

Explaining the Advocacy Agenda: Insights From the Human Security Network

Charli Carpenter
Sirin Duygulu
Alexander Montgomery
Anna Rapp

Forthcoming in *International Organization*

ABSTRACT: How do powerful organizations at the center of advocacy networks select issues for attention? We examined this question through a series of focus groups with human security practitioners. When thinking abstractly, participants emphasized five sets of factors: entrepreneur attributes, adopter interests, the broader political context, issue attributes, and intra-network relations. However, the first two were much more consistently invoked by practitioners in their evaluations of specific candidate issues. We argue that scholars of global agenda-setting should pay particular attention to the way that intra-network relations structure gatekeeper preferences within transnational advocacy space, as these help constitute perceptions of issues' and actors' attributes in networks.

Explaining the Advocacy Agenda: Insights From the Human Security Network¹

Why do organizations at the center of transnational advocacy networks select particular issues for attention but not others? This is an important question because advocacy has been shown to matter significantly in developing new global norms and focusing political attention on global social problems. Yet the advocacy agenda varies, and we know little about how actors in these networks determine which norms to promote in the first place. In this paper, we build on recent research showing that the decisions of advocacy organizations at the center of issue networks are crucial for agenda-setting and investigate the determinants of these advocacy “gatekeeper” preferences by studying agenda-setting in the area of human security, broadly defined.

We explored our research question in four ways. First, we captured variation in the salience of human security issues and mapped the network of human security organizations through surveys with practitioners and content analysis of organizational websites. Second, we identified a population of issues that practitioners in this network believe *should* be on the human security agenda but which (according to our measures) are not. Third, we explored the differences between high-salience and low-salience (neglected) issues through a series of focus groups with practitioners from leading organizations in the network. Finally, we collected participants’ reactions to a variety of low-salience

¹ The data on which this research is based was gathered with support from the National Science Foundation’s Human and Social Dynamics Program. (Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF.) We gratefully acknowledge the Director and staff of the Qualitative Data Analysis Program at University of Massachusetts for assistance in coding; and Richard Rogers for the Issuecrawler tool. We are also grateful for feedback from participants in the Governance and Institutions Workshop at University of Massachusetts-Amherst, the Institute for Global and International Studies at George Washington University, the Ford Institute for Human Security at University of Pittsburgh, the University of Washington Political Science Department and University of Chicago’s PIPES workshop; and particularly to Dawood Ahmed, Michael Barnett, Andrew Cockrell, Kerry Crawford, Martha Finnemore, Robert Keohane, Daniel Nexon, Richard Price, James Ron, Roland Paris, Don Hubert, Peter Haas, and MJ Peterson.

candidate issues as well as their practical understandings of what made the high-salience issues a success.

We found that when speaking in general, participants emphasized five sets of factors: issue attributes, entrepreneur attributes, adopter attributes, the broader political context, issue attributes, and intra-network relations. However, the first and last of these categories were much more consistently evoked than others in evaluations of specific candidate issues. Moreover, we argue that intra-network relations among organizations, entrepreneurs, and issues help constitute perceptions of issues' and actors' attributes. Consequently, network structure has significant direct and indirect effects on structuring gatekeeper preferences within transnational advocacy space.

Significance

Advocacy networks play critical roles in the creation of new global policies and standards.² In the area broadly associated with human security, advocacy outcomes have included the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1997 Landmine Treaty, and the 2002 Rome Treaty of the International Criminal Court.³ Besides agenda-setting, advocacy groups also play important roles in monitoring and enforcing standards once states have agreed to them.⁴ Yet while the relationship between transnational advocacy networks and global policy-making has been established, we know less about why transnational networks mobilize around certain problems and not others.

Indeed, organizations in such networks appear to be highly selective in the issues they choose to champion and the populations whose grievances they choose to frame as human security problems. For example, landmines and cluster munitions have been the subject of widespread campaigns, but explosive weapons and depleted uranium have attracted less opprobrium.⁵ Internal wars are an important concern for conflict prevention analysts but gangs and urban violence are on the margins of the global security agenda.⁶ While HIV/AIDS and SARS are championed as health issues, other communicable diseases such as pneumonia and diarrheal diseases, despite the number of lives they claim, get only limited attention.⁷ While discrimination against indigenous groups has attracted attention at the global level, the same level of attention is only recently developing against caste-based discrimination.⁸

²Keck and Sikkink 1998; Burgerman 2001. We define an issue as an identifiable *problem or category of concern* on an *official agenda*, whether or not linked with a specific policy proposal.

³ Hertel 2006; Price 1998; Glasius 2002.

⁴ Price 2003; Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002. However, the extent of this effect varies with the measures used. See Hafner-Burton and Ron 2009.

⁵ Hubert 2000; Carpenter 2010.

⁶ Forman and Segaar 2006.

⁷ Shiffman 2009.

⁸ Bob 2009.

As the examples above suggest, many problems are articulated by norm entrepreneurs in varying policy domains, but are not promulgated as issues within transnational civil society networks.⁹ Recent literature suggests that to kick-start the issue life cycle forward, entrepreneurs must not only “construct” an issue but also attract support from organizations central to specific advocacy networks.¹⁰ These advocacy “gatekeepers” pick and choose among a range of possible emerging claims, launching some issues to prominence while sidelining others.¹¹ Several recent studies have shown that adoption of an issue by such leading organizations within a network correlates strongly with that issue’s salience both within the network (issue diffusion) and on the global agenda (agenda-setting success).¹² But what causes issue selection by these advocacy elites? And why does it sometimes fail to occur?

Despite the evidence that gatekeepers matter, there has been little *systematic* research on why gatekeepers decide to take seriously some issues and not others. Although a number of implicit hypotheses can be drawn from the vast case literature on successful cases of transnational agenda-setting (see below), very little has been done in the way of testing which combination of those explanations most closely structures practitioners’ decisions.¹³ Instead, in most of the literature described here, gatekeeper preferences are generally either assumed or described inductively on a case-by-case basis without providing a systematic analysis across cases.¹⁴ This limits generalizability across issue areas, and makes it difficult to determine which factors matter most in general. Additionally, most of the literature focuses on issues that were selected, rather than documenting the processes by which actors at the center of advocacy networks vet candidate issues for consideration.¹⁵

Our aim here is to refine our understanding of what advocacy gatekeepers want by studying the reactions of practitioners in a conversational setting. In doing so, we tried to distinguish their narratives about what they want from their actual evaluative behavior. This yields better insights for norm entrepreneurs seeking to win their approval as well as

⁹ Davies 2007; Carpenter 2011.

¹⁰ Bob 2005.

¹¹ See Joachim 2007; Wong 2012; Mertus 2009; Lord 2009.

¹² See Bob 2010 and Carpenter 2011. A medium-N analysis of 17 successful cases across five issue areas conducted by Duygulu and Carpenter (2013) confirms this finding: in 94% of the cases agenda-setting success occurred only after adoption by central hubs in the issue area. Moreover, adoption produces success within an average of five years for issues that had been neglected for on average 17 years in the absence of gatekeeper support.

¹³ By “success” we mean both the ability to place a new issue on the global agenda (agenda-setting success) and to secure political commitments from states (political success). Much case literature follows campaigns that have achieved both. However it should be noted that some issues become globally salient yet do not result in political commitment.

¹⁴ Bob’s (2005) work on ethnic grievances is the best comparative case study but is limited to one issue area.

¹⁵ Carpenter 2011.

a more nuanced set of testable hypotheses for further research on agenda-setting and agenda-vetting in transnational politics.

Finally, much of the existing literature on transnational activist networks either treats organizational networks as homogenous actors or as a mass of dense, reciprocal ties that lead to collaborative outcomes.¹⁶ By contrast, we make no such assumptions when examining networks at two levels of analysis. First, at the macro level, we look at organizational websites to determine which organizations link to other organizations and which issues organizations tend to list together. We use these mappings to demonstrate that both the networks of organizations and the networks of issues are much sparser and more hierarchical than assumed. Second, at the individual level, we conduct small focus groups to examine the effects of the structure of these networks as one among several potential determinants of issue selection.

Hypotheses. A popular explanation in the literature on issue selection relates to the intrinsic aspects of issues (or people's perceptions of those aspects) that make them likelier or less likely to be selected for advocacy. Examples of *issue attributes* drawn from the literature include the nature of the victims (are they, or are they likely to be perceived as, innocent or vulnerable?),¹⁷ the nature of the harm caused (bodily integrity rights violations versus social harms),¹⁸ the nature of the perpetrators (some are more politically acceptable than others);¹⁹ the nature of the causal chain between victim and perpetrator,²⁰ and whether or not the issue is culturally sensitive in nature.²¹

Another strand of research emphasizes the attributes of norm entrepreneurs, many of whom come from outside gatekeeping organizations.²² Busby calls this dynamic "messenger effects," arguing that *entrepreneur attributes* – like credentials, celebrity, or similarity to gatekeepers – help ensure access and enhance credibility.²³ Bob also suggests that marketing savvy makes all the difference: entrepreneurs with the skills to package

¹⁶ Hafner-Burton, Kahler and Montgomery 2009.

¹⁷ Keck and Sikkink 1998; Carpenter 2005.

¹⁸ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.

¹⁹ Carpenter 2010.

²⁰ Stone (2006, 130) suggests that causal stories must describe the problem as "amenable to human action" rather than "mere accidents or fate." See also Keck and Sikkink 1998, 27.

²¹ Carpenter 2007a.

²² Sometimes entrepreneurs come from within "gatekeeper" organizations themselves (Oestreich 2007). However, actors outside established networks such as prominent individuals (Finnemore 1996), small NGOs (Keck and Sikkink 1998), states (Hubert 2007), celebrities (Huliaras and Tzifakis 2010), epistemic communities (Haas 1992; Parson 2003) or think-tanks (Stone 2001) can also play this role.

²³ Busby 2010, 169.

their issues so as to match potential adopters' mandates will have an edge.²⁴ In either case, as Busby puts it: "the attributes of advocates can be as important—if not more so—than the content of the message."²⁵

A third popular strand of recent research is that these preferences are related more to *adopter attributes* than to the qualities of issues or entrepreneurs themselves. Advocacy organizations pick and choose among possible issues according to how well they mesh with the organization's need to survive and thrive.²⁶ In this sense, transnational organizations are said to function much like domestic interest groups.²⁷ In considering where to place their advocacy attention, organizations consider whether or not there is space on their agenda for an additional issue, whether or not an issue fits the mandate and programming culture of the organization, and whether it will be marketable and enhance organizational resources and prestige.²⁸

Other authors stress the *broader political context* in which advocacy attempts occur or, as Cooley and Ron put it, "the incentives and constraints produced by the transnational sector's institutional environment."²⁹ Similarly, theorists of political opportunity structures assign explanatory value to "the broader institutional context that provides opportunities for or imposes constraints on NGOs"³⁰ which are crucial to "understanding a movement's emergence and to gauging its success."³¹ This context primarily includes factors outside the advocacy network itself: the preferences of governments, the mood of donors and of the media, and trigger events beyond the control of actors inside the network.³²

By contrast, a final strand of literature focuses on relationships within advocacy networks, or *intra-network relations*. Rather than examining the individual characteristics of adopting organizations or of entrepreneurs, the intrinsic attributes of issues, or the nature of the external environment, this set of explanations focuses on relationships between advocacy organizations and among issues. In the human rights area, Hertel and Bob have found that significant contestation may exist among advocacy groups either opposing one another's causes or opposing specific framings of those causes.³³ Hadden's work on climate politics found that organizations mobilized around a specific cause may disagree

²⁴ Bob 2005, 28.

²⁵ Busby 2010, 34.

²⁶ See Prakash and Gugerty 2010.

²⁷ Bloodgood 2011.

²⁸ Bob 2005; 2009.

²⁹ Cooley and Ron 2002, 6.

³⁰ Joachim 2007, 23.

³¹ This concept, originating in the social movement literature, is increasingly applied to transnational advocacy networks. See Tarrow 2005.

³² Joachim 2007; Shawki 2010.

³³ Hertel 2006; Bob 2005.

on tactics, altering the nature of the agenda-setting process.³⁴ Carpenter's work on civilian protection and gender-based violence shows such intra-network contestation, as well as inter-subjective understandings about how issue turf is compartmentalized across networks, affect advocates' understandings of whether and how to adopt new issues.³⁵ As detailed below, we find these "intra-network relations" to be a significant motivating factor for issue selection.

METHODOLOGY

This project used multiple research methods including surveys, hyperlink analysis, content analysis of websites, interviews, and focus groups. Our aim was three-fold: to identify a specific transnational network of organizations and operationalize its issue agenda; to draw on practitioners' insights to develop a population of issues missing from that agenda; and to explore hypotheses about the differences between present and absent issues through conversations with practitioners in the network.

Case Selection: The Human Security Network

In this study, we sought to refine a theory of gatekeeper preferences by analyzing a network of organizations working in the broad area of human security.³⁶ Although the term has many meanings and is contested within global civil society, our research showed that this network is composed of several sub-networks in the areas of human rights, humanitarian affairs, peace and security, arms control, the environment, and development. It may therefore be most appropriate to think of this as a "global policy network" encompassing a variety of distinct though interlinked "issue networks."

Identifying the Network and Network Agenda. We identified a population of organizations closely associated with human security through two methods. First, we conducted an analysis of websites using Issue-crawler to determine the cluster of organizations associated with the concept of human security which are connected to one another through hyperlinks (see Figure 1). Second, we disseminated an online snowball survey in Spring 2008, beginning with the mailing list of what at that time was a key information portal in the human security network: the Liu Institute at the University of British Columbia.³⁷ One of the questions asked respondents to name "three or more organizations

³⁴ Hadden 2008.

³⁵ Carpenter 2005; 2010.

³⁶ We use the term "human security network" to describe the empirically measurable relational ties between these organizations rather than the former group of like-minded states called the Human Security Network. On the history and fate Human Security Network, see Martin and Owen, 2010. On the wider meaning of human security see Paris 2001.

³⁷ This survey went out to over 6,000 individuals in transnational civil society, who were encouraged to pass it along to others whose insights they thought we should include. In total, we received 290 survey responses.

that come to mind when you think of human security.” The responses to this question gave us not only a population of organizations cited, but also a frequency count that enabled us to identify the organizations most closely associated with the network by the most practitioners (see Table 1).³⁸ We averaged the two centrality measures to arrive at an overall ranking for in-degree centrality.

We then collected mission statements and issue lists from the websites of the organizations in the hyperlinked network, coding them according to which issues were named on human security web-pages. We also asked survey respondents to “name three issues that come to mind when you think of human security.” These open-ended questions were aggregated and coded using the same code scheme as the websites. The results from the link analysis and the survey responses were closely related in terms of the issue agenda, though somewhat different in terms of issue salience.³⁹ We averaged these measures to create an overall measure of issue salience within the network (Figure 2).

We were especially interested in *low*-salience issues, because we wanted to know what sort of factors might prevent an issue from getting traction in order to better understand what factors enabled other issues to get attention from transnational networks. Therefore, we also asked survey respondents to name human security problems they knew of in the world that were not very prominent as issues within the human security movement. Table 2 contains problems that were reported missing from the human security agenda at the time the data was collected.

Explaining Issue Salience. We drew on the experience and insights of 43 senior officials drawn from organizations central to the human security network. Focus groups, as conversational settings, provide an environment in which to examine what ideas, assumptions, or discourses advocates across issue networks hold in common: they are “particularly suited to the study of attitudes and experiences around specific topics” and to ways in which those topics are articulated in social settings.⁴⁰ Thus, in addition to substantive information on how advocates explain their issue selection decisions, the transcripts of such sessions provide data on the way in which particular issues are currently conceptualized, constructed, or discussed among practitioners themselves;

³⁸ The network includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations (IOs), governmental bodies, academic institutions, and think-tanks.

³⁹This finding suggests the official network agenda as measured by aggregating network websites either reflects or constructs the understandings of individuals who identify themselves closely with a transnational network. Indeed, 82% of the survey respondents reported they got either “some” or “a lot” of their information on the human security network from websites. Also see Carpenter and Jose-Thota 2012.

⁴⁰ Barbour and Kitzinger 1999, 5.

which issues are conceptually linked to which other issues; and the extent to which advocates can agree that particular non-issues lack some factor required for advocacy.⁴¹

Our goal was to spearhead a discussion about why some issues gain attention and why others do not and to compare the narratives presented by practitioners to their reactions to actual candidate issues and to scholarly understandings of these dynamics. Six focus groups were completed by University of Massachusetts Amherst researchers at Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Fall 2009. Participants were recruited based on their positions within organizations identified in both the surveys and the hyperlink analysis. Although all 110 organizations in the network received a letter of invitation and a follow-up phone call, we recruited most aggressively from organizations with the highest centrality scores in the network. This follows from the observation that organizations at the center of a network have the greatest influence over the network agenda.⁴²

We made efforts to recruit from the most senior ranks in each organization in order to hear from individuals with some influence over each organization's internal agenda. This resulted in the participation of 43 individuals from 39 different organizations, including practitioners from 18 nations, based in five world regions, with representation from most of the major thematic clusters, organizational types, and geographical regions.⁴³ We also aimed to create a diverse cohort of practitioners in each focus group, combining individuals operating in different thematic fields and hailing from different types of organizations.

Each focus group began with a brainstorming session on issues missing from the network. Participants were asked to list as many issues as they could think of that are not getting enough attention from human security specialists. The brainstorming session led into a larger discussion on why certain issues make it onto the advocacy agenda, and others do not. After a coffee break, the final segment of the focus group centered on thought-experiments where the moderator presented issues that have not yet garnered international attention, drawn from a pool of candidate issues, and the participants were asked to analyze why these issues lack saliency. At the end of the focus group sessions there was time again for a more general discussion.

The transcripts from the focus group sessions were analyzed using Atlas.ti 6.0. The project coordinator and four research assistants developed the thematic categories using a

⁴¹ We follow John Borrie and Ashley Thornton (2008) in treating these multilateral practitioners as members of a "community of practice."

⁴² Bob 2005; Carpenter 2007a; 2007b; Wong 2008.

⁴³ However, participants in the focus groups were more alike than they were different. Over 75% of the participants held graduate degrees; all were fluent in English. Although our sample included participants based in Africa, South America, Asia and the Middle East, over 80% of our respondents were based in North America or Western Europe.

grounded theory review of the set of transcripts. We then developed codes both for substantive arguments made by focus group participants about the determinants of the issue agenda, and for discursive patterns we observed during each set of conversations. We coded with an eye toward the kind of responses that would lend support to each of the five sets of hypotheses above. For example, if the *broader political context* hypothesis holds, we would expect to see a preponderance of references to the constraints imposed by donors, the media, and government interests; if the *issue attributes* hypothesis holds, we would expect to see references to the intrinsic aspects of issues, such as the magnitude of the problem, the number or type of people affected, or the problem's amenability to empirical measurement.

These analytical categories were applied to each passage of code-able text by between two and four undergraduate student coders through a succession of coding waves in which we aimed to determine which codes could be applied most reliably and which were most subject to interpretation. Inter-rater reliability for each code was measured using Fleiss' Kappa, and each code-list was refined at least three times to derive the maximum degree of reliability among the coding team.⁴⁴ While some codes were easier to apply than others due to the complexity of the dataset and the coding scheme, we achieved an average inter-rater reliability score of 0.47 for the entire dataset.⁴⁵ Remaining disagreement among coders was then adjudicated by the PI using the Coding Analysis Toolkit.⁴⁶

FINDINGS

Responses from the general discussion about issue selection fell into five broad categories roughly mapping onto the typology of relevant factors described in the literature (see Figure 3), with some claims (particularly the *broader political context*) far more frequently mentioned than others. However, we also observed two other dynamics.

First, the significance of these different categories was very different when practitioners were thinking abstractly about issue selection (prior to the coffee break) than when they were asked to evaluate specific low-salience issues (after the coffee break). In other words, their general narratives about issue selection were different from their actual behavior in evaluating candidate issues.

Second, we noticed a general emphasis on factors related to perceived relationships within networks, rather than to the features of actors or issues or the broader political context. This was evident not only from the higher salience of *intra-network relations* in the responses of practitioners to actual candidate issues but also from a number of the claims made regarding relational rather than intrinsic attributes of actors and issues. This

⁴⁴ Fleiss 1971.

⁴⁵ Codebook available from <http://www.people.umass.edu/charli/networks>.

⁴⁶ Chi-Jung and Shulman 2008.

suggests a need for a greater emphasis on social ties and social perceptions in understanding the nature of issues, actors, and the structure of advocacy networks than has been evident in past scholarship.

Issue Selection: Abstract Explanations v. Evaluative Behavior. Unsurprisingly, given that many hypotheses about issue selection have been derived from case studies built on elite interviews with practitioners in advocacy networks, support for all five of these causal hypotheses was evident to some extent in the narratives of practitioners when producing abstract explanations. However, some of these categories were more frequently mentioned than others; and within each category of responses, some specific causal claims were dominant. (See Figure 3.)

Respondents placed only a limited emphasis on actor attributes. *Entrepreneur attributes* mentioned included personal charisma, credentials, an extensive personal network, internet and social media skills, advocacy skills, and a mastery of the English language, although access to funding was the most important. A few comments suggested that entrepreneurship by an “unlikely leader” was helpful; the recent promotion of the cause of nuclear disarmament by former Cold War hawks was mentioned as an example.⁴⁷ However, such references were only about 12% of the total in the brainstorming section, and dropped to fewer than 6% of references in evaluations of candidate issues. Similarly we found consistent but low evidence that organizations see themselves as constrained by *adopter attributes*: in weighing candidate issues, organizations are said to consider their mandate, resources, and organizational prestige.⁴⁸ While this thematic concern was constant across both sections of the focus groups, it constituted less than 14% of the discussion in each.

Intra-network relations were relevant in both sessions: when evaluating candidate issues, practitioners often stressed the issues’ relationship to other issues, their own relationships with other partner organizations, and the issue’s or entrepreneur’s relationship with other organizations inside or outside the human security network. There was somewhat more commentary about the importance of *issue attributes*, particularly if there is a vulnerable victim and an obviously guilty perpetrator. Participants suggested that issues that are “too complex” or seem to have impossible or unachievable solutions are thought to be less likely to gain advocacy attention. Issues that were subjective and emotional, seen as “scary” or that “tug at heartstrings,” are more likely to be picked up by advocates because it is assumed that emotional appeals are often helpful when marketing issues. But systemic, quantifiable evidence to supplement the shocking testimonies is crucial in communicating the severity of the problem to advocacy gatekeepers, many of

⁴⁷ Another example is the embrace of the Jubilee 2000 campaign by former foreign-aid skeptic Jesse Helms, as documented in Busby 2010.

⁴⁸ Bob 2005.

whom pride themselves on their objective technical expertise.⁴⁹ Relatedly, advocates emphasized the inherent measurability of the problem – a function of the issue itself as well as the tools available to advocates.

We heard even more talk (45% in the first session) about how the advocacy agenda is driven by the *broader political context*. Our respondents described how historical shifts create or shrink space for advocacy, affecting organizations' sense that specific issues may succeed.⁵⁰ Advocates seize windows of opportunity presented by focusing events such as international conferences, reports or legislative debates, but these factors are often beyond their direct control. Issues have life-cycles: "Often ideas will percolate for decades before the moment arrives." This moment might be caused by a trigger event such as a natural disaster, genocide, or an industrial accident. The case literature suggests such events have a "cognitive punch effect"⁵¹ which provides an opportunity for the advocates to "push for their pet solutions."⁵² Some participants argued that donors set the agenda, hand-picking which issues will be funded, and which will not.⁵³ Others argued that governments play a leading role in setting the global advocacy agenda, and that the most powerful states play the most powerful roles.⁵⁴ Expert, media and celebrity attention to an issue were also regularly mentioned as important contributing factors.

However, the dominance of the *broader political context* appears to be due its over-representation in the abstract brainstorming section: it carried much less weight when practitioners were asked to evaluate the neglect of specific issues (Figure 4). When asked to comment about the absence of international advocacy around *specific* low-salience issues (collateral damage control, autonomous weapons, infant male circumcision, forced conscription, and military basing), these explanations dropped from 45% to 27%, while the emphasis placed on *issue attributes* jumped significantly, from 16% to 33% of the total. Similarly, *intra-network relations* were far more salient in this section, increasing from 14% to 21% of these comments.

This greater emphasis on the *broader political context* when thinking abstractly is consistent with attribution theory, which suggests both that actors are likelier to attribute outcomes they like to their own agency and outcomes they dislike to the broader

⁴⁹ This echoes Jutta Joachim's (2007) claim that, "testimonial knowledge" must be combined with "scientific knowledge.

⁵⁰ The sudden end of the Cold War, for instance, is frequently said to have opened up the political space for various issues ranging from women's rights to genocide prevention to find a place on the political agenda. Joachim 2007.

⁵¹ Adler 1991, 55.

⁵² Kingdon 1984, 177.

⁵³ On these dynamics see Berkovitch and Gordon 2008; Reinmann 2006.

⁵⁴ Hubert 2007.

environment, and vice versa for others.⁵⁵ Indeed, when we disaggregated causal claims in the evaluative section according to the speaker's relative enthusiasm or skepticism about the issue in question we discovered an almost inverse relationship between the emphasis on the *broader political context* and an emphasis on *adopter attributes* (see Figure 5). Those who favored neglecting these particular issues were likelier to attribute the issues' absence from the agenda to organizational agency, rather than to the factors beyond activists' control; those who preferred that the issue in question get attention were likelier to blame constraints by donors or governments.

However, evaluative arguments stressing *issue attributes* and *intra-network relations* increased in the evaluative section, and did not vary significantly with respondents' affect for the issue in question. This suggests that these variables, operating in tandem, are particularly important in practitioners' evaluations of candidate issues, regardless of how sympathetic they are to an issue. Based on the consistency of intra-network relations as an cross-cutting explanation in the dataset, we argue that the most important factors affecting practitioner judgment on which issues are "worthy" of advocacy may be those pertaining to intra-network relationships, rather than the intrinsic attributes of either issues or actors, since it is through intra-network relations that actor or issue attributes such as "credibility," "fit" and "do-ability" are given meaning by practitioners.

Issue Selection: Intrinsic v. Relational Factors.

In our analysis, we looked for references to social ties among organizations and issues as constraints on or facilitators of issue adoption or proliferation and considered reported ties among practitioners themselves and colleagues in other issue-areas. Although the early transnational activist (TAN) literature assumed that dense networks constitute a resource for activists, practitioner narratives suggest that the trend can work the other way: ties between issues, issue areas, and organizations can result in conflict or competition among issues, and the way that issues are packaged and mapped onto different organizations' issue "turf" affects the receptivity of the network to certain ideas.

A network analysis of the co-occurrences of issues both on websites and in survey responses suggests that issues themselves have a network structure (Figure 6). Indeed, practitioners were concerned about *relationships among issues*, especially the nature of the relationship between the emerging issue and their organization's existing issue agenda.⁵⁶ As Bob's notion of "substantive matching" predicts, respondents spoke of issue attributes in relational terms, claiming there was only so much space for advocacy, both within an

⁵⁵ We are grateful to Andrew Cockrell for this insight. On attribution theory generally, see Pettigrew 1979; on attribution theory as applied to IR see Mercer 1996.

⁵⁶ One respondent said: "An issue 'takes' much quicker if it can be related to an existing issue or set of issues that groups are already campaigning on because, you know, they've taken a lot of effort to construct them."

organization and in the broader networks. Sometimes issues are perceived as being in competition with one another; sometimes they are seen as conflicting entirely:⁵⁷

I think, what all of us in the field feel, so we don't want more issues. You want to push them out, keep them away because we've got enough to work on already. We will only take them on if we see the possibility of them helping the issues that we already have, rather than seeing them as competing issues that draws away from our pet issues that we've been working on. So I think there's a real challenge for new issues because that novelty isn't strong enough.

Additionally, participants suggested that organizations often consider *relationships among organizations* when determining whether or not to sign onto a new campaign or adopt a new issue, as issue adoption can compromise important alliances with other organizations in the network. For that reason, they feel the need to 'negotiate' their various involvements in calculating the interest they have in supporting an issue.⁵⁸ Meritorious issues may be eliminated if they conflict with partners' preferences. Conversely, intra-network relations can facilitate diffusion of an issue once it is adopted by an organization central to that network: practitioners reported that issues quickly proliferate within the network most closely associated with the organization that legitimized it. Indeed, some practitioners acknowledge that an expectation of creating just such a ripple effect sometimes drives their own issue adoption decisions. In addition to network composition, density also matters. It is not necessarily true that denser networks equal greater likelihood of issue adoption: practitioner narratives suggest that this effect hits a tipping point after a short initial bout of issue proliferation: potential adopters must gauge whether an issue is still at an early enough stage that they can be seen to be making a significant contribution rather than simply band-wagging:

You're not going to be able to attract the funds if already too many people are doing it. So, there is a tipping point, the kind of bell curve where at the bottom there's not enough money yet, because there's not enough interest. And then as interest gains, you can get more money. But then once you hit the top, if there's too many people doing it, then funders are going to be like well, what the point? So, there's that sweet spot that you have to kind of hit.

Perceived *relationships among issue areas* also matter. Issues in the human security network cluster into thematic domains, measurable both in terms of ties between issues

⁵⁷ For example, some thought that infant male circumcision might draw resources away from the campaign against female genital mutilation, which was seen by practitioners as a worse evil; but it might also conflict directly with issues they cared about, such as religious freedom or HIV-AIDS prevention.

⁵⁸ Mische 2003.

and organizations (see Figures 1 and 6).⁵⁹ The ties between these issue clusters shape practitioners' judgments about whether it is a fit for them relative to some other organization.⁶⁰ Moreover, the disaggregation of the human security network into sub-networks and the increasingly cross-cutting nature of issues also generate the potential for buck-passing, allowing some issues to fall between the cracks. This dynamic arises from the compartmentalization of issue turf within the network. There may be a sense of which organization, or which type of organization an issue belongs to, and other organizations may not pick up an issue if they feel it has a better home elsewhere.⁶¹

The mandates are giving us problems right now... they make us work in silos and the communications are not very good. There was a food conference recently. Not one word about climate or environmental change was mentioned in the food conference. And the people who are going to meet over the climate are not going to talk about food prices and oil prices and all these things, yet increasingly they impact forced migration. And what we are not finding right now is the right form to start putting the dots in between these silos.

The concept of *intra-network relations* as a set of explanations distinct from the external political opportunity structure suggests that relational factors within networks may be as or more important than factors intrinsic to organizations, issues, or their environment. But the concept also answers remaining puzzles about issue and actor attributes. Many factors that have been treated as attributes of issues or actors are socially constructed through perceptions about ties to other issues or actors.

For example, participants placed relatively little emphasis on the individual characteristics of issue entrepreneurs. However, respondents did place an emphasis on entrepreneurs' social ties to other actors as indicators of their (and therefore their ideas') merit. Entrepreneur "credibility," for example, appears to be based on the entrepreneur's choice of allies and relationship to the claimant population. Adopters look to the density and composition of the entrepreneur's network ties as a clue to what sort of crowd they are joining if they acknowledge the campaign, and what sort of frame is embedded in the issue.

The merit of the cause entrepreneurs champion is also judged by issue attributes such as "linkability" or "toxicity" that are really less about the issue itself and more about what else is already on the agenda or which relationships may be compromised by a

⁵⁹ An "issue area" might be defined as the package of organizations and issues tied together structurally in a certain sphere of advocacy space.

⁶⁰ Depleted uranium munitions, for example, have long been ignored by hubs in the weapons and arms control area, primarily because the issue is strongly associated in their minds with the anti-nuclear and environmental lobby (Carpenter 2010).

⁶¹ An issue can also end up 'belonging' to a particular venue as a result of norm entrepreneurs' preferences, foreclosing alternative frames later on (Praelle 2003).

certain framing. These types of concerns form a crucial part of practitioners' estimate as to whether an issue "fits" their organizational culture. It is in large part relationships—to new issues, new coalitions, new partnerships within the network—that help constitute gatekeepers' understanding of their own organizational interests. These types of factors are front and center in practitioners' judgments about the merit of new human security claims.

CONCLUSION

We have advanced four claims. First, we argued that decisions of organizations at the center of advocacy networks are crucial, yet how these gatekeepers know a worthwhile issue when they see one has been under-studied. While our findings support some of the major arguments in the literature regarding important factors, they also revealed new insights into the role intra-network relations play. Future research could code specific transnational campaigns to determine which combination of these factors most typically leads to agenda-setting success or failure.

Second gatekeepers' actual preferences differ between an abstract, general context and specific issue areas. Disaggregating these two contexts revealed an increased emphasis on issue attributes and intra-network relations and a decreased emphasis on the broader political context. This suggests both that further research is needed to tease out precisely which factors matter most in which contexts.

Third, the responses strongly suggest that intra-network relations should be distinguished from the broader political context and that in general ties between issues, actors and issue areas matter at least as much in structuring gatekeeper preferences as factors intrinsic to issues or actors themselves. This suggests a need for studies of advocacy networks to take networks as structures far more seriously. As Hafner-Burton, Kahler, and Montgomery have argued, the TAN literature has long appropriated the metaphor of the "network" as a way to describe the non-state political sector, yet has rarely examined how relationships within networks shape political outcomes.⁶² Early TAN literature often described networks as "actors" rather than incorporating a sociological understanding of networks as structures composed of nodes connected by ties of different types and strengths. "Networking" was seen as a generic verb to describe the various activities of global civil society, and "networks" used as a metaphor to distinguish such activity from the hierarchical structures associated with states.⁶³ Such analyses fail to theorize how advocacy network structures impact outcomes and mask power relations within networks.

⁶² Hafner-Burton, Kahler and Montgomery 2009; Kahler 2009.

⁶³ Keck and Sikkink's seminal work on advocacy networks fits this description. On empires as networks see Nexon 2009. On intergovernmental networks see Slaughter 2004.

Newer studies call for a closer examination of the effects that network structures have on actors and issues in transnational networks.⁶⁴

Methodologically, a combination of surveys, web analysis and focus group methods were a highly useful way to gather data on agenda-setting failures. The disconnect we observed between practitioners' abstract ideas and their responses to concrete cases of issue entrepreneurship bears close consideration, particularly insofar as elite interviews constitute a core methodology for scholars of transnational networks. Because practitioners may over-estimate the significance of the broader political context relative to other factors, thereby discounting their own power within networks, it is important for scholars of transnational spaces to adopt a variety of methods in exploring the determinants of issue selection, campaign evolution, and norm development and implementation.

Our study suggests insights for organizations in a position to vet advocacy claims as well. We identified a perception among practitioners, particularly in the abstract, that their hands are largely tied by states, donors and the media, yet this perception flies in the face of many successful advocacy campaigns by advocacy networks in recent years. Within these networks central organizations have a powerful legitimating effect on new issues, while those operating at the intersection of networks or ideas have the ability to bridge the distance between "silos" in new ways.

⁶⁴See Goddard 2009; Carpenter 2011.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adler, Emanuel. 1991. Cognitive Evolution: A Dynamic Approach for the Study of International Relations and Their Progress. In *Progress in Postwar International Relations*, edited by Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford, 43-88. New York: Columbia University Press.

Barbour, Rosaline and Jenny Kitzinger. 1999. *Developing Focus Group Research*. London: Sage.

Berkovitch, Nitza and Neve Gordon. 2008. The Political Economy of Transnational Regimes: The Case of Human Rights. *International Studies Quarterly* 52 (4): 881-904.

Bloodgood, Elisabeth. 2011. The Interest-Group Analogy: International Non-Governmental Organizations in International Politics. *Review of International Studies* 37 (1): 93-120.

Bob, Clifford. 2005. *The Marketing of Rebellion: Insurgents, Media, and International Activism*. New York: Cambridge.

Bob, Clifford. 2009. Dalit Rights Are Human Rights: Caste Discrimination, International Activism, and the Construction of a New Human Rights Issue. In *The International Struggle for New Human Rights*, edited by Clifford Bob, 30-51. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bob, Clifford. 2010. Packing Heat: Pro-Gun Groups as Global Governors in Small Arms Control. In *Who Governs the Globe?*, edited by Deborah D. Avant, Martha Finnemore and Susan K. Sell, 183-201. Ithaca, NY: Cambridge University Press. Borrie, John and Ashley Thornton. 2008. *The Value of Diversity in Multilateral Disarmament Work*. NY/Geneva: UNIDIR.

Burgerman, Susan. 2001. *Moral Victories: How Activists Provoke Multilateral Action*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Busby, Joshua W. 2010. *Moral Movement and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carpenter, Charli. 2005. Women, Children and Other Vulnerable Groups: Gender, Strategic Frames and the Protection of Civilians as a Transnational Issue. *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2): 295-334.

Carpenter, Charli. 2007a. Studying Issue (Non)-Adoption in Transnational Advocacy Networks. *International Organization* 61 (3): 643-67.

Carpenter, Charli. 2007b. Setting the Advocacy Agenda: Theorizing Issue Emergence and Nonemergence in Transnational Advocacy Networks. *International Studies Quarterly* 51 (1): 99-120.

Carpenter, Charli. 2010. Governing the Global Agenda: "Gatekeepers" and "Issue Adoption" in Transnational Advocacy Networks. In *Who Governs the Globe?*, edited by Deborah D. Avant, Martha Finnemore and Susan K. Sell, 202-37. Ithaca, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Carpenter, Charli. 2011. Vetting the Advocacy Agenda: Networks, Centrality and the Paradox of Weapons Norms. *International Organization* 65 (1): 69-102.

Carpenter, Charli and Betsy Jose-Thota. 2012. Transnational Issue Networks in Real and Virtual Space: The Case of Women, Peace and Security. *Global Networks* 12 (4): 525-43.

Chi-Jung Lu and Stuart Shulman. 2008. Rigor and Flexibility in Computer-Based Qualitative Research: Introducing the Coding Analysis Toolkit. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches* 2: 105-17.

Cooley, Alexander and James Ron. 2002. The NGO Scramble: Organizational Insecurity and the Political Economy of Transnational Action. *International Security* 27 (1): 5-39.

Davies, Thomas Richard. 2007. *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism: The Campaign for Disarmament between the Two World Wars*. Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff.

Duygulu, Sirin and Charli Carpenter. 2013. The Gatekeeper Effect in Global Issue Networks. Manuscript in Progress, University of Massachusetts.

Finnemore, Martha. 1996. *National Interests in International Society*. NY: Cornell University Press.

Finnemore, Martha and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. International Norm Dynamics and Political Change. *International Organization* 52 (4): 887-918.

Fleiss, Joseph L. 1971. Measuring Nominal Scale Agreement among Many Raters. *Psychological Bulletin* 76 (5): 378-82.

Forman, Shepard and Derk Segaar. 2006. New Coalitions for Global Governance: The Changing Dynamics of Multilateralism. *Global Governance* 12 (2): 205-25.

Glasius, Marlies. 2002. Expertise in the Cause of Justice: Global Civil Society Influence on the Statute for an International Criminal Court. In *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2002*, edited

by Marlies Glasius, Mary Kaldor, & Helmut K. Anheier, 137-68. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goddard, Stacie E. 2009. Brokering Change: Networks and Entrepreneurs in International Politics. *International Theory* 1 (2): 249-81.

Haas, Peter. 1992. Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination. *International Organization* 46 (1): 1-35.

Hadden, 2008. Society Spillover(s) in EU Climate Change and Labor Politics. Paper Presented at Transatlantic Graduate Workshop Hanse Wissenschaftskolleg, Delmenhorst, Germany.

Hafner-Burton, Emilie, Miles Kahler and Alexander Montgomery. 2009. Network Analysis for International Relations. *International Organization* 63 (3): 559-92.

Hafner-Burton, Emilie and James Ron. 2009. Seeing Double: Human Rights Impact Through Qualitative and Quantitative Eyes. *World Politics* 61 (2): 360-401

Hertel, Shareen. 2006. *Unexpected Power: Conflict and Change among Transnational Activists*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Hubert, Don. 2000. *The Landmine Ban: A Case Study in Humanitarian Advocacy*. Occasional Paper #42. Providence: Watson Institute for International Studies.

Hubert, Don. 2007. Humanitarian Advocacy Campaigns: Lessons on Government Civil-Society Collaboration. In *Joint Action for Prevention: Civil Society and Government Cooperation on Conflict Prevention and Peace Building*, Issue Paper 4, edited by Paul van Tongeren and Christine van Empel, 79-86. Den Haag, the Netherlands: GPPAC.

Huliaras, Asteris and Nikolaos Tzifakis. 2010. Celebrity Activism in International Relations: In Search of Framework for Analysis. *Global Society* 24 (2):255-74.

Joachim, Jutta. 2007. *Agenda Setting, the UN, and NGOs: Gender Violence and Reproductive Rights*. Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Press.

Kahler, Miles. 2009. *Networked Politics: Agency, Power and Governance*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Khagram, Sanjeev, James Riker and Kathryn Sikkink, eds. 2002. *Restructuring World Politics: Transnational Social Movements, Networks and Norms*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Kingdon, John W. 1984. *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. New York: HarperCollins.

Lord, Janet. 2009. Disability Rights and the Human Rights Mainstream: Reluctant Gate-Crashers?. In *The International Struggle for New Human Rights*, edited by Clifford Bob, 83-92. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Martin, Mary and Taylor Owen. 2010. The Second Generation of Human Security: Lessons from the UN and EU Experience. *International Affairs* 86 (1): 211–24.

Mercer, Jon. 1996. *Reputation in International Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Mertus, Julie. 2009. Applying the Gatekeeper Model of Human Rights Activism: The U.S.-Based Movement for LGBT Rights. In *The International Struggle for New Human Rights*, edited by Clifford Bob, 52-67. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mische, Ann. 2003. Cross-Talk in Movements: Reconceiving the Culture Network Link. In *Social Movements and Networks: Relational Approaches to Collective Action*, edited by Mario Diani and Doug McAdam, 258-80. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nexon, Daniel. 2009. *The Struggle for Power in Early Modern Europe: Religious Conflict, Dynastic Empires, and International Change*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Oestreich, Joel. 2007. *Power and Principle: Human Rights Programming in International Organizations*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.

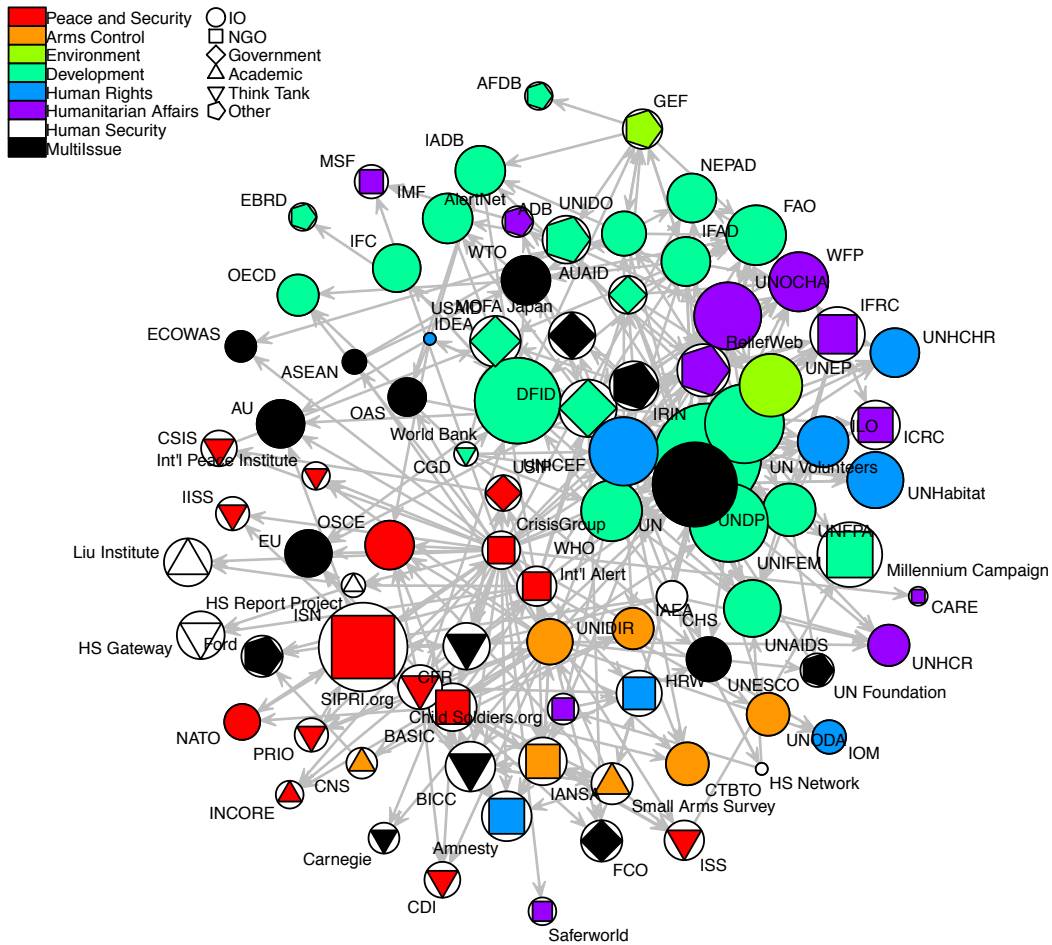
Paris, Roland. 2001. Human Security: Paradigm Shift or Hot Air?. *International Security* 26 (2): 87-102.

Parson, Edward. 2003. *Protecting the Ozone Layer: Science and Strategy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Pettigrew, Thomas. 1979. The Ultimate Attribution Error. *Personality and Social Psychology* 5 (4): 461-76.

- Prakash, Aseem and Mary Kay Gugerty eds. 2010. *Advocacy Organizations and Collective Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Pralle, Sarah. 2003. Venue Shopping, Political Strategy, and Policy Change: The Internationalization of Canadian Forest Advocacy. *Journal of Public Policy* 23 (3): 233-60.
- Price, Richard. 1998. Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines. *International Organization* 52 (3): 613-44.
- Price, Richard. 2003. Transnational Civil Society and Advocacy in World Politics. *World Politics* 55 (4): 579-606.
- Reinmann, Kim D. 2006. A View from the Top: International Politics, Norms and Worldwide Growth of NGOs. *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (1): 45-67.
- Shawki, Noha. 2010. Political Opportunity Structures and the Outcomes of Transnational Campaigns: A Comparison of Two Transnational Advocacy Networks. *Peace and Change* 35 (3): 381-411.
- Shiffman, Jeremy. 2009. A Social Explanation for the Rise and Fall of Global Health Issues. *Bulleting of the World Health Organization* 87 (8): 608-13.
- Slaughter, Anne Marie. 2004. *A New World Order*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Stone, Deborah. 2006. Reframing the Racial Disparities Issue for State Governments. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 31 (1): 127-52.
- Stone, Diane. 2001. Think-tanks, Global Lesson-Drawing and Networking Social Policy Ideas. *Global Social Policy* 1 (3): 338-60.
- Tarrow, Sidney. 2005. *The New Transnational Activism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Wong, Wendy. 2008. *Centralizing Principles: How Amnesty International Shaped Human Rights Politics Through its Transnational Network*. Doctoral Dissertation.
- Wong, Wendy. 2012.** *Internal Affairs: How the Structure of NGOs Transforms Human Rights*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

FIGURE 1: The Human Security Organizations hyperlink network.⁶⁵



⁶⁵ Node size is proportional to the number of incoming hyperlinks. Only ties with two or more hyperlinks are shown. Node position based on complete set of ties.

FIGURE 3.

Reported Factors Affecting Issue Salience⁶⁶



⁶⁶ Tag cloud lists analytical codes used to describe and group substantive patterns in practitioner discourse on correlates of global issue salience from the “brainstorming” section of the transcripts. Tag size corresponds to code frequency across all focus groups.

FIGURE 4.

**Explanations of Issue Non-Salience in Focus Groups
Before and After Coffee Break**

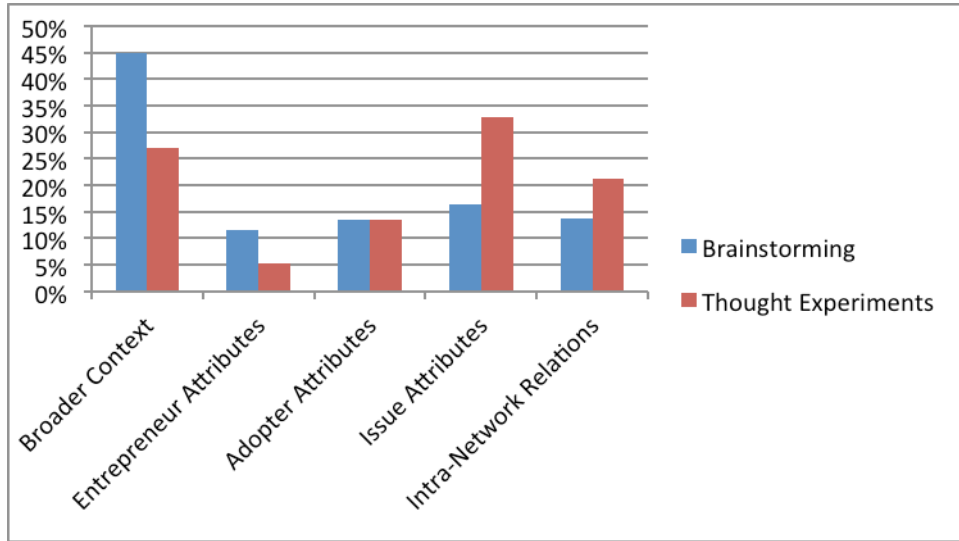


Figure 5.

Explanations of Issue Neglect Based on Affect

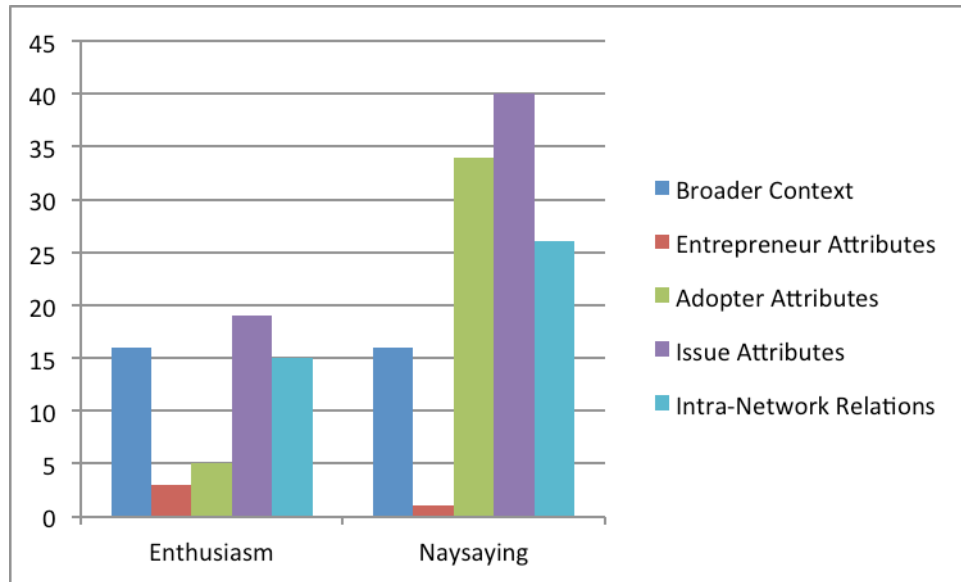
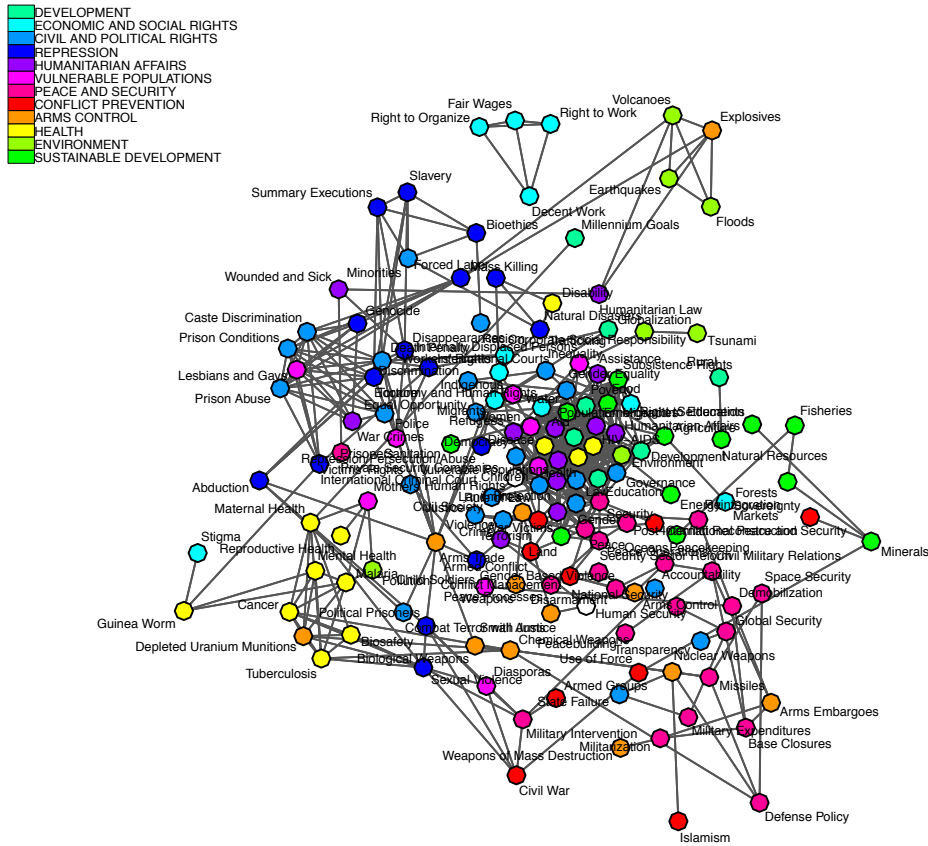


FIGURE 6.

Co-Occurrences between Issues Named on Human Security Websites⁶⁷



⁶⁷ Only ties between nodes with higher than 30% co-occurrence are shown. Node position based on complete set of ties.

TABLE 1.

Most Mentioned Organizations in Human Security⁶⁸

ORGANIZATION	SURVEY CITES
Amnesty International	
Canadian Consortium on Human Security	36
Human Security Report Project	34
United Nations Commission on Human Rights	31
Human Security Network	31
International Committee of the Red Cross	28
Liu Institute for Global Issues	24
Human Rights Watch	23
United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization	16
International Crisis Group	14
Doctors Without Borders	14
North Atlantic Treaty Organization	12
Center for Strategic and International Studies	12
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada	11
Oxfam International	10
United States Central Intelligence Agency	10
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	10
Canadian Foreign Ministry	9
United Nations Development Programme	8
United Nations	7
World Bank	7
United Nations Children's Fund	7
World Health Organization	7
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	7
	7

⁶⁸ Responses to the survey question "Name three or more organizations that come to your mind when you think of human security."

TABLE 2.

HUMAN SECURITY “NON-ISSUES”
IDENTIFIED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS*

<p>Megacities Nonlethal Weapons Aging of Northern Populations Global Social Welfare System Recycling Exports Leprosy Corporate Resource Plunder Family Integrity Safe Child-Bearing Social Esteem Needs Ophthalmic Care Piracy Urban Insecurity Civilian Men Fighting Women Traffic Accidents Mercenaries Impunity For World Leaders Social Exclusion Fundamentalism Hijackings Tobacco Household Waste Disposal</p>	<p>Resource Extraction Indigenous Land Rights Climate Refugees Militarism US Military Budget Fetal Rights High Sex Ratios Literacy Slums Food Prices Consumerism Coltan Safe Passage for IDPs Nuclear Weapons Hostages Developed World Poverty GMOs Sexual Orientation Persecution Propaganda Forced Marriage Cyberterrorism FAMILIZATION OF GOVERNANCE Protection for the Elderly</p>
--	--

*Issues identified through survey responses to the question: “Sometimes problems exist in the world that get little or no attention from transnational activists. What human security problems can you think of that are not very prominent as issues in the human security movement?”