James Madison University

JMU Scholarly Commons

5-6-2021

The rhetorical significance of women deminers and female participation in post-conflict operations

Brenna N. Matlock

The Rhetorical Significance of Women Deminers and Female Participation in Post-

Conflict Operations

Brenna N. Matlock

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication

May 2021

FACULTY COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair: Dr. Cathryn Molloy

Committee Members/ Readers:

Dr. Susan Ghiaciuc

Dr. Sarah O'Connor

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

Across the globe, all female or mix-gender demining teams are working to eradicate landmines and other explosive remnants of war that threaten their communities. However, more generally, women are often absent from the various elements of security and peacekeeping that exists in post-conflict environments. The purpose of this research is to examine the rhetorical significance of women deminers and to analyze wider implications for female participation in post-conflict operations. Using a phenomenological, feminist, and transformative framework, I collected qualitative data from a range of public texts (or "artifacts") written about women deminers and from online surveys distributed to women demining teams operating abroad. By analyzing both data sets and through their comparison, several themes emerge including the women deminers' role as wives and mothers, the deminers' motivations, and information about their occupational choices. Survey respondents were aware of their depictions in popular media and agreed in most part with the way women deminers are described. In many cases, they enthusiastically support continued coverage of their work. While the artifacts portray the women deminers both accurately and positively, the narratives have remained stagnant over the past twenty years of coverage, and the continued focus on women's participation as a "novelty" implies the presence of women deminers is new and diverting from operational norms. In addition, repetitive stories should be replaced with new research and articles that better connect women deminers with the wider security and peacebuilding sectors. This research is presented as a thesis reflection and two journal articles intended for publication in both scholarly and field journals.

Thesis Reflection

Proposal: The Rhetorical Significance of Women Deminers and Female Participation in Post-Conflict Operations

Researcher: Brenna Matlock

Semester: Spring 2021

The purpose of my research project is to examine the rhetorical significance of women deminers and to analyze wider implications for female participation in post-conflict operations. The catalyst for this research came from my own experiences as a program manager in the field of conventional weapons destruction. In addition, my experience as a Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication graduate student helped me to articulate the key questions I had been forming due to my professional observations. I started to question the current state of gender equity in my field, to consider initiatives to include women that were already in place, and to judge whether or not those efforts were effective. Overall, I felt a deep absence of women's participation in the field despite mine action organizations' outwardly promoting gender equality. Upon conducting my research, I found my suspicions confirmed by the available literature and also learned that this issue is prevalent in wider international security and peacebuilding spaces. Feminist research related to peacebuilding suggests women's perspectives are too often absent from inquiry—a reality that ultimately exacerbates societal inequalities and limits the creation of new knowledge.

Using a phenomenological and transformative framework and relying on theories that grow out of writing, rhetoric and technical communication, I collected qualitative data from a range of texts written about women deminers and from online surveys distributed to female demining teams. I present the results of this collective study as two

articles for dissemination through scholarly and trade journals to maximize my reach to appropriate audiences. I selected the following: the Organization for Research on Women and Communication's journal, titled *Women's Studies in Communication* (*WSIC*) (Article I) and the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery's *Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction* (Article II). I have written the articles using each of the journals' guidelines and requirements to submit for publication, and I intend to submit both following my defense meeting.

Preparing this thesis during the COVID-19 pandemic was a unique and difficult challenge that forced me to rethink and restructure the original design of my study. For example, getting access to female deminers due to geographic and language barriers was a significant challenge for me. The conditions of COVID-19, of course, exacerbated this problem. Instead of conducting in-person interviews as I originally proposed, I distributed online surveys to humanitarian mine action organizations asking for the participation of their women deminers. While it started as a frustrating and discouraging process, I believe the new design ultimately improved the quality of my data overall. For example, instead of a handful of in-person interviews, I received a robust amount of information from a total of forty-one different women deminers from at least three different country's programs through the distribution of my online surveys.

The work of my thesis is a foundation for future exploration of this topic in both my academic and professional pursuits. It is my hope that women deminers and others involved in conventional weapons destruction of different identities underrepresented in the security and peacebuilding sector can make greater connections, take on increasingly complex work, and have a say in the work we do in the future. Deeper connection

between women in the wider sector is a bridge we as a community need to build. Most concretely, my next steps are to submit my thesis which is already in article format to journals that will expose these ideas to appropriate audiences. In addition, I hope to participate in the Women in International Security's 2021 Next Generation Gender, Peace and Security (GPS) Symposium where I can continue to share my work with a variety of stakeholders and put a spotlight on the findings of my research to further these conversations. As a feminist researcher, I believe it is an important aspect of my research to actively pursue transformative mechanisms in which to apply what I have learned preparing this thesis.

Article I

"Brave Soldiers, Peacetime Heroes": Examining Women Deminers and the Media to

Improve Gender Equity Outcomes in Security and Peacebuilding

Abstract:

Women deminers have been removing landmines and other post-war

contaminants from the ground for over two decades. Numerous academic, popular, and

public-facing writings have featured these professionals as their presence on the

minefield subverts traditional cultural roles and gender stereotypes. By examining

publicly accessible texts and surveying several dozen women deminers, I discuss what

the feminist and security sectors have learned about women deminers as well as about

improving gender equity outcomes in security and peacebuilding.

Keywords: post-conflict, feminism, humanitarian demining, conventional weapons

destruction, gender, security, peacebuilding

Main Text Introduction:

Across the globe, women-only or mix-gender demining teams are working to

eradicate landmines and other explosive remnants of war that threaten their communities.

According to the Gender and Mine Action Programme (GMAP), Norwegian People's

Aid (NPA) established the first all-women demining team in Kosovo in 1997. Since the

late 2000s, there has been an increase in the number of women demining teams across

geographical locations with the first demining team in the Middle East established in

2007 (GMAP). Based on anecdotal conversations I have had with representatives of

NGOs that recruit and employ deminers, women tend to complete tasks slower than their

male counterparts, have a higher turnover rate, but have higher records for safety and

accuracy. Moreover, stories of women demining teams draw a considerable amount of attention from the media—particularly as current global support for humanitarian mine action lacks interest and resources in comparison to other natural and man-made disasters.

Humanitarian landmine action (HMA) and broader conventional weapons destruction (CWD) (the latter becoming more common as the nature of modern conflict changes) operations establish necessary first and ongoing steps for peace in post-conflict societies. Common activities related to HMA/CWD include: disposal of landmine and explosive remnants of war; risk education; survivors assistance/advocacy; and weapon stockpile reduction. Over the past decade, there has been a significant push globally to increase the number of women working for HMA/CWD programs, and many gender-inclusive benchmarks have been achieved.

Throughout the sector's history, women have made several notable contributions from demining to activist initiatives despite challenges to their participation. Princess Diana, for example, is attributed with bringing worldwide attention to the landmine crisis in the late 1990s. For her activism, Judy Williams shared the Nobel Peace Prize with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines in 1997. From 2012 until recently, Agnes Marcaillou served as the director of the United Nations Mine Action Service. However, there remains a disparate gap in the number of women participating in mine action and what women's contributions, activities and jobs look like as compared to men's participation. This is not uncommon for the security/post-conflict sector. For example, women comprised less than five percent of UN peacekeepers (including police, troops, military experts and staff officers) in 2018 (SecurityWomen). This disparity may be

related to the lack of participation of women in other aspects of conflict and post-conflict environments, and through comparisons to these other issues we can learn more about the patterns prevalent in conventional weapon destruction activities.

Before looking at humanitarian mine action specifically, it is first necessary to illustrate the current post-conflict landscape and women's current involvement in these processes. The gendered experience of war and post-conflict society is well-documented. Reviewing the literature, it is clear the masculine perspective of war and post-conflict is discussed, acknowledged and preserved. However, female experiences are notably absent from the literature, except in cases of their victimhood or relationship to male combatants. The lack of women's stories or perspectives as they relate to war and reconstruction omits their involvement in important societal and political decisions. While perhaps unsurprising, the statistical findings are particularly egregious when examined in light of the size and scope of conflict experienced across the globe. Reviewing 406 stories published by *Time Magazine* citing over 1,500 people about the ongoing conflict in Iraq, only twenty-six can be identified as Iraqi women (Harp et al 210). Importantly, McDowell and colleagues highlight how this erasure of women's experience during war overflows in times of peace and reconstruction. Using war memorials and commemorations as public discourse in Ireland as an example, the authors show how the sites overwhelmingly portray the male experience and perpetuate the patriarchal view of hyper-masculine war and nationalism (335-336). Despite women's active role supporting the causes of both sides during the Troubles, the authors show how men are portrayed as heroes and women are most often rendered victims or as symbolic representations who need protection (McDowell 337).

Post-conflict recovery and female oppression, thus, are linked. That is, the level of inequality or agency experienced by women fluctuates as war and reconstruction disrupts traditional gender norms. In terms of potential benefits, post-conflict reconstruction provides an opportunity for women to reshape public discourse when peace is achieved. For example, Cruz analyzed the discourse of Liberian market women pre-and post-conflict, and found that positive societal views of their labor increased due to their works' essential role during wartime (436). Conversely, war and post-conflict environments may also negatively affect women disproportionately by exacerbating inequalities prevalent before conflict erupts (Puechguirbal).

Peacekeepers and governments prioritize the cessation of combat violence (public, male against male conflict) when making peace agreements or treaties without considering the consequences of violence perpetrated against women during the war and after combatants return to their homes. The kinds of violence that occurs most often for women (private, domestic violence) is absent from these conversations (Puechguirbal 13). The diversity of time and place of the respective studies of gender and post-conflict realities shows that these patterns do not belong to a certain culture or nation, but to the broader narratives of war, post-conflict and the roles of women. Although the differences may not be recognized or well understood, what is consistent is that men and women experience post-conflict environments differently. As well, international organization rhetoric may exacerbate the negative consequences of neglecting gender considerations. Similar to the discourse described previously, for example, international agency reports tend to combine women and children as a group, furthering the view that women lack agency and need protection (Puechguirbal 9-10).

Women's participation in post-conflict or security processes as an occupation adds another layer of complexity to the rhetorical significance of their positions. In many cases, female deminers live in countries with more conservative or traditional gender norms than in Western cultures. While, globally, women are joining the workforce and entering public spheres, there still exists the persistent view of the ideal employee as masculine, and specific professions are designated as appropriate for men and women. For instance, working women in various cultures have expressed concern for the negative societal view of women participating in "dirty," laborious/physical or dangerous jobs (D'Enbeau et al 284, Puechguirbal 421). Demining is all of these things; as the nature of conflicts change, landmines become less common than other, more volatile types of explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and such work is equally labor-intensive and dangerous.

Despite the interest in women demining teams, moreover, there is a missing link between these initiatives to make women's roles transparent and broader pushes for women's participation in security and peacebuilding across the board. There is value in understanding how women enter and contribute to a dangerous and physically-demanding occupation, literally building peace and security from the ground up. In this essay, I examine what we know about women deminers to further these discussions around female participation in security and post-conflict issues through publicly accessible texts or "artifacts." In addition, I compare direct surveys I conducted with women deminers to examine the accuracy or inaccuracy of popular narratives of women deminers and to identify any meaningful gaps in what the women express and what is ultimately reported.

Materials and Methods:

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on the following three concepts: phenomenology, feminism, and a transformative worldview. Likewise, I glean rhetorical-framed insights into women deminers' experiences in this unique space of post-conflict and peacebuilding from the two unique data sets—a corpus of public-facing and academic texts related to women deminers and surveys I conducted with women deminers from multiple humanitarian demining operations abroad. The design of both the collection strategies and measuring instruments were intended to allow for emergent themes and discoveries from the data. In addition, the method for collecting data from women deminers first-hand was influenced by the complexity of reaching this population for study. Many deminers are from rural populations and work in often extremely remote areas for days and weeks at a time. Thus, challenges included the lack of internet or connectivity, translation requirements, and the limited availability of participants.

Text Artifacts

The first data set consisting of texts created about women demining teams demonstrates the current popular view of deminers within their career field and the media. This popular context is important since post-conflict and peacebuilding operations are political. They operate within existing power structures and in the processes of societal shifts and changes. I selected fifty-two texts or "artifacts" for the purposes of this study.[1] All artifacts are text-based, English-language and easily

---

[1]To simplify how I refer to the body of content I compiled which included different kinds of texts/media, I refer to the items as "artifacts." I use the Collins dictionary definition of an artifact which is: "an ornament, tool, or other object that is made by a human being, especially one that is historically or culturally interesting; an item, thing, article or object."

accessible to anyone within or outside of the conventional weapons destruction field (in the case of deminers, accessibility may be based on their geographical location or access to different communication technologies).

Artifacts fall into one of the following categories: a journal article, news article, or an organization's public relations piece. The dates of publication for the artifacts spanned from the year 2000 to early 2021. Dividing the artifacts by region (Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, Southeast Asia, Middle East, Africa and South/Central Asia), deminers from different parts of the world were represented nearly equally while deminers in Africa were featured only slightly more.[2] Almost all artifacts had a geographical setting used to anchor comments on the experience of a deminer or deminers in a certain region or country. Out of the fifty-two artifacts, six had a global or overarching focus on the women's demining community.

---

[2]Note: South America is not listed. There were few articles related to women deminers in South/Central America where demining programs are less common. Articles did spotlight women deminers in Colombia, but those programs are very recently established compared to other regions of the world. I expect the number of stories in this region to increase as demining efforts continue to evolve.

Figure I - Geographic Regions Represented (Artifacts)
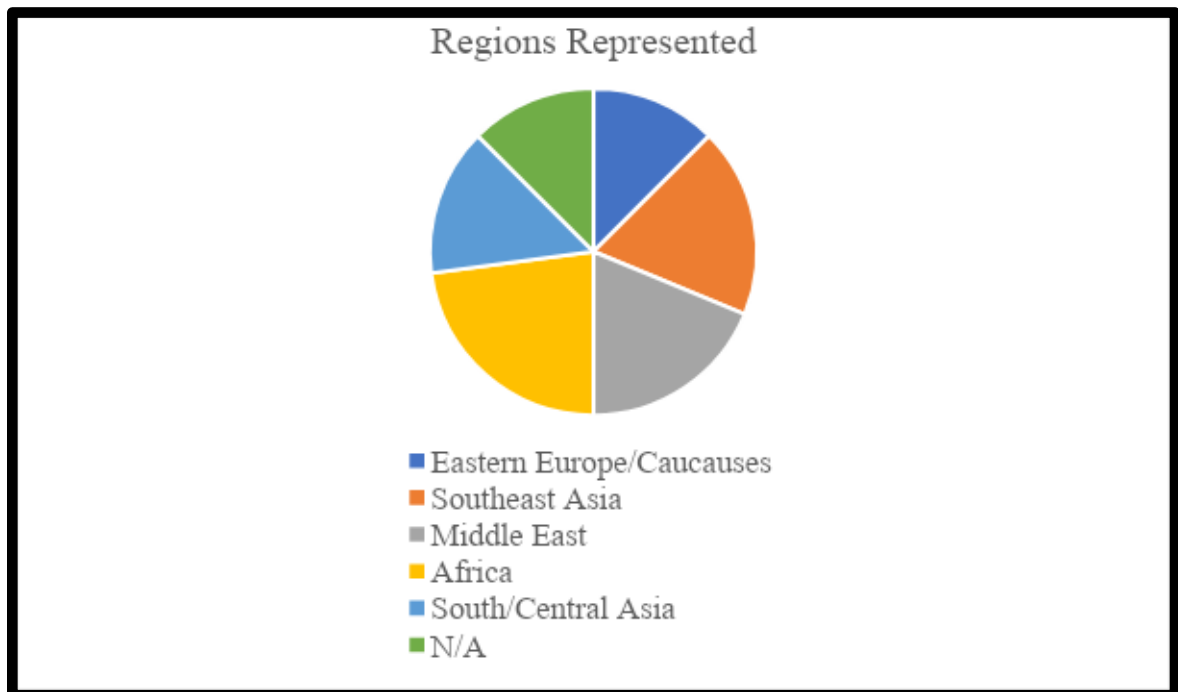
The review of the artifacts involved identifying emergent themes that I then coded and developed definitions for each. Table I illustrates the coding schemes used to analyze the corpus of documents. The second column provides a definition for each code term. I used this coding scheme as a baseline to understand the qualitative findings of the artifacts and then coded the survey responses in order to compare the two datasets.

Table I - Artifact and Survey Coding Scheme

Code	Definition
Descriptors (Character, Ability, Personality)	A word that describes a quality, personality trait, or characteristic of a woman deminer
Descriptors II (Physical Appearance)	A word or statement that describes a woman deminer's physical appearance
Motherhood/Marriage	A statement that relates to the woman deminer's status as a mother or wife
Assessments	A statement that assesses the women deminers' quality of work or contributions to the demining profession
Implications	A statement that discusses the implications of women deminers outside of their contributions to the demining profession
Motive	A statement that illustrates or discuss the motivations of women deminers
Occupational Choice	A statement that discusses the occupational choice of women deminers and/or the occupation's relationship to family or cultural norms

Survey

The second data set comes from online surveys I arranged to be distributed to

women deminers of demining teams in various countries through requests to

representatives of humanitarian demining organizations, such as project managers or

country program coordinators. I designed and administered an online survey with

versions in English, Spanish and Arabic utilizing QuestionPro software. All surveys

required translation from the original language response to English; this was done by

translators with connections to either James Madison University or local demining

programs that had read and signed nondisclosure agreements. Survey distribution

followed IRB-approved protocols to protect the anonymity of survey respondents. The

brief survey consisted of eight questions focused on understanding the deminers' views

of their work, their role in peacebuilding and security, and their knowledge of and/or

opinion on media depicting women deminers. Ultimately, the global survey received 41 unique responses from at least three different regions, including Southeast Asia, Central/South Asia, and the Middle East.

Figure II - Deminer Survey Questions (English)

1. Why did you become a deminer?

2. What do you think of your role as a deminer?

3. Do you believe your job as a deminer contributes to peacebuilding or security efforts? Why or why not?

4. How would you describe your work, and what do you wish others would know about being a deminer?

5. How would others outside your profession describe your work?

6. Are you aware female deminers are described in the media (for example, in the news, public relations pieces, documentaries, etc.)?

7. If yes, how are female deminers or their work described in the media?

8. Do you agree with the views or perceptions of female deminers and their role in the media (for example, in the news, public relations pieces, documentaries, etc.)? Please explain your answer.

Interestingly, while many of the text artifacts contain direct quotes from women deminers, they are still ultimately shaped by the wider narrative of the document and chosen at the writer or journalist's discretion. It is important to compare the deminer's responses to the themes and trends appearing from the popular and accessible narratives found in the artifacts. In this way, the deminer's responses can either reinforce, contradict or fill-in gaps of information not provided in the current literature. The study design considers a transformative approach, allowing the studied population to voice their opinions on the subject and participate in the creation of new knowledge on the subject of gender, humanitarian mine action, and the greater security/peacekeeping field.

Due to the feminist approach of the study, I want to say more about my positionality as the researcher before diving into data results. I have worked for organizations related to humanitarian mine action since 2013. With about eight years in this career field, I have the knowledge and insights to study the questions related to this project with authority. Likewise, as a graduate student in writing, rhetoric and technical communication, I bring specific interdisciplinary lenses to my approach to this topic. However, my perspective is limited to the realm of my experiences, and being a woman who has visited contaminated areas is not the same experience as the women clearing the same areas of dangerous weapons—particularly as they are members of local communities. I understand my findings from a Western, feminist and university academic perspective. My view of the situation will not match the views of the women I study, though we may share some perspectives. While acknowledging this difference, my intention is to bring the voices and experiences of women deminers into the conversation in a meaningful way, especially the women with limited access to the wider sector. My complex positionality required me to be reflective throughout the project in order to confront my own assumptions and biases. This included engaged research to better understand biases related to writing about individuals of different identities whether that difference was gender, disability, LGBTQIA+, or racially/ethnically based.

Results:

To organize the data, the result section moves from specific word choices all the way to broader themes found from both the artifacts and surveys, as well their comparison. It is my intention to provide the results in different segments (some connected and some completely independent from one another) to best share as much of the data as possible considering this population is difficult to access for the reasons

mentioned previously. I view this as foundational research to make connections with future feminist scholarship and making connections among other occupations and roles related to security and peacebuilding. Eighty-one percent of survey respondents responded "yes" to the question, "Are you aware female deminers are described in the media (for example, in the news, public relations pieces, documentaries, etc.)?" As a result, most deminers contacted have access to and are aware of the popular narratives written and shared about women in their profession. This way, I could make direct connections not only with how deminers describe themselves and are described, but get first-hand feedback from the subjects themselves.

    I.   Descriptors

The fifty-two artifacts contained twenty-eight different descriptors, or a word that describes a quality, personality trait, or characteristic of a woman deminer. The most common descriptor was the word, "brave" (or some similar variation as "courageous," "hero," and "fearless"). Attributes such as "committed," "motivated," and "methodical" were the next most common descriptors. In single instances the following descriptors were used for a woman deminer or women deminers in general: patient, beautiful, tenacious, well-trained, incredible, inspiring, driven, spontaneous, shy, and team player. In addition to being called women/female deminers, the women were referred to as ladies or girls.

Figure III - Word Cloud for Descriptors (Character, Ability, Personality)

In the survey responses, the deminers used approximately twenty-eight different descriptors to describe themselves. The most common descriptor word women used for themselves was "proud." Other common descriptors that were used included: happy, soldiers, brave, professional, and heroes. In single instances, descriptors included tired, united, strong, sensitive, protector, defender and delicate. However, when looking at specific word choice, one should be reminded that all surveys are translated, and therefore, it is somewhat up to the translator's discretion. However, even with this caveat, many words or similes do seem to be common across the surveys. There were instances where the women used these descriptors for themselves as well as their team or women deminers as a group. The deminers accurately used a number of the same descriptors found in the popular narratives when expressing what they knew of women deminers in the media.

Examples (Survey Responses)

"I consider myself a helpful person in this field."

"We are brave soldiers, peacetime heroes."

"Delicate, sensitive, happy, tired, and I am strong, full of joy, to save lives."

"We feel happy and proud when being a deminer and I wish everyone will know that this is a very meaningful job."

Several descriptors belong in a separate category (descriptors II, or a word or statement that describes a woman deminer's physical appearance). Instances of physical appearance in the media most commonly described uniforms (five instances). The second most common physical descriptions featured the women's hair and smiles (three instances each). In one instance, the word "petite" was used, and another example remarked on the deminers' tan skin.

Examples (Artifacts)

"She has long, dark hair and a shy smile, and had been working since dawn in temperatures that reached 37C in the afternoon."

"No protection is worn for hands or feet, and the majority of women wear nothing more than simple gardening gloves and sneakers in addition to their standard-issue demining jumpsuits."

"Temperatures that can reach 42 degrees Celsius (108 Fahrenheit) means that skins tan no matter how much sunscreen they use."

Notably, women did not use descriptors related to physical appearance to describe themselves from their perspective in the surveys. However, the deminers did describe their physical appearance when speaking from the perspective of the media. When asked question 7, "If yes, how are female deminers and their work described in the media?," several women responded with descriptions of deminers as beautiful and young. A repeated comparison was the depiction of the women deminers as flowers.

Examples (Survey Responses)

"In the media, female deminers are depicted as silent warriors, as beauties defusing bombs and landmines in peacetime."

"The media describes us as peacetime warriors, or steel flowers."

"In the media, the female deminers are described as silent warriors and beautiful young girls clearing bombs and ammunition in the middle of peacetime."

II.   Recurring Themes

      a.   Motherhood and Marriage

In nearly half of all the artifacts, an emphasis on the deminers role as a mother and/or wife could be found. A total of 35 references to motherhood or being a wife were identified in the artifacts. Most references are stated in passing within the article with examples such as, "many of them mothers," and "mother of two small children." In other cases, women deminers are quoted in the artifacts self-identifying as mothers. For example, in one instance an interviewed deminer states, "I am a single mother of two children and had no other choice at the time. Now, after my experience with demining, I am glad that I became a deminer." However, in many cases when a deeper dive into the women's family dynamic as deminers is mentioned, marriage and motherhood are related to their motivation to be deminers:

"Leaving a young child to go to work isn't easy. But for 29 year-old mother Rita Kassova Kachiponde Vambi, being away from her son for three weeks at a time increases his chances of growing up free from the threat of landmines."

In addition, the deminer's status as wife was mentioned several times. Women are referred to as widows, wives, or as breadwinners for their family unit. In addition, women may be deminers due to their husband's association with landmines or conflict. For example, their husband may have been a victim of a landmine accident or he may already be a deminer himself. In the cases mentioned above, women's relationship to their children or husband is a distinguishing feature of note in these artifacts.

However, there were instances where the deminers' relationships to motherhood or marriage were discussed as a necessary consideration for how they can thrive as deminers and continue in their profession. One example is an article that featured pregnancy as a challenge for sustaining demining teams, and identified strategies and solutions for supporting women, cultural considerations, and maternity leave. This journal article is an example of a practical use for examining the role of motherhood and marriage in relationship to the women's demining profession. The recurring theme of motherhood does center the conversation around how mothers and grandmothers are deminers rather than discussing women in general as deminers.

When reviewing the survey responses, themes of motherhood and marriage do emerge in ways consistent with the findings in the artifacts. The topics of motherhood and marriage are brought up organically when many women deminer's discuss their profession. Most commonly motherhood and marriage are brought up in relation to the reasons why these women are deminers, and their motivations for continuing to do their work. In several instances, many of the women emphasize their ability to conduct their work and fulfill their professional roles while also meeting the social expectations of being a good mother and wife.

b. Motivations

Statements in the artifacts referring to the women's motivations were the second most common references identified. There were sixty-two references related to motivations within the fifty-two documents. All motivation references fit into one of the following three categories: economic motivations, personal motivations, and humanitarian motivations. While the deminers came from very different regions and

countries of the world, these motivations were found across the board without any distinct motivations found outside of these three categories.

Economic Motivations

One artifact, a study, argues that women most often become deminers due to financial motivations. In countries significantly impacted from recent conflict or who have suffered economic downturns, the salaries of the demining work are an attractive motivation for women to be deminers. As noted above, women in articles are often cited as the breadwinners of their family. Motivations are tied to the women's commitment to supporting their families, whether it is their immediate family unit, or commitments to their parents and other relatives. Economic motivations are common initiating factors for why women become deminers, but the other motivations identified in the study are developed over time.

Examples (Artifacts)

"The job is no longer just a way of helping her family. When her parents heard of the accidents they wanted her to stop work. "I refused. I know just how important this work is."

When the survey respondents were asked why they were female deminers, the first reason was overwhelmingly for financial reasons. In the surveys, an economic reason is listed as the very first reason why many became deminers, but the motivations can be multi-faceted. Many of the women explained in the surveys that they were actually unemployed before they had the opportunity to apply as a deminer. They also mentioned that humanitarian demining organizations offered other benefits in addition to salary, such as insurance and pensions. Compared to the artifact responses, financial

motivation was more often cited and emphasized in the deminer survey responses.

Examples (Survey Responses)

"In the first degree, I am the only source of income for my children."

"First, I need a job to support myself and family. Secondly, I personally feel that my homeland where I and my relatives are living has many dangers."

"While being unemployed and the first thing that made me become a deminer was to address my own employment needs."

"Everyone knows that the economic situation is deteriorating, and in sometimes the circumstances govern you by working the work difficult and most dangerous to your life..."

Personal Motivations

Personal motivation can also be found in the artifacts. The documents describe women who are fulfilled because of the success of their careers and benefiting from their improved financial status. Many women talked about ways in which the job is rewarding. In one instance, a deminer talked about the benefit of being able to work with and handle demining dogs. In addition, the artifacts explained the deminer occupation as a potential stepping stone to getting another career or resources to attend a university. The artifacts also focus on how these women, their families, and communities have been impacted personally by the presence of conflict and the resulting contamination. The women have a personal stake in the clearance of these weapons, in other words, because they are often from the community that is impacted.

Examples (Artifacts)

"The importance of this work is that I don't want my family to have this

experience of pain that I have had to live," she said.

"It might seem a little selfish, but for now, my career comes first and I aim high. I must say I enjoy demining. I like doing something good, something useful for other people. It makes me happy and satisfied."

Survey responses did mention the personal impacts of having conventional weapons in their communities, but personal motivations related to their own experiences with war and conflict were less common than either the economic or humanitarian motivations. The respondents did not mention the demining occupation or wanting to join the broader security and peacebuilding sector as a particular motivation. Both artifacts and the survey responses suggest that the women are not actively trying to insert themselves into the security and peacebuilding arena. For example, they are interested in the activity of demining itself, but not necessarily the other aspects (policy, peace agreements, programming, etc.) in which they could potentially be involved.

Example (Survey Responses)

"At first, I was studying in the university and I wanted to save up for university fees and improve my social and economic situation."

"When in 2013-2014 the deminers were passing by our village with their cars and special clothes, I had a great interest in my heart and told myself I want to be a deminer like them."

"I became a deminer because I witnessed many traumatic losses and pains caused by landmines and ERW to the people in my homeland."

Humanitarian Motivations

In the artifacts, the most common motivation found for women deminers were the

altruistic/humanitarian aspects of their jobs. They hope that their role as women deminers inspires other women to participate in the clearance of weapons. In the artifacts, humanitarian roles are a source of pride. In the surveys, the second most common reason that women felt the motivation to be deminers was to protect their homeland and for humanitarian purposes. While the initial motivation for the women was financial, the women understand the impact that they are making on their local communities and continue in this occupation due to the humanitarian role that they play. While all three motivations are found in both datasets, it is interesting to note the artifacts' emphasis on the humanitarian reasons compared to the survey respondents' emphasis on financial motivations.

<div align="center">Examples (Survey Responses)</div>

"It's a humanitarian job that outweighs the women over the male society."

"I became a deminer to serve my country and nation."

"Because this position helps protect survivors from getting hurt or dying."

"As a local living in the homeland, witnessing a lot of pains happening in peacetime, since I have been cherished to become a deminer in order to contribute my small part in overcoming the consequences of war, bringing a peaceful and happy life for everyone."

<div align="center">Examples (Artifacts)</div>

"I promised myself that if I had the chance I would work as a deminer to clear mines from the country, because I want to help villagers work in the fields without being scared or facing danger," she said

"All Yazidis want to do something to make Sinjar as it was before the war," Khider says. "So when I heard about an organisation that removes war remnants and frees the land from the danger of death, I felt eager to work with them."

"If I have no job in the future," she says with a smile, "I'd be happy, because that means everyone will be safe."

c. Assessment

The artifacts contained thirty-five assessment references, or statements that assess the women deminers' quality of work or contribution to the demining profession. These assessments reflect the anecdotal reflections I have heard in the humanitarian demining community. Assessments of women's demining efforts in the artifacts is overwhelmingly positive. In addition, artifacts were able to cite positive benefits specifically attributed to women or mixed teams working to clear land in local communities. Women deminers have greater access to other women and children in communities, and the presence of women deminers assists recruitment of new women into the profession. An artifact also describes instances where the women's participation in demining is questioned, and how they have to respond to questions of the women's deminers capabilities. One article stated that communities were less trusting of land cleared by women. Another discussed the death of a female deminer due to an accident after a breach of proper protocols. The benefits and challenges surrounding women demining teams, importantly, was anecdotal without much data presented in the texts. The viewpoints expressed commonly come from supervising organizations and personal experiences of working with women deminers.

Both the artifacts and the survey responses directly compare the work of women deminers to their male counterparts. While the artifacts' comparisons may often be subtle or argue women are superior in certain aspects, the concern of this comparison is significant in the survey responses. In the survey, the women deminers were asked how they would describe their work and what they wished others would know about their profession. Mostly, the women emphasized the difficult and dangerous nature of

demining. Most importantly, they wanted to emphasize how well they are able to complete their jobs despite the fact that they are women and, in many ways, they have proven that they can complete the job just as well as men. They convey that their work is appropriate for anyone regardless of gender and that their efforts demonstrate this fact. Despite the woman's familiarity with the media and the overwhelmingly positive aspects of those assessments, women still feel that people outside their profession describe their work as men's work.

<div align="center">Examples (Survey Responses)</div>

"Describing our work: Everyday we have to use the project's equipment to detect and get rid of explosive remnants of war, directly face the inclement weather and dangers, and follow the right procedures and techniques."

"Our work is really very arduous, especially we are women."

"I have a great chance to work in a united and energetic team and everyone knows to take care of each other."

"I am a [deminer]. I wish people know that I am a hard worker and expose myself to danger every day."

"People who have profession different from ours think our work is a very dangerous, arduous and not for women like us."

    d. Implications

Several of the artifacts contained implication references, or statements that demonstrate the implications of women deminers outside of their contributions to the demining profession. Artifacts questioned what it meant that the female deminers do not have many other economic opportunities beyond landmine removal. In one article, access

to land was interpreted as a freedom of movement and liberation as well as a part of healing communities. Another article expressed the viewpoint that the opportunities and professional training of female deminers have a positive impact on traditional gender roles. The Gender and Mine Action Programme research found that female employment in mine action had a positive impact at the individual level. In addition, some argued that the establishment of the first women demining team in Kosovo opened the door for other organizations to implement their own women demining teams. The inclusion of women is expected to improve the effectiveness of mine action policies, programs and operations. Women being able to conduct mine action work is linked to efforts in gender equality. Featured women deminers are also examples for girls and other women; they provide inspiring stories of what women and girls are capable of and what they can contribute to their communities.

e.   Occupational Choices

Overwhelmingly, occupation choice references, or statements that discuss the occupational choice of women deminers and/or the occupation's relationship to family or cultural norms, were the most common throughout the artifacts. Thirty-five artifacts contained a cumulative 105 references to occupation choice. From this, it is apparent that the major focus in popular media is understanding the deminer's profession and understanding the context she completes it in. From the artifacts, gender bias is a reoccurring issue among women deminers, but it is importantly not an insurmountable one once women demining activities are occurring. The women deminers in these artifacts share the other roles they play in addition to their profession, for example, a mother, a wife, a breadwinner or a student.

Examples (Artifacts)

"I ask her if she's ever faced any resistance from men in her role as a team leader. "When we – myself and my female colleagues – first started working as deminers, it was a strange thing in the community," she says. "But they were also very open to that. I got support from my husband, from my family, my relatives and the beneficiaries of the land we cleared."

"Ghandour says that in every training session she runs, someone will always ask: 'Is it a woman's job?' and a site supervisor will pipe up, saying the female deminers in their team are doing better than some of the males – and sometimes better than all the males."

"She recalls being told she was "too weak to dig a hole" in the early days of her

mine action career."

"In Kosovo's traditional patriarchal society, few women work outside the home

and until now, no women worked in this internationally male dominated occupation."

"I am very happy and proud with my job," she said. "People in my community

respect me. We provide safe spaces and people can live without fear once we finish our

job."

"It's hard work but I enjoy it, and as an African woman I feel empowered in such a position... Some were surprised at first to see women on the minefield, but now they treat us like equals! The team has become my family... It is very intense. I am a single mother, but through my job I can support my two children and my mother, and I can also invest in the family vegetable business... I think the best thing of all about my job is seeing the land given back to the people who live there, watching their children playing safely and see how happy people are…"

"So Tonh, Supervisor of Mine Action Team 3 in Cambodia, says, 'I used to be the supervisor of a mixed team, and although men may appear stronger than women, in reality the female team can achieve similar productivity.'"

"Although the path was challenging, she now receives respect from local community members and disproved their beliefs about women by working in a traditionally male-dominated field. For her, the next step in the deminer profession is to become a team leader."

Survey respondents' answers demonstrated a clear distinction between the way

the media portrayed female deminers compared to what seemed to be the viewpoint of people in their communities or outside of their profession expressed. Overall, the popular narratives in the media are positive, supporting the idea that women can be deminers. In more localized conversations, it seems that the women are commonly critiqued for the dangerous work that they do, and that they need to explain how they can be involved in such a profession. People are surprised that the women are deminers. Friends and family are particularly concerned with the dangerous nature of the profession. These women encounter gender bias when people state to them that their profession is only appropriate for men. While the media stories are positive, the women feel that the authors often compare them to men, say they are like men, or even refer to them as "tomboys."

For those deminers who were familiar with media depictions, a majority (22 responses) agreed with what they had seen, read or heard. The use of the descriptor "brave" (the most commonly used in the artifact data set) and the overlapping themes in both datasets demonstrate that a majority of female deminers have access to these media narratives. The surveys accurately portray and reinforce the narratives in the artifact dataset. Or in other words, humanitarian organizations and the media are accurately reflecting (for the most part) the information female deminers have shared with them. From what can be gleaned from the artifacts alone, the information is overall accurate and widely common among deminers in different regions. While the other responses were not applicable or did not answer "disagree," two survey respondents did disagree or partially disagreed with how they had seen women deminers depicted.

Examples

"The media always emphasizes the role of women in demining. Gender equity has been raised and it means that senior management positions in demining in [country

redacted] are predominantly female. They are always brave and enthusiastic and able all, they have well fulfilled their roles as wives and mothers."

"I agree with the views and perceptions in the media because for women,

demining is very hard, dangerous, as much as for men."

"I often see posts about our activities on Facebook and it makes me to be proud of my

job."

"I agree with the basic points of the articles in the media. However, in fact there are articles stating the hardships and dangers, there also articles from another perspective saying that this is an easy work. Because the press is multidimensional, each reporter will reflect from a different perspective, I always agree with the views that are true, to the reality that I and my colleagues are going through and disagree with the deviant views."

"I do not agree with the opinion, because women are half of society, just as they

work, learn and sacrifice, and can overcome all difficulties."

Discussion:

As illustrated by the results of this study, there are several recurring themes

existing at different levels of the content that can be understood from both datasets and

through their comparison. As noted above, a number of the articles used in the sample are

public relation materials for humanitarian mine action organizations, in addition to

journal and news articles. Comparing the narratives and information provided in the

artifacts, it is clear that the author or authors have been able to capture women deminers'

stories both accurately and with a sense of global representation. By this, I mean that the

artifacts are nearly equal in the different regions these women work in or are from, and

the survey response dataset reflected the same information conveyed in the popular

narratives. Despite some of the artifacts containing gendered language, the articles about

humanitarian demining can be used as a positive stepping stone when writing about

women in the space of security and peacebuilding. Many of these written texts use first

person/interview-style content, which seems related to why the survey responses match so directly with the views portrayed in the artifacts.

In addition, a majority of the women surveyed conveyed their agreement with how the media portrays them and women deminers in general. Compared to personal or localized conversations, the women agreed that the media's portrayal was one of much more acceptance, excitement, and positivity. This is prevalent even in instances when the women did not agree or critiqued media portrayals. For example, one survey respondent agreed that while many news articles were accurate, she was disappointed to read an author had called demining an "easy task" in one piece of media she had come across. In fact, many women expressed that they wanted to see female deminers depicted in the media more often and to be recognized for their work. Humanitarian mine organizations and other recruiters for the security and peacebuilding field can learn a lot about these depictions, including the positive feelings women have for these accurate portrayals and proper use of media.

Despite the successes described above, it is also necessary to look more critically at this content, the way the content has been used, and the gaps between written texts and women's experiences, which could partially explain why women deminers are not discussed more in the greater field of security and peacebuilding. That is, this study offers insight into ways to better understand why women deminers are not more often used as examples or studied within the feminist, gender equality, and security research and to make moves to push for such inclusion. Geographical and language barriers do remain a challenge to such goals, and, as a researcher, I acknowledge that this population requires a certain amount of resources in order to reach them. However, we do have the

opportunity to learn from women with diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds that can potentially affect future humanitarian and security operations. It is my hope that mechanisms continue to be in place for these women to share their valuable perspectives and insights as I still consider them to be an underutilized resource.

The depictions of women in the artifacts and the survey responses were both useful in understanding the women's motivations and occupational choices. However, a look at articles ranging from the early 2000s to the present, the narrative has not shifted in any significant way. The tone of the artifacts continues to be one of surprise and awe when learning about women deminers. The popular narrative remains at an introductory level: informing us about these women, and it seems like authors may be asking new or well-established women demining teams the same questions over and over. Reading over 50 documents about women deminers, I could easily group my findings into the categories outlined in the results section of this essay. There is no need for this same kind of article in the future, and authors need to consider what other kinds of questions need to be asked and think more critically about what female deminers can teach the community and beyond.

I first recognized what is now almost two decades of redundancy by the titles of many of the news articles. Over and over, I continue to find articles with the title "Meet the women" followed by some version of clearing land mines or helping their communities. The problem of seeing these articles on their own without the greater context is that it reinforces this aspect of newness and novelty. In actuality, women have been pulling mines out of the ground for almost two decades. In a sense, readers have already "met" the women and we have been introduced to the women. As the wider

security community, we should try to understand what has changed and what we have learned and to share that knowledge as time goes by. This is not to say that new demining teams with women or mixed gender teams will not be new in different locations in the future, but rather the novelty is the location itself and not that women's contributions.

It is the stasis of this narrative that I believe may be the issue with why women deminers are not more connected with the security and peacebuilding sector, or, at least used as concrete examples of women doing work with intense physicality. From the surveys, women deminers focus on security and peacebuilding as it relates to their jobs in a very literal sense. Nearly all forty-one answers focus on the fact that their communities were safer and more secure because of their efforts. However, there is no mention during the open-ended questions of how their role may be more widely influential in the field of security and peacebuilding. As both feminist scholars and as practitioners of humanitarian mine action, we have not adequately studied how exactly women conducting this work could possibly affect broader policy and programs. As we have learned, the motivations for these women's contributions are relative to their economic, personal, and humanitarian motivations. However, no motivation was linked to pursuing a career in the wider security or peacebuilding sector. There is also a lack of research to understand what women do once demining operations are complete. While it may take some time, demining efforts are no longer needed once the land is cleared. Where does this knowledge and experience go when these women are no longer needed to remove landmines in their local communities? Where can this knowledge potentially go if, during their time as deminers, women are more connected to broader elements of security and peacebuilding?

Lastly, I wanted to note the lack of the term "feminism" in the artifacts. Several of the survey responses included the translated term, "gender equity" so it is difficult to say whether the respondents would have used the term "feminism" explicitly. Terms along these lines are found in the artifacts as well. Throughout the artifacts, the term feminism was only found once: "The 68 women were not making an overt feminist statement by the occupation they had chosen. They were simply going to work." This article statement should be understood in the context of its time and it was written in the year 2000. The intention may have been to distance the women's presence in the minefield from a political issue. The omission of the word may be strategic based on how it will be interpreted locally; as we have seen in both the survey responses and the artifacts, women deminers face scrutiny and are largely impacted by the community views surrounding them. Is it too much to connect and broadcast the word feminism with women deminers in the year 2021? The question is particularly important for those public pieces that are aimed for Western audiences. I wonder if this omission is unique to women deminers or if this is found in other sectors of security and peacebuilding as organizations and individuals work to include women.

I end this study by giving the voices of my survey respondents the final say. One such survey response, I believe. sums up many of the aspects we currently understand about women deminers. What we have learned can now springboard us into the future with knowledge for recruiting and involving women's participation in the security and peacebuilding sector. My goal is that we do not end with what we know now, and that in the next two decades we will learn far more about women deminers. By doing so, we may better understand how women affect peace and conflict more concretely.

"For me this job is pride in my practical and social life. When the alarm sounds my countrymen, there be people who seek to protect them and warn them to limit the danger that any person can be exposed to even if it is without religion or sect. And this humanitarian act does not differentiate between two different sects or two different religions, but rather it is an act that comes from the heart of a [deminer]. As for the joy and great happiness that comes when you enter a field full of [landmines] and we work to remove it with hard work and determination until we finish."

Acknowledgments:

References:

Cruz, Joelle (2015) "Dirty Work at the Intersections of Gender, Class, and Nation: Liberian Market Women in Post-Conflict Times, Women's Studies in Communication," 38:4, 421–439.

D'Enbeau, Suzy, Villamil, Astrid; and Helens-Hart, Rose (2015) "Transcending Work–Life Tensions: A Transnational Feminist Analysis of Work and Gender in the Middle East, North Africa, and India," Women's Studies in Communication, 38:3, 273-294.

Harp, Dustin; Loke, Jaime; and Bachmann, Ingrid (2011) "More of the Same Old Story? Women, War, and News in Time Magazine," Women's Studies in Communication, 34:2, 202-217.

McDowell, Sara (2008) "Commemorating dead 'men': gendering the past and present in post-conflict Northern Ireland," Gender, Place & Culture, 15:4, 335-354.

"Overview." Gender and Mine Action Programme, www.gmap.ch/overview/. Accessed 27 January 2020.

Puechguirbal, Nadine (2012) "The Cost of Ignoring Gender in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations: A Feminist Perspective," Amsterdam Law Forum, 4:1, 4-19.

"Statistics." SecurityWomen, www.securitywomen.org/resources/statistics. Accessed 27 January 2020.

Article II

Moving the Story Forward: Utilizing Deminer Narratives to Increase Women's

Empowerment in Mine Action and Beyond

Main Text Introduction:

The humanitarian mine action sector, as a part of the wider security and peacebuilding field, has made significant gains related to gender equity as it relates to field operations. In recent years, women deminers have received increased donor and media attention. As a result, we now have access to a wide breadth of texts, literature, documentaries, etc. about women who work to remove landmines and other explosives from the ground. The availability of this new information that is being created at a fast pace leads me to ask the following questions: Are our narratives accurate, and do women deminers agree with them? How do women deminers view the ways that they are represented in the media? What have we shared about female demining with the world? How can we use information on women deminers' experiences to make meaningful connections with the wider security and development sector?

To answer these questions, I designed a mixed-methods study to understand and evaluate popular narratives about women deminers as they emerge in publicly accessible and popular media. In addition to document collection and review from such sources, I administered a survey to women demining teams from various humanitarian operation teams to ask them about these narratives and to capture their opinion on what has been written. Findings from both datasets—a corpus of published narratives and results from this survey study—illustrate important themes about the current literature, and ultimately, provide us with important considerations for how we write about women deminers in the

future. As a result of these intentional narratives, we can potentially improve outcomes for women demining teams as well gender equality in other areas of security and peacekeeping. Specifically, I found that the texts provide insights into women deminers motivations and occupational choices, but that there is little information discussed beyond these topics. Thus, we should evolve the narratives surrounding women deminers using the techniques that have so far captured accurate portrayals if we want to advance the role of women in the wider security and development sector.

Materials and Methods:

Using a phenomenological, feminist and transformative framework and relying on theories in the field of writing, rhetoric and technical communication, I collected qualitative data from a range of texts written about women deminers and from online surveys distributed to female demining teams. I designed this approach to find emergent themes and trends related to female empowerment and oppression in post-conflict environments, particularly through a focus on the deminers' roles as active participants in the peacebuilding and reconstruction processes. Texts created about women demining teams demonstrate the current popular view of deminers within their career field and the media. Rhetorical-framed insights into women deminers' experiences in this unique space of post-conflict and peacebuilding also emerge from the collected interviews of the participants. In addition to knowing whether or not women deminers have access to the narratives written about them for public consumption, we now have more information on how that information is consumed and interpreted by the subjects themselves.

First, I collected public, easily accessible text-based content about women deminers from an array of sources, including: journal articles, news articles and public

relations pieces from humanitarian mine action organizations (such as social media and blog posts). The sample size totaled fifty-two unique documents published between 2000-2021. The goal was to locate pieces that anyone would be able to find through a simple search whether they were part of the mine action community or a member of the general public. Categorizing the documents by geographical region (Eastern Europe, Africa, South/Central Asia, South America and Southeast Asia), ensured that women deminers from each region were nearly equal in representation.[3] Using NVivo research software, I coded the documents using the scheme illustrated in the table below. By reviewing the documents, I found emergent and recurring themes that I assigned codes and crafted specific definitions. The second column defines each individual code.

Table I - Coding Scheme (Texts and Survey Responses)

Code	Definition
Descriptors (Character, Ability, Personality)	A word that describes a quality, personality trait, or characteristic of a woman deminer
Descriptors II (Physical Appearance)	A word or statement that describes a woman deminer's physical appearance
Motherhood/Marriage	A statement that relates to the woman deminer's status as a mother or wife
Assessments	A statement that assesses the women deminers' quality of work or contributions to the demining profession
Implications	A statement that discusses the implications of women deminers outside of their contributions to the demining profession
Motive	A statement that illustrates or discuss the motivations of women deminers
Occupational Choice	A statement that discusses the occupational choice of women deminers and/or the occupation's relationship to family or cultural norms

---

[3] The exception being South/Central America due to 1) the lesser number of demining operations in the region and 2) the newness of the current demining programs such as those in Colombia.

In addition to the document review and coding, I created anonymous surveys using the survey software program QuestionPro and sent them to representatives of humanitarian mine action organizations to distribute to their women demining teams. Respondents had the opportunity to complete the survey in English, Arabic, or Spanish, but, in some cases, surveys required translation to local languages. In such cases, local translators signed nondisclosure agreements and completed the translation work.[4] I received forty-one unique responses from women deminers in at least three different regions of the world, including Southeast Asia, Central/South Asia and the Middle East. In addition to extracting quantitative data, the same coding scheme in Table I was used to compare the two data sets.

Results:

These robust datasets provided a wealth of information about women deminers, their portrayals in the media, how these representations relate to women's own self-reported experiences and perceptions, and how these portrayals are perceived by the female demining community. For the purposes of this article, I will outline the major themes portrayed in the popular media and documents. After identifying themes, I will compare them to the survey responses from female deminers. By far, the most prevalent topics discussed were the motivations and occupational choices of women deminers. In addition, a majority of the news articles were introductory in nature, meaning the author focused on introducing the idea that women deminers existed. In this section, I will explain these results in-depth.

---

[4]Handling of all surveys and responses followed James Madison University Internal Review Board approved protocols to protect respondents' data and anonymity.

Motivation

After coding the documents, I found sixty-two unique references in thirty-three (or 63 percent) of the documents related to motivation. I operationalized "motivation" to mean a statement that illustrates or discusses the motivations of women to go into work as deminers. The deminer's motivations as explained by the authors of the documents fall into three categories: financial motivations, personal motivations, and humanitarian motivations. Financial motivations relate to being unemployed or needing to support themselves/dependents. Personal motivations relate to self-fulfillment, being personally affected by the presence of landmines, or using demining as a means to reach a personal goal (such as raising money for university fees). Humanitarian motivations relate to assisting others impacted by the presence of landmines and other unexploded ordnance, whether that is at the local or national level.

While all three were prevalent, humanitarian motivations were the most frequent motivation cited in the corpus of documents I examined. As consumers of this media, the motivations of female deminers based on the current body of information available would indicate that women deminers are motivated by financial, economic, and/or humanitarian reasons, and those same motivators do come through in the surveys, yet the datasets show a difference of which motivations are discussed more often. Understanding the motivations of women deminers is important in at least two respects. First, from the perspective of new articles or public relations pieces, which commonly introduce the concept of female demining teams, the authors answer a key question that their audience would ask: why would someone (and in this case, a woman, specifically) want to remove landmines or other explosives from the ground? Secondly, understanding motivations is a

key to humanitarian mine action organizations' efforts to successfully recruit and retain women employees.

The authors of the various texts that make up my corpus make it clear that women deminers are motivated to pursue the work they do based on personal and altruistic reasons. Likewise, survey respondents explained that they are drawn to their work for similar reasons and for the same type of motivations (humanitarian, personal, and financial). From this correlation, it seems that popular portrayals of women deminers as it relates to their motivations have been accurate. However, there was one major difference between the datasets. While the most common motivations cited in the documents were humanitarian-related, the survey responses overwhelmingly described financial motivations. This difference is significant when it comes to understanding this population, their unique needs, and how we might draw them into other aspects of our collective work.

Occupational Choice

In the documents, I identified 105 unique references in thirty-five (67 percent) different texts related to occupational choice. As defined in Table I, the code for occupational choice identifies a statement that discusses the occupational choice of women deminers and/or the occupation's relationship to family or cultural norms. Most references constitute the latter definition. The current literature illustrates the cultural and familial norms women face or overcome in order to enter and maintain their positions as deminers. Again, understanding this aspect of their role assists both the general public and the humanitarian mine action community understand gendered aspects of this work. However, these narratives remained surface level, with little time exploring the process of

how gender biases or norms were subverted by these women and their hiring organizations. From the texts, we understand the women succeeded in becoming deminers despite challenges, but, importantly, not necessarily how they achieved their goals. Readers also do not learn how these women will parlay their demining experiences into future careers in the peace and security sector writ large.

Survey answers illuminated information about these issues throughout their responses to the survey. Information related to their occupation and cultural/family norms most often appeared in response to the question, "How would others outside your profession describe your work?" Describing conversations they have had with family, friends and local community, the women discussed experiences with gender-biased remarks, or initial surprise and unacceptance. While the respondents outlined their motivations, they do not discuss their career aspirations beyond demining or in the future. I noted that discussion about occupational aspirations in different security, humanitarian or peacebuilding occupations or in these career fields did not emerge organically from the survey responses, and I saw this as a necessary area of intervention. While the women felt that their direct clearance efforts contributed to security and peacebuilding, their responses did not state or imply any other ways in which their occupation related to these sectors.

Lastly, quantitative findings outlined in Table II demonstrates the survey respondents current view of popular narratives about women deminers. Eighty percent of survey respondents were aware of depictions of women deminers in the media. Of that group, a large majority (82 percent) agreed with the views or perceptions of women deminers that they had seen, heard or read. Interestingly, a majority of women deminers

wanted to see more representation in the media because it made them feel proud and

recognized for their work; respondents felt that the media depictions demonstrated to

others that women can be successful deminers. In sum, the feelings towards these texts

were overwhelmingly positive, and that they were portrayed accurately. This is

significant as we compare these feelings to the personal conversations the women

experience in their local communities where the opinions of others towards their career

choices may be less accepting or positive.

Table II - Survey Qualitative Data

Survey Question	Yes/Agree	No/Disagree
Are you aware female deminers are described in the media (for example, in the news, public relations pieces, documentaries, etc.)?	81%	19%
Do you agree with the views or perceptions of female deminers and their role in the media (for example, in the news, public relations pieces, documentaries, etc.)? Please explain your answer.	82%*	2%*

*Percentages total 84% of responses to this question; five answers did not agree or disagree/were not applicable.

Sample Deminer Responses (Spring 2021 Survey)

"I agree, for me as an individual in the group of female deminers, always make an effort and try to fulfill the assigned tasks. The media has helped bring to light the efforts what we are making to share difficulties with society. When I watch those shows, I feel so proud and confident that I can do it."

"Yes, I agree, I would like the world to see that women are an effective element

and can be in all positions and missions."

"I do not agree with the opinion, because women are half of society, just as they

work, learn and sacrifice, and can overcome all difficulties."

Discussion:

As we have seen, the popular narratives about women deminers (many perpetuated from and within the humanitarian mine action community) appear to be accurate in many respects, and have a positive effect on women demining teams. As other sectors of security and peacebuilding struggle with gender-related issues and underrepresentation, narratives about women deminers may be useful resources. Knowing this, we may be tempted to ask ourselves, "If it's not broke, why fix it?" However, just as we continue to improve clearance and survey techniques, we must continue to improve gender outcomes in the humanitarian mine action community.

While these narratives are both accurate and informative, they remain focused on the introductory, surface-level elements of the women's stories. The documents reviewed spanned from 2000 to 2021, and not much of the narrative changed in that time. Authors continue to introduce and re-introduce the fact that women deminers exist and are contributing to security and peacebuilding efforts. Since Norwegian People's Aid established the first all-female demining team in Kosovo, women have been officially clearing mines for over two decades. The issue with reusing this narrative is that it perpetuates the belief that women's contributions are novel (or, at worst, an exception to "normal" operations). I argue there is much more that we can learn and share about gender, humanitarianism and peacebuilding. If women deminers were recognized for the longstanding roles they've played in security and peacebuilding, perhaps doors would open for further and deeper involvement. For this reason, we as a community should reconsider what questions we ask women deminers related to their profession and consider new ways to frame their existence to those outside our fields in order to build

and share new knowledge on the rich and decades-long contributions these women have made.

Thus, I would argue that those interested in featuring the work of women deminers in a range of public-facing documents should consider ways to highlight the longevity of these contributions and to avoid the novelty trope. Such intentional shifts to the popular narrative could enhance gender equity outcomes in the mine action sector as well as in the peace and security sector more broadly. As well, survey results demonstrate that women deminers are both contributors to and consumers of these popular narratives. Women deminers have a unique perspective and an acquired skill set that can potentially be used or shared in the broader security and peace sectors. The current literature does not connect women deminers with the extended professional community. Based on the largely financial motivations for women to become deminers in the first place, they may not have previously considered being a part of the broader security community and their future potential in different roles. Still, clearance operations are meant to be finite, and there is little data about what women do next after they are no longer deminers. One study suggests that women that do not reach the supervisory level often return the social and economic role they had before they became deminers (Bini et al). This is a significant potential loss for the security and peacebuilding sector. Just as humanitarian mine action clears safe paths for civilians, so must we build pathways for women's empowerment and greater involvement in post-conflict contexts.

References

Calza Bini, Arianna; Janssen, Nyske; and Jones, Abigail (2014) "Effects of Mixed Teams on Land Release," The Journal of ERW and Mine Action, 18:1, Article 4.

List of References/Bibliography

Calza Bini, Arianna; Janssen, Nyske; and Jones, Abigail (2014) "Effects of Mixed Teams
on Land Release," The Journal of ERW and Mine Action, 18:1, Article 4.

Cruz, Joelle (2015) "Dirty Work at the Intersections of Gender, Class, and Nation:
Liberian Market Women in Post-Conflict Times, Women's Studies in
Communication," 38:4, 421–439.

D'Enbeau, Suzy, Villamil, Astrid; and Helens-Hart, Rose (2015) "Transcending Work–
Life Tensions: A Transnational Feminist Analysis of Work and Gender in the
Middle East, North Africa, and India," Women's Studies in Communication, 38:3,
273-294.

Harp, Dustin; Loke, Jaime; and Bachmann, Ingrid (2011) "More of the Same Old Story?
Women, War, and News in Time Magazine," Women's Studies in
Communication, 34:2, 202-217.

McDowell, Sara (2008) "Commemorating dead 'men': gendering the past and present in
post-conflict Northern Ireland," Gender, Place & Culture, 15:4, 335-354.

"Overview." Gender and Mine Action Programme, www.gmap.ch/overview/. Accessed
27 January 2020.

Puechguirbal, Nadine (2012) "The Cost of Ignoring Gender in Conflict and Post-Conflict
Situations: A Feminist Perspective," Amsterdam Law Forum, 4:1, 4-19.

"Statistics." SecurityWomen, www.securitywomen.org/resources/statistics. Accessed 27
January 2020.