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Educating, Empowering & Engaging Through Film-Based Activism: A Survey of Invisible Children Participation and Impacts

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The Center for Unconventional Security Affairs (CUSA) was established at the University of California, Irvine in 2003 as the innovative hub of a global research network that studies and develops solutions to unconventional security challenges through practical research on sustainability and global change.

CUSA undertakes interdisciplinary research to understand and develop solutions to challenges such as human dimensions of climate change; the links between environment, conflict, and peace; global terrorist networks; and transnational threats to health and food security. In addition, CUSA's education programs prepare the next generation of leaders and researchers and our public service activities enhance awareness, preparedness and response to help policymakers and community address emerging security challenges that impact our families, communities, and our nation.

ABOUT TML

Founded by Beth Karlin and Richard Matthew in 2010, the Transformational Media Lab (TML) studies the potential and application of information and communication technologies and their implications for civic action and social change. Current projects investigate technology-enabled energy feedback, audience engagement in documentary film, and transmedia social action campaigns.

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Executive Summary

Although films have been engaging and inspiring audiences throughout their history, new information and communication technologies have opened up a whole new set of opportunities for film to serve as an agent for social change. One organization that has recently garnered attention for utilizing film as tool for social change is Invisible Children (IC). Founded in 2005, IC is both a media-based organization as well as an economic development NGO with the goal of raising awareness and meeting the needs youth affected by the ongoing war in central Africa. Although IC's development projects in Africa have been well-documented, much less is known about the organization's impact on the people who participate in their events, campaigns, and programs. How do participants learn about IC what are common modes of involvement? What types of people are attracted to IC? And what are the impacts of participation on people's knowledge, attitudes, and behavior?

This report presents analysis from a study of Invisible Children and its role in developing and leveraging civic capacity for social change. This study investigates IC as an agent of social change, with a focus on the development of capacity in its supporters. It aims to better understand the unique methods IC has used to empower and engage participants as well as the impacts of participation on them.

Online survey data was collected from 2,173 Invisible Children participants in September-December 2011. Open-ended survey questions provided participants the opportunity to share personal stories about their experience with Invisible Children; closed-ended questions measured exposure, participation, involvement, and outcomes of participants. Analyses reveal patterns of exposure and involvement in the organization as well as outcomes related to intrapersonal, interpersonal, and civic/political knowledge, attitudes, and actions. Findings include:

Sample: A majority of survey participants were female, under 26 years old, Caucasian, and from a middle-upper class background. Although not representative of the US general population, this profile is consistent with previous research on adolescent volunteers.

Exposure: Individuals became exposed broadly across multiple channels, including screenings at schools and places of worship, concerts, television shows, music videos and concerts, internet sources (e.g., Twitter, Youtube, Facebook), and school assignments. Secondary analysis of these responses identified three spheres of influence: organizational (e.g., school curriculum, screenings & events), interpersonal (e.g., friends, family), and media (e.g., television, bands, internet). The strategies used incorporated all three spheres as well as the areas in which they overlapped.

Outcomes: Over half of respondents reported that involvement with IC had increased their motivation to do well in school, opened up job or career opportunities, and helped them prepare for college; over three fourths reported that they started thinking more about their future. Over three fourths of participants reported that their ability to apply knowledge and skills to help solve problems or make meaningful contributions to the world had changed as a result of their participation in Invisible Children; over half reported that they had gained self confidence or developed and/or improved leadership skills. Over three fourths of participants reported gaining an appreciation for their own life, increased attention to world affairs, or a desire to promote social justice in society; two thirds reported that personal values or priorities had changed as a result of their involvement with Invisible Children.

These supporters also developed a set of skills and competencies based on this engagement. Survey participants reported increases in communication, organizational, and leadership skills. Reported communication skills included an increased ability to communicate both informally with peers and in more formal settings, such as public speaking, as well as increased skills in listening to and working with others and fostering community. They also reported gains in specific organization skills, such as event planning, fundraising, and problem solving, as well as leadership skills, including taking initiative, increasing self-confidence, and standing up for what they believe in. Specific responses such as “it made me my own person, and gave me confidence to believe I can change things in this world” and it “improved my ability to take initiative, voice what I believe in, confront people about social issues, and speak for those who don’t have a voice” suggest that IC did not just leverage existing capacity but also worked to develop it actively through its programming.

Our findings suggest that Invisible Children has been successful in creating enhanced social capital and civic capacity of its youth supporters. Participants reported increased motivation to engage in social justice, enhanced leadership and organizational skills, and improved relationships within and beyond their communities. In addition, the various forms in which participants were exposed to and participated in Invisible Children suggest that this capacity is being at least partially channeled back into the organization through fundraising and high levels of social diffusion of their message. These findings may assist in our understanding of the recent viral spread of the Kony2012 video.

The idea that films have impact is often discussed, promoted, criticized, and argued but rarely studied. *"It is not unreasonable to assume that such film campaigns, just like any policy or program, have the possibility to influence viewers' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Measuring this impact has become increasingly important, as funders of documentary and issue-based films want look to understand the "return on investment" of films in terms of social impact so that they can compare them with other projects, including non-media, direct service projects. Although we "feel" like films make a difference to the individuals who also see them in the broader cultures in which they are embedded, measurement and empirical analysis of this impact are vitally important for both providing feedback to filmmakers and funders as well as informing future efforts attempting to leverage film for social change."* (Karlin & Johnson, 2011).

Learning from the case of Invisible Children can be of great service to other groups trying to leverage youth capacity for social change as well as enhance our understanding about how people are interacting with our changing media ecosystem. Results have implications, not only for other film campaigns, but for any organization trying to leverage media for social change.

1. Introduction

Documentary film has been used as a tool for promoting social change throughout its history. John Grierson, who coined the term 'documentary' in 1926, believed that it could be used to influence the ideas and actions of people in ways once reserved for church and school (1996). From the propagandist war films of the 1940s to the historical documentaries in the 1980s, filmmakers have leveraged the use of documentary to educate, persuade, and engage audiences in social issues (Barnouw, 1993). However, the recent upsurge in popularity of documentaries, combined with advances in information and communication technology have opened up a whole new set of opportunities for film to serve as an agent for both individual and social change.

One such opportunity is in the creation of film-based action campaigns. Over the past decade, filmmakers have taken a more active role in promoting social change by coordinating film release with a specific issue, event, protest, or organization. Companies such as Participant Media (e.g., *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Waiting for Superman*) now create "specific social action campaigns for each film and documentary designed to give a voice to issues that resonate in the films" (Participant Media, 2011). These campaigns utilize a broad array of strategies to engage audience members, including action kits, curriculum, podcasts, and social media that often continue beyond the film's release. This combining of new technologies with traditional movement strategies such as rallies, protests, and congressional lobbying efforts is creating a new form of civic engagement and potential soft power about which little is known.

The idea that such films have impact is often discussed, but rarely studied. "Although we "feel" like films make a difference to the individuals who also see them in the broader cultures in which they are embedded, measurement and empirical analysis of this impact are vitally important for both providing feedback to filmmakers and funders as well as informing future efforts attempting to leverage film for social change." (Karlin & Johnson, 2011). Without formulating hypotheses about the relationships between program activities and impacts and then collecting and analyzing data to test them, it is difficult to learn ways to improve programs (or continue doing what works best in the most efficient manner). Attention to this process enables those involved to learn more about, not only what works, but how and why it works and even gain insights about how program outcomes may be affected by changes to resource availability, potential audiences, or infrastructure.

This new breed of documentary films clearly has a role in inspiring/educating the masses about important social and environmental issues and developing civic capacity and soft power for these issues, but much is still largely unknown. Scholars in the recent past have criticized the lack of scientific inquiry on the subject, stating that "the underlying assumption of most social documentaries—that they shall act as agents of reform and change—is almost never demonstrated" (Winston, 1995, p. 236) and that "documentary film, despite its growing influence and many impacts, has mostly been overlooked by social scientists studying the media and communication" (Nisbet & Aufderheide, 2011, p. 451). There is clearly a need for theoretical and empirical inquiry into this important and growing field. This study begins to address this need through an evaluation of the direct impacts of one such organization on its supporters and participants.

1.1 Background

One organization that has recently garnered attention for utilizing film as tool for social change is Invisible Children (IC). IC rocketed to global fame in March 2012 with the release of their ‘Kony 2012’ video, which accrued a record hundred million views in a week as well as a great deal of both support and criticism from around the world. But this was not the first film from this group nor was it their first success in garnering media attention.

In the Spring of 2003, three young men traveled to Africa in search of firsthand experience of the troubles of third world countries. They utilized film to tell the story of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and war-torn life in Northern Uganda; their goal was to inform the western world about a war that garnered little public attention. They first screened their ‘rough cut’ of the film in 2004 and established a non-profit organization the next year, with a dual mission to “stop the LRA violence and support the war-affected communities in East and Central Africa [and to] empower young people to ‘do more than just watch,’ to take steps towards ending injustice” (Invisible Children, 2012). Thus, Invisible Children is both a media/advocacy organization as well as a direct service organization. They support this mission in three ways:

1. Increase awareness of the LRA through creation and distribution of documentary films.
2. Channel energy from viewers/supporters into large-scale advocacy campaigns.
3. Operate programs in LRA-affected areas to provide protection, support, and reconstruction.

Invisible Children has reported many successes in their work in Africa, including schools built, a rehabilitation center for child soldiers, and the establishment of the LRA CrisisTracker. They have also tracked the direct impacts of their media and advocacy, including screenings at thousands of schools and places of worship, nationwide protests and lobbying efforts, and even legislation signed by President Obama. Through a combination of biannual film “tours”, fundraising drives, extensive use of social media, and traditional grassroots organizing, Invisible Children has been able to “mobilize large number of supporters in virtual and assemble large number of supporters in physical space” (Pepper, 2009).

Although Invisible Children’s success in creating a social movement and subsequent social change has been well documented, much less is known about the organization’s impact on the people who participate in their events, campaigns, and programs – the students, teachers, roadies, volunteers, and others who have been exposed to and/or involved in Invisible Children. This paper presents findings from a study of Invisible Children that seek to understand the unique methods the organization employs to empower and engage individuals as well as the impacts of their program on them. We seek to identify whom IC is reaching, how they are reaching them, how they become and stay involved, and how they are developing capital (intellectual, social, political, and financial) through these individuals. How does involvement with Invisible Children impact people’s knowledge, attitudes, and behavior? And what are the implications of these changes for Invisible Children and potentially for other NGOs and governmental agencies? Answering these questions, with a focus on the youth that make up the bulk of Invisible Children supporters, is the goal of this report.

1.2 Literature Review

Our approach was informed by past theory across the fields of communications, psychology, education and political science as well as by practitioners within the documentary film community. A brief review of this literature follows.

1.2.1 Media Impacts

When analyzing the impacts of media content, traditional metrics tend to focus on ratings and revenue, but media with a social agenda must broaden its efforts to understand and measure impact. Whiteman (2004) introduces a “coalition model” of activist media, in which stakeholders include both filmmakers and activist groups and impacts include both the individual and the policy level. Individual impacts include educating people, mobilizing members for action, and raising group status. Policy impacts include altering both agenda for and the substance of policy deliberations.

Whiteman (2002) suggests that the impact of a film is affected not only by production (e.g., content creation), but also by distribution and mobilization. Once produced, activists can use a film to create a public space within which citizens and decision makers can encounter, discuss and act on the issues raised. Impact is related to the way that groups reach audiences and who the audience encompasses: the larger and more diverse the audiences, the greater the potential impact. Beyond distribution, filmmakers vary in the extent to which they facilitate political action. Films have provided audiences with a variety of options for action: studying the issues further, writing letters to representatives, joining an activist group, or engaging in direct action. A coalition model of media impact, therefore, incorporates the distribution as well as the production process as well as the full range of potential impacts for both individuals and systems.

The Fledgling Fund (Barrett & Leddy, 2008) expand on this model, identifying five potential impacts of issue-based film: (1) Quality: How is the film received by an audience? (2) Public Awareness: Are people more aware of the issue? (3) Public Engagement: Are people taking action? (4) Social Movement: Are people engaging in collective action for a common goal? (5) Social Change: Has systemic change taken place? These impacts move from individual viewers to groups, movements, and to what they call the "ultimate goal" of social change. However, they emphasize that not every project may result in concrete policy change or even seek to do so. “The goals of the project and our expectations will be driven by where an issue is in the public consciousness and the role a film can play, given its narrative, in the process of social change. It may be that film can play a key role in raising public awareness and educating key target audiences about a particular issue. In other cases, there is the potential for substantive policy change. The key for each project is to understand the state of the movement and how the film and outreach initiative can move it to the next level. In other words, we need to be clear as to what type of outreach is most appropriate and set reasonable expectations in terms of impact.” (Barrett & Leddy, 2009, p. 7). So, although a film or media project may not represent a sole solution to a pressing social issue, it can have a strong influence as a source of mobilization. “Films should be viewed as embedded within a larger “discourse culture” surrounding an issue, influencing activist groups, stakeholders, decision makers, and journalists across stages of film production and distribution.” (Nisbet, 2007, p. 4)

1.2.2 Latent and Manifest Functions

As suggested above, potential impacts of film may not be direct or even immediately recognized outcomes, but rather may represent indirect or latent functions. Robert Merton (1968) introduced the distinction between manifest and latent functions of an action, policy, or program. “Manifest functions are those objective consequences contributing to the adjustment or adaptation of the system that are intended and recognized by the participants of the system; Latent functions, correlatively, being those which are neither intended nor recognized” (p. 105). This distinguishes function from motive, emphasizing that any activity or system is likely to have multiple functions, including some that may not be explicitly stated, intended, or even recognized. For example, the manifest function of a carpool program may be to decrease freeway and parking congestion, but carpooling can enhance bonds between individuals and create an enhanced sense of self-efficacy for those who participate. It is also possible that individuals who originally carpooled to save money or time grew to adopt environmental attitudes related to this behavior that then translated to other behaviors. This is not to say that this is a necessary consequence of carpool programs; only that there are many possible consequences beyond those which are traditionally intended or recognized. Merton also asserted, “just as the same item may have multiple functions, so may the same function be diversely fulfilled by alternative items.” In other words, there are many different ways to fulfill any given function. As such, when considering a function such as ending a war, no single social practice, policy or institution is indispensable or solely responsible; it is possible to identify a range of “functional alternatives” and explore how they may also contribute to the desired function.

Recent decades have seen an increased focus on collaboration in solving our most pressing social and political issues, bringing together functional alternatives to work towards a combined goal. However, the research has largely focused on evaluating intended (manifest) outcomes rather than latent function of the collaborative process (Koontz & Thomas, 2006; Provan & Milward, 2001). Bardach (1998) suggests an alternate approach that views the structures of collaboration as “latent potentialities that operate only if they are properly actualized” (p. 49). Thus, potential impact goes beyond specific goals to the development of *collaborative capacity*, or “the potential to engage in collaborative activities rather than the activities themselves”. This potential includes both objective components (e.g., documents, policies, and allocation of resources) and well as subjective components (e.g., expectations, skills, and abilities of the individuals involved). This potential, Bardach contends, is an often neglected, yet equally important function of collaborative processes.

1.2.3 Civic Capacity

This same concept of capacity as a resource has been applied to individual citizens and communities in the form of civic capacity, which is “the ability to build and maintain a broad social and political coalition across all sectors of the urban community in pursuit of a common goal” (Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierannunzi, 2001). This type of capacity building has been a common theme in community development for many decades (McNeeley, 1999), but is relatively new in discussions of national or global capacity. Civic capacity does not necessarily refer to specific outcomes, but rather to “the ability to participate in public life with the result of more democratic governance at various scales” (Saegert, 2004, p. 4). Civic capacity is developed through community building efforts that increase social capital of individuals and contribute to a shared civic agenda; over time, this civic capacity leads back to further community building activity. “Even failures to achieve particular goals may lead to important learning and new strategies that do eventually succeed, and the learning itself is part of the development of community civic capacity.” (p. 38)

1.2.4 Youth Engagement

There has been a large focus on developing civic capacity among youth, but past decades have seen decreased engagement of today's youth to overall American public life (Carpini, 2000). One possible cause for this is a decreased sense of efficacy; youth may feel as if participation in public life is futile and/or ineffective and pick up the mentality that they alone cannot do anything about it, rendering public life involvement useless. Another potential cause is lack of opportunity; there may not be sufficient actions present in which youth can actually engage. A third consideration is that the presentation of social issues in mainstream media, which may be specifically tailored to more age mature audiences, further decreasing young audiences motivation to become involved. Caprini concludes that youth "are disengaged because they are alienated from the institutions and processes of civic life and lack the motivation, opportunity and ability to overcome this alienation" (p. 345).

A report for the Forum for Youth Investment calls for an increased focus on reversing this trend and suggests that some of this work is already taking place (Ferber, Irby, & Pittman, 2001). "The vision, simple but powerful, is youth action: young people making a difference in their communities — often in partnership with adults — to effect changes in things that are important to them and the community at large." (p. 2). They cite three trends that will advance this agenda - advances in understanding how to address the needs and desires of youth; convergence of interest between diverse groups who see youth as potential agents of change; and youth themselves stepping to the forefront to take on local and global challenges.

1.2.5 Digital Media

There has also been a recent emphasis on the potential of new technology to change how people, and especially youth, interact with information (Flanagin & Metzger, 2008). The amount of time youth spend exposed to media is unprecedented. Roberts & Donald (2000) found that American youth (aged 8-18) devote more time to media than to any other waking activity; up to 8 hours a day. New media forms provide opportunities for learning, social connection and interaction. Digital media also allows for an unprecedented amount of flexibility, allowing the general public to participate publicly in conversations that may have previously been reserved for journalists and politicians. This is demonstrated in platforms such as blogs and Wikipedia, where any person can contribute content. These new functions and abilities of media have not only changed participation, but also changed our perspective of the social consumer. A "network society" had been created through the proliferation of internet-based social mediums, which allow two-way communication between the individual and the media source (Valtysson, 2010). This network society had altered our conception of consumers and producers, enabling nearly any individual to serve as both consumer and producer of both virtual and physical capital. Social media continue to grow in number and serve to both collect and disseminate data to an increasing number of individuals. Organizations that are able to leverage these abilities will be able to increasingly garner public attention and engagement to spread their message, providing the potential for a new form of social capital that can be leveraged widely as a form of soft power.

1.3 Methods

1.3.1 Procedures

Data for this project was collected in Fall 2011. A survey was constructed by the study authors and distributed by Invisible Children. Participants were recruited through the following four channels:

1. *Fall 2011 Frontline Tour Interns and Roadies*: The survey was pilot tested by the Fall 2011 Frontline Tour interns and roadies ($n = 62$) during their training in August 2011. Feedback was used to revise the survey; since the instrument changed significantly based on feedback from this sample, their responses were not used in the final analysis.
2. *Fourth Estate Participants*: In August 2011, Invisible Children hosted a youth leadership summit called the Fourth Estate for 650 youth supporters. An email link to the survey was sent to all participants a month after the event. 177 Fourth Estate Participants (27%) completed the survey.
3. *Tour Email Lists*: Emails were sent to a random sample of individuals from mailing lists for three IC tours. They were: Spring 2009 Rescue Tour, Fall 2009 Rescue + Recovery Tour, and Spring 2011 Congo Tour. For the Congo tour, the sample was stratified to include both individuals who registered for 25 but did not fundraise as well as those who successfully fundraised for the event.
4. *Internet and Social Media Links*: Invisible Children posted survey links on the following web and social media channels: Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and the Invisible Children blog.

Participants were directed from the channels above to a website that hosted the survey. Survey design was based on Dillman's Tailored Design Method (2007) in which progress indicators, multiple screens, and a simple layout were used to maximize survey completion. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete and participants were given a link to a free music download as compensation for their participation. Participation was anonymous and no identifiable data was collected. 2173 individuals completed the survey. Total number of individuals within each population as well as the recruited sample and number of surveys completed from each group are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Channels of Data Collection

	Population	Sample	Participants
Fall 2011: Frontline Tour Interns and Roadies	62	62	62
Summer 2011: Fourth Estate	650	650	177
<u>Spring 2011: Congo Tour</u>			
- Registered for 25, but did not fundraise	~10,000	4,000	218
- Registered and fundraised for 25	~25,000	4,000	548
Fall 2009: Rescue and Recovery Tour	~51,407	4943	59
Spring 2009: Rescue Tour	~171,560	4289	50
<u>Internet and Social Media</u>			
-Facebook	428,716 likes ^{***}	**	566
-Twitter	48,021 followers ^{***}	**	100
-Tumblr	1,100 subscribers ^{***}	**	30
-Blog	500 views/day ^{***}	**	315

*Not included in analysis. Feedback used to revise instrument

**No sample actively recruited

*** Retrieved November 2011

1.3.2 Measures

Survey respondents were asked questions about exposure, participation, beliefs, outcomes and demographics. These questions were designed to inquire about the youth participants' outcomes as a result of their levels of involvement with Invisible Children. Thus, there are four general topics of interest: (1) who becomes involved in Invisible Children, (2) how participants are exposed to Invisible Children, (2) levels or pathways of involvement, and; (4) outcomes of involvement, such as changes in knowledge, attitudes and/or behavior.

The survey consisted of both close-ended and open-ended questions. The open-ended survey questions provided participants the opportunity to share personal stories and testimonials about their experience with Invisible Children. The closed-ended questions measured exposure, participation, involvement, and outcomes of respondents.

Demographics. Demographic variables were included in the survey to characterize the general sample and to compare the demographics of all youth participants in different stages on the pathway of involvement. The survey gathered general demographic information such as location, age, race/ethnicity, occupation, religious affiliation, highest level of education, political affiliation, and parents' or guardian's highest level of education. Other questions include asked respondents to describe their upbringing in terms of income.

Exposure. Participants were asked about previous knowledge of LRA issues before exposure as well as how they found out about Invisible Children (from a screening, a person/club/group, from news/internet/media, or from an event/power/activity). They were asked to expand on their answers by providing specifics (from whom, from where, or at which event specifically).

Participation. A series of questions were asked to determine the level of participation of survey respondents. Questions asked about the following: films they had seen; use of various IC website and social media sites; donation and purchasing behavior; involvement with friends, family, and organized groups; tour and event participation; long-term volunteering and employment; and current involvement.

Beliefs. Adapted scales were used to measure several attitudinal outcomes, including: self-efficacy (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001), civic efficacy (Gough, McClosky, & Meehl, 1952; Weber, Weber, Sleeper, & Schneider, 2004), civic norms (CIRP, 2011; Gough et al., 1952; Weber et al., 2004) and connectedness (Der-Karabetian & Ruis, 1997; Karcher & Lee, 2002; Putnam, 1995; Simon et al., 1998).

Outcomes. Participants were asked open-ended questions about outcomes related to the following categories: education, empowerment and engagement. A set of closed-ended questions, adapted from the YES survey (Hansen & Larson, 2005) was also included. Another series of closed-ended questions was asked to measure the following civic outcomes: civic knowledge (Kohut, 2011), civic attention (Steel & Lovrich, 2001), civic interest (Lough, McBride, & Sherraden, 2008), civic ability (Reeb, Folger, Langsner, Ryan, & Crouse, 2010), and civic behavior (Klandersman; Roper; Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2010).

2. Involvement

2.1 Who? (People)

2.1.1 Demographics

2,173 individuals completed the survey; 81% provided demographic information (see Table 2). Results indicate the majority of supporters are quite young (average age is 20) and American. This makes sense in light of IC's media, outreach and campaign strategies, which have intentionally focused on youth (discussed further in Section 2.2). In addition, a majority of survey participants were female, Christian, and from a middle-upper class background. Although this profile is not representative, it is consistent with previous research on volunteers. Rosenthal, Feiring, and Lewis (1998) found that women volunteered more than men, whites more than minorities and those with higher incomes than lower incomes. And the National Study of Youth and Religion found that teens who attend church weekly were more likely to volunteer frequently and at least occasionally throughout the year (Gibson, 2008).

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample¹

Variable	Survey Sample	
Location	USA/Canada	95%
	Europe	2%
	Other	3%
Gender	Female	83%
	Male	17%
Age	12-17 years	23%
	18-25 years	65%
	26+ years	12%
Race	Caucasian	80%
	Hispanic/Latino	7%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	6%
	Black/African American	2%
	Multiple race/Other	5%
Socio-economic Status	Low-middle income	5%
	Middle income	41%
	Upper-middle income	30%
	Upper income	4%
Religious Affiliation	Christian	73%
	Agnostic (Spiritual, Humanist)	14%
	Atheist	5%
	Jewish	4%
	Muslim	1%
	Other (e.g., Hindu, Buddhist)	3%
Political Affiliation	Conservative	9%
	Moderate conservative	12%
	Middle of the road	20%
	Moderate liberal	23%
	Liberal	36%

¹ Education is not presented here due to average age of participants; see exposure for further information.

2.1.2 Beliefs

Survey participants were asked a series of closed-ended questions regarding their beliefs (See Table 3). Findings are grouped in the following categories:

1. Efficacy: Includes general self efficacy (perceived confidence in one's ability to perform tasks and achieve goals) and civic efficacy (confidence in ability to have an impact on social problems)
2. Civic Norms: Sense of civic responsibility for behaviors such as contributing to one's community, keeping up to date with political affairs and voting.
3. Social Capital: Feelings of similarity or closeness to other (e.g., family, community, world); also measured as beliefs in inherent honest/trustworthy nature of others.
4. Global Identity: Defined by identification with people all over the world and the sense that all persons are alike regardless of culture

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Alphas for Belief Questions

	Mean	SD	α
<u>Efficacy</u>	4.54	.59	.87
1. I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself			
2. I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks			
3. Each of us can make a difference in the lives of the less fortunate.			
4. I can have a positive impact on social problems.			
5. I believe my involvement in Invisible Children will create positive change in Central Africa.			
6. I have skills/talents that can benefit the work of Invisible Children			
<u>Civic Norms</u>	4.63	.60	.78
1. People should have a basic understanding of other countries and cultures.			
2. Keeping up to date with political affairs is important.			
3. People should find time to contribute to their communities			
<u>Social Capital</u>	3.38	.97	.82
1. Most people are honest			
2. Most people can be trusted			
<u>Global Identity</u>	4.04	.86	.54
1. I feel like I am "next door neighbors" with people living in other parts of the world.			
2. I feel that people around the world are more similar than different			

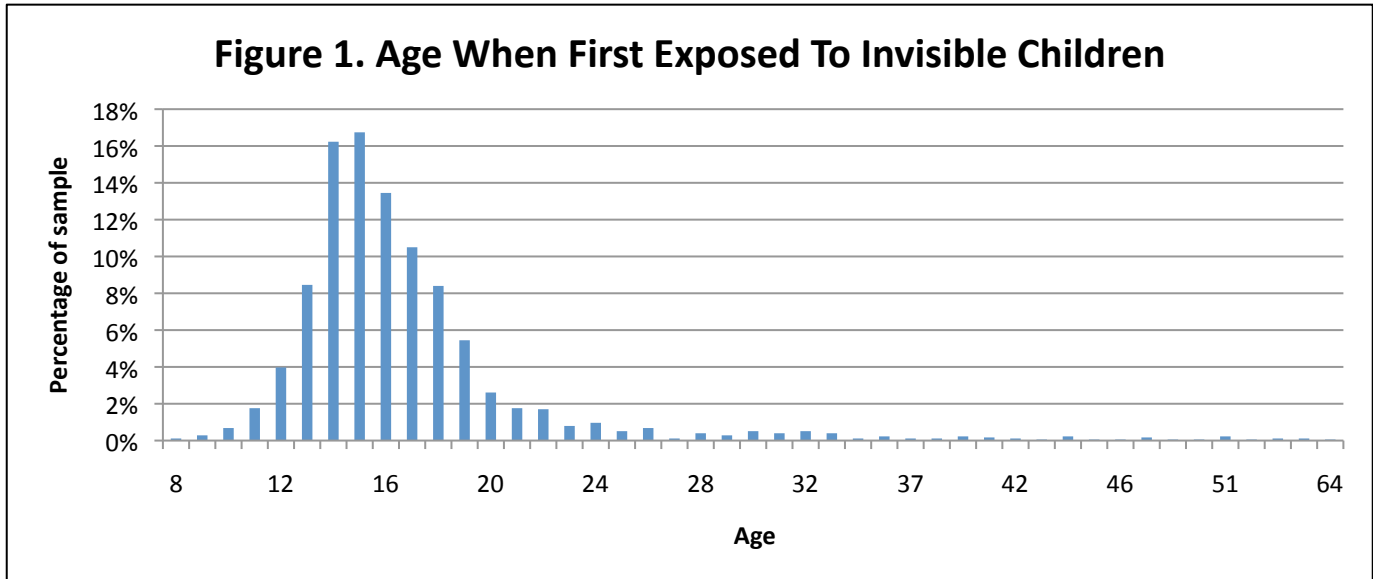
Note: Scales ranged from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Directionality cannot be inferred from these results alone; they may represent outcomes of involvement of characteristics of a self-selected population. However, comparing them to representative samples indicates that Invisible Children participants are higher in global identity (Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price), social capital (Putnam, 1995), and self-efficacy (Chen et al., 2001) than the general public (comparison data was not available for civic norms).

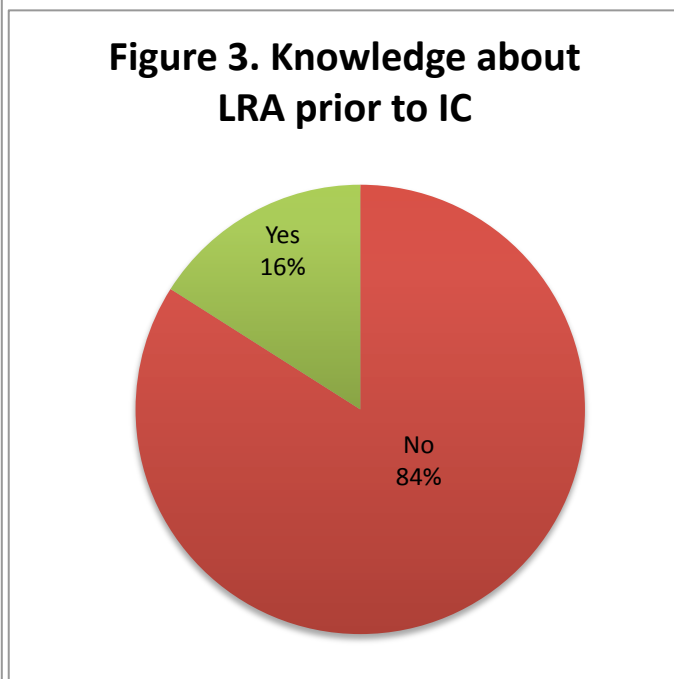
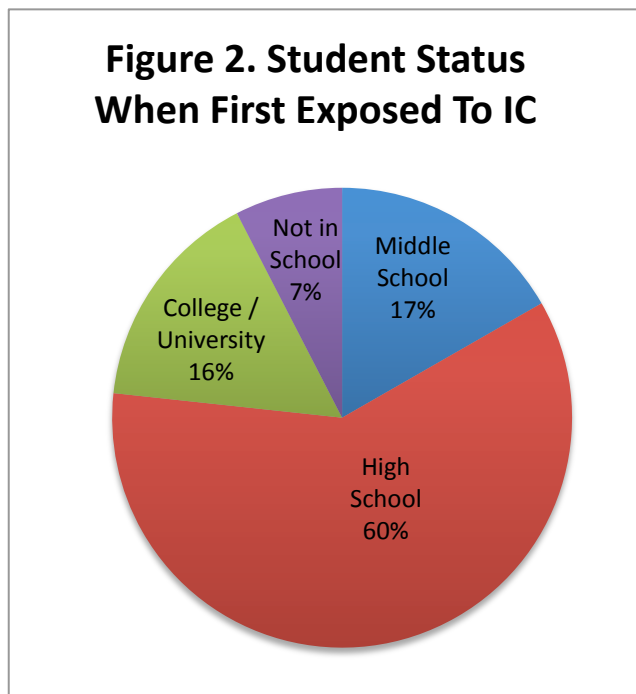
2.2 How? (Exposure)

2.2.1 Exposure Characteristics

Individuals were exposed at a young age to Invisible Children. Over 72% of respondents were under the age of 18 when they learned about Invisible Children; the average age is 17, and the mode is 15.



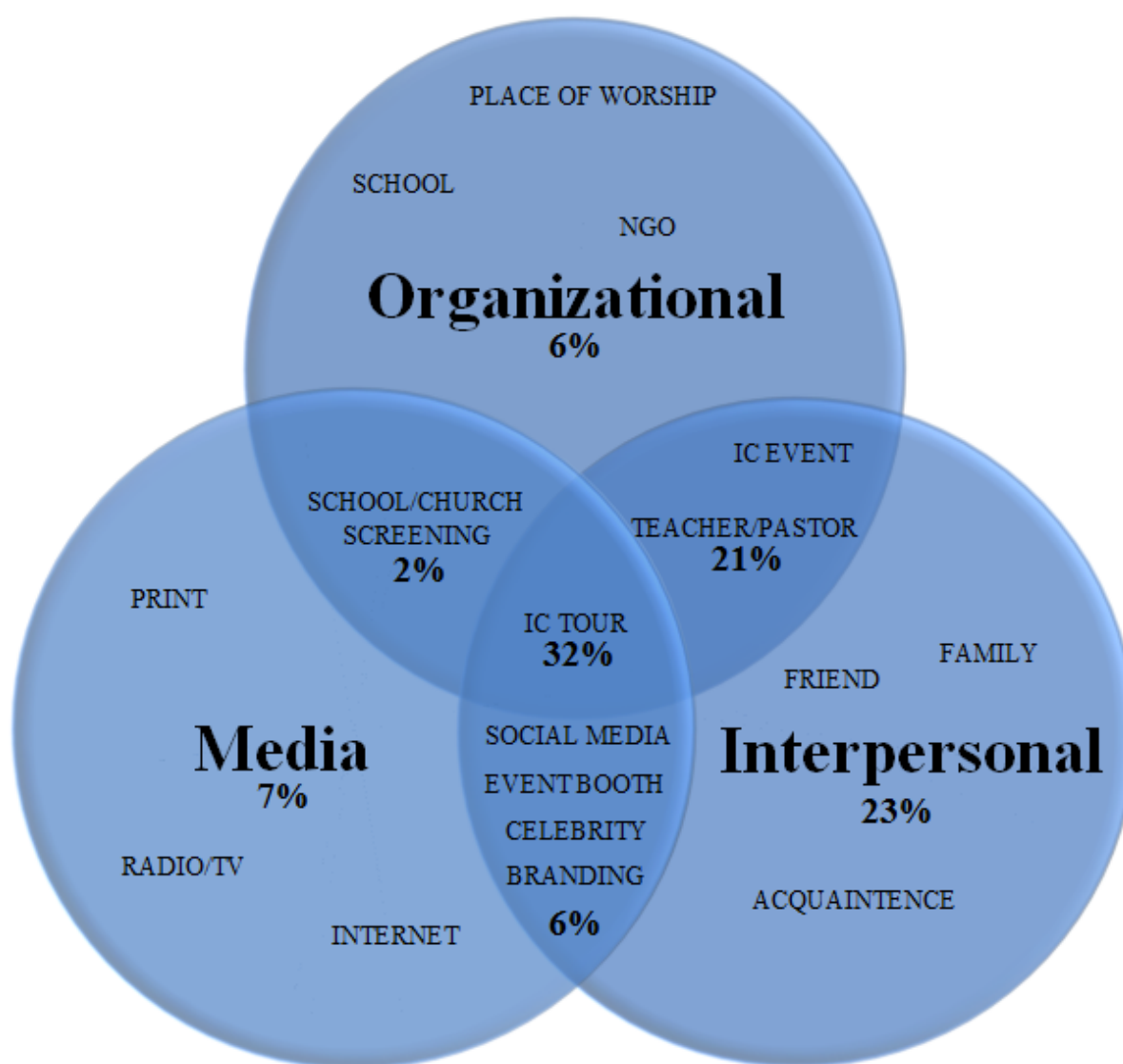
Of those over 18 when they learned, 56% were university students; only 7% of the entire sample were not students when they learned about IC. 84% reported that they did not know anything about the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) presence in central Africa before Invisible Children.



2.2.2 Exposure Sources

Through bi-annual screening tours focused largely on schools, an extensive social media presence, support from popular musical artists and celebrities, national events, and appearances in television and other media sources (e.g., books, newspapers), Invisible Children has many channels to reach potential supporters, specifically a youth audience. Responses indicate that individuals became exposed broadly across these channels. Survey responses to the question, “How did you find out about Invisible Children?” included screenings at schools and places of worship, concerts, television shows, music videos and concerts, internet sources (e.g., Twitter, Youtube, Facebook), and school assignments. Secondary analysis of these responses identified three general ‘spheres of influence’: organizational, interpersonal, and media. Specific strategies were identified that fit into each of these spheres as well as those areas where one or more intersect (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Exposure Channels



Organizational

The organizational sphere refers to influences from an institution initiated with a clearly defined purpose and set of goals (e.g., education, religious practice, philanthropic cause). Organizational influences included exposure at schools (78%), places of worship (12%), and partner NGOs (2%). Of those who mentioned school, 55% reported Invisible Children being integrated into course curriculum:

- *“In my HS, there is a class called African American and Latin America history. where we learn current events from this parts of the world, which are not taught in any other class.”*
- *“A speaker from Falling Whistles mentioned one of the Invisible Children documentaries”.*
- *“an art silent auction to raise money for IC at my school”*

Interpersonal

The interpersonal sphere refers to influences from a relationship between two people who know one another or between one highly influential person and a group of followers who feel personally connected to that person. Echoing past research that found peer influence as predictive of youth extra-curricular involvement (Brown et al., 1986; Clasen & Brown, 1985), most participants in this category reported finding out about Invisible Children from friends and family members (96%). Others mentioned acquaintances (2%), and encounters with IC staff or conversations with strangers (2%).

- *“I met a roadie in a coffee shop”*
- *“When I traveled to Africa I visited the IDP camps and heard about invisible children”*
- *“My best friend went to the Displace Me event and told me about it.”*

Media

The media sphere refers to influences from mass forms of communication including digital (e.g., internet), broadcast (e.g., radio, TV), performance (e.g., live music, theater), and print (e.g., newspaper, books) media. The most dominant response within this category was that digital media (72%), which included search engines like Google (14%), YouTube (11%), and other websites (75%). Additional sources included print (8%) and broadcast (12%) media.

- *“I read a book about human trafficking and there was a story that suggested visiting the IC website”*
- *“Saw a t-shirt, looked it up online to see what it was (I actually thought it was a band!)”*
- *“I searched an african song on youtube, and came across the trailer of the rough cut movie.”*
- *“An episode of Made on MTV where the participant was the president of his club”*

Media-Interpersonal

Analysis identified exposure channels that represented an overlap between the media and interpersonal spheres. These included instances in which an influential person from the media (i.e. a musician or TV star) spoke publicly about the cause (18%) or featured a song or video promoting Invisible Children (20%), when individuals learned from friends via social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter (22%), when individuals were seen wearing IC branded items (3%), or at a house party where friends watched the movies together (2%).

- *“through a friend's post on Facebook =)”*
- *“Representatives were at an All Time Low concert”*
- *“Thrice released an album and had a percentage of their proceeds go to Invisible Children”*

Interpersonal-Organizational

Analysis identified exposure channels that represented an overlap between the interpersonal and organizational spheres in which an influential person (i.e. a teacher or a pastor) or a group of people (i.e. a youth group or school club) worked within an institution to spread awareness. This also included IC events that utilized institutions and IC workers to put on the event. 50% of these responses were from a school club and 22% from a school teacher.

- *“At a youth group meeting. My youth pastor bought a ton of food, the IC film, and a donation box.”*
- *“My cheerleading team in high school donates to a charity every year, our coach sat us down to watch Invisible Children. With 25 girls in tears at the end of the film, we picked Invisible Children”*
- *“Part of cultural training with mission/charity team to Uganda”*

Organizational-Media

Analysis identified exposure channels that represented an overlap between the organizational and media spheres in which media was used within an institution to spread awareness. This included screenings at institutional venues that were not hosted by Invisible Children (78%), religious magazines and websites (6%), using the internet for school curriculum (6%), and posters on a school campus or in a community coffee shop (4%).

- *“I was searching for a picture of children for a class project, and the website came up.”*
- *“I was required to write a paper on central and east Africa for a Civics class in 9th grade. When I began researching that part of the continent, Invisible Children began busting up all over Google.”*
- *“I saw a poster for them at my college campus.”*

Media-Interpersonal-Organizational

Finally were exposure channels that represent an overlap between all three spheres of influence. A core component of ICs outreach model is their biannual tours, in which teams of four “roadies” travel for 2-3 months in designated regions hosting community screenings. Each tour corresponds with a specific film and campaign/event to engage viewers. This unique strategy include all three spheres of influence because it features a film (media) distributed through screenings hosted by formal organizations, presented by devoted supporters (interpersonal).

- *“A presentation by Invisible Children roadies at my school's chapel service”*
- *“A group of Roadies came to my school and told us all about what was going on”*
- *“I went on a service trip to Uganda with World Vision and was advised to watch the film with my group before going.”*
- *“My school has Invisible Children come at least once every year and they show the movie.”*

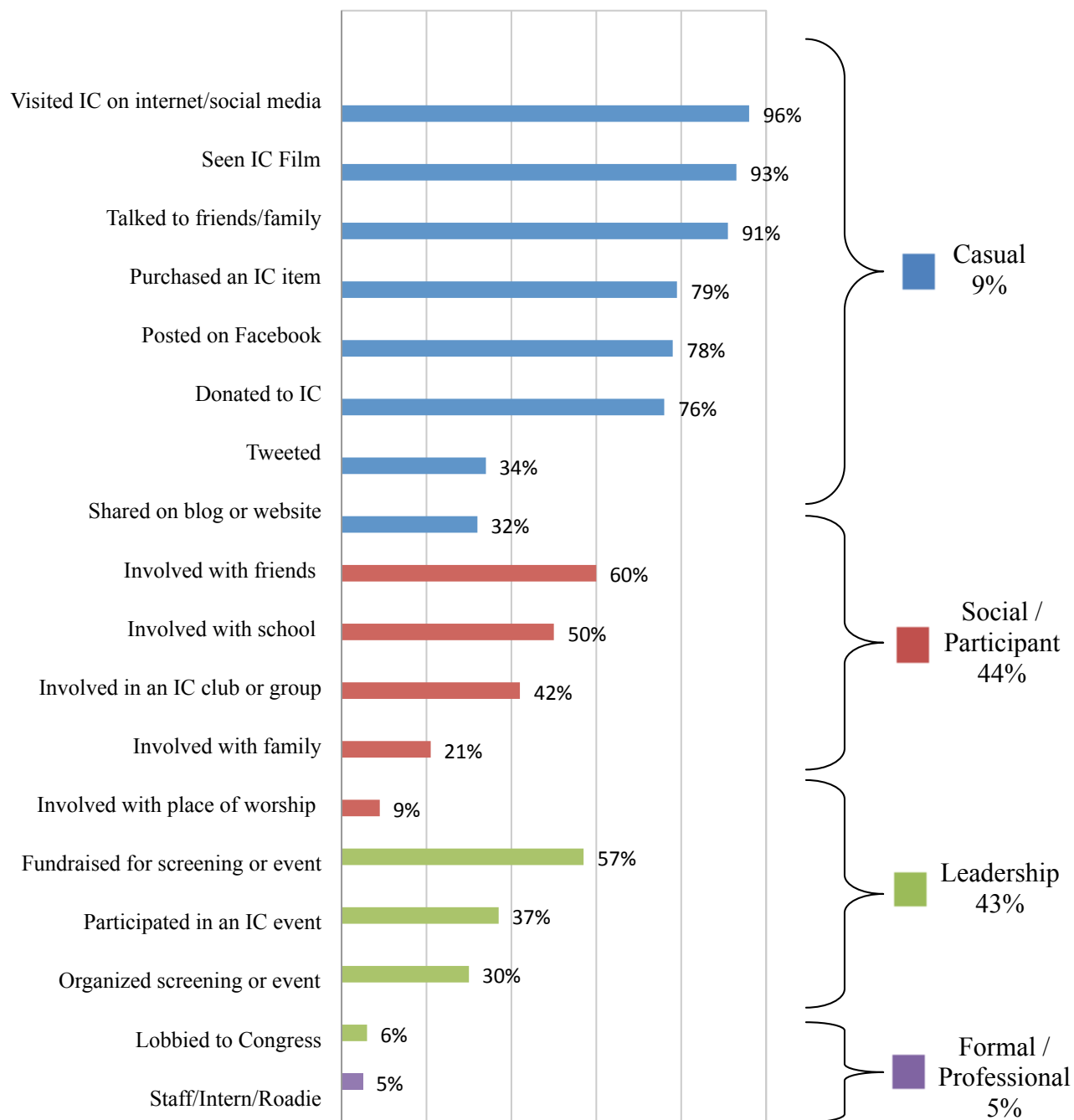
As indicated above, participants were exposed to Invisible Children through many different channels that utilized distinct and often complementary influence strategies. Although the largest single source of exposure were IC tours (32%), approximately a third of the sample were exposed strictly in one sphere of influence (e.g., curriculum, family, book), a third were exposed within two spheres of influence (e.g., school club, celebrity), and a third were exposed within all three spheres of influence (e.g., IC tour). These multiple channels create infrastructure and networks that are not just online (virtual) and social (informal), but also within local communities (place-based) and existing organizations (formal).

2.3 What? (Activities)

2.3.1 Types of Participation

Questions regarding specific forms of involvement were analyzed to identify patterns of participation. Participation levels for these different behaviors are presented below in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Participation



Analysis identified four levels of participation:

1. **Casual:** this level entailed that participants had seen an IC film, visited IC on the internet, posted or shared about their involvement, purchased an IC item, or donated to IC. 9% of participants reached only this level of participation.
2. **Social/Participant:** this level entailed that participants were involved with others, were a member of an IC club or group, attended or fundraised for an IC tour or event, or contacted congress for an event. 44% of participants reached this level of participation.
3. **Leadership:** this level entailed that participants were a leader of an IC club or group, organized an event or a screening, hosted roadies, or attended the 4th Estate conference. 43% of participants reached this level of participation.
4. **Formal/Professional:** this level entailed that participants were an intern, roadie, or staff member for IC. Only 5% reached this level of participation.

2.3.2 Social Involvement

The high level of social involvement among survey respondents is of special interest, especially in light of the rapid dissemination of the Kony2012 video². Over 90% percent reported speaking with others or posting about IC on the Internet, including taking to friends or family, posting on Facebook, tweeting, or sharing on a blog or website and over half also reported being involved with IC through a formal organization, such as their school or place of worship. In addition to the options provided, several gave additional examples of how they had shared their involvement with others. A few key themes emerged:

Branding. Several mentioned wearing IC apparel, buttons, etc. as a way to spread the message to others.

- *“Customers ask about my IC shirts at work so I let them know a bit about the organization”*
- *“At work I wear my Invisible children pin proudly and bracelets and explain to everyone”*
- *“I have a tattoo on my wrist that people frequently ask me about.*

Public speaking/writing. Many mentioned writing/talking about IC in a class or for publication.

- *“Video announcements at school for Invisible Children, wrote an article for the Denver Post”*
- *“For a web design class, I redesigned the website and spoke about it with the class”*
- *“I gave a speech on it in my Leadership class. All we were told was that we had to make our audience connect with the material like Martin Luther King, so IC was the best choice for me.”*

Fundraising. Many reported using fundraising activities to raise both money and awareness.

- *“Did a fundraiser and spoke to those who bought something about what Invisible Children is about”*
- *“Frontline Fundraiser sent out e-mails to inform/beg and plead:)”*
- *“I have created service projects through my community service organization in order to help Invisible Children with their screenings and book drives.*

² Findings were collected 3-6 months prior to the release of the Kony2012 video.

Karlin, B., Iaali, A., & Matthew, R. (2012). *Educating, Empowering, and Engaging Through Film-based Activism: A Survey of Invisible Children Participation and Impacts*. Irvine, CA: Center for Unconventional Security Affairs.

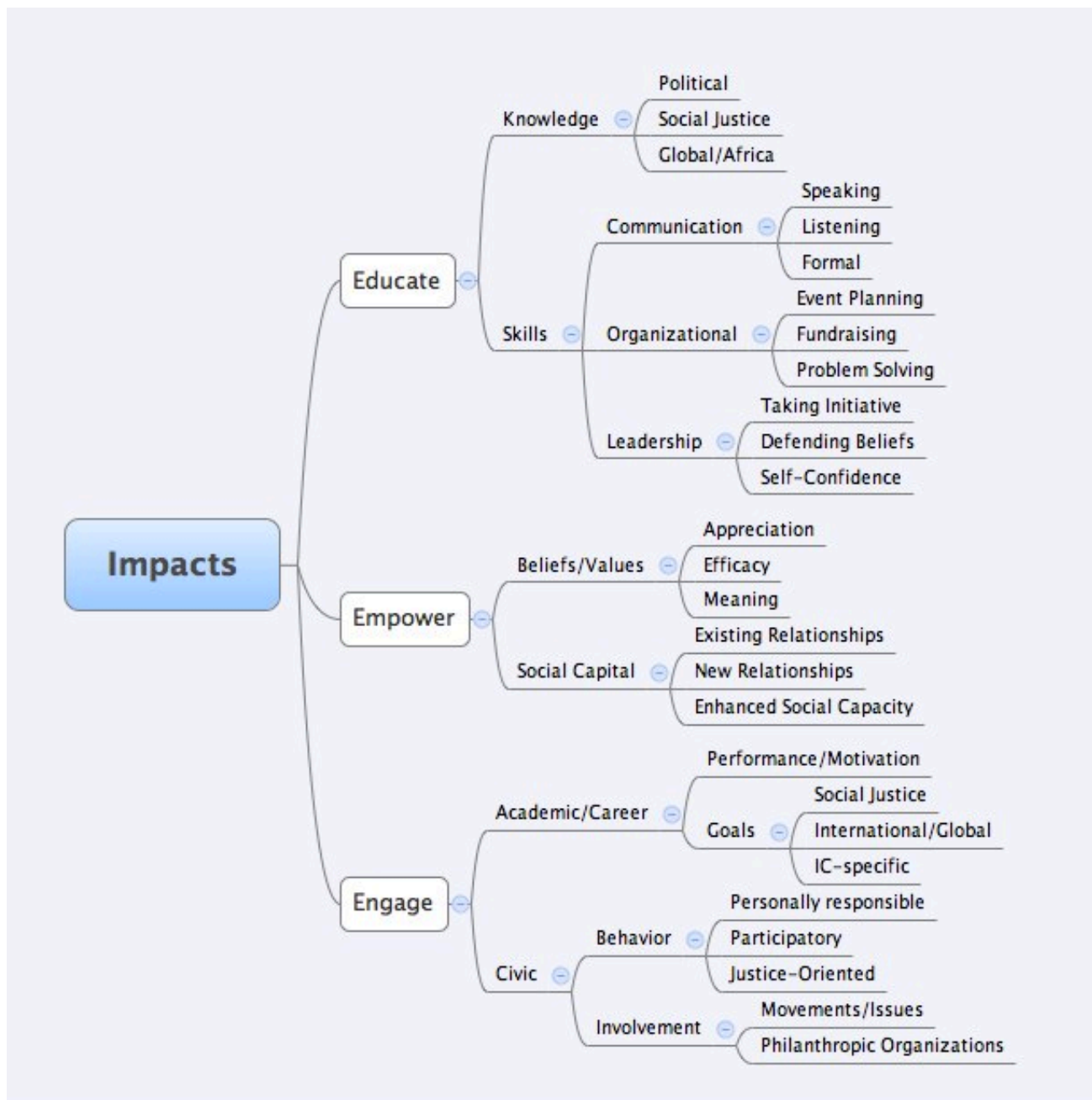
3. Impacts

Survey participants were asked a series of open- and closed-ended questions about outcomes of their involvement with Invisible Children. Findings are grouped in the following three categories:

1. Educate
2. Empower
3. Engage

Summary statistics for closed-ended responses and summary of open-ended responses³ follow.

Figure 6. Impacts Model



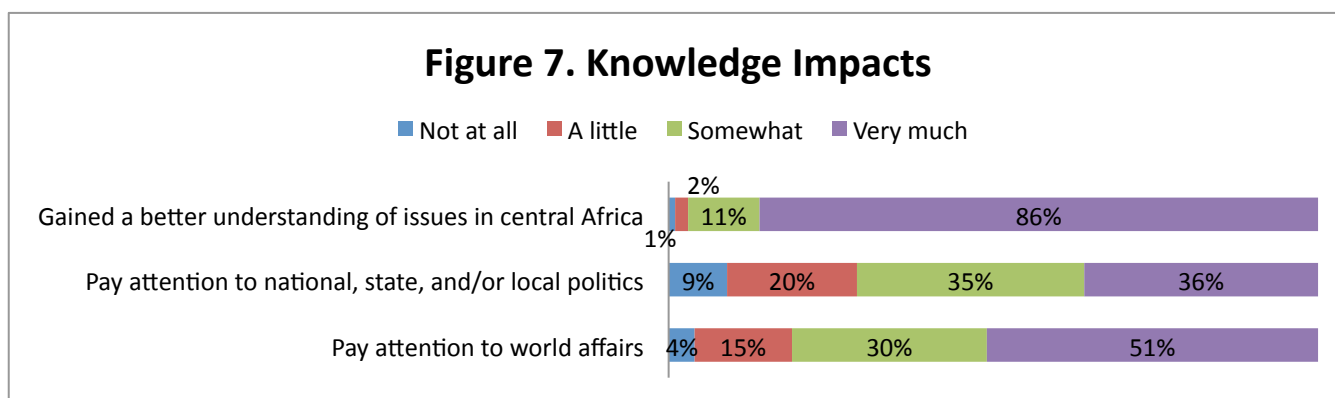
³ Codes and themes of open-ended data are not mutually exclusive.

Karlin, B., Iaali, A., & Matthew, R. (2012). *Educating, Empowering, and Engaging Through Film-based Activism: A Survey of Invisible Children Participation and Impacts*. Irvine, CA: Center for Unconventional Security Affairs.

3.1 Educate

3.1.1 Knowledge

Over three fourths of participants reported that they gained a better understanding of issues in central Africa and that they pay more attention to world affairs as a result of Invisible Children. Over two thirds reported that their participation impacted how much they pay attention to politics (see Figure 7).



Coding of open-ended responses revealed the following themes related to knowledge:

Global/International Issues. Participants reported an increased sense of global awareness and awareness of international issues.

- “I definitely have a better understanding of other problems in many other countries.”
- “Invisible Children began my awareness of other cultures and other country's political issues.”
- “It has impacted me to learn more about what is happening to people around the world.”

Social Justice. Participants reported an increased sense of social justice and awareness of injustice and inequality in the world.

- “Noticed how much suffering is going on in the world; that it's possible to create peace.”
- “Knowing about the horrible circumstances that children my age, and older and younger, have to endure daily; truly humbles me and makes me want to go out and do something for my community.”
- “I have learned the true meaning of “Where you live shouldn't determine whether you live.”

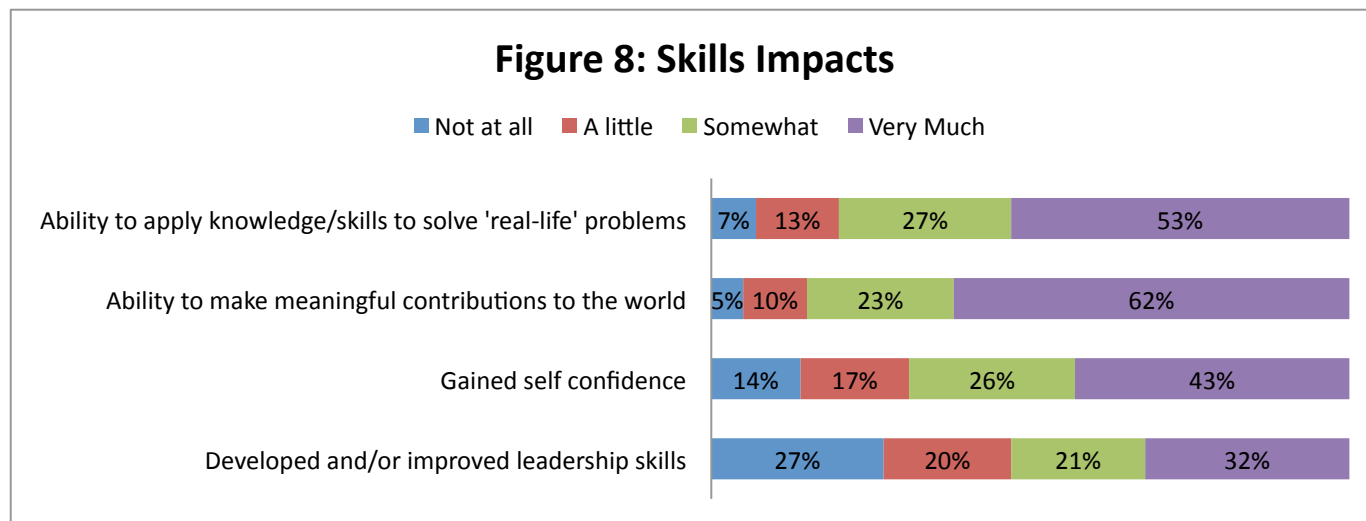
Participants also responded to a set of questions gauging political and Invisible Children knowledge. Respondents answered a greater percentage of general political questions correctly than either a youth or general sample collected from the Pew Research Center (see Table 4). It is not clear, however, whether involvement with Invisible Children led to this increased knowledge or whether it is correlated with those most likely to participate. Participants also scored high on a series of questions related specifically to the LRA (average 84% correct), but no control data for these questions are available.

Table 4. Civic Knowledge Questions compared to Pew Survey

Question	IC Survey	Pew - General	Pew - Youth
Moammar Gadhafi was the leader of which of these countries?	84%	71%	34%
Who is the current speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives?	82%	43%	21%
The No Child Left Behind Act deals with which of these issues?	96%	80%	75%
Hillary Clinton is:	95%	73%	--

3.1.2 Skills

Over three fourths of participants reported that their ability to apply knowledge and skills to help solve problems or make meaningful contributions to the world had changed as a result of their participation in Invisible Children; over half reported that they had gained self confidence or developed / improved leadership skills (see Figure 8).



Coding of open-ended responses revealed the following three themes related to skills:

Communication skills. Participants reported an increased ability to communicate both informally with peers and in more formal settings (e.g., public speaking), as well as increased skills in listening/working with others, and fostering community.

- *“I have begun to speak in public, something I couldn't do before.”*
- *“Much more confident in my individual strengths and ability to work with others as a cohesive and motivated team; Much more willing to be outspoken and expressive, and discuss/speak publically.”*
- *“Invisible Children has taken me out of my comfort zone. I have learned how to talk to strangers and inspire them to do good.”*

Organizational skills. Participants reported specific organization skills, such as event planning, fundraising, problem-solving, and general organization.

- *“I believe that I've become 1 bit more comfortable with fundraising, and this has helped me be a more confident person when I'm thrust into leadership positions.”*
- *“Through fundraising in high school I learn effective planning and taking initiative. And obviously being an intern taught me so much.”*
- *“I have learned many leadership skills I did not have prior such as organization, using criticism to enhance what you are already doing and being flexible.”*

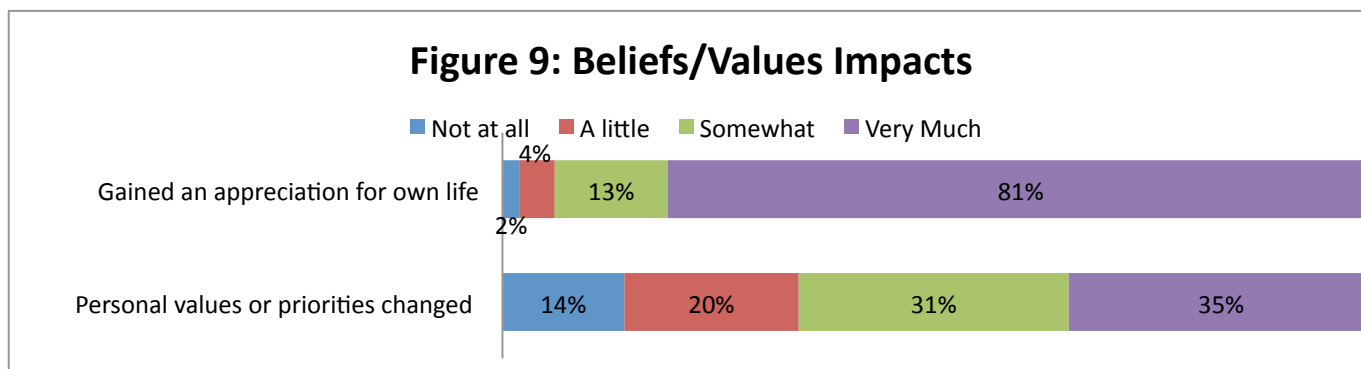
Leadership skills. Participants reported general leadership skills, including in taking initiative, general self-confidence, and standing up for what they believe in.

- *“It made me my own person, and gave me confidence to believe I can change things in this world”*
- *“I have much more confidence in myself as a potential leader, and more experience leading and getting things done.”*
- *“It has helped me to be more confident and not afraid.”*

3.2 Empower

3.2.1 Beliefs/Values

Over three fourths of participants reported gaining an appreciation for their own life; two thirds reported that personal values or priorities had changed as a result of their involvement with IC (see Figure 9).



Coding of open-ended responses revealed the following additional themes related to beliefs and values:

Efficacy. Participants reported realizing the importance of individual actions, increased motivation to contribute to social issues, and become more politically active.

- *“I now believe that no task is too big. After participating in fundraisers for IC I think that even just one person can make a difference.”*
- *“Your movies have touched my soul in a way that I had forgotten. You have reminded me that one voice can echo across the world if only amplified.”*
- *“Invisible Children opened my eyes to the injustice in the world and the fact that we as individuals can work together to make real, tangible changes in the lives of those who are less fortunate.”*

Appreciation/Gratitude. Participants reported an increased appreciation for one’s own life and a decreased focus on material things.

- *“Has made me look at how fortunate I am and how other people don't have that, and it has made me more compassionate toward those less fortunate.”*
- *“I am now trying even harder than before not to take things for granted.”*
- *“made me grateful for everything i have”*
- *“It has opened my eyes to the importance of life and makes me grateful for what I have”*

Sense of Meaning/Purpose. Participants reported a changed or increased sense of meaning or purpose in their lives, generally related to helping others or alleviating injustice in the world.

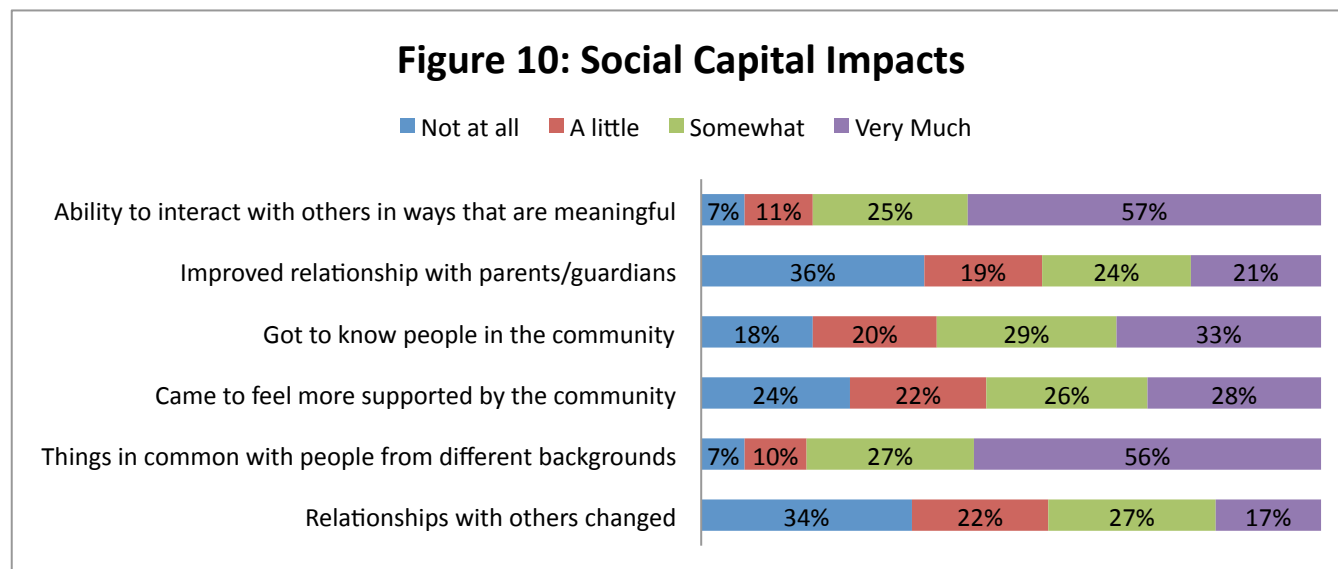
- *“I see that life and a job is and can be more than making money.”*
- *“I also now know that for me to be happy in life, I have to have a career that helps people around the world.”*
- *“I now understand the importance of helping others who cannot help themselves.”*

These three themes, as all presented, are not meant to be mutually exclusive and often do overlap, as is the case of the following response, which combines all three themes related to values:

- *“I look at what I have and realize that it is more than I need and more than some people will have their entire lives. I have no excuse for not helping in some way. I know now that if you want to see something done, you have to be the one to start it.”*

3.2.2 Social Capital

Over two thirds of participants reported an increased ability to interact with others in meaningful ways and learning they had things in common with people from different backgrounds. Over half reported getting to know or feeling more supported by communities. Less than half, however, reported that their relationships with others had changed more than a little (see Figure 10).



Coding of open-ended responses revealed three primary themes related to social capital:

Existing Relationships. Participants reported improved or strengthened existing relationships with current friends, family, and community.

- *“I’ve grown to appreciate the people in my life.”*
- *“I spoke with people in the church I wouldn’t have because I feel like the young people in my church need to see your movie and decide if they want to participate.”*
- *“I believe most of my friendships are strengthened through my involvement because they get to see another side of me that I believe to be appealing – empathy.”*

New Relationships. Participants reported new relationships forged at school and church, and within their wider community through their involvement with Invisible Children.

- *“I’ve found that it’s actually pretty easy to find commonalities with most people, even if what you have in common is humanity. Realizing that has changed my relationships with others.”*
- *“I got to meet so many amazing people through the program and I feel like I gravitate to those people more now, ones willing to make a difference.”*
- *“I’ve made more friends and met many more people.”*

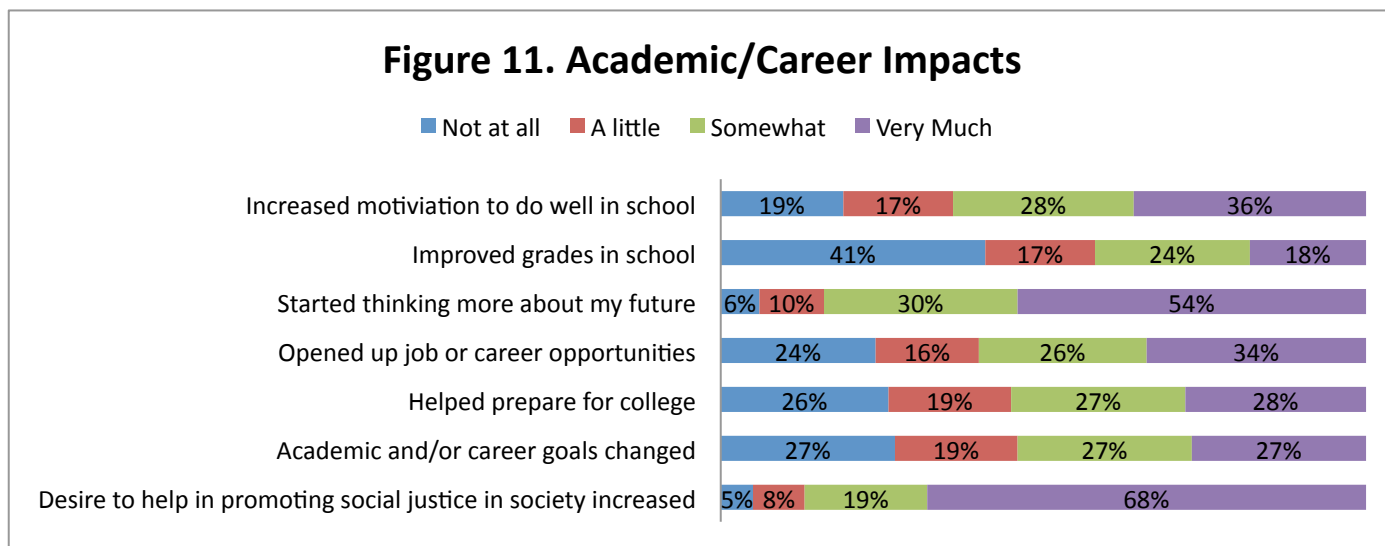
Enhanced Social Capacity. Participants reported the ability to forge new relationships or viewing people in general differently as a result of their participation in Invisible Children.

- *“I’m connecting with more people than I’m used to connecting with. Also, I’ve never been much of a socialite and I’ve been making new friends & meeting new people constantly since getting involved”*
- *“I no longer judge peoples situations. You never know what they have gone through.”*
- *“I have been awoken to the fact that all people are alike, we all want love and to feel safe and happy, and therefore I feel like it is easier for me to relate to others.”*

3.3 Engage

3.3.1 Academic/Career

Over half of participants reported that involvement with IC had increased their motivation to do well in school, opened up job or career opportunities, or helped them prepare for college; three fourths started thinking more about their future or increased their desired to help promote social justice (see Figure 11).



Coding of open-ended responses revealed the following themes related to academic/career impacts:

Educational Aspirations. Participants reported changing educational goals as well as increased performance and motivation in school.

- “I want to work harder, I want to make a difference, I know that what I have to offer can do that.”
- “IC is why I received my M.Ed in Curriculum & Instruction.”
- “I want to work harder so that I can be more educated about the world”

Social Welfare and Justice. Participants reported wanting to work with NGO or community service organizations and thinking more about making the world better.

- “I never thought of doing anything charity related with my life until I found out about Invisible Children. I have realized that I want to use my abilities and privileges for the good of others.”
- “Invisible Children has convinced me that I want to make the world a better place with what I do. Because of IC, I've realized my dream to join the Peace Corps after I am done with school.”
- “I want to center my education on the goal of doing something to help others.”

Travel/International affairs. Participants reported experience/motivation to study or travel abroad and increased interest in careers related to global/foreign affairs.

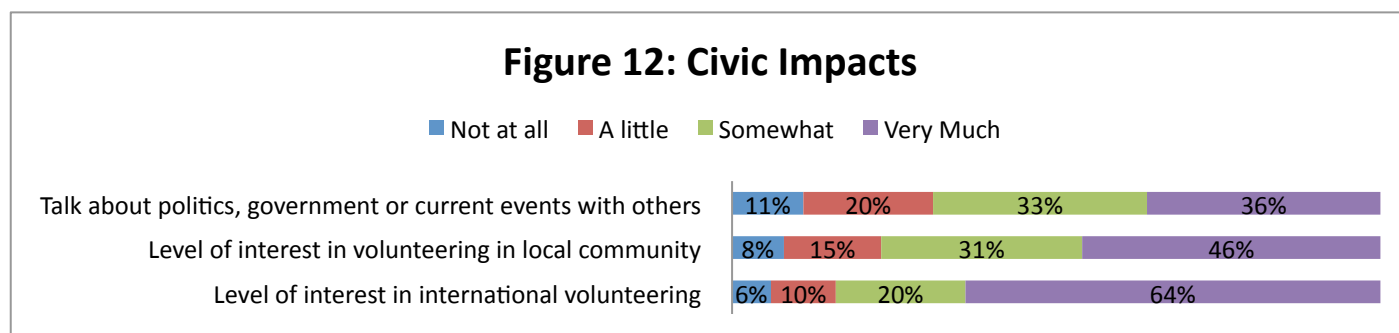
- “I don't want to be just a social worker any more, I want to be a humanitarian. I want to travel the world, and help those in need first hand, not just through donations and second hand support”
- “I want to go to medical school and become a doctor and if that happens I would like to be a part of Doctors without Borders and work anywhere/everywhere in Africa.”

Invisible Children. Finally, many participants reported goals related specifically to IC, such as becoming a roadie/staff member or simply getting more involved in the organization.

- “I now aspire to be a roadie and/or intern at some point.
- “I want to be more involved with Invisible Children and expand the program in my school.”
- “I hope to pursue a major in justice studies and to get as involved as i can with Invisible Children.”

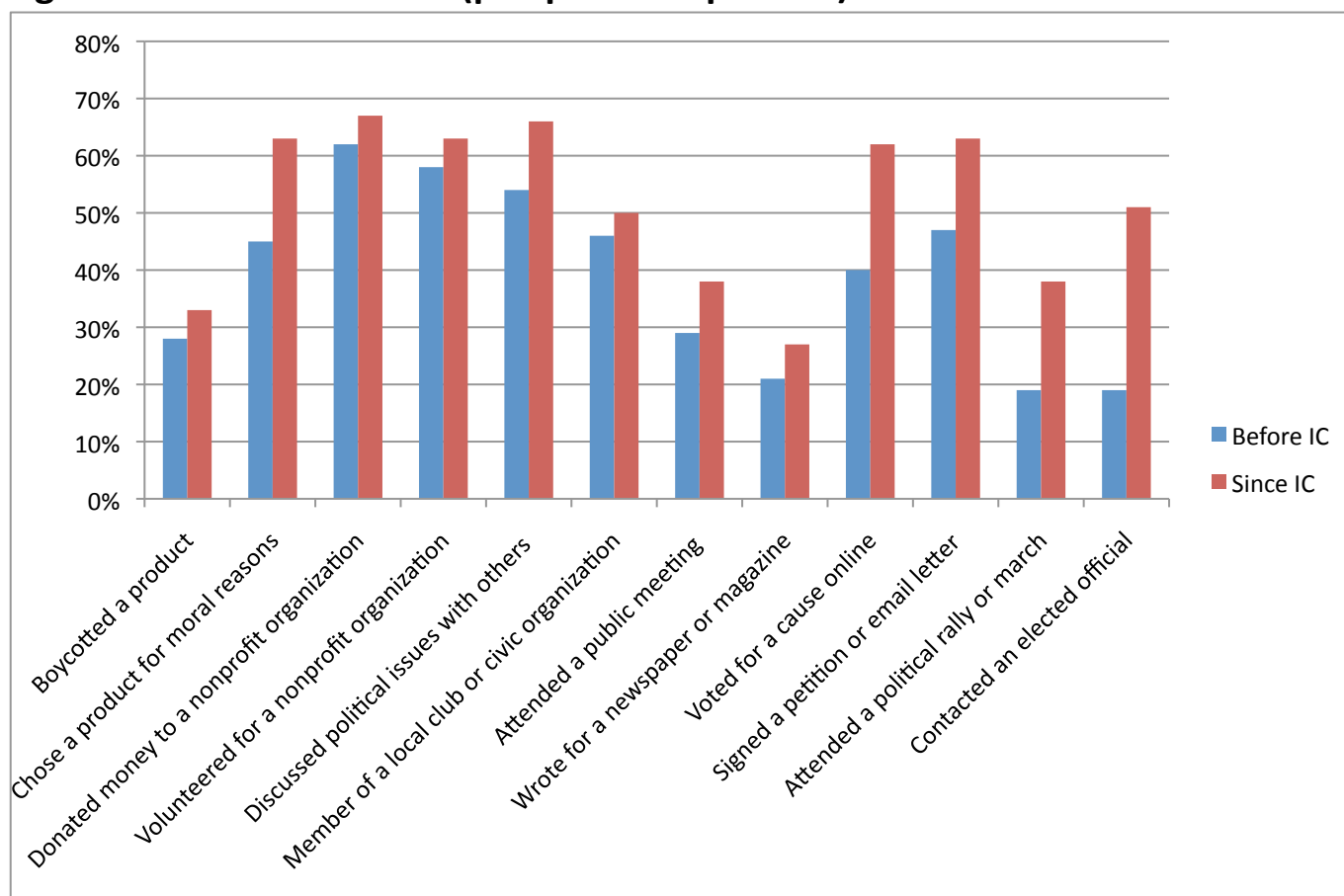
3.3.2 Civic

Over three fourths of respondents reported their level of interest in volunteering either locally or internationally increased; over two-thirds also reported the amount they talk about politics or current events with others increased (see Figure 12).



Survey participants were also asked a series of closed-ended questions regarding various civic behaviors and involvement with social issues/movements and philanthropic organizations before and since their involvement with Invisible Children. Participants reported an increase in a dozen various civic behaviors (see Figure 13). The greatest increases were in justice-oriented behaviors, such as attending a rally, signing a petition or contacting an elected official (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Figure 13: Civic Behaviors (pre-post comparison)



Participants also reported an increase in involvement for a series of social issues, both directly related and not related to Invisible Children (see Figure 15). Involvement increased for all issues with the exception of traditional values.

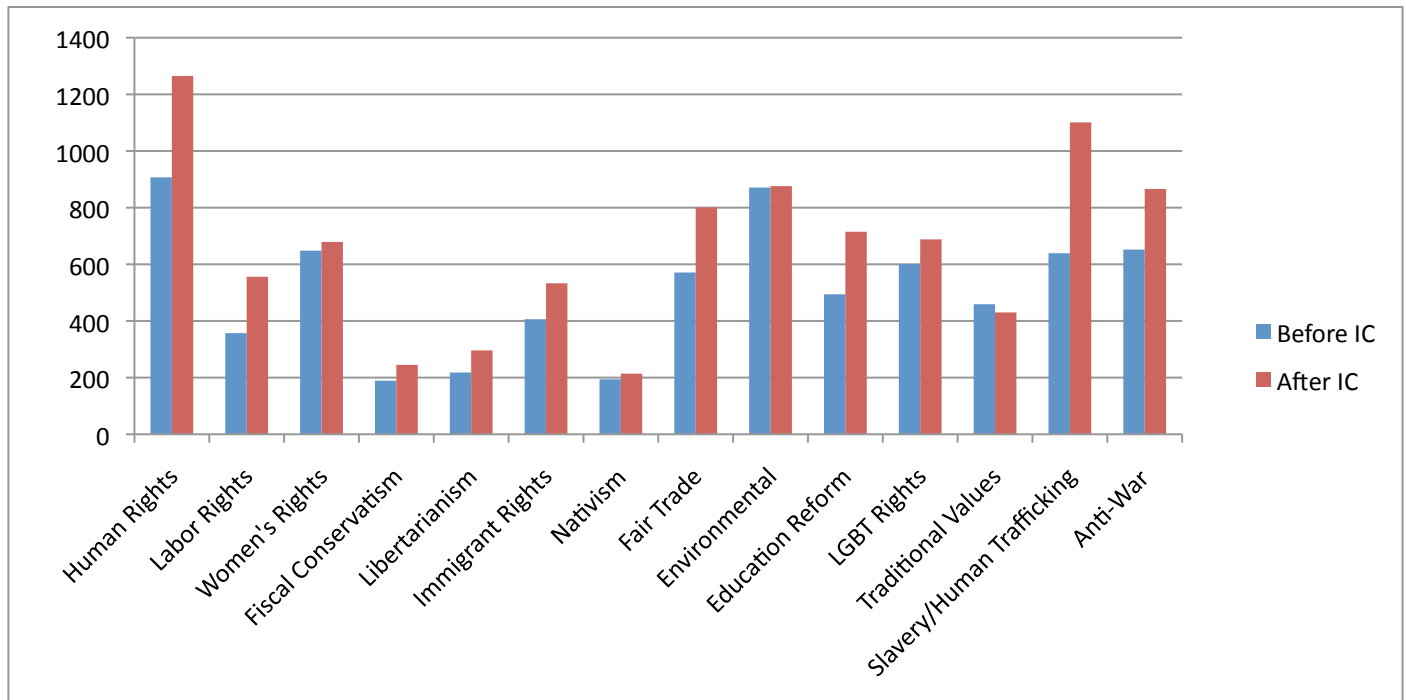
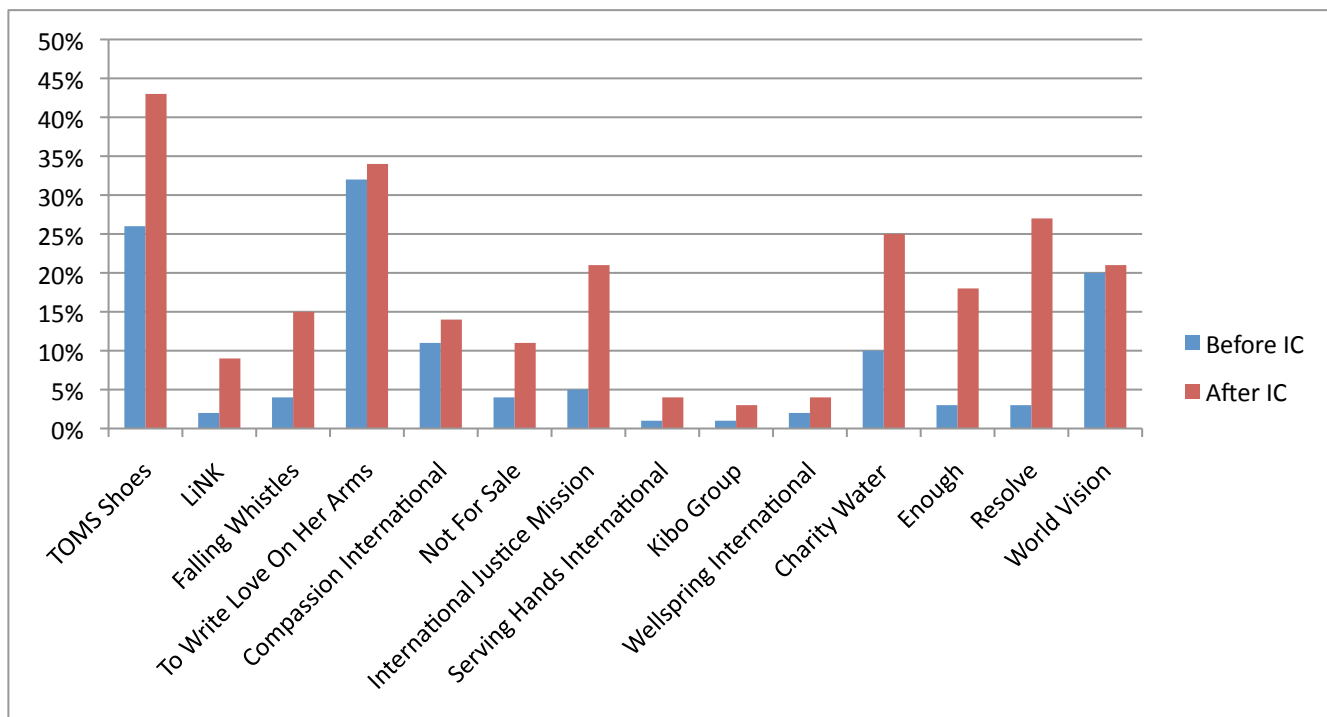


Figure 15: Civic Involvement (pre-post comparison)

Finally, participants were asked a series of questions on philanthropic movement involvement before and after exposure to Invisible Children; the list included all Invisible Children partner organizations (see Figure 16). Participants reported an increase in involvement for all organizations; the largest effects were seen for Resolve, Enough, Charity Water, and International Justice Mission.

Figure 16: Philanthropic Involvement (pre-post comparison)



4. Discussion

Our findings suggest that participation in Invisible Children has been successful in creating ‘soft power’ in the form of enhanced education (knowledge and skills), empowerment (beliefs/values and social capital), and engagement (vocational and civic capacity) of its youth supporters. Participants reported increased motivation to engage in social justice, enhanced leadership and organizational skills, and improved relationships within and beyond their communities. In addition, the various forms in which participants were exposed to and participated in Invisible Children suggest that this capacity is being at least partially channeled back into the organization through fundraising and high levels of social diffusion of their message. These findings may assist in our understanding of the recent viral spread of the Kony2012 video. Prior to releasing this video, Invisible Children had spent nearly a decade building a network of empowered, engaged, and connected individuals, comprised mainly of youth, and then deployed these individuals with a specific and simple task – make Kony famous.

Although this enhanced capacity seemed to serve the manifest function of the organization, this capacity can also be seen as an outcome in and of itself. Although it may be an initially latent impact, Invisible Children seems to be helping to create a mobilized force of educated, engaged, empowered youth who can successfully communicate, fundraise, and lobby on behalf of issues of social justice, not just for Invisible Children but for other issues as well. This is evident in the increases in civic behaviors as well as involvement in social movements and philanthropic organizations related to, but distinct from Invisible Children. The data suggest a “foot in the door” effect, where interest in the LRA and violence in central Africa can become a gateway into other human rights issues, such as fair trade, human trafficking, and anti-war as well as to philanthropic support of a number of museums in the area.

This study is not without its limitations. The data presented is from an opt-in internet survey distributed through Invisible Children’s existing social media platforms and mailing lists; it is likely that there is a self-selection bias towards only the most dedicated and positive from among the 500,000+ supporters identified as the target population. Additional data collected from Fall 2011 school screenings controls for this self-selection bias and will be included in a later report. In addition, there are limitations inherent with self-report data on outcomes; reports of improved grades, for example, may be exaggerated. However, since our focus is on the development of civic capacity in participants, which is a subjective quality, we feel the use of subjective data gathering is justifiable (though additional data to triangulate findings would be beneficial).

Further research may also investigate additional potential impacts of this enhanced civic capacity for local communities and schools as well as the broader climate of youth engagement in America. It is possible (and current findings suggest) that the civic engagement promoted by Invisible Children and programs like it may have an impact on not only the issue to which it is engaged, but to a revitalized engagement of youth to public life. Participants reported and directly attributed to their participation in Invisible Children increases in self-efficacy and the belief that one person can make a difference. The organization provided to youth a wide variety of specific actions in which they could effectively engage. And they presented their message in a way that appealed specifically to a youth audience, using strategies such as apparel and celebrity opinion leaders that are often reserved for product marketing.

It is still unclear whether media and advocacy work, such as that which is conducted by Invisible Children, can exert as much or even more impact as money spent on direct service or other forms of political action. However, it is vital to measure and better understand these impacts, so that organizations and potential donors have the information with which to decide whether to focus resources on this new form of activism and advocacy.

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