Creating better realities: A Content Analysis of the Kidlink website.

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Events like the recent shooting of high school teens and faculty in Colorado and the pictures of children fleeing Kosovo assault the basic assumptions that we hold concerning the media. Questions arise about media control and influence, media use, culture and change. Central to the issues regarding the media are an understanding of the processes by which we create meanings for our individual and collaborative realities.

Language analysis of course holds great promise for understanding meaning construction, (DeFluer, et al, 249). In fact, one of the leading intercultural communication theories about the processes of how we create meaning comes from the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Defluer and Ball-Rokeach refer to this hypothesis in their chapter on meaning construction. They concur that language serves as a guide to social reality and that "language powerfully conditions all of our thinking about social problems and processes," (DeFluer et al, p.251).

Underscoring the idea that language creates social reality is the fact that the "worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached," (DeFluer, et al, p.251). What do these language concepts mean for the "worlds" of mass communication effects and influences? What promise does the Internet hold for children growing up in this age of the Internet in terms of their ability to construct reality? How are the experiences and response activities of children using the Internet different as a result of their cultural background? In a larger sense, is it possible to describe a distinct "world" of the "Internet"? Is there a culture of cultures developing on the Internet's "network of networks"? How can communication, culture and the Internet be researched?

According to Rogers, leading intercultural theorists George Simmel and Edward T. Hall recognized that "culture is communication and communication is culture," (Rogers, 68). Communication is the processes by which we create our realities for we also learn about ourselves. People create, disseminate and evaluate subjective understandings of reality when they communicate. The part played by mediated communication in that process becomes increasingly important as people make use of the mass media and emergent technologies. In fact, children spend a great deal of their time interacting with TV, Radio, Video, Computers, Web, Gaming etc.

Children are undergoing enculturation through the language of their cultures. The language they learn, and the way they use it, enable children to create their reality, their identity and ideology. In some cases, a culture will teach that every one has the right to certain beliefs and value. In other cultures, the good of the community as a whole ought to be considered before an individual. Regardless of the various differences, children learn about these values largely via language. If we could analyze the language or words that they use, would we be able to discern the nature of their realities? We can compare the words they use to describe themselves now and in the future amongst their various cultural backdrops?

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the contents of responses sent to the Kidlink web site for the 15 day period from March 15, 1999 through March 31, 1999 and to sketch out a portrait of new member submissions.

Internet Research

With the rapid expansion of Internet technologies and the subsequent result of increased potential for global interaction via those technologies, the Internet has become a "poster child" for mass media research. The entire issue of the Winter *1996 Journal of Communication* established various theoretical and methodological frameworks for analyzing communication in this broad range of electronic and computer mediated communication. According to J. December, "the Internet cannot be considered to encompass a single medium, but consist of a range of media," (December, 17). In fact, these media do share some commonalties in that they are Internet-based and computer mediated. According to December, the "Internet is not a single network but a cooperatively organized, globally distributed system for exchanging information,"(December, 18)

Nevertheless, conducting research in this medium of mediums is not without constraints. M. Morris points out in the article, "The Internet as Mass Medium," that although there are some current theoretical constraints to researching the Internet, "the Internet allows scholars to rethink, rather than abandon, definitions and categories," (Moore, 41). Furthermore, Moore defines the Internet as a multifaceted mass medium, in that it contains many "different configurations of communication," and its "varied forms show the connection between interpersonal and mass communication," (Moore, 43).

December suggests using units of analysis for Internet based research that are focused on the various technological processes and events underlying Internet communication. For example, the basic units outlined are media space, media class, media object and media instance. These units help define the specific parameters under investigation. Perhaps they are a starting point to understanding the impact of the technological underpinnings of the Internet. Nevertheless, additional units of analysis could be developed to focus on the underlying human motivations for interacting with Internet technology.

Before applying December's suggested units of analysis for this study, it is important to understand some background information about Kidlink.

About KIDLINK

In the words of Odd de Presno, a Kidlink founder, "To understand Kidlink, a network for K-12 teachers that includes 27 conferences, private chat systems, and over 100,000 web pages, reach for its roots," (Presno, 43). Presno then describes an Internet communication scenario during Saddam Hussein's scud bombing of Israel in which some Kidlink students waited for their Kidlink "keypal" in Tel Aviv to reply. In fact, claims Presno, as a result of

sharing information over the Internet, the war is more than 30 seconds of TV news for these children, "it is a question of life and death for a good friend," (Presno, 43).

The official definition of Kidlink as posted on their website is "a non-profit grassroots organization aimed at getting as many youth through the age 15 as possible involved in a global dialog," (Kidlink, 1999). In order to promote inclusive participation in this global dialogue, Kidlink currently offers activities in the following 17 languages:

Danish	Icelandic	Portuguese	Turkish
English	Italian	Saami	Nordic Languages
French	Japanese	Slovenian	(Scandinavian gateway)
German	Macedonian	Spanish	
Hebrew	Norwegian	Swedish	

Kidlink began in 1990 when founders Odd de Presno, Nancy Stefanik, Knut Braatane and John Ord moved the Kidlink operations from Tymnet packet network and Sci Net Conferencing systems onto the Internet, hosted at the North Dakota State University's data center. From then on, the technological infrastructure, regional participation and non-profit funding have increased.

The technologies associated with Kidlink involves a range of available communication media. These include IRC, Listservs, archives, web pages, email, fax and other media. More than a technological forum or website, Kidlink is "based on the idea that getting kids together around the world to talk to each other will allow them a direct experience with friends having the common experiences of childhood but often in different circumstances," (Kidlink, 1999).   This commonality of childhood is one of the main reasons for choosing Kidlink as a source for analysis. In this study and in subsequent investigations, researchers can find examples of commonalties and develop some comparisons.

The Kidlink mission facilitates dialogue and that "by hearing a range of opinions and developing familiarity with different ideas we can hope to overcome some communication barriers and solve some problems in a more cooperative manner," (Kidlink, 1999). In fact, the purpose of Kidlink speaks directly to the need for society as a whole to promote identity, communicate to solve problems and be more cooperative in a multi-cultural global setting: "We hope that when Kidlink kids become adults they will take a more global and long-term perspective on issues, rather than acting to maximize local, short-term interests," (Kidlink, 1999). Because of the cultural differences across the globe, Kidlink espouses an inclusive and respectful approach: "Kidlink's participants live in countries all over the world. Their societies have very different views on social, ethical, legal, and moral issues. Kidlink encourages participants to value these differences, and use them as a means of helping their kids gain a better insight into all views of a particular issue," (Kidlink, 1999).

The following chart depicts the distribution of participating countries at Kidlink from its inception in 1991 through the current year 1999. Since 1991, there has been an accumulation of 127 participating countries. The data for this table were provided from the Kidlink web page entitled, "Countries who have participated in Kidlink". (Kidlink, 1999).

Distribution of KidLink
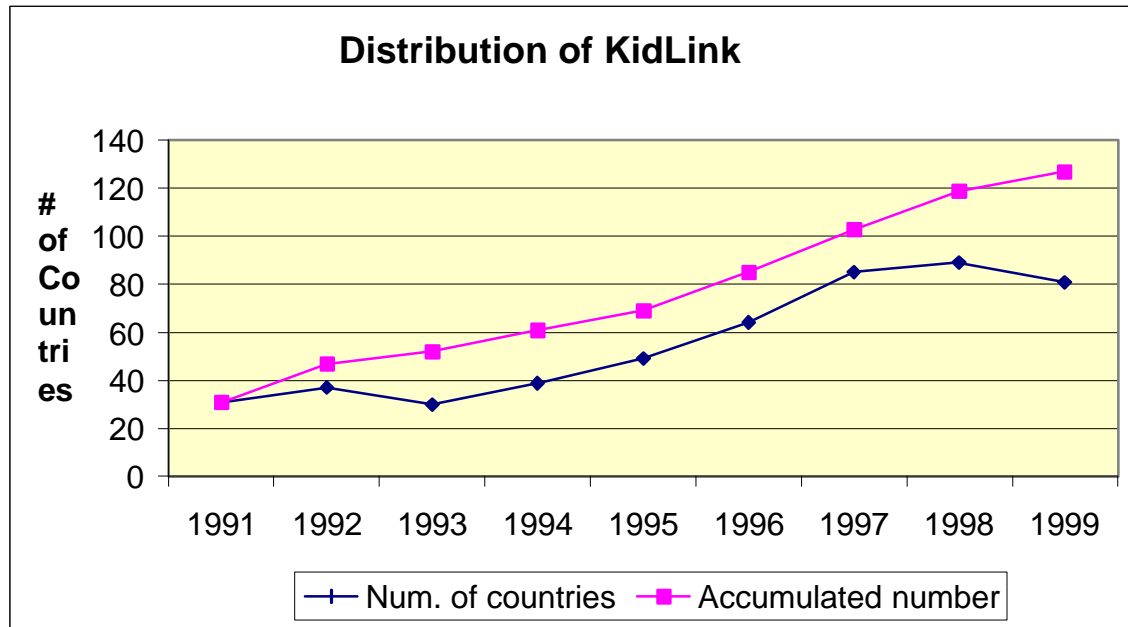
(Source: Kidlink webpage 1999)

The present study should be able to validate the diffusion of Kidlink throughout the world by finding responses from a wide variety of participating countries.

Finally, Kidlink also hosts a research institute that covers a broad range of studies about Kidlink. Independent studies have also been done. Falcon presented her experiences of working with street children in Mexico City using Kidlink. She found four types of interchange that occurred on Kidlink:

1. Friends communicating freely
2. Specific projects that children create
3. Discussion Forums with specific themes
4. Free forums of communication in real time in IRC, (Falcon, 189) .

In general, she found that Kidlink participation offered enhanced communicative opportunities for learning as well as serving as a pretext in using and learning from maps, encyclopedias and other materials. Perhaps most importantly, "they have learned that learning can be an enjoyable experience...and this is definitely worthwhile," (Falcon, 194).

The four types of interchange become available for members once they introduce themselves and answer the four Kidlink questions.

Methodology: Analyzing the Media Experiences as artifact

Content analysis provides a fruitful tool for analyzing communication and cultural inquiry interactions from the Internet. In fact, Thomas argued that content analysis is a preferred method for studying mass-culture artifacts, such as television, shows, movies and books, (Thomas, 683). In a recent study to understand children and adults information-seeking behaviors, Bar-llan and Assouline discerned patterns of member contributions to the PUBYAC listserv (Children and Young Adult Services in Public Libraries) using content analysis. Their study analyzed the artifacts of responses at the listserve which existed in a digested format received via email. For this study, the Kidlink Research Director was contacted and gave permission to access the archives of the four questions as well as other Kidlink Listservs.

December's definition of Internet media space as being a combination of media with variable distribution, time and sensory characteristics that are based on a client-server-content platform offers a clear starting point for identifying "Internet-artifacts" for analysis. From a human user perspective, a web space is a "seamless forum, in which users can observe any of the content from the servers in that space using their clients," (December, 26). Media space and Media Object are then defined to allow researchers more precision when investigating Internet-based communication. The Kidlink web site involves various media spaces and media classes with a variety of Internet-based and non-Internet media including IRC, Listservs, archives, web pages, email, fax and other. Kidlink can be considered as a media space since the technical infrastructure involves the client-server-content model and that there are "many different, (sometimes overlapping, sometimes disjointed) spheres of activity" on the site, (December, 27).

Kidlink can also be considered as a media class in that the web site consist of "content, servers, and clients that share a defined set of characteristics,"(December, 27). More importantly for this study is the definition of the Media Object and Media Instance. For example, at Kidlink the following English language list serve media objects exist for research:

KidCafe Individual	KidCafe Query	KidCafe School
KidCafe topics	KidCafe Coord	Kidproj

In addition to these Kidlink components, there are similar Listservs in various languages.

The Media Object for this study, then is the archive of listserv responses to four questions at the Kidlink website. The technical underpinnings beneath this object "for which the server, client and content are completely and unambiguously specified" further defines the

scope of this study, (December, 28). Nevertheless, because the opportunities for interaction and the actual communication occurring at Kidlink are so vast, it is important to more narrowly focus a particular Media Instance for analysis. For the purpose of this preliminary study, the Media Instance under investigation is the English Language listserv of responses to four questions at Kidlink web during a two-week period from 3/15/99 through 3/31/99. Finally, the responses themselves can be classed in terms of Media Experiences. In this manner, the responses represent an archive of actual written media experiences from children who have responded to the Kidlink 4 questions during the period specified.

To join Kidlink, children must be 15 or under and they must "submit personal presentations and views on the desired future of this world, by answering the following four main questions with their respective guided sub-questions:

1)Who Am I?
What is my full name? How old am I? Am I a boy or a girl? Where do I live (city, country)? What is the name of my school? What are some of my interests, hobbies, and concerns? What else do you want others to know about yourself?

2)What Do I Want To Be When I Grow Up?
Share your vision of what you want to be when you grow up in terms of work, education, and in general.

3)How Do I Want The World To Be Better When I Grow Up?
How would you like to improve the way we treat each other and the environment we share?

4)What Can I Do Now To Make This Happen?
What steps can you take now to realize your personal goals and your vision of the world?
Note that only your name, address, school, and country must be written in English. The rest can be in your preferred language. "(p)(December 15 1997-presno)

Through content analysis of the language that children use to identify themselves, their interests, ambitions and ideologies, we can develop a portrait of children's identities and realities across gender and region. More specifically, we can ask, what are the basic demographic characteristics of kids who have answered the four questions? Are there any significant trends regarding age, gender or region? Do females and males differ in their responses about interests and ambitions? Does either gender identify themselves within stereotypical interests and ambitions? Are there important differences or similarities among regions in the responses? What evidence, if any at this level, reveal the responses cultural underpinnings for a particular region's responses? How do children joining Kidlink characterize their ideological better future world? Do they suggest actions that are in accord with their beliefs? What does the selection of terms about ideology and action reveal about their values and the realities they want to create?

In this study, English Language responses were analyzed in order to discern children's construction of social identity, interests, ambitions and ideologies. These analysis cover responses from the four questions. In fact, Question 1, "Who am I?," was broken into two separate parts. The first part considers language used as social identifiers in terms of basic demographic language, (age, gender, region). The second area of investigation

under Question 1 classifies the language according to interests. Question 2 was used to analyze language regarding ambition. Questions 3 and 4 represent a set of that were used to investigate how the language children use paints a portrait of their ideology and reality.

The following table outlines the research matrix of Kidlink questions, various characteristics and research criteria:

Four Kidlink Questions	1.A: Who am I? (Basic Demographics)	1.B Who am I? (Interests)	2. What do I want to be when I grow up?	3. How do I want the world to be better when I grow up?	4. What can I do now to make this happen?
Response Characteristics	Name/age/country	Interests/Hobbies	Career Occupation	Concept of future	Actions
Sociological Categories	Social Identity	Social Identity-Interests	Ambition	Ideological	Ideological
Research Questions	1 and 2	3 through 6	3 through 6	7	8
Number of potential responses for analysis	129 randomly selected	288 (3 choices x 96)	288 (3 Choices x 96)	192	192
Number of actual responses analyzed	96 in English	196	140	131	116
Notes on category creation/selection	Demographic variables for age, gender and country of posting were analyzed. (Names were not used according to the Kidlink research policy.) .	Since many responses tended to have more than one signifier of an interest or hobby activity, each response was given three slots for analysis of this variable	Since many responses tended to have more than one signifier of Ambition, each response was given three slots for analysis of this variable.	Two slots were allocated for each of the responses.	Two slots were allocated for each of the responses.

Content Categories

Q1.a: Basic Demographic
The content categories for basic demographics of Question 1 were created from the source material and included:

Region: North America, South America, Europe, Middle East, Asia, Africa, Australia
Age: 10 and under, 11-12 13-14, 15 and over
Gender: male, female
For each category above an NA (No Answer) choice was included.

By analyzing the responses children made with regards to these categorizes we can answer the following questions:
1. *What are the basic demographic characteristics of kids who have answered the four questions?*
2. *Are there any significant trends regarding age, gender or region?*

Q1.b and Q.2: Interests and Ambitions
The content categories regarding interest and ambition were created through clustering responses into corresponding categories. Because there were so many responses that had multiple interests and hobbies, each response was allocated three slots for analysis. For each response, the first three interests were recorded.

For example:
"I like to play basketball, tennis and swim" would be recorded as 3 separate sports responses.
"I like reading and listening to music" would be recorded as 1 response for each category.

Q1.b: Interests
The second part of Question 1 regarding children's interests yielded the following 13 categories:

Sports	Arts	Learning-in general	Math/Science
Socializing-in general	Opposite Sex socializing	Listening to music	Pets
Collecting	Watching TV	Reading	Web/Computer games
Miscellaneous			

Q.2: Ambitions

The responses to question 2 regarding children's ambitions yielded the following 13 categories:

Don't Know	Professional Sports	Medicine	Scientist
Engineering/Busines	Arts	Teacher	Police/Soldier

s			
Lawyer	Agriculture	Journalist	Miscellaneous Career
Miscellaneous General life ambition			

The analysis of responses in the categories for both Interests and Ambitions can provide data in order to answer the following questions:

3. *Do females and males differ in their responses about interests and ambitions?*
4. *Does either gender identify themselves within stereotypical interests and ambitions?*
5. *Are there important differences or similarities among regions in the responses?*
6. *What evidence, if any at this level, reveal the responses cultural underpinnings for a particular region's responses?*

Q.3 &Q.4: Ideologies and Actions

What ideals do children at Kidlink express? How do they describe their future and the actions they can take to better it now? Analyzing their responses to questions 3 and 4 provide material for discerning their various ideologies. The content categories regarding ideology were created through gathering responses into respective categories. The categories for Questions 3 and 4 are a direct reflection of the statements children made in their responses. For example, in responding to Question 3, a child might indicate:

" I will try to stop the violence. I will make an effort to stop children from fighting and to get them to talk things over by loving one another". This would be recorded as an indicator of the "Respect/Love" category.

"Save the rain forest" would be recorded as a statement for Ecological concern.

"More peace, less wars" would be recorded in the "Peace/Equality" category.

Q.3: Ideology

The responses to Question 3 regarding children's ideological future yielded the following 13 categories:

Statements on Ecology	Statements regarding World Peace and Racial Equality	Statements about eliminating Hunger/Poverty	Statements about concerns for Personal/Community Safety

Statements about Respect and Love in relations	Generic "Happy" statements	Miscellaneous	

In responding to Question 4, a child might say:

Statements like "I could also try to stop pollution in my circle of friends", and "I can plant trees" and "Recycle paper" would be placed in the Ecological action category.

"Get along with people" would be a response that typifies Communicate/Cooperate actions.

Statements like "I can Protest" and "I would make a speech to the kids at my school and talk about peace and love" although involving communication , more directly refer to the "Get Involved" type of response.

Statements like "I have to do my best" and "I have to study hard" would be considered as a typical "Work Hard" response.

Statements like " I could collect money for charities" would be considered "Help Others/Charity" category.

Q.4: Actions
The responses to Question 4 regarding children's actions yielded the following 10 categories:

Statements about taking Ecological Action	Statements about Helping others and Charities	Statements about Communication and Cooperation	Statements about Getting Involved
Statements regarding Safe actions	Statements about Working Hard	Statements about Becoming a …(something or somebody with influence)	Statements about Thinking, Praying and Meditating.
Miscellaneous			

The analysis of responses in the categories for both Future and Actions can provide data in order to answer the following questions:

3. *How do children describe a better future?*
4. *Do they mention actions that are congruent with creating this better future?*

Research Questions

After applying the responses within the methodological framework it should be possible to determine some results with respect to the following questions:

1. What are the basic demographic characteristics of kids who have answered the four questions?
2. Are there any significant trends regarding age, gender or region
3. Do females and males differ in their responses about interests and ambitions?
4. Does either gender identify themselves within stereotypical interests and ambitions?
5. Are there important differences or similarities among regions in the responses?
6. What evidence, if any at this level, reveal the responses cultural underpinnings for a particular region's responses?
7. How do children describe a better future?
8. Are there suggested actions in congruence with their suggested better future?

Results

The response rules direct children to answer Question 1 in English and the rest in their native language if they so choose. Analysis was only done for responses in English. Nearly 75% of the 129 postings answered all questions in English. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine at this level of analysis which children have English as their mother tongue, their second mother tongue or those who are in the process of learning English as a second language. Additional theoretical and methodological investigations need to be developed to investigate these language relationships.

Geographic Distribution

South America
North America
Europe
All Other
NA
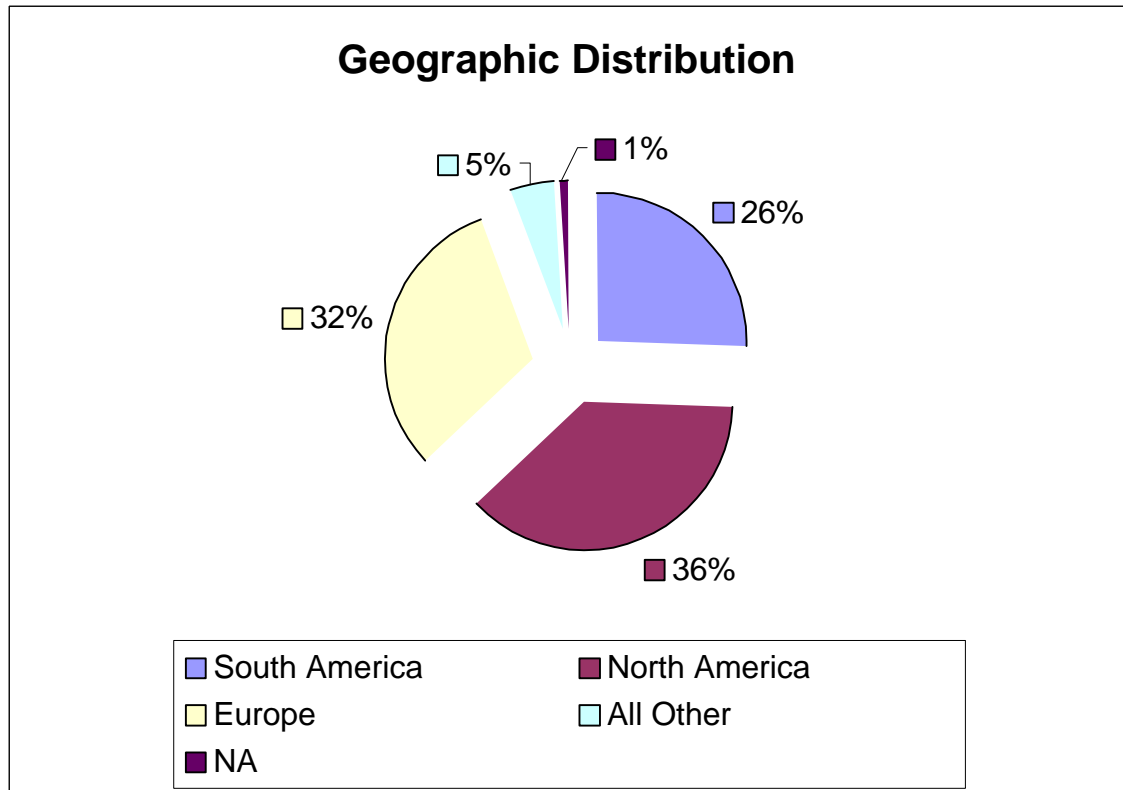
Geographic Trends?

At first glance the data reflects a wide array of country participation. In fact, responses from 19 individual countries of the continents of North America, South America, Europe, Africa-Middle East, Asia and Australia were found in the data. In terms of geographic region of origin for postings, the results depict an almost even split amongst responses from North America (mainly the United States), and Europe (mainly from Sweden, Norway and Denmark), with South America (mainly in Brazil) a close third. All other responses were low (6% of all) and were placed in an "All Other" category. These responses were from Australia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

In general, these results confirm that Kidlink is global and multi-cultural even when analysis is limited to English Language only responses.

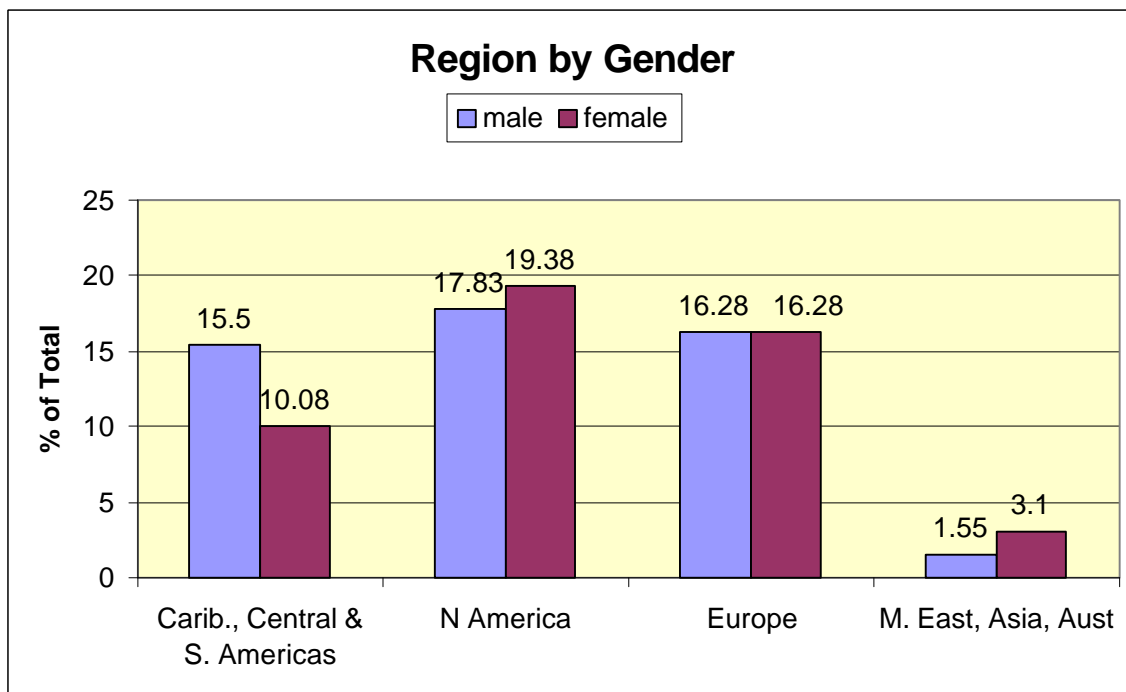**Age Distribution**
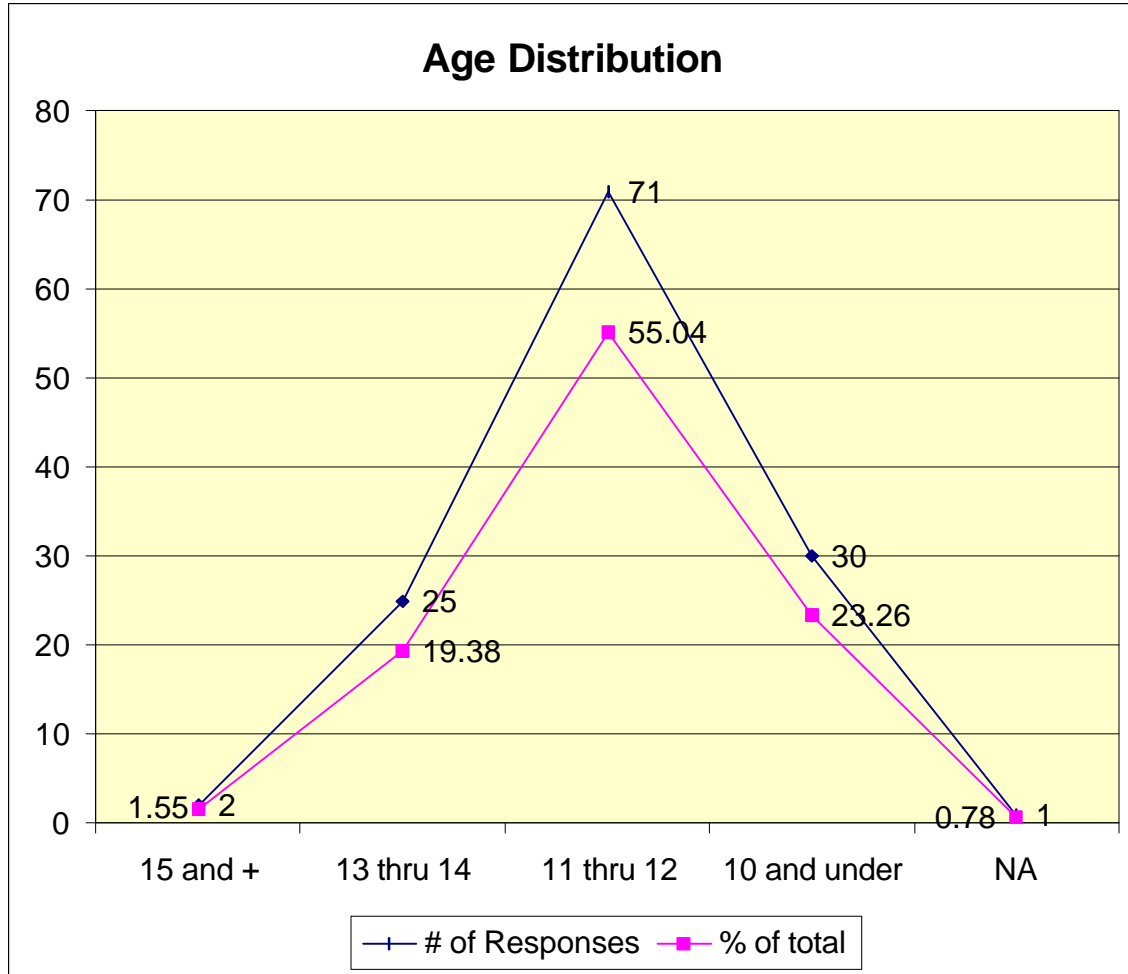
Age Trends?
The Kidlink on-line forums are for children to age 15. In this study, more than half of the responses came from children ages 11-12. Next, almost a fourth of the children identified themselves as 10 years old or younger while almost a fifth the children identified themselves as being from ages 13 –14. This data confirms Kidlink's age limits for participation with a frequency towards the center of the permitted range of ages.

Gender Trends?
Of the 129 responses analyzed for basic demographic information, 51% were male while 49% were female. In order to identify patterns or trends it would be necessary to measure gender distribution within a more historical context such as comparing male and female response quantities over the length of the Kidlink project. Current data are not sufficient to discern such a trend. However, we can ask for future research, do males predominate in usage of Internet Listserv at Kidlink? Has there been an increase of both genders in proportion to the user community?

Gender Distribution

49%   51%

- male
- female
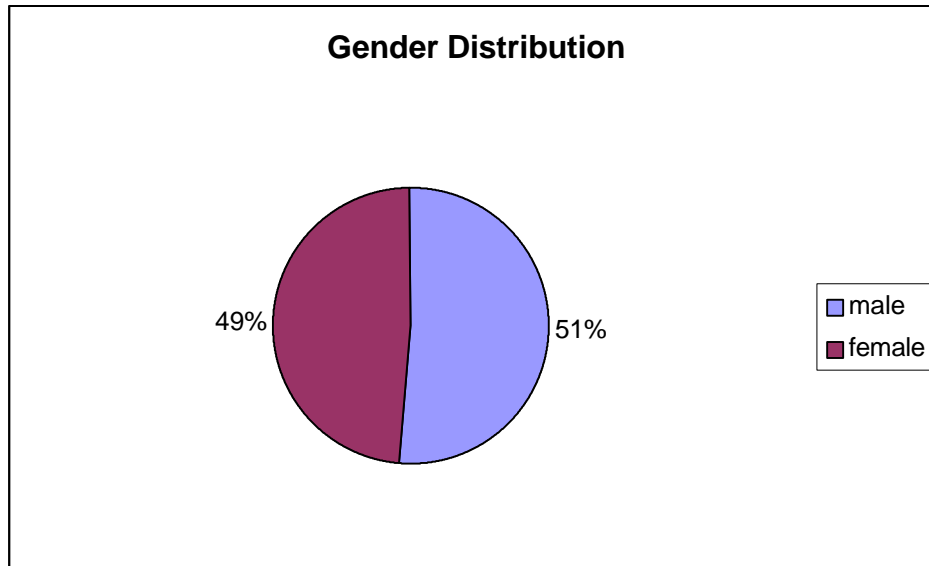
In addition to identifying answers to these questions, future research needs to take into consideration the relationship between gender and region. In this study, when it comes to gender, the results are varied along regional lines. For the European region, there were as many females as males. In North America and in the "Other" category, there were slightly more female responses than male. Finally, in the Caribbean, Central and South Americas there were over 5% more males than females.

Region by Gender

male   female

% of Total

Region	male	female
Carib., Central & S. Americas	15.5	10.08
N America	17.83	19.38
Europe	16.28	16.28
M. East, Asia, Aust	1.55	3.1

Future research is needed to determine the levels of Internet usage at Kidlink among males and females in various regions. In that manner, it might be possible to collaborate historical demographic analysis with cultural analysis for responses at this listserv.

Demographic analysis summary
In general, data confirm that Kidlink responses have been returned from a variety of countries across 6 continents but especially from North America, Europe and South America. This data may reflect either the historical diffusion of Kidlink into those regions or current communication, media or educational development projects in those areas. Additional research including interviews with Kidlink leaders would be needed to determine the significance of these results. The data do reinforce the age limits as established by Kidlink. In addition, while slight, there is no clear difference in the number of male to female responses. Looking at gender and region, it appears that responses from a European country have an equal chance of being male or female, responses from South America have a greater chance at being male, and that responses from North America and All Other points of origin have a slightly better chance of being female. Underlying cultural factors impacting this data can not be determined in the present study.
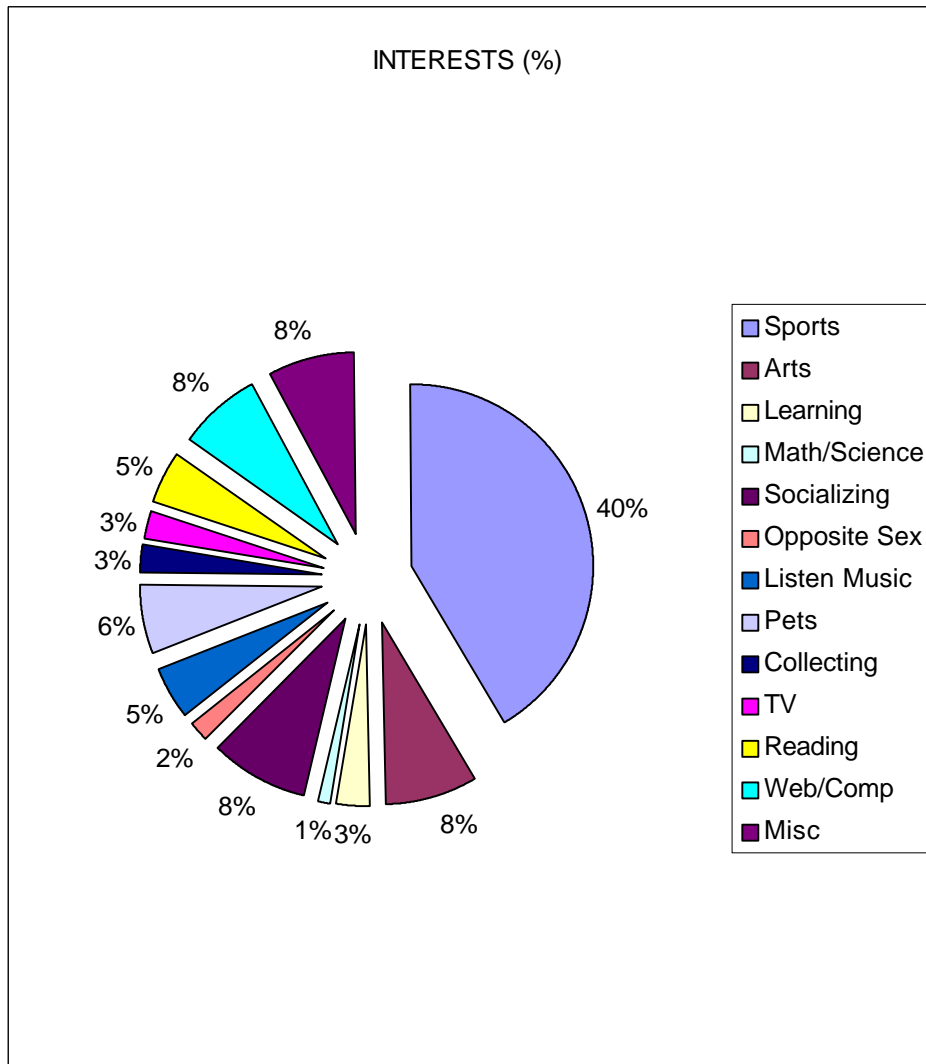
Interests

More than half of the responses given for this aspect of the first Kidlink question were from North America(59%). European responses made up for nearly a third(29%). Finally, South America and All Other made up only (12%).

**Interests: % of actual response x region**
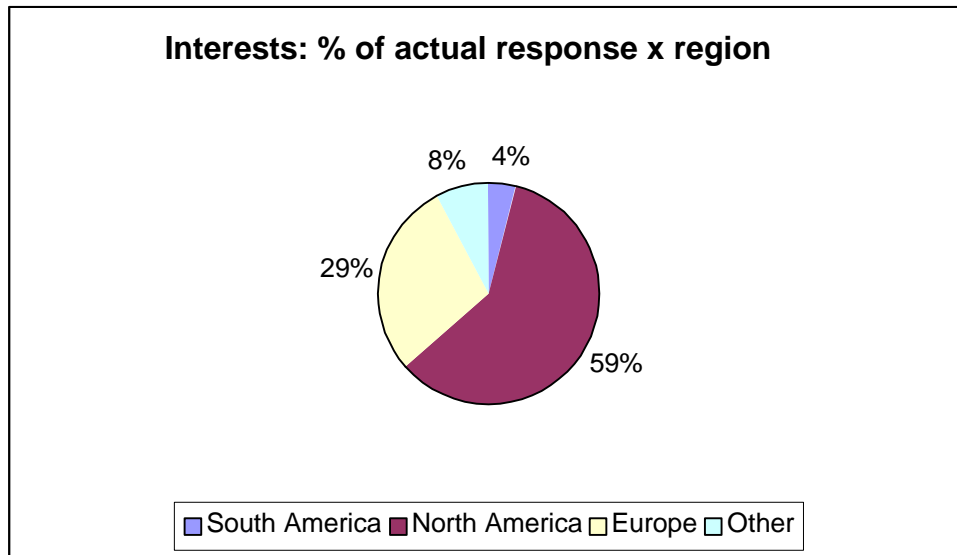
This data suggests that more than 50% of the time responses about interests came from North America. Or that at least more than 50% of the actual responses received that related to interests were given by children from North America. Does this mean they were more likely to list two or three interests? Does this mean that children in North America and perhaps in Europe also have more "Interest-seeking" opportunities? Further analysis of these responses about Interest by Region would be needed to determine the causal relationship between culture and current regional Kidlink development projects.

In general, the children indicated the following interests:

INTERESTS (%)

Legend:
- Sports
- Arts
- Learning
- Math/Science
- Socializing
- Opposite Sex
- Listen Music
- Pets
- Collecting
- TV
- Reading
- Web/Comp
- Misc

Children indicated Sports as one of their primary interests at least 40% of the time. The remaining 60% of responses were splintered into various interest groups:

Arts-8%
Socializing-8%
Misc.-8%
Web/Computer Games-8%
Pets-6%
Reading-5%
Listening to Music-5%
Learning/School-3%
Collecting-3%
Watching TV-3%
Opposite Sex-2%
Math/Science-1%

Interest by Gender

Male	Female
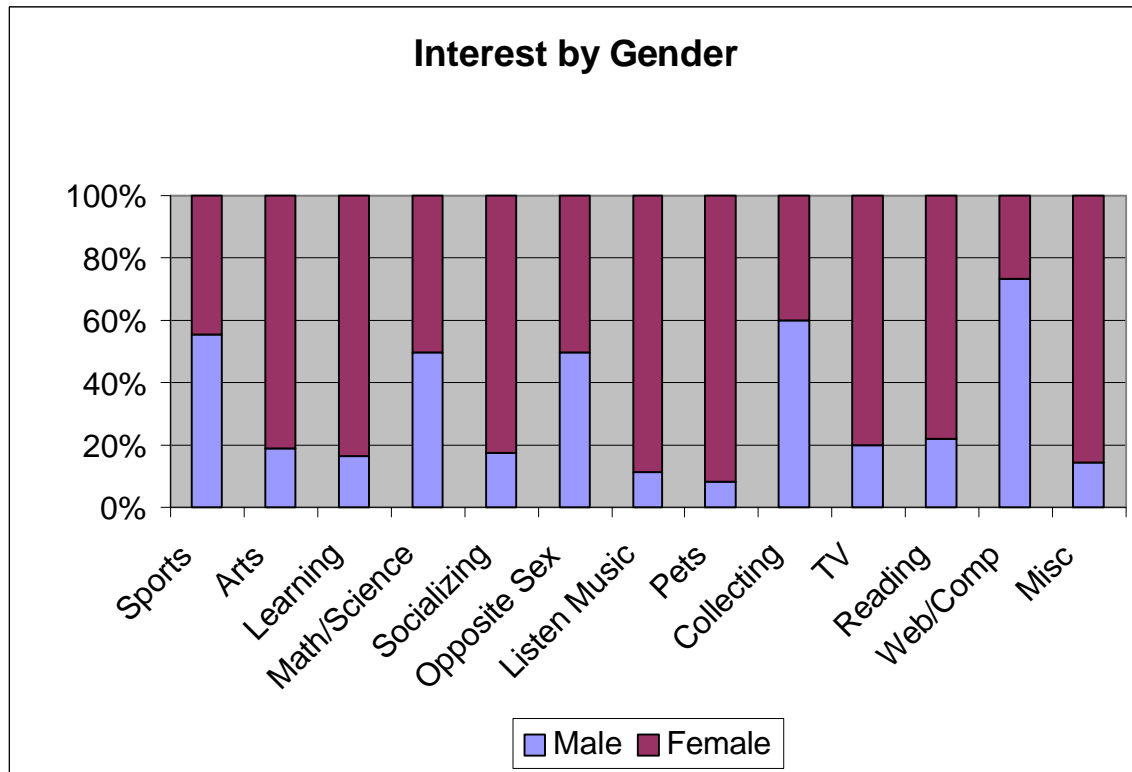
In terms of Interest Analysis by Gender, (keeping in mind that 88% of these responses were from Europe and NA), there are two clear findings:

1) Sports was the number one choice for both male and female respondents. 60% of male responses and 31.9% of female responses identified a sport for at least one of their interests.
2) The majority of female responses are characterized by a more diverse selection of interests. For example, when these three responses are combined, females chose the Arts(11.5%), Socializing (12.4%) and collecting (9.7%) as much as they chose sports. The male responses chose Web Computer Game at 14.7% as their second choice. The remainder of the male responses fell at 4.0% or below.

Interest by Region (%)
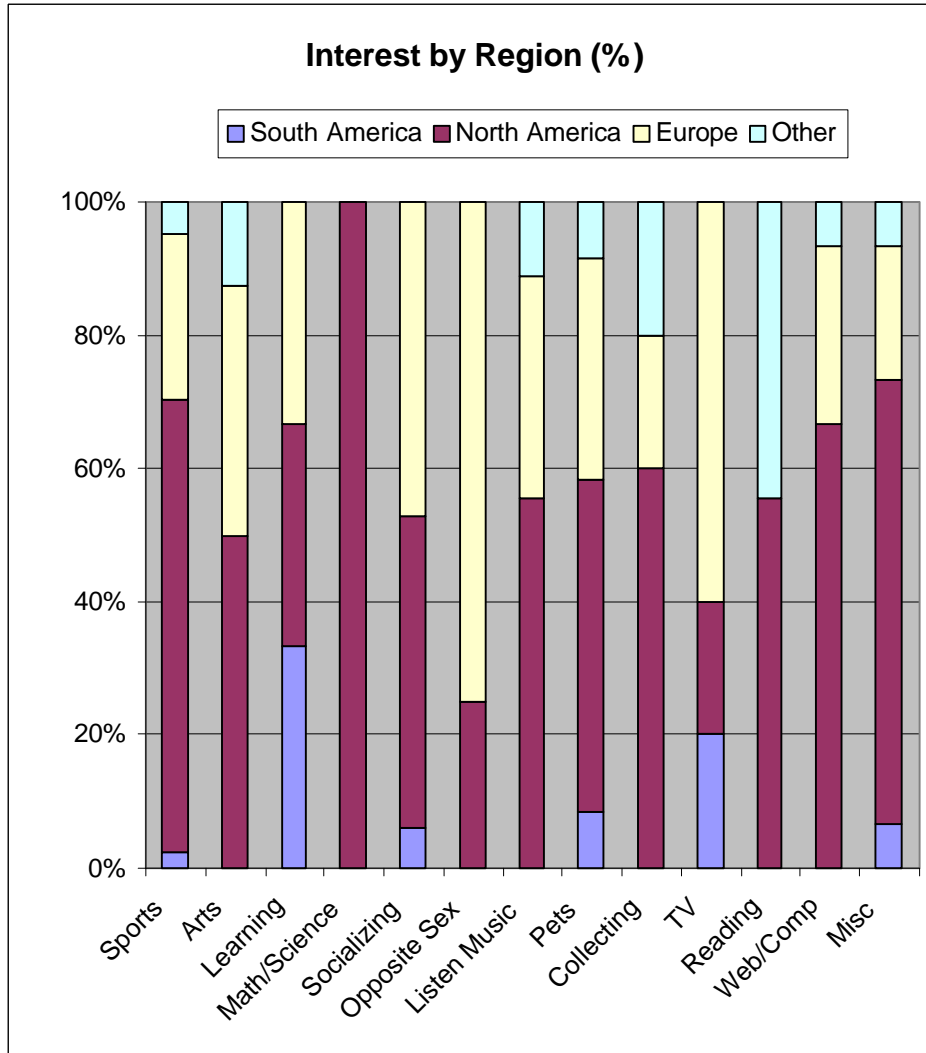
Analysis of responses by region must take into account that 88% come from either North America, (Mexico, Canada and the United States) or Europe.

81 responses were given for sports and North America comprised nearly 70%. Perhaps this may validate an enculturation of competition in North America. In addition, responses from North America led for the categories of Web/Computer games, Listening to Music, Collecting and Miscellaneous. Conversely, responses from European children were higher for categories of General Socializing, Opposite Sex socializing and Watching TV. Both Europe and North America were almost equal in terms of interests in the Arts and Reading. South America, North America and Europe were evenly split in the category of Learning/School as an interest. Nevertheless, more research and larger sample sizes must be drawn in order for this cross tabulation to be more geographically representative and meaningful.

Interest analysis summary

In summary, responses were highest from the North American region, followed by
Europe, South America then All Others. Sports was identified as the most popular
interest (40%) and the remaining 60% were split among the various categories. In regards
to gender and interests, males identified strongly with sports and their second most
frequent Interest was the Web/Computers/Gaming category. Females on the other hand,
while also choosing Sports as their most popular interests, also identified with a wider
diversity of interests. Thus in response with the questions of Gender stereotyping of
interests, the results show that Males did Identify interests commonly associated with their
gender, (Sports and Computer/Gaming). Females typically chose a range of interests that
included Sports almost 40%. Because the responses were so heavily from North America
it is difficult to undertake a meaningful analysis of differences or similarities among regions
in the responses beyond what has been postulated. Furthermore, it is not possible with the
current data to associate cultural underpinnings for a particular region's responses.
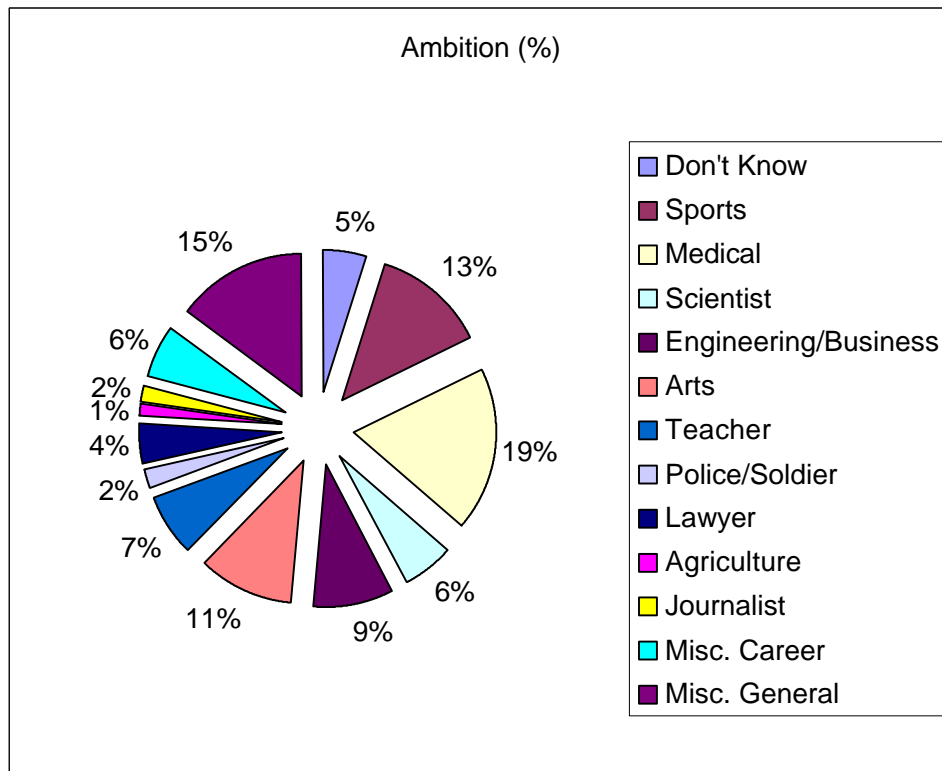
Ambition

While the number of responses for the Ambition analysis were less than the number
received for the Interest analysis, children still provided more than one choice. Therefore,
up to three slots were allocated for collecting each response.

When it comes to a basic analysis of the regional responses, this time only 50% came from
North America and 24% came from Europe. However, South America increased to
almost a fifth of the total responses for this analysis.

Ambition: % of actual response x region
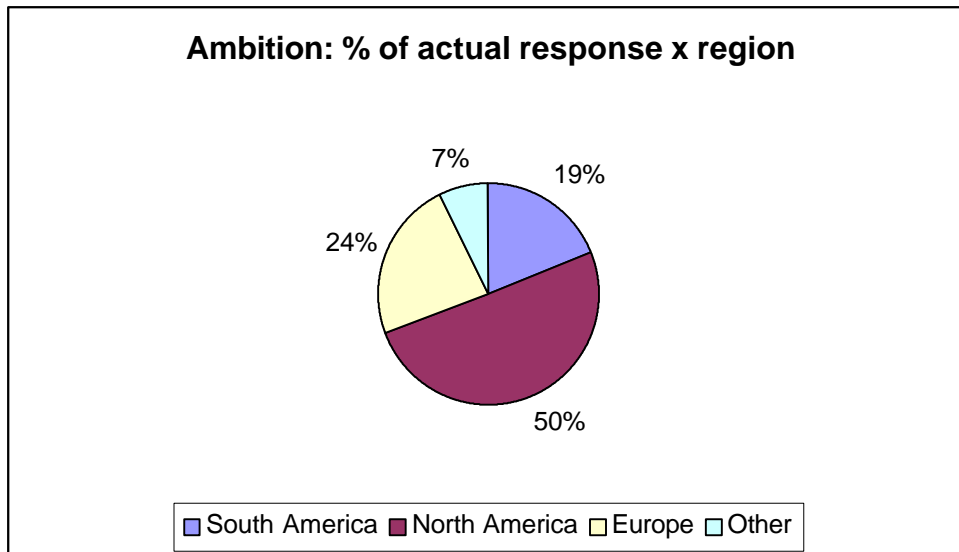
Children desscribed their ambitions in the following categories:
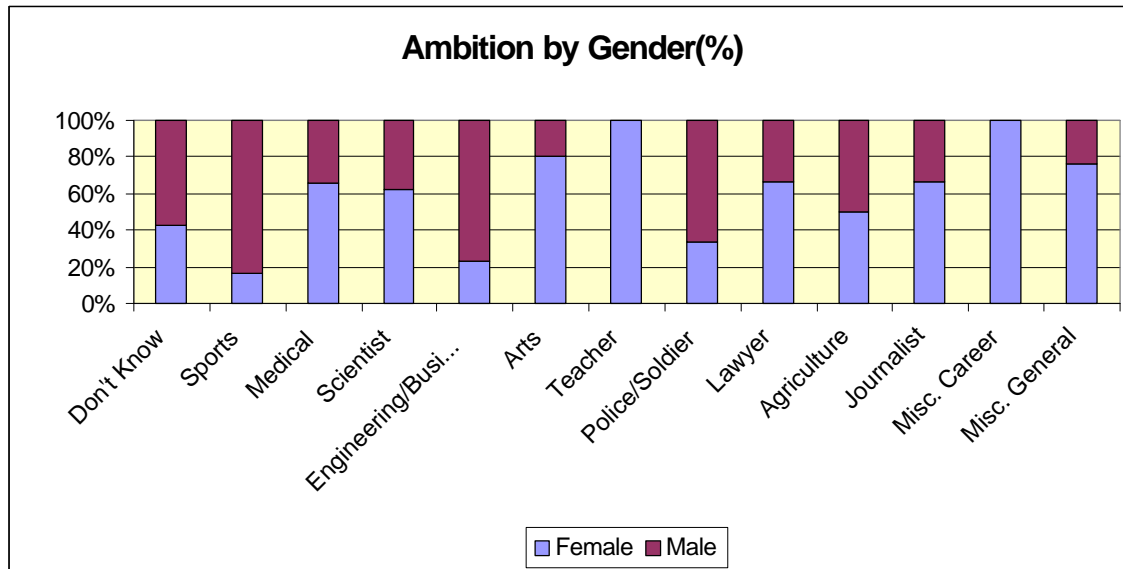

Ambition (%)

Almost 85% of all responses in the Ambition analysis listed specific jobs, careers or professions. The remaining 15% mentioned more general ambitions (designated in the chart as Misc. General) such as "go to college, have a family".

Unlike the Interest analysis, there is no large percentage for a single ambition. Instead, the lead category, Medical profession, had only 19% of the responses. General life ambitions comprised the second highest choice at 15%, Professional Sports was 13%, and the Arts were fourth at 11%.

The remainder were broken down as:
Engineering/Business-9%
Teacher-7%
Scientist-6%
Miscellaneous career-6%
Lawyer-4%
Journalist-2%
Police-2%
Agriculture-1%

Does this data suggest Kidlink children hold very singular ambitions? Why is it that they chose to identify General Life ambitions almost as much as any of the other four leading categories?

Ambition by Gender(%)

Will the analysis of ambition by gender be stereotypical?

Males led in the following ambition categories:
Sports
Engineering/Business
Police and Soldier

Male and female were just about even in terms of
Agriculture
Don't Know

Females led in most of the categories reflecting a wider diversity of Ambition:
Medical
Scientist
Arts
Lawyer
Journalist
General Life ambition (Have a family, Go to college, have a good spouse)

Females were the only responses in two categories:
Teacher
Miscellaneous Career

The data reveal that male children are more likely to respond along stereotypical lines with regards to ambition. Females in general chose more types of professions including Medicine and Scientist which had been typically viewed as male in the recent past. Therefore, one trend in terms of the relationship between gender and ambition is that females are identifying themselves with a wide variety of ambitions including previously held male ambitions.
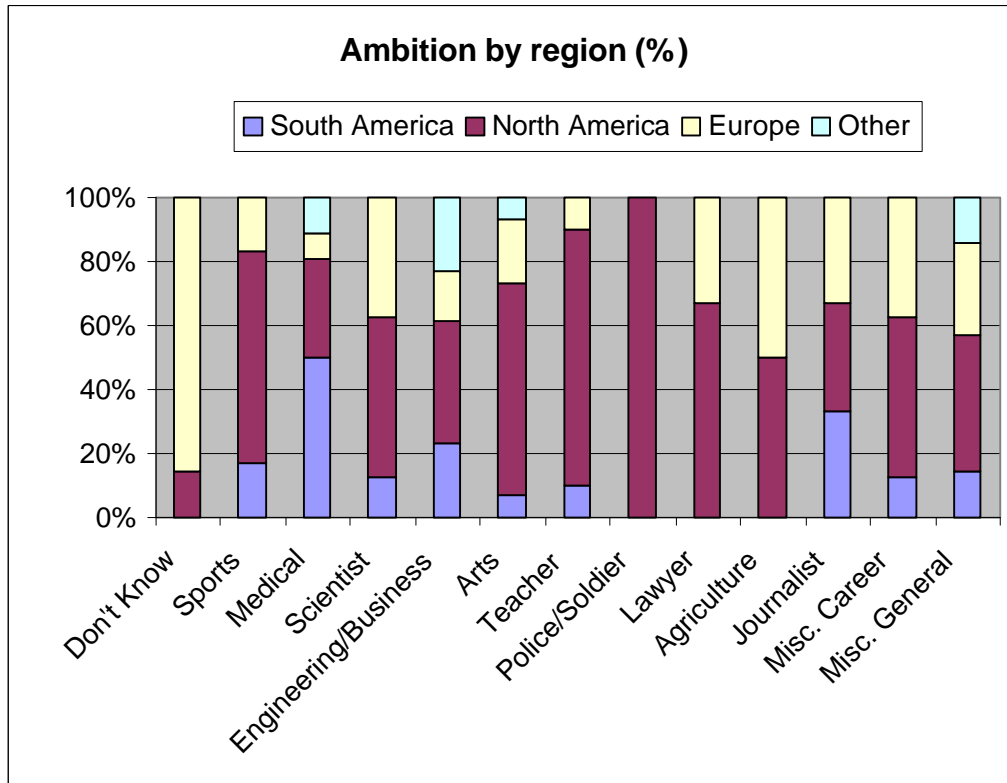

Data analysis revealed the following patterns in geographic region. For instance, North America led in the categories of: Professional Sports, Arts, Lawyer and Miscellaneous General. North America was the only region to indicate Police. Responses from Europe led the "Don't Know" and split almost evenly with North America in terms of ambitions for Scientist, Agriculture, and Miscellaneous Career. South America, Europe and North America split evenly on the ambition of Journalist. South America also led the responses for the ambition of Medical.

Ambition analysis summary
In review, responses were highest from the North American region, followed by Europe, South America then All Others. Children overall did not identify with one singular ambition and of the four most indicated the category of General Miscellaneous (Life ambitions) was second to Medical. In terms of gender and ambition, male children are more likely to respond along stereotypical lines. Females in general chose more types of

professions including medicine and scientist. Therefore, one trend in terms of the relationship between gender and ambition is that females are identifying themselves with a wide variety of ambitions including previously held male ambitions. Data analysis revealed a few subtle trends in terms of geographic region and ambition. Responses from North America indicated a preference for becoming a Professional Sports player, an Artist, and a Lawyer. In addition, children also mentioned the abstract Miscellaneous General about as frequently as other leading categories. North America was the only region to indicate Police/Soldier. Responses from Europe led the "Don't Know" and split almost evenly with North America in terms of ambitions for Scientist, Agriculture, and Miscellaneous Career. South America, Europe and North America split evenly on the ambition of Journalist. South America also led the responses for the ambition of Medical.

Future

Future: % of Actual Response by Region
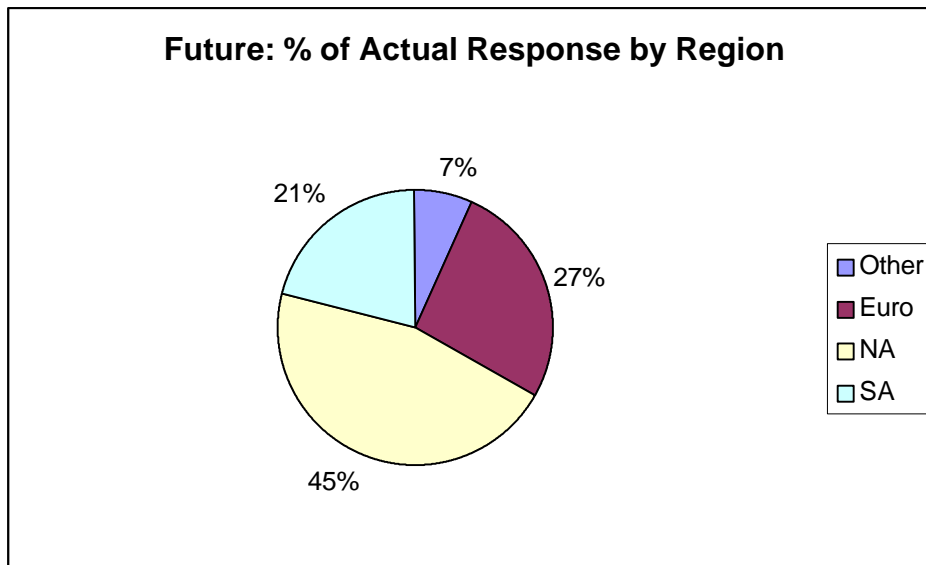
As with previous analysis in this study, North America had a higher number of responses but this time account for less than half of the total. Europe accounted for almost a third of the total responses and South America for a fifth.
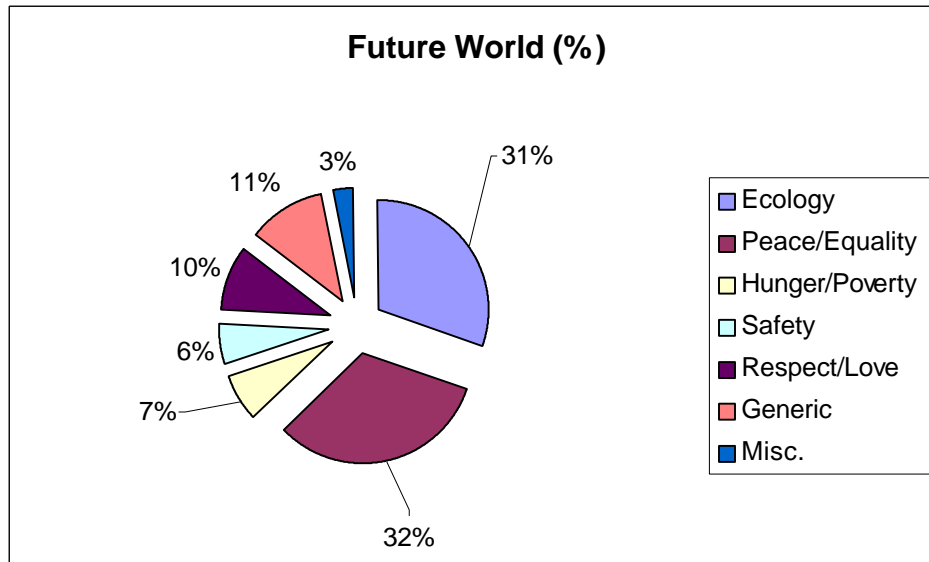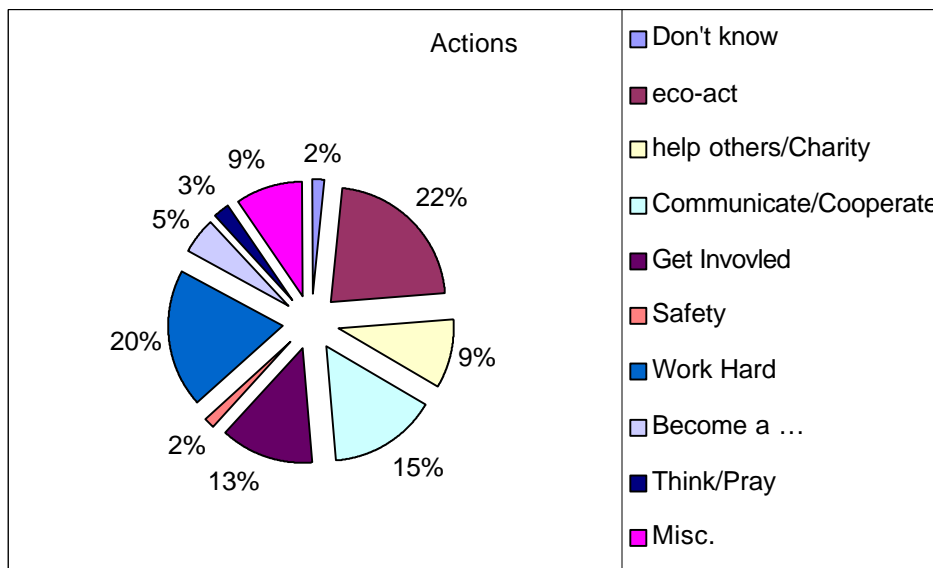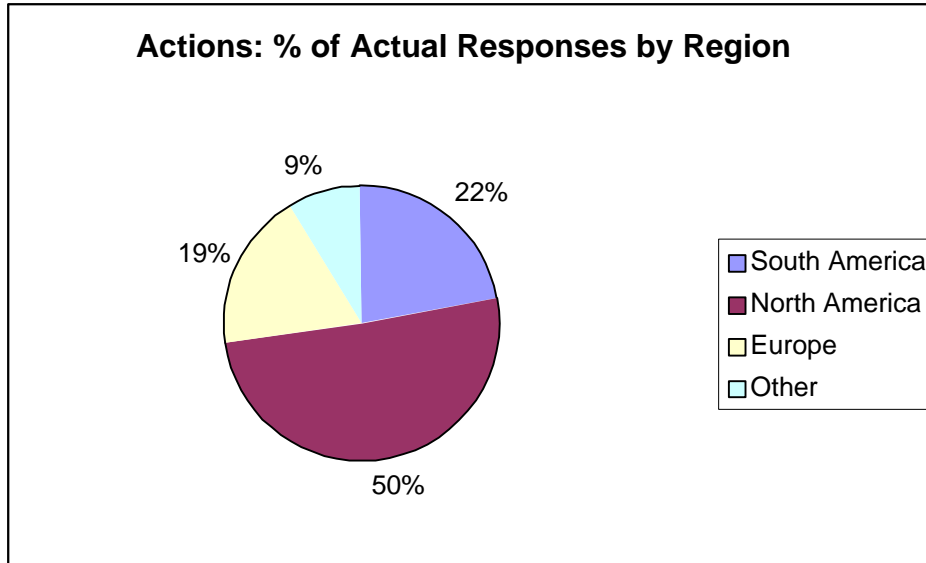
Future World (%)

For more than two thirds of the responses, children considered that a better future world would consist of World Peace/Racial Equality (32%) or an Ecologically balanced/clean Environment (31%). In addition they described a better world as "Generic-Happy Statements" (11%), Respect/Love (10%), Elimination of Hunger/Poverty (7%), Concern for Safety (6%) and Miscellaneous (3%).

The data suggest that children are strongly aware not only of current social problems but also with the solutions in general. In fact, their ideological better world consist largely of problems that ought to be solved. Rather than war there ought to be world peace. Instead of pollution and deforestation there ought to be a clean and ecologically balanced planet. Instead of violence and hate there should be respect and love.

Perhaps children are reflecting the values they are being taught in particular lessons at home and in the classroom. Nevertheless, they construct their ideology of a better world through the use of these values.

Actions
Again, the geographic response rate conforms with previous geographic trends with respect to regional source of responses. North America comprised 50% with South America (22%) and Europe (19%).

Actions: % of Actual Responses by Region

9%   22%

19%

50%

- South America
- North America
- Europe
- Other

Actions

9%   2%
3%
5%
20%
2%
13%   15%   22%

- Don't know
- eco-act
- help others/Charity
- Communicate/Cooperate
- Get Invovled
- Safety
- Work Hard
- Become a …
- Think/Pray
- Misc.

The most important figure in this data is that 98% of the responses indicated some type of action as opposed to the 2% who responded that they did not know what action to take. Children identified taking some type of Ecological Action 22% of the time. These ideas ranged from picking up litter, to planting trees, to developing solar energy. Almost as many (20%) of the responses indicated taking actions of Working Hard toward constructing that better world whether that meant through studies, future employment or relationships. In 15% of the responses, children indicate that the action to take is to better communicate and cooperate with others. Next, children identified with Getting Involved (13%), Miscellaneous (9%), Becoming a…influential person(5%), Think/Pray (3%), and finally being Safe(2%).

Again the data show children who can identify their ideological better future world by taking actions to solve social problems.

The children's ideological future and action responses provide a valuable resource for further analysis of construction of meaning. If possible, a glossary of ideologies could be constructed along with corresponding actions in order to develop a framework for further analyzing children's language. If our reality is indeed a product of our language, then it seems that these children who have expressed themselves during this brief moment at Kidlink are on the road to creating a more harmonious world and they are bringing the Internet along.

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