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**International Agenda-Setting in World Politics:  
Issue Emergence and Non-Emergence  
Around Children and Armed Conflict**

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# **International Agenda-Setting in World Politics: Issue Emergence and Non-Emergence Around Children and Armed Conflict**

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## **ABSTRACT**

A proliferating literature in IR theory documents the impact of transnational advocacy networks (TANs) on global public policy-making. We know little, however, about the process by which advocacy networks select issues around which to mobilize in the first place. This paper aims to build a framework for analyzing variation in issue emergence by examining a case of issue non-emergence within the transnational network around children and armed conflict: the protection needs of children born as a result of wartime rape. Hypotheses about issue emergence in the extant literature emphasize the role of norm entrepreneurs, the inherent attributes of issues, and the presence of existing norms onto which to graft new categories of concern. I argue that none of these factors explains why this very vulnerable category of child has not been addressed specifically by any of the major organizations advocating for the protection of war-affected children. I then draw on social movement theory to develop an alternative explanation: that the conditions for issue emergence are constituted by dynamics across, rather than primarily within, issue networks.

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## **International Agenda-Setting in World Politics: Issue Emergence and Non-Emergence Around Children and Armed Conflict<sup>1</sup>**

R. Charli Carpenter

A proliferating literature in IR theory documents the impact of transnational advocacy networks (TANs) on global public policy-making (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Khagram, Riker and Sikkink, 2002; Florini, 2000; Burgerman, 2001; Thomas, 2002). Linking insights from social movement theory, IR constructivism and sociological institutionalism, this literature explores the role played by civil society actors in setting the international agenda, teaching actors new norms and holding them to existing ones (Price, 2003). So far the research agenda has focused on proving that advocacy networks have an impact and, to a more limited extent, exploring variation in why some campaigns (once initiated) succeed while others fail.

Under-theorized, however, is the process by which advocacy networks select issues around which to mobilize in the first place. Indeed this rich set of questions seems generally absent from the advocacy networks research agenda. Price's recent overview of the advocacy network literature lists a number of "next steps" for the enterprise, including the study of non-liberal norms; better analysis of variation in impact of campaigns; and consideration the role of the Internet (Price, 2003). In addition to these steps, I argue we need a better understanding of why certain issues are singled out for attention in the first place and become salient on *networks'* agendas as a prelude to lobbying governments, while other potential issues fall by the wayside.

This paper aims to create thinking space for consideration of these questions by examining variation in issue emergence within the transnational network around children and armed conflict. A laundry list of issues – including child soldiering, displacement, landmines, sexual exploitation and girls in armed conflict – are decisively "on the network agenda," as evidenced by a qualitative analysis of web content and linking practices among major international and non-governmental organizations working in this broad issue area. Several others are absent from this agenda. Here, I explore hypotheses about issue emergence by considering a particular absence from network agenda around "children affected by armed conflict": the human rights of children *born* as a result of wartime rape or sexual exploitation. Although this category of child has been estimated to number around 500,000 and although babies born of wartime rape have often been mentioned by the global press coverage of war-torn contexts, this category of child has not entered this official discourse as an "issue" around which awareness must be raised, programming priorities established, and a campaign of any type formed (Carpenter, forthcoming). Indeed, exploratory focus group research and in-depth interviews with members of

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the humanitarian community suggest some child protection advocates are particularly reluctant to openly address this issue in the context of their work.

In the analysis below, I consider possible explanations for this advocacy vacuum. I begin by distilling some hypotheses about the emergence of “issues” within advocacy networks from the extant literature. Although I have not found analyses that explicitly tackle the question of issue emergence directly, a number of explanations are implicit in existing arguments, and I describe three: 1) norm entrepreneurship; 2) issue attributes; and 3) availability of existing norms onto which to “graft” new categories of concern. A comparison of the applicability of these explanations to what is known about this issue suggest none of these approaches tells the whole story.

This paper then draws on social movement theory to develop an alternative explanation: that the structure of advocacy discourse around *adjacent* issue areas predispose potential norm entrepreneurs to consider certain issues but not others (Mische 2004).<sup>2</sup> The case study described below is consistent less with existing hypotheses for issue emergence than with a framework emerging in social movement theory regarding communicative practices in network settings. In this case, the emergence of “war babies” as a coherent network theme seems to be problematized by social dynamics between the children's rights network and the women's network (and between different communities of practice within each network) over whether and how it links to existing issues including gender-based violence and reproductive health, on the one hand, and child protection on the other. This line of thinking is supported by qualitative data gathered in semi-structured interviews between June 2002 and May 2005, five years of participant-observation in the CaAC network, and preliminary results from focus group data gathered between December 2004 and March 2005.

The paper proceeds in three parts. I begin by surveying the general assumptions and emphases of the literature on advocacy networks. Here, I describe the web-based qualitative methods used in this paper to define the particular network around children and armed conflict; to identify the network agenda; and to evaluate existing hypotheses about this agenda. I next present evidence as to which issues occupy agenda space (including notably child soldiering and girls), compared to issues (including “war babies”) that do not. Section Two considers three generic (and largely untested) explanations for variation in issue emergence; I present the strengths and weaknesses of each as an explanation for the particular variation observed here by supplementing the historical record with preliminary data from in-depth interviews conducted within the CaAC network between 2003 and 2005. I then turn in Section Three to the “inter-network cross-talk” approach advocated in particular by Mische (2004) as a potential tool for gaining leverage on questions of issue emergence in international society. I conclude by using this framework to suggest possible answers to the specific substantive question asked here, as well as to generate an additional testable hypothesis about issue emergence in advocacy networks more generally.

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<sup>2</sup>Issue area adjacency refers to the extent to which a given issue in one area is viewed as complementary or linked to another area. The adjacency of issues to one another can be operationalized according to the number of cross-issue references present in discourse within a specific issue area; the adjacency of networks to one another can be operationalized according to the number of cross-network hyperlinks on network advocacy sites, or the number of organizations claiming a specialization in overlapping issue areas.

## Advocacy Networks and International Agenda-Setting: Theory and Methods

In their classic definition, Keck and Sikkink (1998:8) describe networks as “voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange.” All kinds of network politics matter in world affairs, but here I emphasize networks of activists motivated by shared principled discourse and aiming to affect political behavior through moral argument, or what the literature refers to as “transnational advocacy networks” (Price, 2003). All social networks are “network[s] of meanings” (White, 1992:67); advocacy networks are networks of *principled* meanings, in this case about rights and obligations between political actors and human beings.

The network around children and armed conflict (CaAC) is a network within a set of networks. It is embedded within the broader children's human rights network, which is again a subset of the broader human rights network about which much has been written (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, 2002; Hawkins, 2002; Thomas, 2002; Joachim, 2002). The principled belief at the core of this network's efforts is that children should be better protected from the effects of armed conflict: as the U.N. web portal on this issue states: “international and local standards of conduct should be resurrected and respected, in order to prevent the abuse and brutalization of children.”<sup>3</sup>

As a specific category of concern, “children affected by armed conflict” are a relatively recent construction in human rights discourse, although a concern for children as the “innocent victims” of armed conflict dates back centuries, and major humanitarian and development organizations such as Save the Children and UNICEF emerged out of early 20th-century efforts to protect child victims of war (Beigbeder, 2002). However, only in the early 1990s did the broader human rights network and UN machinery begin talking about children and armed conflict as a specific human security issue (Oestreich, 1998).

Recognition of this problem took root at the World Summit for Children in 1990. In 1994, following a recommendation from the General Assembly, the U.N. Secretary General commissioned a global study on the effects of armed conflict on children, and the resulting document, the 1996 Graca Machel Report, galvanized the human rights network, the United Nations, and governments worldwide (Machel, 1996). As a result, Secretary General Kofi Annan established the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General (OSRSG) on Children and Armed Conflict, appointing Olara Ottunu as the first Special Representative in 1997. Simultaneously, the newly christened Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was developing its “protection of civilians” mandate with an emphasis on “children and war” incorporated as a component. These offices, along with other agenda-setting bodies in the humanitarian community (such as UNICEF, UNHCR, and the ICRC) began working closely with the Secretariat to place children's rights in war on the agenda of the most powerful governing body in world affairs, the Security Council.

These efforts resulted in a number of Security Council thematic debates and resolutions in 1999, just as the Campaign to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers was gaining momentum. This wildly successful campaign led to the negotiation of a new protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2000, as well as a whirlwind of activity around the issue of children and war. Aiming to capitalize on the success of the child soldiers campaign and broaden humanitarian concern with children and armed conflict more generally, the Canadian government unveiled a multi-year initiative on “war-affected children” at an international

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<sup>3</sup> See website for the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict: <http://www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict/>. Accessed May 22, 2005.

conference in Winnipeg in 2000, and committed its development agency to earmarking funds for research and programming on children in armed conflict, spawning additional projects, activities, and media concern (CIDA, 2000) So salient has the “children and armed conflict” issue area become that even formerly development-oriented relief and advocacy organizations such as Save the Children have begun re-emphasizing children in emergencies in their advocacy and programming.

As the brief historical sketch above illustrates, advocacy networks are composed of a variety of non-governmental organizations (such as Save the Children), international organizations (such as UNICEF), governments (Canada in particular playing the role of norm leader in this regard) and myriad individuals located within these bureaucracies and other levers of symbolic power in world affairs, including academia and the media. As the literature has demonstrated, networks such as these do a great many things, including lobbying, standard-setting, monitoring of compliance with standards, and shaming norm violators (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). But one of the most pivotal aspects of network politics is the construction of specific problems as international issues in the first place (Price, 2003).

This step is logically prior to building campaigns, negotiating treaties, and holding states accountable. Yet because studies of advocacy networks to date have tended to examine *pre-existing* items on advocacy network agendas, most of the theorizing has dealt with later steps in the advocacy chain, such as the process of creating and diffusing new norms (which occurs when states sign onto treaties); or the process of campaigning for the creation of new norms, which occurs once a critical mass of civil society actors converges around a specific platform such as “create an international criminal court” or “ban landmines.” Thus, we know a fair amount about why campaigns form around certain issues but not others, and the conditions under which campaigns, once formed, succeed or fail. Less has been written about the crucial early question of why advocacy networks pay attention to certain issues and not others in the first place.

*Issue definition* is the conceptual link between the myriad bad things out there and this persuasive machinery of advocacy politics in world affairs. For example, the practice of clandestinely abducting and killing political dissidents, or what is now understood as “disappearing” people, has been a problem (at least, for the dissidents) throughout history. It was not a human rights issue, however, until a network of organizations *named* it as such, linked it to existing human rights discourse, and began documenting and shaming states for it (Clark, 2001). Issue definition involves demonstrating “that a given state of affairs is neither natural nor accidental, identify[ing] the responsible part or parties, and propos[ing] credible solutions” (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:19). Once an issue is defined as such, it may or may not elicit a campaign or concerted action. But without this step, no effective advocacy is possible. Because all subsequent advocacy politics depends on an issue being defined as such by a critical mass of activists, understanding variation in *issue emergence* is crucial to assessing the role of TANs in world politics.

To this end, this paper considers variation in the set of issues that end up occupying agenda space within specific networks: in this case, the CaAC network. In the sections below, I first use web-based qualitative tools to describe the network itself, and the issue-specific variation that exists within its agenda. I then apply existing models from the TAN literature to explain this variation. Because these explanations do not fully account for the variation observed here, I conclude by turning to social movement theory to develop a more nuanced explanation about the agenda-setting process in advocacy networks, from which I distill a hypothesis to be tested on additional cases.

## *Methodology*

Research that begins with questions about omissions in a given network agenda is tasked with identifying both “the network” and “the agenda” in order to demonstrate what is or is not “on” it. Only then can one move toward developing explanations for specific variation in issue salience. Following other analyses of the social construction of meaning, this project uses a combination of qualitative methodologies to map out the CaAC network, identify the dominant items on the network agenda and specific gaps, including the “war babies” gap, and to evaluate hypotheses about why that gap currently obtains.

To define the parameters of the network, I draw on social network theory, particularly hyperlink analysis (Park, 2003). To describe the network agenda, I rely on a multi-coder content analysis of organizational websites, conducted with qualitative data analysis software that renders the analysis transparent and replicable.<sup>4</sup> Finally, to evaluate existing hypotheses and to develop new ones as to why some issues but not others are on the international agenda, I draw on in-depth interview data and participant-observation within the CaAC network carried out over the past five years.<sup>5</sup>

*Operationalizing the Network.* To determine the constituent parts of the network under study, I began by looking to cyberspace as a virtual context in which network actors both associate and construct shared meanings. Price reminds us (2003:597) that the TAN literature has not adequately exploited the Internet as a data resource or systematically analyzed it as an organizational medium for advocacy networks. Yet the Internet is a rich source of information about the way in which advocacy networks define issues, as well as relationships among network actors themselves. Norm advocates will themselves argue that organizational websites are a vital source of content about the issues that define the organizations. “In creating an online persona, NGOs engage in framing activities... by shaping the ways that issues are conceptualized and understood” (Warkentin, 2001:36-37). As Carpenter (2005) argues with respect to advocacy around the protection of civilians, the rhetorical content of websites, the accompanying images, the way content is categorized and the way in which different themes and frames are connected in cyberspace matter enormously in terms of the construction of advocacy frames in transnational civil society.

According to the emerging field of hyperlink network analysis, webspace also provides us with data about how organizations within a network interface (Park, 2003; Thelwall, 2004). Networks themselves are defined in terms of relational links between discrete nodes; hyperlinks in cyberspace connect websites much as social relations connect agents in real space (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). But hyperlinking practices between online organizations are not simply an instrumental means by which to navigate from one cyber-locale to another. They also constitute recognition of organizational membership in a community of understanding. “On the web, the measure of visibility is the number incoming links. The more incoming links point to your web page, the more visible it is” (Barabasi, 2002:5). Similarly, Park et. al (2001) discuss hyperlinks as a function of the “credibility” among web-sites, a reflection of the perception within an issue network of who the key agenda-setters are. If advocacy networks are communities of shared meaning, the linking structure and content of web-based advocacy sites around an issue tell us both about specific discourses through which that shared meaning is

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<sup>4</sup> The complete dataset as well as web archives are available upon request.

<sup>5</sup> The latter includes participation at two international conferences and work on a UNICEF fact-finding study.

constructed, and also about which actors' participation is understood to matter in that community of meaning.

Methodologically, then, the Internet is a useful and under-explored tool for mapping out the parameters of a particular issue network, because one can identify the cluster of organizations most prominent in an issue network according to their reciprocal linking practices.<sup>6</sup>

In this study, I began by using web content in this way to identify the key cluster of organizations that dominate the CaAC network. I was less interested in the linking practices themselves than in identifying a sample of issue leaders in the network whose web content I could analyze as indicative of the current network agenda. Two graduate students were assigned to work independently to identify the universe of organizational websites with “children and armed conflict” emphases<sup>7</sup> linked within three degrees of separation<sup>8</sup> of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Children and War website. We then replicated the analysis beginning instead at the Watchlist for Children and Armed Conflict.<sup>9</sup> Because these were not significantly different, we organized our data using the Watchlist links page as an entry point because it allowed for more relevant organizations within the first degree of separation and led to a small number of additional organizational sites.

The linking practices were catalogued using Analyst Notebook (see Figure 1), a computer program which enables the user to generate graphical representations of social networks. The key “hubs” in the CaAC network – webpages receiving a large number of incoming links - turned out to be (in descending order of number of links): UNICEF, the Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG), the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (WCRWC), the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The key “connectors” - webpages serving as gateways to other relevant sites by providing a large number of outgoing links - included research institutes such as University of Essex's Children and Armed Conflict Unit and University of Alberta's Children and War Project; and online bulletins such as the Watchlist and the Child Rights Information Network. Other nodes that

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<sup>6</sup> It is highly noticeable for example when an organization that is trying to be loud on an issue ends up being virtually ignored in cyberspace by powerful organizations' refusal to engage in reciprocal linking practices. This both constitutes a denial of membership in a community and helps to render an organization's platform less visible within network discourse, by failing to direct Internet users toward its location in cyberspace.

<sup>7</sup> Not every organization at the end of an outgoing link ended up in our dataset. Because we were interested in reviewing the range of issues constitutive of the broader 'war-affected children' advocacy arena, we included only organization web pages with text describing 'children and armed conflict' as a multi-issue area. This means we excluded organizations with only an issue-specific focus on children and armed conflict (such as UNHCR, whose page focuses only on refugee children, and the Coalition Against the Use of Child Soldiers, which focuses only on recruitment). We also excluded broad-based rights organizations with no specific website dealing with children and armed conflict, such as Human Rights Watch.

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, a degree of separation is the number of clicks one must make in order to reach a site. One degree of separation is one click from OCHA; two degrees is two clicks. According to Barbarasi (2002:34), computer scientists have determined that all data on the world wide web is no further apart than nineteen degrees of separation.

<sup>9</sup> These are in some ways arbitrary places to begin. OCHA seemed particularly appropriate because one of its core purposes in the humanitarian community is precisely to *serve* as a 'web portal' (that is, a centre for outgoing links to the broader network. However, OCHA's Children and War page turned out to have relatively few outgoing links, prompting us to replicate the analysis using the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict's website as an entry point. What is notable however is that both of these organizations lie within two degrees of separation of the same CaAC network organizations, suggesting that the starting point turns out to be relatively unimportant in terms of mapping out the network.

appear in the organizational dataset within three degrees of separation of the Watchlist are listed in Table 1.<sup>10</sup>

<< TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE >>

*Identifying the Network Agenda.* Having established a sample of organizations densely connected and all identifying as members of a common network, I then proceeded to analyze the issue content as represented online. To do this, I had two graduate students independently identify the specific pages on the organizational website with text content pertaining to children and armed conflict. We looked in particular for sets of text that described “the issue” or the organizational “mandate” with respect to children and armed conflict. In some cases, the amount of text is quite extensive and disaggregated by issue, notably the OSRSG's website with detailed articulation of each of many issues; in others, such as the International Bureau for Children's Rights in Montreal, “children and armed conflict” is but one on a broader list of protection themes, with a relatively concise one-paragraph description of what the IBCR's mandate for such children covers. We excluded organizations from the dataset which lacked a page specifically dealing with children and armed conflict.

We downloaded all such text from the Net as it appeared online in January 2004 and converted it to txt files. These were then uploaded into a qualitative data analysis application called Atlas.ti 5.0. Atlas software allows the user to systematically categorize and count occurrences of particular themes in text, theorize about the relationships between discrete discursive properties, and document an analytical process that allows the reader to replicate the analysis. It is also very useful in allowing multiple independent coders to sift through raw data in order to identify the initial codes, while then allowing a principle investigator to refine and categorize the discrete coded categories as needed given the focus of a particular qualitative project. I instructed my two coders to look for “themes” articulated as such by different actors in the total dataset.

We began with the set of issues listed on the OSRSG's homepage, which include approximately fifteen issues such as “child soldiers,” “sexual violence,” “land mines” and “killing and maiming.” Coders were asked to apply these codes to clauses in the entire dataset where such themes were mentioned, but also to look for cases where a theme did not fit the extant categories and a new code was required. We compared results, refining our interpretation of what certain things meant<sup>11</sup> and ended up with a total of 31 distinct “issues.” The students then began from scratch to recode the data using these categories, which resulted both in a qualitative dataset that will allow us to more closely examine the relationship between discrete categories of text, but also a set of frequencies. Frequencies for issues that appear on 30% or more of the organizational webpages are listed in Table 2 and described below. They tell us something about which issues are currently most salient on the network agenda.

A supplementary source of data on CaAC network frames has been drawn simultaneously from on-going focus group research bringing together humanitarian practitioners from these

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<sup>10</sup> Extending the analysis to three degrees of separation increased the number of qualifying organizations only by one, suggesting that two degrees of separation is the saturation point for this online social network.

<sup>11</sup> For example, it took some time to decide to create separate codes for 'sexual violence/exploitation/abuse', 'gender-based-violence' and 'trafficking/abduction' since these terms are sometimes used interchangeably in the content. Conceptually however we understand these terms to be distinct: trafficking may or may not be for sexual purposes; and gender-based violence is broader than sexual violence, though all sexual violence is gender-based. When coding, we often applied multiple codes to the same passage in order to capture overlap in the discursive usage of these terms.

same agencies as well as humanitarian officials working in sexual and gender-based violence. In collaboration with several other researchers on a related project, I have convened four focus groups since December 2004 in New York, Geneva and Pittsburgh. The goal of these focus groups is to measure the existing knowledge base in humanitarian programming around children born of sexual violence, but we recruited participants under the general theme of “protecting women and children” and we began the discussions by asking participants to list the 10 most important issues women and children face in war zones. The issues listed for children across the focus groups are remarkably similar to those that emerge from the content analysis of websites, lending further support to the idea that organizational websites are reliable indicators of network agendas.

### Issues and Missing Issues on the CaAC Network Agenda

What are the most salient issues on the CaAC agenda today? A preliminary qualitative data analysis of a sample of 20 of these organizational web pages on CaAC, suggests that the issue most often identified by CaAC organizations is child soldiers (76%), followed by separation/loss of family (70%), psychosocial harm (66%), education and displacement (both at 60%), sexual violence and killing (both at 56%), and physical violence/abuse (50%). Other issues appearing on more than 35% of organizational webpages include maiming/disability, trafficking/abduction and health/malnutrition.<sup>12</sup>

The CaAC agenda is characterized by both *categories* of affected children and by *issues* affecting children.<sup>13</sup> Categories of child include soldiers, refugees, orphans, girls, disabled children, and street children; examples of issues are killing, discrimination, reintegration, family reunification, education and landmines. In some cases categories and issues overlap or are used interchangeably: for example, child soldiers as a category corresponds to recruitment as an issue; unaccompanied children correspond to separation as an issue. However, not all categories have a corresponding “issue” and indeed some categories of child are discursively connected to multiple issues (eg child soldiers are connected not only to recruitment as an issue but also to light arms, psychosocial harm and separation).

*Child soldiers* are the single most prominent category on the list. Recruitment of children in armed conflict was discussed at the negotiations for the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in the Committee on the Rights of the Child in subsequent years. A seminal book written by Goodwin-Gill and Cohn (1994) drew attention to this global phenomenon, and the 1996 Graca Machel report emphasizes recruitment as a key impact of war on children. While ad-hoc efforts to prevent child soldiering pre-dated the Machel report, concerted advocacy around child recruitment as a specific issue picked up in 1998, when in the wake of the successful campaign to ban landmines civil society organizations began “looking for other issues which had stagnated within the UN system and which might lend themselves to a similar formula” (Sorger and Hoskins, 2001:135). The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers was launched in June 1998, with its initial aim the adoption of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibiting military recruitment and use in hostilities of any one under 18 (Maslen,

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<sup>12</sup> This analysis has been replicated independently by two graduate student coders and edited by the author for accuracy. The websites from which content was taken are archived on the author's website at <http://www.pitt.edu/~charli> and the coded dataset is available as an Atlas.ti 5.0 copy bundle upon request.

<sup>13</sup> According to some interview respondents, a controversy existed while drafting the original Machel Report as to whether to frame the agenda in terms of categories of affected child or cross-cutting issues. The current overlapping nature of both approaches may reflect this ongoing debate. One respondent told me the UN is now moving away from the use of categorization in this way altogether.

1998:447). The Protocol was successfully negotiated in 2000, and though its overall effects on states' recruitment policies are indeterminate, the effect of the negotiations on the salience of child soldiering as an international issue was profound (Snyder, 2001). Content analysis of web data shows that child soldiering is the single most often-cited issue among children's rights organizations dealing with armed conflict.

A category that has drawn relatively recent attention, and which currently occupies a lesser amount of agenda space, is the plight of *girls in armed conflict*. Efforts to speak about girls distinctly from the larger category of “child” in the human rights movement go back to the codification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, where activists succeeded in introducing sex-variable pronouns for the first time in an international treaty. An additional discursive change began during the lead-up to Beijing in the early 1990s, when the standard discourse “women and children” of humanitarian discourse turned to “women and girls” as part of the emerging gender-equality framework within the human rights network.<sup>14</sup> While girls were linked to women before they were linked to the broader category “child,” the need to emphasize girls in particular was soon picked up on by the war-affected children's network. Graca Machel's 1996 report included a section on “girls”; subsequently, independent scholars and activists began seeking to disaggregate the category of “war-affected child” by sex to highlight the specific forms of abuse to which girls are subject in armed conflict. A background paper on the topic of girl soldiers was presented at the 2000 Winnipeg Conference, aimed at deconstructing the myth that child soldiers are all male and pointing to the surprisingly large-scale presence of young women in the revolutionary movements across Africa, Asia and Latin America. At the conclusion of the conference the Canadian government issued a three-year grant to researchers Dyan Mazurana and Susan McKay to conduct a study of girls soldiers and girls in demobilization programs. The report entitled *Where are the Girls?* was released in 2004, documenting agency, victimization and a complex set of gender-based factors contributing to girls' specific forms of insecurity in war (Mazurana and McKay, 2004). Reports were simultaneously emerging at other focal points in the network, including the Quaker UN office headed by Rachel Brett; and the Special Representative's web portal soon included content on girls as a category.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast with categories such as child soldiers and girls in armed conflict, *children born of wartime rape or sexual exploitation* are not yet on the official agenda.<sup>16</sup> Objectively speaking, this category of war-affected child should be considered particularly vulnerable. As the World Health Organization has briefly acknowledged in a document on gender-based violence, children born to wartime rape survivors are at particular risk of a variety of human rights abuses and developmental difficulties due to their biological origins (WHO, 2000). Because of attachment difficulties due to trauma, their birth mothers may neglect or even kill such children; they may be at greater risk of HIV-AIDS and malnourishment as infants, and face stigma, discrimination and statelessness as they grow older (Carpenter, forthcoming). As described in a recent UNIFEM document (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2003:18), children born of rape and sexual

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<sup>14</sup> This construction is somewhat controversial because while it spotlights gender, it is argued that the association with girls may infantilize women. See Whitworth, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict/English/GirlsinWar.html>. Accessed May 22, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> There are other notable omissions from this list as well. For example, children of military families in troop-contributing states are not defined as war-affected, nor does the network consider the continuum of peace-time violence, exposure to media images of violence in industrialized countries or the militarization of northern children by the war toy industry as issues to be addressed. See, however, Enloe, 2000.

exploitation “become the symbol of the trauma the nation as a whole went through, and society prefers not to acknowledge their needs.”

The number of such children has not been documented, although some hundreds to thousands are reported existing in nearly every war-torn society that has experienced spates of sexual violence, and a 2001 report by the War and Children Identity Project in Norway has aggregated these reports to estimate a population of at least 500,000 worldwide (Grieg, 2001). Although a taboo exists regarding these children in war-affected societies, knowledge of their existence and plight is wide-spread in the global media, which has generated numerous reports of “rape babies” from Bosnia to Rwanda to East Timor to the Sudan (Becirbasic and Secic, 2001; Powell, 2001; Wax, 2004; Polgreen, 2005). Despite these trends, and despite emerging awareness within the women's network, war babies had not by June 2005 appeared in web content as a category of war-affected child worthy of advocacy or particular concern by the CaAC network.<sup>17</sup> That the children as a category are absent from the formal network agenda is confirmed by in-depth interviews and focus groups with humanitarian practitioners.<sup>18</sup>

### Variation in Issue Emergence on Advocacy Network Agendas: Three Hypotheses

Social scientists are interested in explaining variation in outcomes. While most of the advocacy network literature to date has focused on variation in networks' ability to impact state agendas (and correspondingly, state behavior), the question that emerges from this descriptive data is how to explain variation in the issues that appear on the agendas of networks themselves. Why were child soldiers, girls and various other categories of war-affected child singled out for issue advocacy in the mid-late 1990s while children born of wartime rape were not? Although there has been less concerted attention to the question of issue emergence in the advocacy network literature, three implicit hypotheses may be distilled from the existing literature as to the conditions for a problem to become an “issue” in world politics. I consider each below in terms of its ability to explain variation in attention to child soldiers, girls, and war babies within the CaAC network. I then suggest a fourth explanation having to do with the nature of cross-network relationships around specific types of advocacy. Within the context of this explanation, I develop a specific hypothesis for further exploration.

#### *Issue Attributes.*

In their groundbreaking volume on advocacy networks, Keck and Sikkink develop an implicit theory of issue formation within networks, emphasizing the importance of issue attributes in advocates' selection of specific campaigns. The attributes most helpful in terms of framing issue are “causes [that] can be assigned to the deliberate actions of identifiable individuals”; “issues involving bodily harm to vulnerable individuals, especially when there is a short and clear causal chain assigning responsibility; and issues involving legal equality of opportunity” (Keck and Sikkink 1998:27). The idea that the intrinsic nature of an issue can explain its success in efforts to build new international norms is shared by a variety of scholars (Nadelmann, 1990; Bob, 2002) and echoed by Price (2002).

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<sup>17</sup>This does not mean there has been zero activity in this area; only that the activity has not penetrated official network discourse. The issue has been raised briefly in certain contexts and is mentioned in some network documents – including the Graca Machel report. No organization to date, however, has done a cross-national study or initiated a campaign; and none of the Internet sites here explicitly refers to these children as a category.

<sup>18</sup>Almost all practitioners I've spoken to report that programming directed at war babies is non-existent, although many practitioners claim that although they are not singled out for attention, this does not necessarily mean they are underserved. Without any assessments however it is impossible to tell whether this is the case.

Various studies lend support for these hypotheses, at least when it comes to the emergence of campaigns around specific issues and their relative likelihood of success.<sup>19</sup> For example, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998:907) compare the widely successful international campaign for women's suffrage to the failed temperance campaign, pointing out that former engaged questions of legal equality. Keck and Sikkink's analysis of the Nestle boycott (1998:28) describe the campaign's relative initial success of ending direct marketing of breast-milk substitutes to mothers in developing countries, but its difficulty in ending the marketing of formula to health-care professionals: the longer causal chain posed by that scenario, alongside the notion that health-care workers buffer women from multi-nationals' advertising, complicated advocates' ability to assign direct responsibility to Nestle. Because of the influence of the global media in generating visibility for specific issues, problems that can be easily converted to a simple media frame are also more likely to result in international attention than others (Bob, 2002; Carpenter, 2005).

While the issue attributes hypothesis may well explain why specific campaigns succeed or fail, as well as to some extent why certain issues but not others are identified as candidates for campaigns, it doesn't provide much leverage on how problems are or are not constructed as issues worthy of advocacy concern in the first place. The issue attributes emphasized by the above authors do not correlate well to the presence or absence of the issues presently discussed on the CaAC agenda, nor do they explain the absence of war babies' rights.

For example, child soldiers, many of whom maim, kill, rape and gain social benefits and security from participation in armed forces, are a particularly problematic category to cast as uniformly innocent and vulnerable: in many cases child soldiers may in fact be perpetrators of atrocities; they are as likely to have joined voluntarily as to have been forcibly abducted (Brett and Specht, 2005); and as one humanitarian official put it, "Compared to some other children experiencing the effects of armed conflict, child soldiers are extraordinarily well off."<sup>20</sup> Yet advocacy on their behalf has been enormously successful, whereas newborn war babies who are unarguably both innocent and helpless have not been articulated as a priority for the child protection community.

Girl children affected by war arguably better meet the criteria of vulnerability and females across the board are more likely to be socially perceived to be innocent bystanders to conflict, which might better explain the issue salience of girls as a category. However, Keck and Sikkink's model would predict that gender discrimination per se would be a particularly difficult issue to define and address given its broad multi-faceted character. Indeed, feminist literature in human rights advocacy has demonstrated the barriers to addressing systemic societal forms of abuse and discrimination precisely because it is often diffuse and difficult to trace to specific actors, particularly states (Thompson, 2004; Joachim, 2004). While this problem may have impeded successful political change on behalf of women however, it has not posed an obstacle to talking about gender discrimination as an issue, and has in fact framed the discussion through efforts to "recast" human rights discourse and to narrow in on specific categories of discrimination such as violence against women (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Bunch, 1990). The emergence of girls and child soldiers on the agenda, and the absence of children of rape, suggest that issue attributes, while relevant, are hardly decisive in determining the content of the international human rights agenda.

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<sup>19</sup>Campaigns and coalitions sometimes form around, but are distinct from, specific issues. See Khagram, Riker and Sikkink, 2002:7.

<sup>20</sup> Personal conversation, New York, May 2005.

### *Norm Entrepreneurship.*

Another common theme in the literature on advocacy networks is the importance of specific altruistically-motivated individuals who initiate a campaign and lobby to draw awareness to an issue (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Nadelmann, 1990; Lumsdaine, 1993; Price, 1998). These “norm entrepreneurs” identify under-studied causes and begin to work through their social networks to rally other influential individuals to their cause. At least one initial norm entrepreneur, such as an Henri Dunant (Finnemore, 1996) or a Jody Williams (Price, 1998) is necessary, but it is the strategic creation of “norm leaders” which catapult an issue to international prominence. These can include specific states whose desire to champion a particular cause can contribute to international prestige or the solidification of certain forms of domestic identity, as in the case of Canada's leadership on the Ottawa Treaty and the “Human Security” agenda in international society (Gwozdecky and Sinclair, 2001). Relatedly, celebrities available to take up an international cause can be a vital element in issue emergence (Bob, 2002). The Dalai Lama's role as a spokesperson on behalf of the Nepalese and Princess Diana's advocacy around the landmines issue have contributed to their international visibility and salience.

The common theme here is that issue emergence depends on the actions of agents: issues don't just emerge, someone must make it so. Perhaps the war babies issue lies dormant in international society simply because no norm entrepreneur has yet thought to take it up. There is some evidence that simply drawing attention to an understudied problem can have an advocacy effect, the counterfactual being that as long as nobody plays this role, issues will lie dormant. But this evidence does not take us very far, because it doesn't explain why some issues seem to *elicit* requisite norm entrepreneurship within powerful networks and others don't. Bob's contention that the critical variable is local organizing is inapplicable to populations such as children affected by armed conflict, whose cause has been defined and championed transnationally rather than by local representatives. It did not take systematic lobbying by child soldiers themselves or even by local activists in war-torn countries to initiate issue attention at the UN and by NGOs on child soldiers. Norm advocates within the network were *primed* to tap into this issue using their existing frames and repertoires of contention. What factors cause norm entrepreneurs or activists with leverage within network to think about and pay attention to certain issues and certain categories of victim, but not others?

The generic idea that norm entrepreneurship plays a role in issue emergence also does not explain why ideas that *are* sparked sometimes fail to snowball into effective action. The global media is often attributed an agenda-setting role on human rights issues, and media visibility is considered a prerequisite for moral engagement in international society (Carpenter, 2005; Bob, 2002:136) but this can be no more than a necessary condition, since rather extensive media coverage of this issue in a variety of contexts has not yet resulted in practitioners choosing to emphasize it as an advocacy issue (Stanley, 1999). Celebrity and state norm leaders' interest in specific issues also can be no more than an exacerbating factor given other permissive conditions, since certain celebrities<sup>21</sup> and states (particularly Britain) expressed interest in war

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<sup>21</sup> A women's rights activist told me, 'A certain Hollywood figure, I won't say who, during the Bosnian conflict was all the time asking women's organizations how to help the rape babies. The emphasis in particular was on making sure that American couples could adopt them.' Personal Interview, June 2003.

babies at various pivotal moments during the Bosnian conflict,<sup>22</sup> but issue space failed to emerge in the 1990s that might have harnessed their publicity potential (and financial contributions) on behalf of these children.<sup>23</sup> When attempts were made to create such space, they did not result in concerted action.<sup>24</sup> The questions remain: what conditions are necessary for norm entrepreneurs to take *note* of potential issues; for advocates within a network to pick up on and promote such currents when they exist; and what factors impede the furtherance of this process with respect to specific issues?

### *Grafting Potential.*

A third explanation for the emergence of certain norms but not others, which might plausibly be applicable as well to issue advocacy, is the extent to which advocates can link a new set of intersubjective understandings to pre-existing moral standards. This perspective, associated in the particular with Richard Price's work on weapons taboos, argues that the promotion of new moral standards is most likely to succeed if these can be “grafted” onto pre-existing taboos. For example, the chemical weapons taboo was popularized partly because it built upon an earlier prohibition on the use of poisons in warfare (Price and Tannenwald, 1996); and advocates of the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines sought to move debate over landmines away from arms control discourse and graft it onto the relatively robust norm of civilian immunity by emphasizing landmines' indiscriminate effects (Price, 1998).

Although Price's use of the term “grafting” is meant to highlight the strategic and conscious aspect of this process, the notion that new issues must “resonate” with existing frames has been articulated in earlier literature. Florini (2000) discusses the relationship of emerging norms to other norms in the “pool.” In the human rights sphere, Bob (2002) argues that the groups most likely to have their oppression championed by international human rights networks are those who suffer from violations *recognized* by the networks: “International human rights organizations have long focused their concern on basic rights rooted in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Groups suffering abuses that fit into these categories have a better chance of gaining international support than groups suffering other forms of oppression.”

From this perspective, war babies' absence from the CaAC agenda would be predictable to the extent that the particular harms they are likely to suffer fall outside the conventional categories of harm enshrined in the international treaties and norms on which the network typically draws. But this is not the case. The most common and distinct harms to which children

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<sup>22</sup> In 1993, Tim Yeo, then the Junior Health Minister for the British government, introduced controversial legislation in Parliament to streamline red-tape for international adoptions of war-rape orphans from Bosnia (Stanley, 1999). The effort was heralded by some as a 'humanitarian effort' but criticized by the Bosnian government as a form of imperialism and by some, who pointed out that Britain might have also sought to extend asylum preference to rape victims in order to keep the mothers and babies together, rather than focus on exporting the children for adoption by British couples.

<sup>23</sup> Indeed, several key human rights organizations involved in collecting data on the needs of war-affected children and women attempted to dampen down enthusiasm to treat 'war babies' as a programmatic concern in themselves, emphasizing the importance of allowing the Bosnian government to deal with the issue and provide generic support to local humanitarian initiatives. See Williamson, 1993 and Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, 1994.

<sup>24</sup> For example, the 2000 Machel Review document specifically called for a fact-finding study entitled *Where are the Babies?* to follow up on this category of child (Machel, 2000). But the presence of this issue on the initial agenda did not result in the incorporation of attention to the issue in the draft documents resulting from the conference; indeed, that background paper was eventually removed from the conference website, and no fact-finding study was undertaken in the wake of the conference.

born of war rape are subject – infanticide, stigma and discrimination, abuse or neglect, and difficulties in securing identity rights – all are regulated by the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (Leblanc, 1994). Additionally, children born of war rape are arguably protected by other international legal instruments relevant to civilian populations and children in conflict situations in particular (Carpenter, 2000). All of these international standards incorporate, in principle, the assumption of impartiality: that children’s human rights codified in law apply to all children, regardless of sex, nationality, religion, social origin, *birth or other status*.

Potential to graft an issue to pre-existing norms may be only a necessary condition; arguably interested moral entrepreneurs must also have capacity to graft in these ways. Bob's recent study of Ogoni activism in the Niger Delta goes on to discuss a strategic process by which savvy aggrieved groups can and do tailor their claims to these pre-dispositions among the international lobbyists whose help they seek. He argues that not all groups will possess either this savvy or the resources (material, linguistic, cultural) or organizational connections to conduct such activism effectively, and that *capacity* to effectively graft claims onto pre-existing discourse is as crucial as the potential to do so.

This may partly explain the absence of war babies on the international agenda, insofar as norm entrepreneurs are not wholly non-existent but instead tend to be marginalized from the network for reasons that might be chalked up to various institutional and structural factors. For example, the War and Children Identity Project in Norway emerged on the heels of a successful campaign to obtain reparations from the Norwegian government for maltreatment of Norwegian/German war babies in the aftermath of World War II.<sup>25</sup> This group has not yet succeeded at accessing or transforming agenda space within the CaAC network and remains relatively marginalized. In part, incapacity hinders its reach: as a Norwegian NGO, WCIP is relatively isolated from the North American aid community's organizational resources, and its fundraising efforts to date have focused on Norway. Similarly, a few members of the scholarly community have written on this issue in the interests of drawing greater attention to it, but academics are generally not well situated as such to structurally to communicate principled ideas to transnational networks.<sup>26</sup>

But while these examples may substantiate Bob's prediction that capacity to graft matters, there also exist latent norm entrepreneurs better situated within the CaAC network, whose efforts have nonetheless also been largely unsuccessful. The war babies issue in fact was raised briefly in the Graca Machel Review in 2000. It most recently appeared briefly again in the Independent Experts' Report *Women, War and Peace* pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1325. What failed to happen was any decisive advocacy as a result: the issue remained buried within the text of these larger documents and systematic fact-finding, called for in each of these cases, has not yet materialized. The widely recognized importance of norm entrepreneurs and of both potential, capacity and willingness on the part of those entrepreneurs to graft a new issue onto existing discourse doesn't explain the conditions under which potential norm entrepreneurs (those aware of an issue, motivated toward issue formation and possessing the sorts of capacities on which

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<sup>25</sup> See <http://www.warandchildren.org>. The organization's platform includes attention to children born of war rape: its proposals include tracing networks to help adult children establish their identities, the development of new international standards addressing the particular harms to which they are subject, and mechanisms to hold governments accountable for children fathered by their troops through rape or other forms of sexual exploitation (Grieg, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> See Carpenter, 2000.

Bob focuses) will *decide* to engage an issue, or what accounts for success or failure when they do.

### Issue Salience and Issue Concordance: The Role of Inter-Network Cross-Talk

The case of children born of wartime rape as a non-issue is not fully explained by importing explanations for campaign success to questions of variation in issue emergence. As an issue, children born of wartime rape possesses several of the attributes most associated with advocacy appeal: innocence, vulnerability, subject to bodily harm or socio-legal inequality. The causal chain is complex, but no more so than that of various other children's right issues on the agenda. Several bodies of law exist already with which to address these rights, as does a network around "children affected by armed conflict" that poses an obvious institutional and normative context in which to address this issue. Yet there is little mention of this dimension of children's experience in conflict situations within the CaAC network discourse. Why?

In this section, I sketch thinking space for an alternative approach to issue emergence in international society that might help connect and fill the gaps between the above explanations. Conversations with practitioners suggest that there is something about some issues that renders them more complicated than others in terms of advocacy. But I hypothesize below that this has less to do with the issue's attributes itself, availability of norm entrepreneurship, or grafting potential than with the structure of advocacy discourse around *adjacent* issues: in this case, particularly reproductive health and gender based violence.

Although the recent IR work on advocacy networks seeks to speak to and draws on many assumptions in the literature on international norms, arguably some of the most important insights regarding international agenda-setting come instead from the literature on comparative social movements (e.g. McAdam et. al, 1996). This literature is both beginning to emphasize collective action across state boundaries and applying sophisticated concepts already well-developed in domestic social movement theory to explore how transnational advocacy operates (Smith et. al, 1997; Guidry, et. al 2000; Joachim, 2002). A recent volume edited by Diani and McAdam (2004) explicitly seeks to link insights from social network analysis to literature on comparative social movements by moving beyond "networks as metaphor" to explore their role as explanatory mechanisms in different movement contexts. While this wide-ranging volume describes a number of network functions (Passy, 2004),<sup>27</sup> and while it does not explicitly deal with failures in issue emergence, Ann Mische's chapter on conversational strategies across networks are particularly relevant for generating explanatory hypotheses that might fill gaps in the approaches outlined above (Mische, 2004).

The key contributions of Mische's approach are, first, the insight that activity *across* networks is as important analytically (and politically) as the strategies that connect movement actors within networks. This is important for two reasons. First, because advocates generally occupy more than one kind of network simultaneously, they must negotiate their multiple allegiances in social settings that may require them to wear "more than one hat" or to connect discursively. It is in these conversational settings that cross-network relations (as well as intra-network identities) are constituted. These also provides the social context in which issues (and issue coalitions) emerge: "Events serve as settings for cross-group communication and

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<sup>27</sup> These include socialization functions, which 'create an initial decision to participate'; structural connection functions, which generate opportunities for involvement, and decision-shaping functions, affecting the ultimate decision to take part.

mediation, which in turn contribute to the convergence of cross-sectoral coalitions” (Mische, 2004:268).

In our case, although the focus here is on the CaAC network defined as a community of ideas in itself, actors and even organizations within that network do not exist independently of their strategic and discursive relations with other networks. In this case, such “adjacent” issue networks include the network around “war-affected civilians”; the network around “women and armed conflict,” which is embedded in a broader network on “women’s human rights”; the “humanitarian practice network,” the broader network on “children’s human rights” and the yet broader network on “human rights” in general, as well as various arms control advocacy networks such as the coalition around landmines or small arms.

Focusing on the “dynamics of intersecting movement relations” also allow us to go beyond the tendency in social movement analysis to focus on the social cohesion role of networks to the neglect of relations of power or dispute within networks. Mische (2004:260) describes this as a theoretical shortcoming because it directs attention away from possible conflicts between different types of affiliations: “Important problems (as well as opportunities) are posed by the overlap between multiple types of ties and affiliations, and the diverse projects and practice actors bring with them into cross-network interactions” (2004:261). As Carpenter argues (2005), institutional and ideational alliances with adjacent networks create pressures to align one’s advocacy frames with those of one’s partners.

This framework suggests a possibility that may fill the gaps in existing approaches to issue emergence: that issue emergence is dependent not simply on the “salience” of an issue within a particular network (a function, as the literature suggests, of a combination of issue attributes, norm entrepreneurship and grafting potential) *but also on the structure of advocacy discourse around adjacent issue areas, and the various power relations between the multiple networks with a stake in emphasizing or deemphasizing a particular problem.* This could make it less likely that any network advocate with access to levers of symbolic power will take note of an issue, and less likely that should this occur such an issue would then be taken seriously by other network advocates and pursued effectively using network resources. While this explanation needs further analysis across a variety of issue cases, the need to look at cross-network relations, and at the empirical value of conversational settings as a analytical site for measuring the constitution of these relations, bears consideration. Indeed, employing these approaches illuminates three key themes emerging in my dataset of in-depth interviews with humanitarian practitioners on children born of rape.

The first is that this issue is generally seen as important as soon as actors think about it, *but they just never thought about it before.* For example, one child protection officer said: “It seems when you think about it that this is an obvious category of child to be concerned about after conflict, but I can’t think of any organization that has dealt with them specifically.”<sup>28</sup> This tendency is consistent with the argument that the issue attributes fit unproblematically with pre-existing advocacy discourse and are graftable, but they also suggest that the discursive structure by which advocacy networks operate channel attention toward particular kinds of issue and away from others. When probed to consider *why* they might not have thought of such an obvious issue before, advocates often invoked cross-issue linkages, in this example to the issue of wartime sexual violence against women and girls:

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<sup>28</sup> Personal Interview, April 2004.

I'm not sure anybody specifically looks at [the children]. The issue of sexual violence itself was under the carpet for a long time. Certainly we should look at the children too, that's a good point. Much more information on this issue is required... but right now we're still fighting to get recognition for rape survivors, let alone their babies.  
- OSRSG Staff, August 2003

Another pattern in the dataset that demonstrates the network-spanning nature of this issue when raised was a phenomenon of issue-related “buck-passing”: some respondents expressed the expectation that the issue was being or probably ought to be addressed by some other set of actors in an adjacent issue area, but not by organizations with a mandate similar to those in which the respondent was embedded.

I will tell you that we are not really considering specific projects on this, and if anything were to be done it would be done in conjunction with the protection of the mothers, with these women who have been raped. And in this case, our 'Women and War' project is definitely in a better position to know, what do we do to protect the woman and the newborn child?

- ICRC Staff Person, Children and War Unit, June 2003

There is no data on this that I know of... I never tried to compile those numbers. But you should talk to UNICEF, child protection organizations must keep track of these things.

- Women's Commission Staff Person, August 2003

The second trend was the discursive shifting between multiple network “hats” that was evident throughout interviews and within focus group settings: individuals' assessments of the problem and how to approach it varied according to which “hat” they put on: whether using a gender-based violence frame, a child protection frame, a humanitarian response frame or a broader human rights frame. Many individuals, when asked to introduce themselves to a focus group or discuss their professional background as a prelude to an interview, described their professional negotiation through a variety of positions; later, when thinking aloud through difficult questions regarding agenda-setting or humanitarian response, many shifted back and forth discursively between their various organizational and issue-oriented identities. These identities mattered regarding how issues were framed and what language was used. For example, one focus group participant said, “I would think that, from the UN perspective, and again putting my old UNHCR hat on, we don't like the word orphans because... it means 'hopeless' and we're very much involved in that terminology.” This practice corresponds to what Mische calls “identity qualifying,” a discursive strategy that allows advocates working in mixed-network settings to signal which of multiple identities are active in a particular set of utterances.

Finally was the idea, expressed even by those few individuals most concerned to raise the issue, that doing so was particularly delicate and difficult due to its overlapping nature with other issues. There was considerable disagreement across the data about whether this the issue was appropriately conceptualized as a child protection issue directly or dealt with in the context of programming to support mothers. For example, if advocates raised the issue of infanticide within conflict settings as a specific child protection issue, would this constitute blaming the female victim or, in cases the genocide, the targeted group?<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Heated disagreements broke out within several focus group settings about whether to conceptualize infanticide as a crime against an infant or against the mother itself, insofar as the situation 'forced her' to kill her baby, or whether to consider it criminal at all since in some ways this constituted her last best avenue to exercise self-determination over her circumstances. As important as the clear-cut causal chain described by Keck and Sikkink may be the

Even among those who believe advocacy on this issue is important there is currently no consensus on how to articulate the issue. A dominant disagreement is over the merits of openly classifying children of rape as a particularly vulnerable group in and of themselves versus attempting to ensure that programming reaches them without calling attention to the issue: a fear is that visibility will exacerbate stigma and backlash, making the problem worse. Of those who favor some means of naming the issue, lack of consensus emerges around *how* to do so: should it be articulated narrowly, to emphasize the most visible and egregious cases such as infanticide against “janjaweed” babies in Darfur, or broadly, to also include children fathered by peacekeepers, humanitarian troops, and perhaps even by foreign troops in consensual liaisons with local women?<sup>30</sup>

These are disputes about precisely how to link this problem to its broader context and which adjacent issues to emphasize in its framing. They are also about the very constitution of categories such as “children in armed conflict” and about what logically falls under this rubric: in short, the discursive properties by which advocates in specific networks think about the work they do in relation to that of colleagues working in other areas matters in framing discussions about what ought to go on the agenda, who should be responsible for putting it there, and how to negotiate tensions with respect to other current issues.

An analytical framework that takes such inter-network dynamics into account is interesting for the question of issue emergence or non-emergence because of its potential to help us understand how the three hypotheses discussed previously fit together, as well as addressing their conceptual gaps. Such a framework attunes us to the multiple “hats” that members of any issue network wear, as different issue networks’ ideas and discourses suffuse one another, as different networks work in alliance on cross-cutting campaigns, and as advocates within a broad issue area navigate throughout different professional locations and issue emphases over the course of a career.

First, the cross-talk framework provides insights into how IR theorists might build upon the concept of norm entrepreneurship. Norm entrepreneurs who do notice new issues must engage in a process of creative manipulation and reconstitution of moral meaning. But how do they manage this process in conversational settings where there are disincentives to swim against the rhetorical tide, and to what extent does the communicative structure of these environments themselves constrain the range of new ideas that may plausibly be raised by specific actors? Issue emergence requires that an issue be defined as such by the network actors on whom its promotion will depend, and this process takes place (or fails to take place) as a result of discourse in conversational settings. Moreover, before this “grafting” process occurs, actors must consider and explore alternative potential frames from the pool of potential discourses within a network, and it is through a process of communicative action (and sometimes trial and error) that actors pick among plausible frames to identify one that will be effective given the target audience.<sup>31</sup>

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question of where the chain leads: politically acceptable perpetrators may be as or more important than politically acceptable victims.

<sup>30</sup>Other questions concern the exact label used to refer to this issue and these children as a category: should it be blatant or subtle? Concerns over stigma lead some to recommend a neutral term: the epistemic research community of which this author is a part has appropriated the term *war babies* from documentary work on this issue to define children 'born of armed conflict,' but some advocates suggest that such a euphemism detracts attention from the fact that *rape* happened: 'We should use the term 'children born as a result of rape.' We shouldn't sugar-coat it.'

<sup>31</sup>Keck and Sikkink (1998:170-171) describe the political history of the women's movement, for example, which focused somewhat ineffectively on the issue of development before Charlotte Bunch (1990) transformed the

To a great extent, these debates are not limited to the issues that fail to emerge but also those that do. The strategic use of language shifts within advocacy networks: some child protection advocates have told me that they now dislike the term “child soldiers,” or “street children,” once so useful campaigns around these issues, because they define the child according to his or her victimization; and within UNICEF the goal is to use the term “children” first and foremost in any label.<sup>32</sup> At the outset of campaigns around these issues, however, it was partly the ability of the network to coalesce around tropes by which the issue could be articulated in the media that resulted in the emergence of attention to the issues. The key point is that such intra-network consensus-building is a necessary condition for agenda-setting. This consensus-building process is as important as the availability of norm entrepreneurs to kick it off, graftable discourses from which to pick, and an issue that lends itself to advocacy work. And as Mische suggests, because this is hashed out in conversational settings among network advocates, it is such settings to which scholars of international agenda-setting must turn their analytical lenses.

Second, Mische's approach also attunes us to the discursive relationships *between* issue networks. One hypothesis that bears further testing is that *issue concordance between networks for which a problem is perceived to be salient is a necessary condition for issue emergence*. It has already been shown that coalitions between networks can be an important factor in successful international agenda-setting (Joachim, 2003; Price, 2001). To that extent that an issue by its nature spans multiple network agendas, perhaps concordance of advocacy frames is a requirement for an issue to emerge at all. As Meyer and Whittier document (1994), “spillover” effects between networks can provide a means of amplifying advocacy frames, but can the same effects pose disincentives for the selection of issues that do not neatly fit multiple network agendas? If so, perhaps failures to create common ground across network in conversational settings where such issues are broached (or, inter-network convergences around a frame that promotes non-action) may contribute to and explain substantive gaps in the agenda.

Carpenter (2005) has argued, for example, that frames regarding vulnerable groups in armed conflict, which might be applied to the protection of draft age civilian men, have not been due to a convergence of discourse on “vulnerability” and “gender-based violence” between the civilian protection network and the women's network, discourse which mitigates against the possibility of discussing draft-age men as vulnerable to gender-based violence. While social currents exist within each network that argue for greater attention to this underserved population, the concordance of both networks' discourse around vulnerable “women and children” (and their institutional reliance upon one another) poses a mutually reinforcing disincentive to raise issues that challenge this discourse.

In the case of children born of sexual violence, advocates argue the issue might be grafted onto a children's human rights frame or a gender-based violence/reproductive health frame, so the issue is perceived to exhibit a high degree of salience within both the CaAC network and the women's network. But it is low with respect to inter-network concordance, because advocates within reproductive health and gender-based violence and advocates in child protection disagree over which conceptualization is more important or appropriate, and about the implications for advocacy that would result.

In short, since different networks take different sets of victims as their frame of reference, issues that span network agendas but invite different understandings of a problem may cause

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movement by framing women's rights as human rights and selecting violence against women as a specific issue campaign around which to mobilize a broad constituency.

<sup>32</sup> Personal interviews, child protection advocates, New York and Florence, April and May 2005.

tension between otherwise allied networks. This tension in itself, and the transaction costs associated with negotiating it, may provide a barrier to issue emergence. The assumption within one network that another network for which the issue is salient may or should already be addressing it may create a disincentive to expend resources on advocacy. And the necessity of strategic social construction across networks complicates the possibility of advocacy, because a suitable cross-network advocacy frame may in fact be difficult to negotiate. A combination of these factors, previously underappreciated by the literature on TANs, may account for failures in issue emergence within international society. Whether this hypothesis is generalizable should be tested on a wider set of cases in issue emergence.

### Conclusion

This paper calls attention to the need for theory-building on issue emergence in world politics, and suggests that explanations for issue advocacy successes are only partially applicable to this early stage in the process of international agenda-setting. Beyond issue attributes, grafting processes, and norm entrepreneurship, research on advocacy networks might usefully consider the way in which discourse around adjacent issues channels attention toward or away from certain problems and constrains or facilitates consensus-building when such problems are recognized.

As the qualitative data on agenda-setting around “war babies” tentatively suggests, such discursive structures may predispose potential norm entrepreneurs to consider certain issues but not others, and may pose barriers to raising new issues in advocacy settings if a new framing poses a tension with an adjacent issue already on the agenda, either within a given network or within an adjacent network. While almost no one in the exploratory dataset denied the salience of the issue studied here, very few saw it as their particular responsibility to work on it distinctly, and those who did weighed advocacy strategies carefully given what was perceived as a minefield in terms of other related issues. Many also retreated, when pressed, behind the assumption that such harms are likely adequately addressed by the existing web of related advocacy and programming. At stake in these conversations was the very social construction of the issue area “children and armed conflict” itself as a frame in which to address the specific harms to which some human beings are subject because of mass violence.

Because such processes of social construction occur through language, this study also suggests the value of more rigorous qualitative work on the ways in which advocates manage their discursive processes in relevant conversational settings. The dynamics described above became visible in conversational settings insofar as advocates could not speak about the issue without exposing its linkages to multiple additional issue networks. While solid conclusions on this particular case study are premature pending closer study, the theoretical sketch above does suggest that a promising avenue for the transnational advocacy networks literature is to look more closely at conversations both within and across advocacy networks, and the processes by which actors “steer their way among their various affiliations, as they construct alliances, coordinate activities, and battle over vision and strategy” (Mische, 2003: 262).

Combined with the other variables already highlighted by TAN scholars, these factors may help explain the lag in international attention to this and to other issues. Testing whether indeed this obtains requires an understanding of how the relationship between *issue salience* within networks and *issue concordance* across networks interact and shape the available space for international agenda-setting. In this case, inter-network issue salience may be the reason why any effort to advocate for war babies hinges on a coalition between the CaAC and women's

networks; yet lack of inter-network issue concordance may explain why “war babies” as an issue currently poses particular problems for cross-network coalition building. If future research supports the hypothesis that this relationship matters, then mapping out which issues require inter-network advocacy and are therefore vulnerable to impediment by existing inter-network frames would be a fruitful direction for advocacy network research.

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