Studying Issue (Non)-Adoption in Transnational Advocacy Networks

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Abstract Why do some issues but not others galvanize transnational advocacy networks? To gain insight into this question, I studied how advocates in the human rights sector think and talk about an issue that has received little advocacy attention to date: stigma against children born of wartime rape. Focus groups with humanitarian practitioners were coded and analyzed for evidence of a variety of explanations for issue adoption drawn from the literature on advocacy networks. The analysis suggests that the conditions for issue adoption are constituted by dynamics across, rather than primarily within, issue networks.

Fifteen years ago, few people thought about the recruitment of children to fight in adults' wars as a threat to human rights or international peace and security. Today, child soldiering has become the most prominent issue on a laundry list decried by a transnational network of activists and organizations working in the issue domain of children and armed conflict.[1] However, the network around children and armed conflict (CaAC) does not lobby for all categories of children affected by war: until very recently the particular needs of girls and HIV-AIDS orphans were invisible on this agenda, and issues still absent from the laundry list include children born as a result of wartime rape, children in military families, and children affected by the war-toy and entertainment industries in industrialized societies.[2]

Why do activists in leading transnational organizations adopt certain issues or populations of concern but not others?[3] To date, this has not been a central ques-

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1. Achvarina and Reich 2006. Issue prominence is defined as the relative frequency with which an issue is referenced within a sample of advocacy discourse.
2. See Carpenter 2007; Wertsch 1991; and Enloe 2000.
3. Issue adoption occurs when a gate-keeping organization (Bob 2005) within a network champions the issue (Carpenter 2007).

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tion for the literature on transnational advocacy networks (TANs).[4] While this literature has gone far toward explaining the conditions under which advocates successfully sell normative changes to states and societies, it lacks a convincing theory of issue emergence within TANs themselves. In short, how do lead actors or "gatekeepers" within transnational issue spheres select causes from the endless pool of possible options? As Ron, Ramos, and Rodgers have recently explained, "Transnational activists resemble social problems 'claims makers' and the intensity of their work on a given issue or country may not reflect its real-world prevalence."[5] What, then, does the shape of the global agenda reflect?

Key explanations for the emergence of certain issues but not others on TAN agendas include the attributes of issues themselves; pressure from political entrepreneurs, donors, or the media; and a favorable normative environment; but these have seldom been tested empirically for their absence in cases where issues fail to emerge.[6] With a team of graduate student coders, I attempted such an analysis by examining human rights advocates' discourse about an issue that has not emerged on the transnational child rights agenda (children born of wartime rape). Interview and focus group data with advocates in the issue area of children and armed conflict provide only mixed support for the hypotheses that issue attributes, public visibility, and international legal precedent will necessarily result in issue emergence. Instead, my findings point to the potential importance of *inter*-network politics in constraining issue adoption, even in such seemingly "easy" cases.

This argument, if borne out across additional cases, suggests that earlier work on TANs has been unduly optimistic about the positive role of inter-network density in the promotion of advocacy around issues.[7] While coalitional politics between issue networks may promote campaigns around select issues, such inter-network relationships may also impede the emergence of other issues altogether by encouraging buck-passing, increasing the number of actors whose consensus is required for an acceptable advocacy frame, and providing an environment conducive to frame disagreements. Given the importance of such inter-network politics in determining what gets on the TAN issue agenda, it is recommended that scholars of TANs look to theories of domestic agenda-setting and bureaucratic politics to explore further hypotheses about transnational issue emergence.

Issue Adoption in Transnational Advocacy Networks: Hypotheses

Until recently, scholarship on TANs focused on proving (contra state-centric international relations realism) that advocacy networks have an impact on state behav-

4. See Keck and Sikkink 1998; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; Florini 2000; Burgerman 2001; and Thomas 2002.
5. Ron, Ramos, and Rodgers 2005, 575.
6. See Keck and Sikkink 1998; Finnemore 1996; Cooley and Ron 2002; Bob 2005; and Price 1998.
7. See Meyer and Whittier 1994; Keck and Sikkink 1998; and Joachim 2003.

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ior or why some campaigns (once initiated by gatekeepers) succeed at influencing state behavior while others fail.[8] Overall, however, this body of scholarship typically bypasses the prior question of how issues do or do not get adopted by transnational networks in the first place.

The extant literature does contain (though rarely tests) some implicit hypotheses for issue adoption, which are explored below. In their ground-breaking study on TANs, Keck and Sikkink emphasized the importance of *issue attributes* in explaining the success of specific campaigns.[9] The attributes most helpful in terms of framing issues 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."[10] 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 and echoed by Price.[11]

A second explanation for the success of certain international advocacy campaigns but not others is the extent to which advocates can link a new set of intersubjective understandings to preexisting applicable moral standards. This perspective, associated in particular with Price's work on weapons taboos, suggests that the promotion of new moral standards is most likely to succeed if these can be "grafted" onto preexisting taboos. For example, the chemical weapons taboo was popularized partly because it built on an earlier prohibition on the use of poisons in warfare; and advocates of the Ottawa Convention banning antipersonnel 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.[12]

According to a third line of thinking, international advocacy is best pictured as a marketplace for short-term contracts, in which public visibility toward a problem generates pressure to appear to be addressing it, and in which savvy advocates gravitate toward "hot" issues likely to draw donor funding and good media coverage for their organizations.[13] This agenda-setting effect is similar to Finnemore's "norm entrepreneurship" thesis, which stresses the role of well-connected individuals with the resources and symbolic leverage to draw attention

8. See Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; Florini 1999; Price 2003; and True and Minstrom 2001.

9. Keck and Sikkink 1998 distinguish between problems, issues, and campaigns. In the human rights area, problems are preexisting grievances that may not yet have been defined as issues. Issues are created when advocates name a problem as a human rights violation and put it on the agenda. Campaigns involve concerted efforts by multiple organizations lobbying for a specific outcome around a certain issue. Campaigns and coalitions sometimes form around, but are distinct from, specific issues. See Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002, 7. Here, I am interested in how problems become identified as issues.

10. Keck and Sikkink 1998, 27.

11. See Nadelmann 1990; Bob 2005; and Price 2003.

12. See Price and Tannenwald 1996; and Price 1998.

13. See Bob 2005; and Cooley and Ron 2002.

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to previously unnoticed causes.[14] Relatedly, the global media is also sometimes described as a possible source of advocacy momentum around specific issues: the contagion effect of targeted media coverage is cited as a driving force behind disproportionate attention to certain regions or categories of victim.[15] The logic of this argument is that greater public awareness of a social problem should raise the likelihood that it will be adopted as a cause by transnational advocates.

These hypotheses have rarely been tested on issues that have not emerged among gate-keeping transnational advocacy organizations.[16] However, exploring negative social outcomes can provide important clues as to the causal factors underlying outcomes that do occur.[17] In this research, understanding what is left off the global agenda (and why) can add to our knowledge about successful issue adoption as well as the politics and pathologies of transnational advocacy networks more generally.[18]

To this end, I analyzed a condition in world politics that lacks prominence within the issue area of children and armed conflict: stigma against children born of rape and exploitation in conflict zones. Such children are at particular risk of human rights abuses in conflict zones because of community perceptions about their origin as "children of the enemy."[19] Evidence from Bosnia, Rwanda, East Timor, and most recently Darfur, has increasingly shown that such children are subject to stigma, discrimination, and even infanticide in postconflict settings.[20]

Nonetheless, there is little mention of this dimension of children's experience in conflict situations within the CaAC network discourse. As recently as 2005, no leading Web sites within the CaAC network referenced this category of child in descriptions of their issue agenda.[21] Understanding the obstacles to transnational advocacy around this category of war-affected child may therefore provide clues as to whether these theses are adequately specified, and as to which additional factors influence the shape of the transnational agenda.

14. Finnemore 1996. Thus, as Bob writes, celebrities available to take up an international cause can be a vital element in issue emergence; see Bob 2005. For example, Britain's Princess Diana's advocacy around landmines has been cited as contributing to these issues' international visibility and thus salience; see Price 1998.

15. See Dale 1996; Ramos 2005; and Carpenter 2005. However, advocacy networks also use the media to set their own agenda (Ron, Ramos, and Rodgers 2005), so it is not always so clear whether the media drives issue emergence, with advocates responding to it strategically, or more accurately reflects advocacy frames, given other necessary conditions.

16. The failure of social science generally to systematically collect data on negative evidence, or "the significance of a thing's absence," has been documented in Lewis and Lewis 1980.

17. On selecting negative cases, see Mahoney and Goertz 2004.

18. Barnett and Finnemore 2004.

19. See Grieg 2001; Rehn and Sirleaf 2002; and Carpenter et al. 2005.

20. See Becirbasic and Secic 2002; Isabel Matheson, "Darfur War Breeds 'Dirty Babies.'" *BBC Online*, 15 December 2004, available at ⟨http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4099601.stm⟩, accessed 15 January 2007; Siam Powell, "East Timor's Children of the Enemy," *Weekend Australian*, 10 March 2001; and Emily Wax, "Rwandans Struggle to Love Children of Hate," *Washington Post*, 29 March 2004, A1.

21. Carpenter 2007.

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In the next section, I briefly describe how the advocacy discourse from the CaAC network was sampled, collected, coded, and analyzed. I then describe the findings of the analysis. Mixed evidence was found for each of the hypotheses described above. However, none appeared decisive in producing the ambivalence advocates articulated in conversational settings about constructing "children born of war" as a global category of concern. Rather, the patterns in the data make most sense in the context of a meta-variable, best understood as "inter-network politics." In the final section, I lay out the broader support for this line of thinking and suggest theoretical implications for scholarship on transnational advocacy networks.

Methodology

The empirical analysis here is based on data from four focus groups with activists specializing in child protection and/or gender-based violence in conflict zones, supplemented with seventy-six semi-structured interviews with human rights practitioners involved in these issue domains. Focus group participants were recruited from major human rights and humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Save the Children, and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children which might be considered "gatekeepers" in the area of children and armed conflict. According to Bob, gatekeepers are powerful and well-recognized organizations "whose decisions to back a [cause] activate other organizations and individuals across the world."[22] Although the frame of reference for this study was the issue adoption decisions of organizations within the CaAC network, focus group participants were also drawn from organizations in the network concerned with women and armed conflict (WaAC), which allowed examination of dynamics between issue networks for which an issue (in this case, children born of wartime rape) might be expected to be salient.[23] Participants were recruited by contacting specific agencies and asking for referrals to the appropriate person. Where needed, a snowball method was used to identify additional participants. A total of twenty-nine humanitarian practitioners participated in these consultations. The organizations ultimately represented in the focus groups are listed in Table 1.

To determine how closely the resulting sample approximated the leading organizations in these two networks, I conducted two hyperlink analyses of advocacy organizations on the World Wide Web. Hyperlink analysis is, essentially, social network analysis applied to cyberspace.[24] Since linking practices in cyberspace

22. Bob 2005, 18.

23. Although "women and children" are often conflated in human rights and humanitarian discourse (Carpenter 2005), Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate that these two issue networks are distinct subnetworks within the broader human rights and humanitarian networks. They do, however, overlap considerably: 60 percent of organizations appearing in one also appear in the other.

24. Park and Thelwall 2003.

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TABLE 1. *Organizations participating in focus groups*

Office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG)
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
Human Rights Watch
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
Save the Children USA
United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
World Health Organization (WHO)
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
Washington Network on Children and Armed Conflict (WNCAC)
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (ECOSOC)
World Vision
Women for Women International
Defense for Children International
Medica Zenica
Krousar Thmey
End Child Prostitution and Traffiking (ECPAT) USA
Children and War Project, University of Alberta

connect Web sites much as social relations connect agents in real space, hyperlink analysis of advocacy sites in cyberspace allows one to empirically map out a network of common meaning and purpose as represented in online linking practices.[25] The assumption behind this methodology is that a hyperlink from one Web site to another functions as a citation, representing membership in a common ideational community as well as acknowledgement of authority.[26] Thus, hyperlinking practices can be used as one indicator of the constitutive organizational elements and boundaries of advocacy networks, as well as which organizations are recognized as authorities in those networks.[27]

To gather the hyperlinks in a systematic and replicable way, I employed IssueCrawler, an algorithm developed by Govcom.org at University of Amsterdam.[28] IssueCrawler permits the graphical representation of issue networks in cyberspace by identifying those Web sites receiving two or more links within a cluster of sites

25. See Wasserman and Faust 1994; and Adamic and Adar 2001.

26. See Barabási 2002, 5; and Henzinger 2001, 45. A study by Bae and Choi suggests that this type of linking practice is particularly relevant in the transnational human rights sector; see Bae and Choi 2000.

27. Rogers 2002. A potential drawback of relying on cyberspace for operationalizing a network and sampling its advocacy discourse is that this method discriminates against less-connected organizations within a network (for example, those in developing countries with lesser access to the Internet). However, this bias works methodologically in my favor, assisting in gathering a representative (though not random) sample. This is because advocacy networks themselves discriminate in this way, with central nodes (in our case, leading child rights organizations such as UNICEF) exercising a "gate-keeping" role (Bob 2005, 5) due to their disproportionate access, resources, and prestige (Lake and Wong 2005).

28. See ⟨http://www.issuecrawler.net⟩, accessed 7 March 2007.

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relative to two or more "starting points." As starting points for the CaAC network, I used the first five organizational hits appearing in separate Google searches for the terms "children and armed conflict" and "war-affected children"; for the WaAC network I used the search term "women and armed conflict." Cluster maps of these issue networks appear in Figures 1 and 2. They demonstrate a close correlation between the focus group participants and the online issue networks: 63 percent of the organizations whose members self-selected into the focus groups appear in the CaAC network, and 52 percent of organizations appeared in both the CaAC network and the distinct but overlapping network around WaAC.

During the focus groups themselves, participants were asked to comment generally on the protection needs of children and women in conflict zones before commenting on the particular issues facing children born as a result of sexual violence. They were then asked specific questions about the scope and nature of this population's needs as well as what, if anything, should be done to better protect them. Participants' answers provided not only a source of factual information around these issues and the particular obstacles to addressing them, but also a set of text data reflecting advocates' concerns about and reactions to the topic. The focus groups also provided evidence of how advocates negotiate with one another in

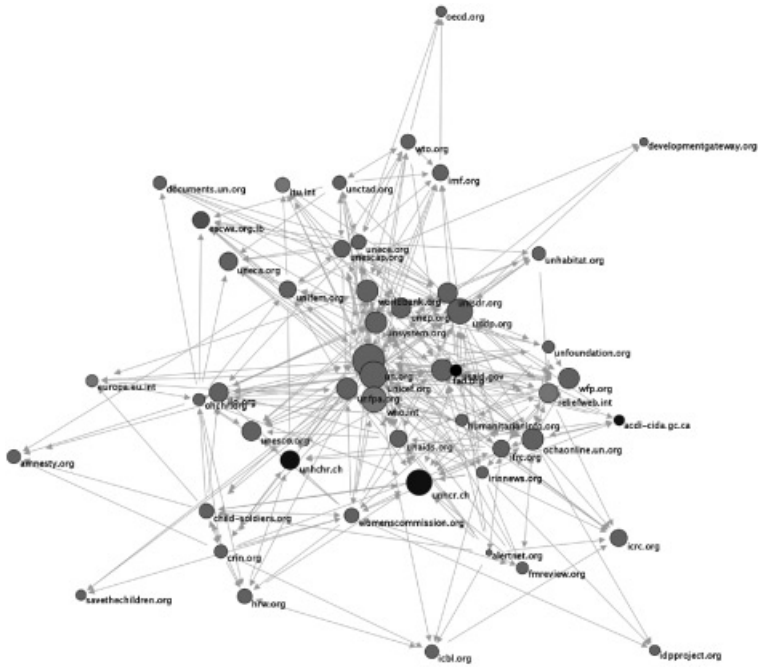


FIGURE 1. *"Children and armed conflict" network as rendered by IssueCrawler, using top five Google hits as starting points*

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FIGURE 2. *"Women and armed conflict" network as rendered by IssueCrawler, using top five Google hits as starting points*

conversational settings over the merits of committing advocacy network resources to a new issue.

To analyze the resulting text data in a replicable and transparent way, six graduate student coders associated with University of Pittsburgh's Qualitative Data Analysis Program were hired to independently annotate the text data. We combined a deductive and inductive approach in determining a coding scheme. First, four coders were assigned to do independent grounded-theory readings of the raw data.[29] These individuals were asked to identify key themes, argument structures, and patterns across the various focus groups: these were used to develop three initial code lists for references to specific issues (for example, child recruitment, displace-

29. Grounded theory is a methodological approach requiring investigators to immerse themselves in raw data prior to developing preconceptions about what the data might show. In this way, theoretical concepts emerge from the data themselves rather than being imposed a priori through a deductive process. See Strauss and Corbin 1994.

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ment, and discrimination), then to these issues as applied to (1) babies born of rape specifically and (2) the mothers of such children.[30] Two other code-lists were developed to capture specific substantive themes in the text (such as the importance of reproductive health planning) and finally discursive properties in the text (including cases where participants agreed or disagreed with one another, cited specific actors, or qualified their statements).

In addition to these inductively derived sets of codes, a separate set of codes was developed to capture the types of dynamics that might be predicted by various extant hypotheses on issue adoption. Although children born of rape are objectively vulnerable to bodily harm and discrimination, social constructivists would argue that it is advocates' perceptions of these harms that should matter most.[31] I hypothesized that Keck and Sikkink's issue attributes explanation might account for lack of advocacy in this area if advocates did not perceive these children as vulnerable. Coders were asked to look for references in the data to physical abuse, infanticide, stigma, and other impacts on these children's human rights to determine how clear it was to participants that these babies were indeed at risk. We also attempted to determine whether advocates understood these problems as "irredeemably structural" or could clearly point to perpetrators whose actions might be usefully criticized by issue advocates.[32]

Similarly, although conceptual space may objectively exist within human rights discourse to construct these children as needy victims, we looked for evidence that advocates themselves might not see it that way, which could lend support to Price's "grafting" thesis. How easy is it for advocates to discuss the harms to which these children are subject in the context of existing issues and using existing human rights language? To explore this question, we used a code named "issue linkage" for instances in which speakers drew a conceptual connection between children born of war rape and other issues or categories of concern already on the agenda. We also sought to code passages in which speakers appeared conceptually confused or debated how to label or define the issue. Finally, in order to explore the hypothesis that media and donor awareness was a concern in decisions about whether to advocate for children born of rape, coders also looked for references to the media or to the exigencies of funding, references to donors, public pressure, or contracts.

Three different two-coder teams then worked on these various subsets of codes. Each code was applied independently to all the primary documents by two different coders using *Atlas.ti* qualitative data analysis software. Inter-rater reliability

30. These sets of codes were differentiated by the modifiers WB (war baby) and MTHR (mother), from general codes (GEN). Therefore for each instance of a reference to "displacement," we could code whether the speaker was referring to displacement in general (Displacement-GEN), displacement of war babies themselves (Displacement-WB), or displacement of the mothers who had given birth to the babies (Displacement-MTHR).

31. See Best 1995; Blumer 1971; and Spector and Kitsuse 1977.

32. Keck and Sikkink 1998, 27.

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TABLE 2. *Frequency distribution: Vulnerabilities specific to children of rape*

Vulnerabilities	*Frequency distribution*
Stigma	17
Registration/statelessness/nationality	14
Health/malnutrition/disease	12
Infanticide	10
Adoption	6
HIV-AIDS	6
Abandonment	5
Separation/loss/orphans	5
Education	4
Information/family tracing	4
Displacement	3
Child soldiers/recruitment	2
Neglect	2
Sexual violence/abuse/slavery/exploitation	1
Trafficking/abduction	1

was scored using the F-Measure metric, which rates the overlap between two coders' annotations on a scale between −1 and 1, where 1.00 represents 100 percent synonymity between two coders' independent annotations.[33] Definitions for codes where inter-rater reliability was lower than 0.5 were refined and gradually improved through iterative pretests; those that failed to reach the 0.5 threshold after three pretests were dropped from the analysis. The list of resulting inter-rater reliability scores for the various codes is represented in the Appendix.[34] I then adjudicated between mismatches for the remaining codes to produce a single, comprehensive frequency list for the codes (see Tables 2 to 6).[35]

We used this coding scheme to explore whether advocates' logic behind the nonadoption of this particular issue correlated to the types of explanations for issue adoption prevalent in the literature on transnational advocacy networks. For example, if the sorts of issue attributes that Keck and Sikkink identify are viewed as lacking in this case (for example, if it is not obvious to advocates that these babies are vulnerable to bodily harm), we would expect few passages to be coded for references to infanticide or physical abuse; this might then be an explanation for the nonadoption of the issue and would also lend support to the issue attributes hypothesis. If Price's "grafting" hypothesis is borne out here, we would expect to see few instances of participants linking the issue of "children born of war" to

33. Van Rijsbergen 1979.
34. The overall inter-rater reliability was 0.70.
35. The complete set of coded data is available to other researchers at ⟨http://www.pitt.edu/~charli/networks.htm⟩, accessed 7 March 2007. Accessing this data requires the use of *Atlas.ti* software.

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existing issues or human rights standards, and we might see evidence of conceptual confusion or comments regarding "lack of fit" with existing conceptual frameworks. Similarly, if Cooley and Ron's political economy approach explains why this issue is absent from the agenda, perhaps because it is not conducive to securing contracts for protection work, then we would expect to see comments regarding the constraints posed by donors, funding, or the media.

Findings

The results of the analysis suggest mixed support for several of the above hypotheses. With respect to issue attributes, participants readily mentioned infanticide as a major impact on babies born of wartime rape, satisfying Keck and Sikkink's condition that a population of concern be exposed to bodily harm. While discrimination in the legal sense was coded only once in the data set, the more diffuse problem of social stigma was the most frequently cited impact; and other equal opportunity problems such as statelessness, lack of education, and lack of access to health care were also mentioned as problems facing this group (see Table 2). Given that advocates readily constructed the babies, when asked, as innocent individuals at risk of bodily harm or equal opportunity discrimination, it would seem puzzling from an issue attributes perspective that the same advocates were largely reluctant to consider adopting "children born of war" as a transnational cause.

Regarding Keck and Sikkink's prediction that a marketable issue must include a short, simple causal chain linking perpetrator and victim, we found that advocates easily articulated where the specific harm to children born of war came from, in particular in cases of bodily integrity violations such as infanticide, where the role of mothers and extended families was explicitly mentioned several times in the data set. In fact, more comments were coded as referencing a specific perpetrator of abuse against the babies than references to the perpetrators of harm against the rape victims themselves. Although advocates did tend to speak in broad and diffuse terms about the structural difficulties facing the babies (a factor that Keck and Sikkink's model would predict might impede issue adoption), many other issues mentioned in the focus groups that have been adopted onto the global agenda (such as forced marriage) were also treated with the same sensitivity to structural complexity.

The frequency with which the code "issue linkage" appears in the data set casts doubt on the hypothesis that difficulty grafting this issue to the existing issue pool could explain its nonadoption in the CaAC network. In fact, even participants unfamiliar or uneasy with the topic readily drew connections between the obvious vulnerabilities of children born of war rape and other populations with whom they saw conceptual or programmatic similarities. For example, issues regarding stigma, which was the adverse impact most often mentioned for children born of war, were already well known to practitioners who had experience working with HIV-AIDS patients; and many participants drew connections between health program-

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ming for sexual violence survivors and the psycho-social and physical health of their children. In fact, connections were made between the subject of children born of war and twenty-one other general issues mentioned in the data set (see Figure 3).

However, the ease with which participants linked one problem to others did not forestall disagreements over which grafting strategy was more appropriate. Overall, a notable finding of the analysis is that advocates were much readier to link "children born of war" to the wider issue of sexual violence rather than to the wider issue of child protection. For example, of all the co-occurrences with the code "issue linkage," the code "sexual violence/exploitation/slavery/abuse" is by far the most frequent co-occurrence; codes for general factors impacting the specific population of babies including "psychosocial," "stigma," "poverty," "separation/loss" and "abuse" all co-occur with "issue linkage" less frequently than codes invoking the rape victims themselves such as "rape-pregnancy," "reproductive health" and "girls." In the larger data set as well, the umbrella problem of sexual violence, rather than of infant health, framed the discussion. For example, 110 comments were coded as using a "women's rights" frame versus only eighty-five coded as "children's rights" (see Table 3).

TABLE 3. *Frequency distribution: All issue-specific references*

Vulnerabilities	*Frequency distribution*
Sexual violence/abuse/slavery/exploitation	147
Health/malnutrition/disease	81
Displacement	42
Psychosocial	41
HIV-AIDS	39
Child soldiers/recruitment	38
Reproductive health	38
Economic/poverty	36
Girls-GEN	34
Physical violence/abuse	32
Education	31
Separation/loss/orphans	29
Stigma	27
Trafficking/abduction	25
Gender-based violence	12
Discrimination	8
Registration/statelessness/nationality	6
Child abandonment	5
Adoption	4
Neglect	3
Infanticide	2
Street children	2
War babies	1

Notes: GEN = general codes.

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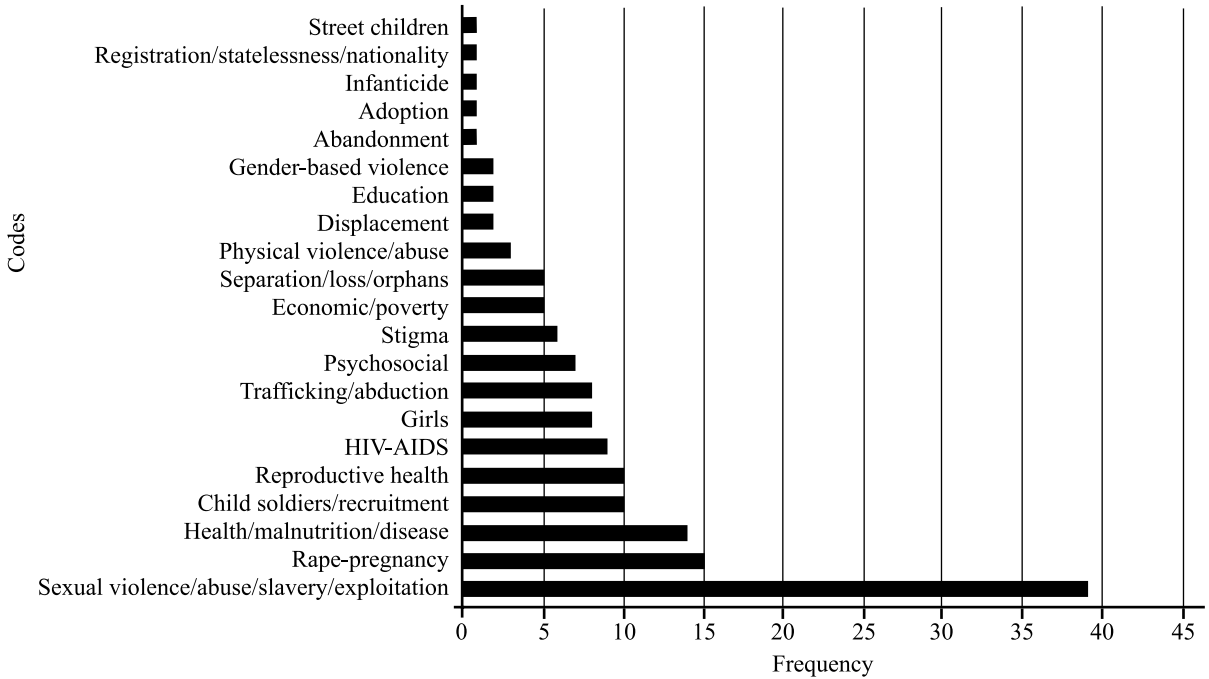


FIGURE 3. *Codes co-occurring with "issue linkage"*

Moreover, a common theme in the data set was the lack of consensus regarding which children in particular were under discussion. Much of the conversation centered on semantic trade-offs involved in conceptualizing the parameters of the population, or as one participant put it, "where you draw the boundaries around who these children are born of what?" Was the discussion limited to children born in systematic rape campaigns, or all wartime sexual violence? Would marital rape count? Why not peacetime rape as well? What about children born of sexual exploitation by peacekeepers rather than violent coercion by enemy soldiers? For example, one participant commented that it would be a conceptual mistake to link children born of genocidal forced pregnancy with those born to abducted girl "wives" in rebel groups. There was also a pragmatic question of how to label the population itself, with various positions taken as to what terminology would capture the specific issue being raised without further stigmatizing the group. Put together, these dynamics suggest that although the category "children born of war" is easily graftable onto various existing discourses, it is not obvious to advocates how and whether to engage in such grafting efforts.

Regarding the political economy thesis, which suggests that public awareness, media attention, and donor proclivities drive issue adoption, several participants did refer to these factors as important in international agenda-setting: "When reports come out and the public gets outraged by it, that is what drives change." "Donors don't really care if you're stigmatized for the rest of your life, or infected with HIV-AIDS, or you have no security—they want to know who dies." But others described the reverse relationship between donors and advocacy: "Without advocacy on an issue, you aren't going to get funding on an issue." Moreover, a participant acknowledged that children born of war is "a very attractive and sexy issue for media: you can make touching documentaries about the children you are

TABLE 4. *Frequency of substantive themes in text*

Themes	*Frequency distribution*
Rights-women	110
Rights-children	85
Community	40
Legal issues	35
How to label/define?-WB	29
Lack of data-WB	21
Sources of harm-WB	18
Funding/donors	16
Sources of harm-MTHR	16
Punitive justice	12
Media	6
Peace building	5

Notes: WB = war baby; MTHR = mother.

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TABLE 5. *Frequency of discursive properties in text*

Discursive properties	*Frequency distribution*
Citations	77
Issue linkage	70
Concurrence	42
Hat-wearing	40
Rationalization-WB	29
Intensity	17
Nay saying-WB	13
"I'm no expert but"	11
Disagreement	7
Buck-passing	3

Notes: WB = war baby.

talking about," while many participants nonetheless agreed that very little attention had been paid to these children in the advocacy community: "You ask what is known about these children? You might begin by asking what is not known." In fact, some participants spoke disparagingly rather than optimistically of the effect of global agenda setting on the lived realities of certain populations:

> I think there's something kind of instinctive that says—oh we need some sort of category like this that would … somehow grab the attention of donors or the international community or whoever. But my concern is that in examples where this has been done before there has either been a horrible backlash or it just doesn't make any logical sense.

Thus the empirical record of advocates' thinking around this particular nonissue is mixed. If appropriate issue attributes exist in this case but are insufficient to galvanize advocates' sense of moral urgency, what additional permissive condi-

TABLE 6. *Vulnerabilities specific to mother*

Vulnerabilities	*Frequency distribution*
Stigma	16
Reproductive health	15
Girls	9
Infanticide	9
Economic/poverty	7
Sexual violence/abuse/slavery/exploitation	3

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tions are missing? If a specific population is easily grafted onto existing categories of concern but advocates are hesitant to engage in such grafting, what accounts for that reticence? If media and donor attention drives issue adoption in general, and it exists in this case but has not had the predicted effect, what additional constraining factors may be evident?

Issue Adoption as a Function of Inter-Network Politics

I conclude that the lines of support for each of the above hypotheses make most sense in the context of a meta-variable: inter-network relations. In short, the findings support the need to consider the sociopolitical dynamics between networks advocating around related issues and, more generally, to understand transnational advocates as agents situated not simply in a common ideational space vis-à-vis targets of influence, but within a bureaucratic and coalitional politics constitutive of TANs themselves. In this sense, I am disputing Heclo's claim, echoed by the early literature on TANs,[36] that issues constitute TAN interests, "rather than (as standard political or economic models would have it) interests defining positions on issues."[37] On the contrary, the evidence here suggests that the decision (so far) not to adopt "children born of war" as a category of concern within the CaAC network is driven at least as much by political and institutional dynamics both within and, importantly, between issue networks as by advocates' understanding of the issues, political opportunities, and the available norm pool.

While this claim needs further analysis across a variety of cases, it illuminates a key theme emerging both in the focus groups analyzed here and in my broader data set of in-depth interviews with humanitarian practitioners on children born of war rape. An argument frequently given against advocating on the issue of "children born of war" is that doing so is particularly delicate and difficult due to its overlapping nature with other issues important to the CaAC network and its institutional partners, particularly the issue of wartime sexual violence. In short, what makes it difficult to develop an advocacy frame for "children born of war" is the fact that the issue bridges at least two different, though overlapping, advocacy networks: the CaAC network and the network of organizations concerned with gender-based violence in conflict zones. At least three different but interrelated processes appear to produce this result.

First, in the data set I have gathered, there appears to be a trend of issue-related "buck-passing," suggesting that inter-network understandings of issue turf may play a role in the construction and adoption of new issues.[38] Issues that logically

36. See Keck and Sikkink 1998, 32.
37. Heclo 1978, 102.
38. Fewer examples of "buck-passing" were found in focus groups than in one-on-one interviews, perhaps due to the mixed nature of the focus groups.

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span multiple organizational mandates are often assumed to result easily in coalitions, but the findings here suggest they might as easily fall in between the cracks for the very same reason. Some interview respondents expressed the expectation that the issue of children born of war was being or probably ought to be addressed by some other set of actors in a related 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?

> 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.

The idea that activists' construction or "image" of an issue will correlate with the "policy venue" they see as that issue's natural "policy niche" is consistent with Baumgartner and Jones's work on domestic agenda-setting. New or emerging issues, and those where the problems are "complex and pose many contradictory or unrelated questions" may logically fall across policy jurisdictions.[39] In the transnational sphere, as the emerging work on international organizations as bureaucracies has shown, organizations and clusters of organizations face similar pressure to define and maintain a distinctive identity vis-à-vis donors, issue constituencies, and activists in related areas.[40] They do this to some degree through the causes they adopt. As Bob notes in his study of the ways that aggrieved groups pitch rights claims to international gatekeepers, norm adoption decisions "often hinge on the match between a new norm or rights claim and an NGO's substantive, cultural, tactical, and organizational characteristics. If a proposed new right does not 'fit,' it may be rejected."[41] An issue that might plausibly "belong" in multiple networks' agenda space, can be easily assumed off of any given network's agenda, even where advocates in several networks agree someone should be working on it.

Second, beyond questions of "fit," TAN advocates also seem keenly concerned with the impact of new issues on the existing agenda, both in their own and also in adjacent networks' issue pools. In conversational settings such as interviews or focus groups, advocates' key disagreements over whether or why to adopt an issue had much to do with how adopting a new issue would affect advocacy around existing issues. For example, there was some concern expressed about "bypass-

39. Baumgartner and Jones 1993, 33.
40. Barnett and Finnemore 2004.
41. Bob 2005, 8–9.

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ing" rape survivors' rights to begin focusing on their children. The desire not to do so, and the perception that one issue is logically prior to the other rather than complementary, underlay a number of respondents' explanations for this advocacy gap:

> 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.

> How do you do sexual violence work without jeopardizing our other programs—communications, health, education—there's that thing that we run up against all the time, that challenge, it's huge, how to do that. And then the next layer of children is even harder. And we're not even doing the first part, getting to rape survivors for all their needs.

These passages suggest that decisions about whether to advocate on new issues are made not merely on their own merit as a function of their innate attributes, but in a context where the ability to continue pushing existing issues is also at stake. Moreover, for network-spanning issues, the concerns of partners in adjacent issue networks also matter in shaping advocates' consideration of whether and how to frame new problems in the context of existing agenda space.

Third, the network-spanning nature of the "children born of war" issue, and the challenges this creates in dialogues over how to give it greater attention, is also demonstrated by the difficulty interviewees and focus group participants had in choosing a frame for the discussion even among those who acknowledged some response was necessary. There was considerable disagreement across the interviews and focus groups about whether this issue was appropriately conceptualized as a child protection issue directly or dealt with in the context of programming to support sexual violence survivors as mothers.[42]

> I would say that when working for children's rights you need to work for women's rights. Most of the issues are going back to the mother. If a mother doesn't have access to a certain facility, the children have even less.

> I agree that you have the medical psycho-social and legal and other aspects, but I will say … that it's not the same for women and for children; there are differences and they are huge differences in fact.

Inter-network competition over framing was particularly obvious in the focus groups, where advocates from both child protection and gender-based violence

42. Some political entrepreneurs now pushing this issue in certain institutional contexts within the CaAC network argue that it needs to be both.

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backgrounds were asked to dialogue on this issue in the context of broader programming for children and women in conflict zones. For example, heated disagreements broke out within several focus group settings about whether to conceptualize infanticide as a crime against an infant or against the mother herself, 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. 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 of genocidal rape, the targeted group?

As important as the clear-cut causal chain described by Keck and Sikkink may be the question of where the chain leads: politically acceptable perpetrators may be as or more important than politically acceptable victims—not because of the difficulty in selling the new issue to transnational publics, but because of the fallout effect on resource mobilization for existing issues. The bar may be higher when adoption of a new issue is contingent on a consensus between advocates in multiple networks with divergent interpretations of a problem.

All these three problems—organizational fit, impacts on existing issues, and frame conflicts—may be particularly acute when the networks in question exhibit a high degree of personnel overlap, as do these two networks. In such cases, potential issue adopters' professional identities are bound up in identifying issues that avoid normative conflicts between multiple communities of practice in which they are embedded. As Mische has noted, participants in social networks belong to a variety of affiliations at once: "Activists belonging to multiple networks and organizational sectors must negotiate the different identities, projects, and styles of participation associated with their various involvements."[43] Similarly, Hutchings has pointed out that overlapping memberships and agendas may "not necessarily enhance salience effects particularly if those memberships [are] in conflict."[44]

Indeed respondents in my data set, when asked to discuss their professional background as a prelude to an interview, typically described their negotiation through a variety of positions in multiple networks; later, when thinking aloud through difficult questions regarding agenda setting or humanitarian response, some shifted back and forth discursively between their various organizational and issue-oriented identities. Network-spanning issues such as "children born of war" may go unarticulated because they trigger identity conflicts among practitioners who see themselves as "on the fence" between networks:

> I don't know; it's complicated.... I've been sitting on that fence for the past year as a gender-based-violence officer in a child protection unit.... child

43. Mische 2003, 262.
44. Hutchings 2001, 849.

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> protection maybe still has a little controversy to it, but sexual violence has a lot, senior managers get uncomfortable when you tell them a 13-year-old is raped . . . so they're very much inter-linked, very much multi-sectoral. . . . the children born of this population as well; you can't separate it out.

In short, what is common to these three particular patterns emerging from the qualitative analysis is the importance of dynamics between issue networks in gatekeeping organizations' consideration of "new" issues. The concerns most frequently cited in this text data have little to do with the inherent attributes, grafting potential, or potential political salience of the issue itself. Rather, the concerns expressed—the obstacles to issue adoption in this case—have more to do with whether the issue fits existing organizational goals of potential gatekeepers, defined in relation to the mandates of gatekeepers in other networks; whether consensus can be developed with coalition partners in adjacent networks; and whether advocacy around this issue would enhance or negatively affect advocacy around related issues already on the human rights agenda, both within and between networks. While these concerns do not so much refute as extend the existing theses, they suggest that scholars of TANs should look more closely at inter-network dynamics in future research.

If the evidence from this case is borne out when applied to other examples of issue nonadoption, the typical appraisals of coalitional politics in transnational advocacy may prove overly optimistic. For example, Meyer and Whittier documented how "spillover" effects between networks can provide a means of amplifying advocacy frames, but the evidence here suggests the same effects can pose disincentives for the selection of issues that do not unproblematically fit multiple network agendas.[45] This too stands in contrast to Keck and Sikkink's assumption that "network density" bodes well for the development and success of coalitions around specific issues.[46] The data here suggests that in addition to the benefits that transnational coalitions present, inter-network politics may, under certain conditions, present obstacles to issue adoption. Better understanding these obstacles—and taking seriously the institutional context of transnational actors generally—is the next step for scholarship on TANs.

Conclusions

I have made three arguments. First, the question of how and why certain issues do or do not become visible on the global agenda needs more attention from researchers interested in the political impact of transnational advocacy networks. There is considerable variation in the emergence and prominence of transnational

45. Meyer and Whittier 1994.
46. Keck and Sikkink 1998, 28.

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causes. Capturing and explaining this variation is relevant both for international relations theorists and for transnational policymakers themselves. Second, factors explaining why advocates succeed or fail in pitching issues to states do not work unproblematically to explain why advocates take up certain causes and not others.

Instead, analyzing discourse about the nonissue of "children born of wartime rape" has yielded insights about the importance of bureaucratic and organizational politics between issue networks in explaining variation in a given network's issue agenda. Network activists do not automatically adopt issues on the basis of their attributes, their graftability to existing norms, or the visibility generated by media attention or political entrepreneurs. Given these permissive factors, they then consider (1) whether or not the issue fits their ideational "turf" relative to other networks; (2) how it will affect their existing efforts and those of their allies in adjacent issue networks; and (3) how much consensus can be forged with those allies on a suitable advocacy frame. If any of these factors represents strategic problems within a network, issue adoption is unlikely. To the extent that the issue is logically constructed as spanning multiple network agendas, each of these factors may be complicated by the same calculations in the adjacent network.

The data presented in this article hardly constitutes a definitive test, but they do suggest that theorists of issue adoption in advocacy networks should think about issue adoption in TANs through a *network* frame that accounts for the politics of networks, rather than primarily a *transnational advocacy* frame emphasizing cohesion effects against targets of influence.[47] The key argument here is that the conditions driving issue adoption in TANs are likely to have as much to do with the institutional environment in which transnational advocates operate as with particular issues' attributes, existing norms, or political entrepreneurship. Cooley and Ron have argued that bureaucratic decision making in the transnational sector is driven at least as much by short-term concerns with organizational survival as by normative commitments; the analysis here suggests that the institutional environment affects not only the "tacit material relations among transnational actors," but also their very conception of which normative concerns are properly theirs to champion.[48]

It may therefore be useful for international relations scholarship to draw more closely on insights from the literature on domestic agenda setting and bureaucratic politics to begin capturing how inter-network dynamics influence issue adoption—or nonadoption—in world politics.[49] Doing so will better attune international relations scholars to intra-network conflicts over meaning and generate new insights about the obstacles to issue adoption within transnational civil society.

47. See Barabási 2002; Lake and Wong 2005; and Mische 2003.
48. Cooley and Ron 2002, 37.
49. Kingdon 1995.

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Appendix

TABLE A1. *Inter-rater reliability scores*

Code	*Coder1*	*Coder2*	*Exact match*	*F-measure*
Code list: Discourse				
Buck-passing-WB	4	4	2	0.5
Citations	79	79	63	0.8
Concurrence	21	36	16	0.6
Disagreement	4	3	2	0.57
Hat-wearing	37	30	22	0.66
I'm no expert but	12	9	8	0.76
Intensity	16	10	8	0.5
Issue linkage	77	52	31	0.5
Nay saying-WB	15	16	8	0.52
Rationalization-WB	20	24	11	0.5
Code list: Substance				
Community	45	35	30	0.75
Cultural context	31	30	19	0.62
Funding/donors	11	20	11	0.71
How to label/define?-WB	34	20	17	0.63
Lack of data-WB	14	24	10	0.53
Legal issues	33	36	26	0.75
Media	5	5	4	0.8
Peace building	6	4	3	0.6
Punitive justice	10	12	8	0.73
Rights-children	61	88	46	0.62
Rights-women	87	111	72	0.74
Sources of harm-MTHR	8	16	7	0.58
Sources of harm-WB	15	23	11	0.58
Code list: Issue agenda				
Abandonment	2	5	2	0.57
Adoption	2	4	2	0.67
Child soldiers/recruitment	38	37	35	0.93
Discrimination	8	9	7	0.82
Displacement	37	37	31	0.84
Economic/poverty	37	28	27	0.83
Education	29	37	26	0.79
Gender-based violence	12	11	11	0.96
Girls	29	30	25	0.85
HIV-AIDS	39	39	38	0.97
Health/malnutrition/disease	65	73	51	0.74
Infanticide	1	3	1	0.5
Neglect	4	2	2	0.67
Physical violence/abuse	25	26	16	0.63
Psychosocial	30	29	25	0.72
Registration/statelessness	6	6	4	0.67
Reproductive health	36	32	28	0.82
Separation/loss/orphans	29	23	22	0.85
Sexual exploitation/slavery/abuse/violence	119	137	106	0.83
Stigma	35	28	23	0.73
Street children	2	2	2	1
Trafficking/abduction	20	24	19	0.86
War babies	2	1	1	0.67

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TABLE A1. *Continued*

Code	*Coder1*	*Coder2*	*Exact match*	*F-measure*
Code list: War babies-specific codes				
Abandonment-WB	5	5	5	1
Adoption-WB	7	5	4	0.67
Child soldiers/recruitment-WB	2	1	1	0.67
Displacement-WB	2	3	2	0.8
Education-WB	3	4	3	0.86
HIV-AIDS-WB	3	5	2	0.5
Health/malnutrition/disease-WB	10	12	7	0.64
Infanticide-WB	11	9	9	0.9
Information/family tracing-WB	5	2	2	0.57
Neglect-WB	2	1	1	0.67
Registration/statelessness-WB	14	12	10	0.77
Separation/loss/orphans-WB	4	4	3	0.75
Sexual Exploitation/slavery/abuse/violence-WB	1	2	1	0.67
Stigma-WB	9	18	9	0.67
Trafficking/abduction_WB	2	1	1	0.67
Code list: Mother-specific codes				
Economic/poverty-MTHR	2	4	2	0.67
Girls-MTHR	11	8	6	0.63
Infanticide-MTHR	9	7	7	0.88
Reproductive health-MTHR	15	16	10	0.65
Sexual violence/abuse/slavery/exploitation-MTHR	4	4	2	0.5
Stigma-MTHR	13	16	8	0.55

Notes: WB = war baby; MTHR = mother.

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