

In determining the success of an organization William Gamson writes, “It is useful to think of success as a set of outcomes, recognizing that a given challenging group may receive different scores on equally valid, different measures of outcomes” (Gamson 2009). Further, he argues that these outcomes fall in to two categories, the first being the outcomes for the challenging group, which in this case would be Invisible Children Inc., while the second category is the outcomes for the challenging group’s beneficiaries.

Determining the success of any group, then, comes as the result of a balancing act between the outcomes of these two parties. Using this as a model, this paper argues that Invisible Children Inc. has been marginally “successful,” however, the recent strategy shift with the KONY2012 campaign, where the group focuses more on the war in Central Africa, and less on recovery projects, could limit the group’s success in terms of outcomes for the beneficiaries of Invisible Children Inc.’s actions. It remains to be seen whether the group’s new focus on Joseph Kony and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) will come at any expense of the people on the ground in Central Africa, or if Invisible Children Inc.’s multi-faceted approach will continue to provide recovery assistance to the same degree as the war being waged against Joseph Kony and the LRA.

In making this argument, this paper will be split into five sections. First I will provide a historical context for the war in Northern Uganda, DR Congo, and South Sudan, the role Joseph Kony and the Lord’s Resistance Army play, and how Invisible Children Inc. came on to the scene of conflict in Central Africa. The second section will discuss the initial framing, tactics, and organization of Invisible Children Inc. during the period from 2005 to 2010. The third section will illustrate how the first five years of the organization’s growth culminated in a number of achievements starting in 2010, which initially seem to counter Michel’s argument for the Iron Law of Oligarchy. The achievements during this second two-year period culminate in the creation of the KONY2012 campaign, which signaled a major shift in the organization’s strategy. In the

fourth section I will examine the impacts of this shift and how it resulted in fragmentation between the local and national levels within the organization, intensified problems with reciprocity between First World donors, and Third World recipients, and how the shift came as a response to changing global politics in the region. Finally, in taking everything into account, the fifth section will examine the outcomes and future prospects for Invisible Children Inc., considering its current state within mass media, its recent MOVE:DC campaign, and its continued presence in Central Africa.

1. Historical Context: The rise of Joseph Kony and the LRA in Central Africa

In the mid 1980s, influenced by the prevailing premillennialist philosophy in Northern Uganda, as well as the popular Holy Spirit Movement led by Alice Auma, Joseph Kony formed a rebel guerrilla group that would later become the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which opposed the National Resistance Army (NRA) led by current Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, exposing weaknesses in Museveni's government. By 1988, in the wake of Alice Auma's and the Holy Spirit Movement's defeat, Kony took the opportunity to recruit members of the Holy Spirit Movement and other rebel groups, making the LRA a major force in Uganda. Over the next few years, Kony and his army slowly began to lose support from the Acholi, the ethnic group living primarily in Northern Uganda and South Sudan, after carrying out several retaliatory attacks on the population. He became known for his inhumane recruitment tactics, which included using children as his foot-soldiers, often killing the children's family and neighbors, leaving the children no choice but to go with him (Briggs 2005). In the mid-1990s the LRA received support from the government of Sudan, which was fighting the rebels in what would become South Sudan (Dickenson 2010). With his increased military strength, Joseph Kony succeeded again and again against Museveni's attempts to stop the LRA and capture Kony; these victories were almost always followed by retaliations targeting civilians, including an attack on refugee camps where hundreds of refugees were brutally killed (Nyakairu 2008), while others were conscripted into his army as soldiers or sex-slaves.

The three young-men who founded Invisible Children Inc., Jason Russell, Bobby Baily, and Laren Poole, enter the picture in 2004 when the war in Sudan, popularized as the “War in Darfur”, was receiving the majority of media attention. While Kony was beginning to gather international attention from The Carter Center and Pope John Paul II (RIN Global 2004), it was the Sudanese war, not Joseph Kony, that served as the impetus for their journey to Central Africa. After spending a number of days lost, they arrived in the Northern Ugandan city, Gulu, where their experiences shocked and amazed them to the point that they chose to title the film after the “Invisible Children;” the children living in rural areas who would travel to the center of the city every night to sleep on verandas and in the streets in an attempt to avoid the cruel conscription tactics of the LRA. One child in particular, named Jacob, especially touched Russell leading him to say in their 2012 short-film, “Everything in my heart told me to do something, and so I made him a promise.” The promise to young Jacob was simple, “We are going to do everything that we can to stop [Joseph Kony]” (Invisible Children Inc. 2012). However, despite their efforts, war continues through-out the region today.

The first successful peace talks occurred in 2006 when the Ugandan government and the LRA signed a truce (BBC News 2006) where the LRA agreed to leave Uganda to be protected by South Sudan while the Ugandan government promised not to attack the rebels. While the LRA no longer has a strong presence in Northern Uganda, the site of the atrocities Russell, Baily, and Poole encountered, the LRA continued to commit war-crimes in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo). In 2008, with the support of the United States, the Ugandan Government launched aerial attacks in the DR Congo on the LRA as part of “Operation Lightning Thunder” (BBC News 2009). The attack splintered but failed to defeat the LRA or capture Joseph Kony. Instead, the attack prompted brutal revenge attacks by the LRA, with over 1,000 people killed and hundreds abducted in DR Congo and South Sudan and even more displaced through-out the region fearing for their lives.

In 2012, the Ugandan government announced, along with the Central African Republic, the DR Congo, and South Sudan, that it will “form a 5,000-strong brigade to hunt down Joseph Kony and [the LRA]” (Urquhart 2012). This announcement came just weeks after Invisible Children Inc.’s KONY2012 campaign was launched and seen by millions of people around the world, thus forging an undeniable link between Invisible Children Inc. and direct action against Joseph Kony and the LRA. It is now unreasonable to discuss the war in Central Africa without also mentioning the role Invisible Children Inc. has played. The next two sections will focus on how Invisible Children Inc. was able to rise to this level of influence on the transnational level.

2. The First Period of Growth: From 2005 to 2010

This section will focus on the political opportunity structure that provided the groundwork for Invisible Children Inc. to enter the international arena. This section will also detail the organizational structure, tactics, and strategy of the group during this period, and how these were mediated by the group’s financial resources and the strength of their presence in the US.

In 2005, the relatively newly founded International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against Joseph Kony for 12 crimes against humanity and 21 war-crimes. In taking resource mobilization theory into account, it is important to recognize how social movements “do not emerge from scratch” (Guigni et al. 2010:168) therefore the indictment by the ICC should be seen as an important political opportunity, which provided Invisible Children Inc. with enough momentum to enter the political arena as an effective organization. Invisible Children Inc. have since continually used the indictment to back up their argument against Kony. While I will refer Invisible Children Inc.’s relationship with Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni, in section four it is important to also note here that Museveni was the one responsible for referring the issue of the LRA to the ICC, which led to the indictment, and therefore allied Invisible Children Inc.

with Museveni. Utilization of this political opportunity also allowed Invisible Children access to what William Gamson calls “acceptance,” (2009) in that they became recognized by their targets, those working in the involved governments, as having a legitimate voice in transnational and international affairs.

In addition to providing grounding, political opportunity structures also impact “the choice of protest strategies and the impact of social movements on their environments” (Guigni et al. 2010). In working with a formal, bureaucratic organization like the ICC, it was important for Invisible Children to organize itself in a similar fashion. Furthermore, as William Gamson found in his 1975 study, having a centralized, bureaucratic organizational structure also affects “a challenging group's ability to remain mobilized and achieve movement goals” (Ritzer 2004). However, while the organizational structure was highly bureaucratic from the start, their relative lack of financial resources forced leaders to come up with creative tactics to keep members mobilized, thus preventing the organization from becoming formalized.

At its founding, Invisible Children Inc. was a relatively grass-roots movement. As mentioned in the previous section, the Ugandan Government signed a peace treaty with the LRA in 2006, for the LRA to leave Uganda. However, Invisible Children Inc.’s strategy, which focused primarily on recovery projects in Northern Uganda, did not change immediately to reflect the changing regional politics. Until 2010-2011, their mission statement remained largely the same, reading, “We are a movement seeking to end this conflict and bring [the child soldiers] home. We seek to rebuild schools, educate future leaders, and provide jobs in Northern Uganda. We are the motivated misfits and masses redefining what it means to be an activist” (Invisible Children Inc.). In an interview with members of Invisible Children Inc. at the University of Minnesota (ICUMN), many shared that a goal centered around recovery and education was particularly appealing. The majority of members of ICUMN identified recovery as their own personal goal for outcomes from their involvement with the organization.

Tactics during this period centered around spreading the word through-out the United States. Small groups of people were sent through-out the US, to bring the original film to be screened at high-schools, colleges, and universities. For the majority of ICUMN members, this tactic was identified as what prompted them to join (Palmer 2012). The young woman who founded ICUMN also shared that she had facilitated the creation of an Invisible Children Inc. group at her high school prior to attending the University. This tactic was particularly effective around the country. In 2007, their financial records show how the organization's net assets tripled from 2006 to 2007, turning Invisible Children Inc into a multi-million dollar campaign. With these new funds, Invisible Children Inc. broadened its tactics by appealing to national celebrities such as Fall Out Boy, the American Rock Band, which a number of members of ICUMN said helped to facilitate their friends also joining in the campaign (Palmer 2012). As the organization grew every year and new achievements were accomplished, Russell's promise to Jacob to stop Kony and end the war became more feasible. New members to the organization during these latter years began to identify more with a goal centered around ending the war. However, for those who had joined the organization in its early stages and who identified more with recovery projects, this shift in the focus of Invisible Children Inc.'s goals introduced internal tensions, which I will describe in section four.

In addition to broadening its tactics, as the organization acquired more resources, it also became more formalized. This scale-shift and subsequent strategy-shift, the roots of which can be traced back to this first period, shed light on a number of social movement theories, which I will now analyze in the next section.

3. Scale-shift and Strategy-Shift: From 2010 to KONY2012

In this section I will first discuss the achievements Invisible Children Inc. made in the years leading up to the KONY2012 campaign, including a description of Gamson's advantages (Gamson 2009) as well the ways the

group utilized the problems identified in critiques of Michels' Iron Law to avoid goal displacement and maintain radicalism by decentralizing the allocation and disbursement of funds through its four-part model and resonating with millennial youth culture. Then, I will examine the shift that occurred with the release of the "KONY2012" video and what this indicated in terms of the group's goals and strategy. The impacts of this shift will then be analyzed in section four.

The beginning of this period is signaled by another scale-shift, which can be attributed to the group winning a \$1 Million grant from Chase Bank on Facebook, as well the support from Oprah Winfrey, after the group staged a protest outside of Oprah's Harpo studios before being featured briefly at the beginning of Oprah's May 1st episode in 2009 (Fry 2009). This is reflected in their financial statements, which shows how the organization went from roughly \$2 Million in assets in 2010 to almost \$7 Million by the end of the fiscal year 2011 (Invisible Children Inc.). Winning the Chase Bank competition on Facebook required the organization to develop a strong presence on social media, as Shayne Pepper (2009), Assistant Professor at Northeastern Illinois University, wrote in his paper on Invisible Children and Cyberactivism, "[with the use of] video technologies such as Google Video and YouTube, a larger base of supporters was established, and, along with the use of social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, the Invisible Children movement began to expand its tactics from simply spreading the word about the film and/or contributing money to eventually assembling massive amounts of people offline in order to raise awareness and lobby Congress to take more action about the situation in northern Uganda." This resulted in the first real victory for the group in terms of trying to end the war. In 2010, President Barack Obama signed the "Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act" making it American policy to kill or capture Joseph Kony and to crush his Lord's Resistance Army rebellion.

In 2011, with the support of Oprah Winfrey, they started the “25 campaign,” where participants were to be silent for 25 hours in recognition of the 25 years of war in Uganda, while also raising money for the organization. By the end of the 25 hours, the participants gathered in 18 different cities for a large multimedia event that featured celebrity musicians such as Plain White T’s and American Idol’s David Archuleta (PRNewswire 2011). The use of celebrity promotions was especially important to the spread of Invisible Children Inc.’s message. In a 2012 article, Mark Wheeler, Professor of Political Communications at London Metropolitan University argued in favor of this type of promotion, saying, “Celebrity activists can bridge the gap between Western audiences and faraway tragedies by using their fame to publicize these international events” (Wheeler and Kapoor 2012). For Invisible Children Inc., bridging that gap has been especially crucial to the movement’s success because of the LRA’s identification as a Christian Militia (Drogin 1996), a fact Invisible Children Inc. is not eager to promote. This has produced a frame geared more towards images of Third World poverty and ending a war, which better resonates with those in the United States. In fact, Invisible Children Inc. attributes its incredible growth to the receptivity of its message among the people in the United States. However, Andrew Bowman, author of “Big Bucks from Big Brother” (2012) would argue that this “philanthro-capitalism” approach does not necessarily serve the needs of the people in Uganda whom Invisible Children claims to be helping. If Invisible Children’s revenue is based on whether people in the US connect with their message, their success and legitimacy must be assessed in terms of both the organization’s ability to achieve measurable impacts and to foster sustainable change by empowering recipients, rather than making them dependent on foreign resources in Uganda. As Bowman writes, “the way ‘venture-philanthropy’ focuses on measurable impact may obscure the less tangible, but equally important, goals of democracy and empowerment” (Bowman 2012). Writing about the Bill Gates Foundation, Bowman was particularly concerned with how the Gates Foundation and the distribution of its funds were determined more by Bill Gates and his investors, and less by the people on the ground.

Influenced by the organization's transition towards a war-focused goal, access to large groups of people through social media, and continued self-recognition of the organization's presence on the global stage, the KONY2012 campaign launched in March of 2012 provided a brand new framework for Invisible Children Inc. to address some of these issues. The release of the video titled after the campaign was made in coordination with a major update to the group's website where they announced a new goal reading simply, "Invisible Children exists to bring a permanent end to LRA atrocities" (Invisible Children Inc.). In achieving this mission, they lay out a four-part strategy: Media such as their films and videos, Mobilization projects such as grassroots advocacy and awareness campaigns, Protection for those in Central Africa, and finally Recovery programs which serve a variety of needs including building schools and providing scholarships for students.

It is possible that, as Invisible Children Inc. began to tackle larger political issues, leaders were aware of older members connections to Invisible Children Inc.'s earlier recovery-focused strategy and developed this four-part model as a way to avoid total goal displacement. This strategy has allowed the organization to pursue its war-specific goal, while having a more general impact in Central Africa. In this way, their four-part strategy can be seen as a floating-signifier. Their strategy does not require participants to associate themselves with a specific cause within the organization's goals. This strategy has provided for what Donatella della Porta calls "Tolerant Identities" to form so that activists with different individual goals and frames can participate together. This was shown to be very effective in mobilizing support, providing evidence for how framing differences can become "an enriching characteristic of the movement" (della Porta 2005). For example, many of the members of ICUMN stated "awareness" as their own personal goal for ICUMN; additionally they tended to identify this as being in line with the primary goal of the national organization. In these instances, I understood the members to be referring to their perception of Invisible Children Inc.'s strategy in the years prior to 2010, thus demonstrating this strategy's effectiveness.

Furthermore, because of this strategy, instead of having to send the money they raise to the national campaign, ICUMN has chosen to send their funds to a smaller organization run by Ugandans who are employed by Invisible Children Inc. called “The Legacy Scholarship Program.” Invisible Children Inc.’s regional ambassador, Jolly Grace O. Andruvile, founded the Legacy Scholarship Program to provide mentoring and scholarships to secondary, vocational, and University students in Northern Uganda. In reference to the need for measurable impact, one member of ICUMN felt it was important to note that the Legacy Program’s scholarships only go to “*deserving* kids” adding that they have to go through a “rigorous process” to be selected (Palmer 2012). The website states that acceptance into the program is based on “academic performance and level of vulnerability,” the latter term referring to children who are “orphans, heads of households, living with HIV/AIDS, were at one point abducted by the LRA, or girls who have children of their own” (Invisible Children Inc.). If accepted, the child receives a fully-paid merit-based scholarship and mentoring from one of Invisible Children’s full-time mentors. The program is one of 8 programs, to which donors can send their funds, all of which focus on different forms of “recovery” in Uganda. While measurable impact does seem to be important to the members of ICUMN, they also recognize that it was founded by a member of the Ugandan community and is managed entirely by Ugandan staff, which seems to imply that those in ICUMN are not only concerned with the program being effective but also with empowering recipients in Uganda. Further, while the program itself is legitimized by its measured success, if we consider the program’s founder, Jolly Andruvile, to be an activist for educating the youth in Uganda, the program also serves as an example of “how traditional NGO advocacy networks are embedded with, and relate to networks of direct activists” (Bennett 2005). In this way, Invisible Children is able to avoid the problems of dependency and lack of sustainability that Bowman describes.

In addition to problems with goal-displacement associated with Michels’ Iron Law of Oligarchy is the problem of maintaining radicalism in the face of rising formalization within an organization. Contrary to the

predictions of Michels' Iron Law, Invisible Children Inc.'s tactics have continued to remain radical. In fact, this has facilitated their continued success. In many ways, the organization continues to reflect the ideology present in their 2010 mission. The final statement is of particular interest because it defines the way Invisible Children Inc. frames itself for participants of the organization. This notion of the "motivated misfits and masses redefining what it means to be an activist" bears a resemblance to the notion of transnational civil society, discussed by Thomas Risse. He argues that the emergence of transnational civil society has "affected human rights at both the global and national levels" (Risse 2000). Invisible Children Inc. is a prime example of this impact. Invisible Children Inc. continues to identify itself as existing outside of the norms usually set for NGOs. Their 30 minute film entitled Move, which was released October 2012, begins with a generational frame. It discusses the term "millennial," a term used to refer to children born after 1980 and shows footage of television pundits making pejorative statements about millennials as unproductive members of society. Having been founded by three college-age men, the film intended to show how in some ways the goals of Invisible Children Inc. were also to, in a sense, prove those pundits wrong. As Jason Russell says in the video: "The strength of Invisible Children is that we are an organization that people cannot wrap their head around" (Invisible Children Inc. 2012). To prove this, the organization points to a number of different tactics such as flash-mobs and other projects designed to surprise and humor people while also getting the message of the struggle in Northern Africa across to the public. Because of their commitment to this latent goal of improving the perception of "millennial" culture in the media, their tactics have had to remain radical, and avoid conservatism.

With a wealth of resources at their disposal, Invisible Children Inc. announced a new, ambitious goal in their KONY2012 video: to capture Joseph Kony by the end of 2012. Within a week the film had gone viral, with millions of views from around the world. As mentioned in section one, the release of this video was followed by the announcement by several Central African countries that they would launch a 5,000-strong brigade to

find Kony. Aside from their four-part strategy, the launching of this campaign and its overwhelming success, signaled a major shift to both the scale of Invisible Children Inc., as well as the focus of the organization's goals. While the full extent of the impact of this shift remains to be seen, the next two sections will analyze many of the problems associated with previously mentioned achievements for the organization and discuss how these issues effect Invisible Children Inc.'s outcomes and future prospects.

4. Problems: The Global vs. the Local, Reciprocity, and Adapting to Change

This section discusses many of the problems that Invisible Children Inc. has, and continues to face beginning with the impact of the shift from a recovery-focused goal to a war-focused goal, and how this was influenced not only by a scale-shift as described above, but also by the major contextual shift that occurred in Central Africa with the signing of the peace treaty in 2006. Then, I will examine the extent to which the organization is rooted in reciprocal transnational relationships, in terms of the group's involvement with the Acholi people and the Ugandan Government.

With the unprecedented success of the KONY2012 campaign, according to the members of ICUMN, Invisible Children Inc. has abandoned, to some degree, the importance of the smaller recovery programs in favor of its primary goal. For instance, a number of the fund-raising campaigns for the organization's other smaller programs, which were standard in previous years, were not included as part of the plan for 2012. When asked if they thought the goals of Invisible Children have changed in the past 5 years, one member nodded her head, going on to say, "Definitely. As the conflict has exited Uganda and gone into all of central Africa, their strategy has had to change to reach a wider area and that's why they've moved away from education and more towards other ways of ending the conflict. They've really put more focus on the politics" (Palmer 2012). Because of their identification with the recovery-focused goal, this "focus on the politics" has introduced internal tensions between the national and local level.

While ICUMN was certainly “free” to pursue its own goals by way of the open-signifiers described in section three, that freedom may have come at a price. In the spring of 2012, Invisible Children Inc. launched its “Cover the Night” project in the Twin Cities as part of the Kony 2012 campaign, where supporters were encouraged to contact leaders, serve in their communities and hit the streets, plastering surfaces with wanted posters of Kony. Sometime during this event the word “Kony” was spray-painted on the “Spoonbridge and Cherry” in the Walker Art Center’s Sculpture Garden (Gustafson 2012). While no member of ICUMN was involved in the act, they received the brunt of the blame, which resulted in a number of their posters getting torn down, angry phone-calls, and offensive comments from passers-by during later awareness-raising events. Since this event occurred, the group has had to change its tactics to what member’s called “re-informing” people about the organization. However, this process has been made more difficult by inconsistency with the national organization’s frame and stated goal, finding and bringing Joseph Kony to justice. As ICUMN continued to participate less with the national organization’s Kony campaign, they have also received less support from above. All of the members I interviewed admitted frustration with this apparent schism between their group and the national level, and some were disappointed that Invisible Children Inc. may be going a direction in which they don’t entirely support. In this way, formalization within Invisible Children Inc. has been harmful in that it has enabled its leaders to pursue this goal shift, under the guise of an empty-signifier associated with education and empowerment, without listening to the goals of individuals within the organization’s own constituency.

While the problem of goal-displacement can negatively impact the group itself, as Gamson argues, it is also important to investigate negative impacts on the population the organization claims to be helping. This involves the notion of altruism and whether Invisible Children Inc. is truly involved in building a reciprocal relationship with the people in the region primarily affected by the organization’s actions. While Invisible

Children is adamant that they intend on working *with* Ugandan's in a reciprocal relationship, there is much evidence to dispute that reciprocity. The first piece of evidence is the concept of foreign aid itself. When money flows from a wealthy nation to a nation in poverty, the relationship can hardly be called reciprocal, even if it is transnational, while there are those in Uganda who must facilitate the distribution of this aid, they have little else to do other than wait for the young American students to raise awareness and stop the war. Secondly, as Uzodinma Iweala (Iweala 2007) writes, "There is no African, myself included, who does not appreciate the help of the wider world, but we do question whether aid is genuine or given in the spirit of affirming one's cultural superiority. My mood is dampened every time I attend a benefit whose host runs through a litany of African disasters before presenting a (usually) wealthy, white person, who often proceeds to list the things he or she has done for the poor, starving Africans."

One argument Jason Russell, and supporters such as Nicholas Kristof, try to make is the idea of a compassionate global community. As Kristof (2012) said in a New York Times defense of Invisible Children, "When a warlord continues to kill and torture across a swath of Congo and Central African Republic, that's not a white man's burden. It's a human burden." However, Kathryn Mathers provides an argument against this philosophy in an article directed at Kristof, saying "This model does not question the causes... either general or specific, for the people it is mean to help. It does not pay attention to what people are doing for themselves or ask what they need" (Mathers 2012). The disparity between Invisible Children Inc.'s and the needs of the people in the region was noted in 2012 by Dr. Beatrice Mpora, director of Kairos, a community health organization in Gulu, a town that was once the center of the rebels' activities. She said about the KONY2012 video, "What that video says is totally wrong... there has not been a single soul from the LRA here since 2006. Now we have peace, people are back in their homes, they are planting their fields, they are starting their businesses. That is what people should help us with" (Pflanz 2012).

From international agencies like the ICC, which is based in the global north, to the efforts of US celebrities like Oprah and Fall Out Boy, in terms of Invisible Children's efforts, Ugandans are largely missing when it comes to the activism that is meant to support their well-being. While many Ugandans are present within Invisible Children's staff and administration, protests and activism related activities are held in the US, not Uganda, where protests over the allegedly rigged re-election of Museveni were met with violence (Izama and Wilkerson 2011). Further, while Museveni's government was responsible for bringing the issue of the LRA to the ICC, the Human Rights Watch (HRW), stated in a Washington Times article that they have also "documented human rights violations committed by Ugandan forces in the name of stopping the LRA in Uganda. On a lesser scale than those of the LRA, crimes by government forces nevertheless included deliberate killings, routine beatings, rapes and prolonged arbitrary detention of civilians" (Burnett and Evanson 2012).

The publicizing of HRW's article brought much criticism from the public in the spring of 2012, shortly after the group released the viral video KONY2012, leading the group to back away from the Ugandan government, as they say on their website, "None of the money donated through Invisible Children has ever gone to support the government of Uganda or any other government. Yet the only feasible and proper way to stop Kony and protect the civilians he targets is to improve the efforts of regional governments, which we are advocating for, not supporting monetarily" (Invisible Children Inc.). Although they go on to defend the Ugandan military, saying the Ugandan government "has reduced the size and strength of the LRA prodigiously," they do also call for focused international attention on the human-rights abuses of the Ugandan army. However there is a clear conflict of interest here; in making the capture of Joseph Kony as the organization's one true goal, they seem willing to temporarily over-look the Ugandan government's abuses, if it means capturing Kony.

Another conflict of interest appears in their funding practices, and resulted in a controversy in March 2012 when it was revealed that the organization had received a \$414,000 grant from the National Christian Foundation (NCF) in 2008 (Wilson 2012), an organization which has also been associated with Ugandan author and promoter of the Anti Homosexuality Bill in Uganda, Julius Oyet. In response, Invisible Children Inc. said it “is not an anti-gay organization, and has in fact publicly spoken out against acts of violence on members of the GLBT community in Uganda” (Huffington Post 2012). Regardless, this can be seen as an example of Invisible Children Inc. further removing itself from participating in reciprocal relationships with the Acholi people, as it moves from a purely human-rights agenda to advocating other issues and potentially having an impact on decisions that will happen within the country. It could be argued that the organization’s association with the NCF is evidence of goal-displacement in a conservative direction, however because they received the funds in 2008, early on in Invisible Children Inc.’s formalization, this is unlikely. Nevertheless, it does illustrate Invisible Children Inc.’s reliance on large donors, although I was unable to find credible sources that indicated Invisible Children has since participated in any of the other alleged offenses, including providing Exxon Mobil with easier access to oil in Uganda via Chase Bank, one of Invisible Children’s donors (Blood 2012). Taking all of these problems into account, Invisible Children Inc.’s efforts can only be seen as reciprocal on a few occasions. Particularly for the people living in Gulu, where Russel, Bailey, and Poole first encountered the “Invisible Children,” ending the war has become more of a goal for those in the US than for those in Uganda.

5. Consequences: Analyzing the outcomes for Invisible Children Inc.

In taking all of these factors into account, it is finally necessary to perform Gamson’s balancing act between the outcomes for the challenging group and the challenging group’s beneficiaries. This section will first analyze Invisible Children Inc.’s presense within mass media since the launch of their KONY2012 campaign

and describe how this should serve as the base for examining the problems described in section four in terms of determining Invisible Children Inc.'s measure of success.

In addition to the issue ICUMN encountered with the spray-painting of "Kony" on the Spoon and Cherry sculpture, the national campaign was dealt a devastating blow when founder Jason Russell was taken into psychiatric care after being caught naked, screaming and pounding the pavement near his home in southern California (40). As Jason Russell had become the face of Invisible Children, he had also become a sort of public celebrity and unfortunately his break-down was filmed by a witness and sent to the tabloid television show, TMZ where it was distributed widely. However, instead of attempting to forget the incident, Jason Russell chose to bring the topic back into the media's attention in October, when he filmed an interview with Oprah Winfrey. Later, when Invisible Children Inc. launched their Move:DC campaign, the short-film titled after the new campaign also included Jason Russell being asked about his outburst. Because of how high-profile this incident was, it cannot be ignored when analyzing the level of Invisible Children Inc.'s success.

This incident, however, also serves as an example of the importance of Invisible Children Inc.'s presence in social media, as well as mass media. As discussed in section three, social media has served an important role in disseminating information quickly to members, and making recruitment easier and more effective. As R. Kelly Garrett argues, New Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) "have transformed the role of communication media in politics, making media skills, persuasion and socialization fundamental to contemporary contention" (Garrett 2006). For ICUMN, Facebook served as the primary source of communication between different levels within the organization, however for non-officers who are still members of Invisible Children Inc. most of the information comes through email list-servs and the organization's website.

This outburst also illustrates the risks of relying on a small number of high-profile representatives or leaders. In the beginning of Invisible Children's evolution, not only could they not help but have high-profile leaders, which were the three college-students, but they used their status as a tool to draw support for the cause. As the organization grew, however, this strategy become both less useful and more dangerous. However, it is important to note that the outburst has heralded a new kind of structure in the organization's media campaign that relies heavily on depicting the views and opinions of ordinary members and less on the goals and aspirations of the organization's leaders. While this does not mean that the goals of the organization's leaders will take a lower priority over its membership, it does signal that the leadership is more willing to communicate with its members. The product of this shift can be seen as the launch of the MOVE:DC campaign, which was the most recent update from Invisible Children. The goal was to bring thousands of people to demonstrate in Washington D.C. against war and against the war-crimes committed by Kony and the LRA. In spite of the Russell incident, thousands showed up for the event in Washington D.C. While some in the media continued to refer to the organization's failings, as discussed in this paper, members at the rally were determined to focus instead on "seeing justice brought to one of the world's worst human rights offenders" (Punch 2012).

With only a few more weeks left in 2012, it is unlikely Invisible Children Inc. will accomplish its goal of capturing Kony by the end of this year. Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands of members from around the world remain committed to ending Joseph Kony's reign over the people in Central Africa. The Move:DC campaign signaled a kind of frame-shift for the organization, from taking the problem of war-crimes and poverty in the third-world head on, to approaching these issues with a level of humility. If there is anything these multiple shifts within the organization should tell us, it is that Invisible Children Inc. is willing to change and listen. Doing so, however, does not always come easily. Whether or not the KONY2012 campaign is

seen as a mistake, it served the valuable purpose of creating a multi-faceted strategy that will be most useful in serving the needs of the people living in the region.

In conclusion, after examining the outcomes for Invisible Children Inc., and weighing them with the outcomes for the people living in Central Africa, Invisible Children Inc. has been marginally successful in that it has accomplished real achievements through the development of its recovery projects in Central Africa over the past seven years. While the group does present problems with reciprocity, increasing levels of global involvement, including activists in Africa, demonstrate how this is changing (Punch 2012). Furthermore, the group has been instrumental in bringing Joseph Kony to the world's attention as a war-criminal and through the efforts of Central African governments he will likely be brought to justice sometime in the near future, if not this year. The organization's sustained success, however, depends upon whether Invisible Children Inc. is prepared for the shift that will follow the end of the war. After interviewing members of ICUMN, while I don't agree completely with Kristof's argument for the "human burden," I was touched by the level of commitment members had in making a lasting and positive impact in Africa. These were not students acting out of a "white man's burden," instead, as Mather's writes, they were students who were "questioning their own privilege, and developing their political and ethical responsibilities in the United States rather than in Africa" (Mathers 2012). If the members of ICUMN, then, are at all representative of the national organization, or if the national organization is more willing to listen to members of ICUMN, Invisible Children Inc.'s outcomes will bode well both for members as well as Central African recipients.

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