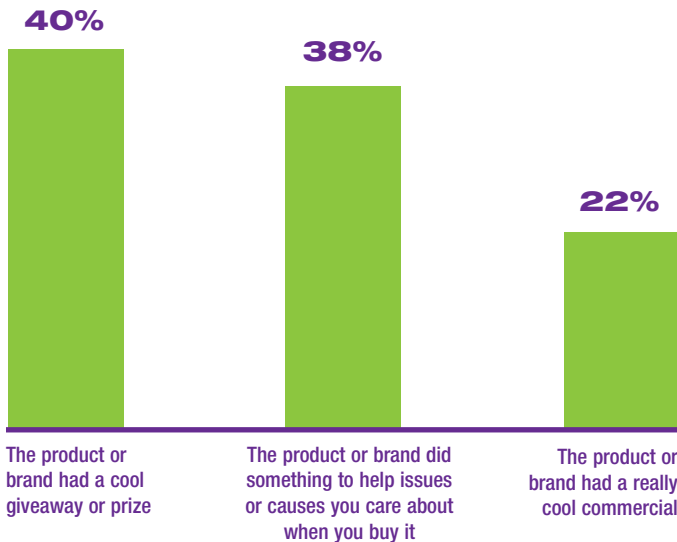
seeking a more positive and less objectionable way of building relationships with young consumers and enhanced brand trust among moms.

Given the recent and ongoing criticism of youth marketing tactics, judicious marketers are identifying other ways of communicating with their kid and parent audiences. When implemented responsibly and respectfully, corporate social responsibility, activism, and other community and social service programs can provide bold new avenues for brand and marketing communications and interaction. Smart companies need not abandon profit goals to achieve social responsibility. In fact, it may well be a way to build much stronger relationships with consumers as they are becoming increasingly concerned with social issues and how companies position themselves in relation to those issues.

## Brand Loyalty Starts in the Young: Youth Brand Connection

Kids have the power to purchase and influence their parents' purchases based on their loyalty to specific causes. When youth are asked what actions they would take to help the cause they care most about, over half (51%) would buy a product or ask their parents to buy a product that donates money towards helping their cause with each purchase. (This is the second highest action youth report willing to take in support of their cause.) In fact, children report they are more likely to purchase a product or brand that is linked to an issue or cause they care about (38%) over one with a cool commercial (22%).

Which would make you more likely to buy or ask for a product or brand?



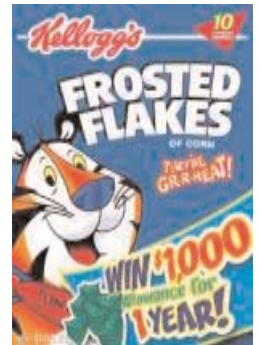
### Kids Display a Desire to Give Over Get

A strong example of kids' desire to give over receive occurs when we asked children if they were more likely to ask their parents to purchase a box of cereal that gave them the opportunity to win money or donate money to a cause. Kids are more willing to ask their parents to purchase a product that gives to a cause, than the same product that gives them an opportunity to get something for themselves.

Which would you be more likely to ask your parents to buy?



Now every time you buy Frosted Flakes, money will be given to build a hospital for baby tigers and other injured animals.



Now every time you buy Frosted Flakes, you will be entered in a contest to win a \$1,000 allowance for 1 year.

or

58%

42%

	Girls %	Boys %
6-8	64	53
9-12	67	55
13-14	61	44

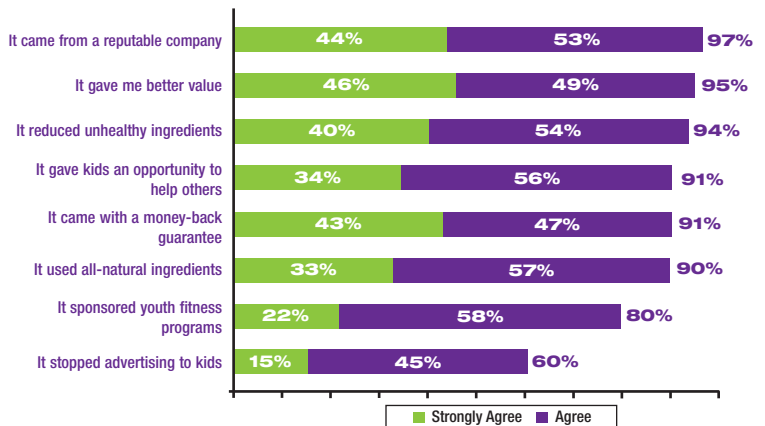
	Girls %	Boys %
6-8	36	47
9-12	33	45
13-14	39	56

### Developing Mom Brand Trust

There is a new emphasis on building brand trust among moms.

With more and more marketers of kid brands shifting to parent-directed messaging strategies, there is a new emphasis on building brand trust. An important way to connect with parents is by tapping into their goals and desires for their children. Mothers' number one goal for their child is for the child to grow up to become a good person (indicated by 91% of Moms). In fact, two in three mothers (66%) would prefer their children to be involved with charitable work instead of sports. It's no surprise, then, that over 9 in 10 mothers (91%) would trust a brand more if it gives their children an opportunity to give – far more than the percent that would trust a brand more if it stopped advertising to children.

I would trust a brand for my kids more if...



Cause-related offerings would also drive moms' purchase behavior. Moms say they would be far more likely to give in to a purchase request from their child if the product did something to help issues or causes (76%) instead of having a giveaway (21%) or a cool commercial (3%). Moms would also be more likely to procure their child's favorite food if it gave the child an opportunity to help others (35%) than if it had a fun toy or contest (6%) or featured a favorite character (5%).

If your child asked you to buy a new product you'd never purchased before which would make you more likely to buy it?

	Total Moms %
The product or brand did something to help issues or causes your child cares about when you buy it	76
The product or brand had a cool giveaway or prize	21
The product or brand had a really cool commercial	3

## A golden opportunity for the non-profit community:

A new generation of corporate partnerships funded by marketing dollars vs. foundation dollars

With the number of non-profits doubling in the past two decades, the competition to gain funding through corporate foundations has grown increasingly difficult. These data allow non-profits to open a new door to look for corporate funding, with marketing departments that have much larger budgets. These data are important to the non-profit community because the causes and issues that kids hold dear are the very issues on which non-profits have been looking to partner with the for-profit community for years. Non-profits and for-profit companies now have an opportunity to strengthen both of their brands simultaneously among kids and their parents by partnering to solve an issue or shed new light on a cause.

### A Path Forward

What the findings of these studies offer is a single solution for three seemingly disparate problems.

**1. Businesses can develop far more positive, less objectionable ways of building consumer relationships with kids.**

- 2. Causes seeking increased funding to support their mission face a new set of possibilities for more meaningful and enduring corporate partnerships and funding.**
- 3. Kids—most important of all—can be exposed to a greatly expanded set of opportunities that let them fulfill their burning desire to reach beyond themselves and change their world for the better.**

This, in turn, would produce a societal paradigm shift we can all get excited about...one in which we stop looking at kids as the victim of the world's problems and begin to see them for what they really are...an integral part of the solution.

For more information on this study and how Just Kid can help your organization create and test programs that leverage it, please contact us.

## Child Development Corner: Why is service “good for kids”?

Between the ages of 6 to 14 children are heading to adulthood by becoming more proficient, self-aware, autonomous and engaging to a broader social context outside their families that influences their development. Biological and cognitive changes continue to transform children’s bodies and minds. Social relationships outside the family take on a much stronger role as they enter school and involvement with peers expands. Middle childhood is a time when children develop a sense of self and sense of worth through their own comparison of themselves with peers. The years between 7 and 11 is a time when children should develop what Erik Erikson called “sense of industry” and learn to cooperate with peers and adults.<sup>1</sup> Children who do not see themselves as competent in academic, social, or other domains during their elementary school years report a host of poor outcomes such as depression, social isolation, anger and aggression.

Service provides an opportunity for kids to build their skill set and confidence in their ability to have a positive effect on their world. Adults who completed service as a youth have been shown to go further academically, be more civically engaged, and be happier overall than their peers who did not complete any service as a child.<sup>2</sup>

## 2007 Suite of Studies on Youth as a Force for Positive Social Change

Michelle Poris, Ph.D.

### Environmental Scan

Reviewed the existing programs that provide kids with an opportunity to change their world for the better and interviewed program creators to investigate best practices.

### Focus Groups with Volunteering and Non-Volunteering Kids

Conducted groups to understand the drivers of kids’ desire to change their world for the better, and the barriers preventing this.

### Kid and Caregiver Quantitative Study

Surveyed 2,000 caregivers and 2,000 kids nationally (ages 6-14) to understand youth impulses and motivation and ascertain the best way to convert kids’ strong altruistic desire into a brand-based program that can build kid consumer relationships with kids as effectively as traditional kid marketing tactics.

### Mom Quantitative Study

Surveyed 600 moms nationally to test moms’ receptivity to corporately sponsored programs encouraging her kids to be forces for positive social change and exploring how this type of program can build brand trust scores.

<sup>1</sup> Erikson, E. (1963). *Childhood and Society*. Norton Books, New York, NY  
<sup>2</sup> National Survey on Service-Learning and Transitioning to Adulthood (2006)  
Available at NYLC Resource Center [www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)

George Carey, CEO of JKI,  
speaks with Fox Business News  
about our research.

<http://www.justkidinc.com/resources.html>

Just Kid Inc. also publishes a  
New Product Watch newsletter,  
highlighting newly-introduced  
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