WOMEN'S HIDDEN AGENCY IN THE NEWS COVERAGE
OF THE TIBETAN RIOTS

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Introduction

An increasing amount of academic literature and international policy recommendations, United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 among others, recognizes the variety of roles women take during times of conflict and the importance of women's participation in peace initiatives (see Söderberg 2010; Väyrynen 2007; Giles 2004; Rodgers 2003, Rehn and Sirleaf 2002; Goldstein 2001; Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen 2001). However, scholars in media and gender studies argue that this change in attitude towards not perceiving women as only passive spectators and victims during times of conflict is not reflected in the mainstream news media[1] (Söderberg 2010; Global Media Monitoring Project 2010; Lappalainen 2008; Lehtonen 2007; Halonen 1999). Broadly speaking, the scholars (ibid) argue that conflict time news media tends to under- and misrepresent women. That is, women are either not included in the news or represented according to prevailing gender stereotypes, namely as passive feminine objects (ibid).

Yet the inclusion of active women in conflict news does not automatically guarantee a more gender fair representation (see Kumar 2004; Lloyd and Howard 2005). For example, Söderberg (2010, 11) sees conflict news' representation of female activists as often linked to the women's gender: "They can be hung out to dry by the media, accused of being immoral, promiscuous, prostituted, and homosexual". Consequently, conflict time news media runs the risk of sensationalizing or stigmatizing women (Lloyd and Howard 2005, 40-41).

Apart from the aforementioned research, studies critically assessing gender in conflict time news remain small in number. Instead, the vast literature on gender, media, and conflict consists mainly of assessing the topics either as separate categories, or as combinations of two. For example, it is relatively easy to encounter research that looks at gender in media, gender in conflict, or conflict time media. What is missing is research that relates these three viewpoints together. Hence, this article sets out to explore with a case study how women are represented in international newspapers'[2] conflict news.

The present study looks into how three international newspapers, *International Herald Tribune* (hereafter referred as IHT), *China Daily* (hereafter referred as CD) and *the Tibet Post International* (hereafter referred as TPI), represented women in their news on the Tibetan riots in March 2008. I am especially interested in seeing whether there were

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[1] If not explicitly otherwise stated, I define mainstream news media as print, broadcast (television and radio), or online news items that are meant for mass communication and are published by professional media companies and/or journalists.

[2] I regard 'international newspaper' as a newspaper that is written in English, enjoys international readership as well as circulation, and has global scope of focus in its articles.

possible breaks from the rather fixed perception of gender bias in the conflict news, namely in the representation of women as victims. In other words, I set out to find out whether it is possible to find alternative media representations of women in my empirical material.

I use "mixed methods" in a pragmatic and technical sense as detailed by Bryman (2006; 2003). I set aside epistemological debates regarding the incompatibilities of qualitative and quantitative methods and regard them as "[…] rather crucial and needed parts of the research as a whole" (Bryman 2003). I first employ statistical quantification and Chi-square testing[3] to gain an overview of the material, in the process identifying an interesting deviation among the three newspapers' representation of women.

Then, I use both Jørgensen and Phillip's (2002) and Carpentier and De Cleen's (2007) interpretation of Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) discourse theoretical analysis,[4] as well as Barthes' (1977) central premise of text-image interaction to address a statistically interesting finding. In the discourse theoretical analysis, I first examine the press photos in isolation, and then introduce text into the interpretation. This proves to be a sound way to identify techniques applied in the newspapers to hide active women from conflict news. In addition, discourse theoretical analysis allows me to move beyond sorting out which of the newspapers' statements about the Tibetan riots and women in the riots were "true". Instead, I am able to focus on discovering what discursive claims about the studied aspect of social reality there are, and how the claims are discursively constructed.

According to discourse theory, a researcher's position plays a part in his or her analysis and findings, as there is no neutral point of reference. My position is determined by four key factors: 1. I, as a gendered (woman) reader situated in a particular historic and cultural context, having sympathies towards the 2. Tibetan cause,[5] 3. gender equality, and 4. peace. Consequently, I might be a reader that reads the selected texts and images "against the grain" (Pearce 1995, 82), questioning the newspapers' representa–tions of the conflict and especially women in it. As such, the findings I produce in the study cannot be regarded as a transparent account of reality. Instead, they contribute to the already existing "canon of academic discourses" on women in conflict news.

In this article, I will discuss my main findings. More specifically, I will look into how text-image interaction transformed the perception of active women created by press photos into passive by textual means. As such, I wish to question the prevailing conflict coverage by bringing to the discussion a studied case of gender in conflict news. Furthermore, by taking into account how text-image relationship bears an effect on the

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[3] The Chi-square test is used to measure variation within an empirical material. Please refer to, for example, Greenwood and Nikulin (1996) for more on Chi-square testing.

[4] Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory is rather challenging to come in terms with. In addition to their work therefore, I have referred to Jørgensen and Phillips', and Carpentier and De Cleen's secondary sources. Subsequently, I have extracted the overall, macro analytical understanding from Laclau and Mouffe, and utilized a more operationalized version of it as provided by the secondary sources.

[5] With Tibetan cause, I refer to the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach. See for example http://www.dalailama.com/messages/middle-way-approach

news' representation of women, I wish to pose questions in a field that is usually entirely overlooked by both quantitative and qualitative media studies and even peace journalism.

Discourses reflecting and constructing social reality

For Laclau and Mouffe *discourse* is social reality (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 1 & 18). This is because discourse is the only available means to access perceived reality by ascribing it with meaning (Carpentier and De Cleen 2007, 267; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 8-9). In this respect, discourses do not just reflect reality but contribute to constructing it (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 9). However, Laclau and Mouffe do not argue that no material world or phenomena exist beyond discourses. Instead, they acknowledge that "[…] there is no possibility getting behind the discourse to a 'truer' truth" (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 18).

Antagonism arises between discourses that aim to ascribe understanding of the same social phenomena in contradicting ways. According to Laclau and Mouffe, antagonism can be hidden by a *hegemonic discourse* that temporarily naturalizes a particular understanding of an aspect of social reality. As a result, the hegemonic discourse becomes seemingly objective and "true". *Hegemony* then is dominance of one particular perspective of social reality. Thus, for Laclau and Mouffe discourse is *political* in the sense that the meanings it ascribes involve a choice over other potential meanings. Furthermore, the politics of choice keep discourses open to transformative change all the time. In this sense, understanding of social reality, discursive claims about meaning and "truth", are always relative, temporal and socially constructed. Indeed, Laclau and Mouffe's previous premise that everything in social reality is discursive has also provoked criticism for overestimating the possibility of change (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 54).

Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theoretical stance can imply various things, but two aspects are relevant for my study. Firstly, press photos can be taken as objects of discourse theoretical analysis. This presumption is based on the discourse theoretical premise that everything in social reality, even its material dimension such as images and everyday practices, is discursive (Carpentier and De Cleen 2007, 277-8; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 19). That is, the press photos entail meaning that is accessible only through discourses. Secondly, Laclau and Mouffe's social constructivist understanding of social reality fits my research as it allows me to explore how female agency in conflict news is created, understood, and contested in the specific context of selected newspaper articles.

Discourse and gender

Butler's (1999) gender theory shares some common ground with social constructivist thought and Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory. As reality is socially constructed for Laclau and Mouffe, so is gender for Butler. Simply put, according to Butler, gender is not a biologically fixed fact; it is about doing rather than being (Butler 1999, 33). Gender is something absorbed in body, it is a performance, "[…] a repetition and a

ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (Butler 1999, xv). Furthermore, Butler argues that gender performance needs to be repeated according to prevailing gender norms and cultural codes according to a *heterosexual matrix* (Butler 1999, 45-100). In order to transform the norms in a prevailing heterosexual matrix, one needs to repeat the gender performance in a subversive way (Butler 1999, 173-176; Butler 1988, 531).

Butler has been criticized by other feminists for breaking up their common subject of action: the homogenous group of women (Butler 1999, vii-viii, 6-9). However, Butler's gender analysis can be used to pinpoint how discourses and social practices produce gender norms that bear an effect to women's actions (Seidman 2008, 215-6). In terms of discourse theory, a heterosexual matrix is like a hegemonic discourse on gender that naturalizes prevailing gender norms and hides conflicting and confronting discourses about gender. Discourse theory's antagonism is similar to gender theory's subversive repetition of gender. Broadly speaking then, my study could be seen as a way to identify subversive gender repetitions in Butler's terms that represent women as more active than the prevailing heterosexual matrix allows.

Empirical material
As mentioned above, I analyze three international newspapers' coverage of the Tibetan riots in order to address the knowledge gap on gender in conflict news. Two of the newspapers, IHT and CD, are printed newspapers whereas the TPI is an online newspaper. This is because I am unable to find a Tibetan newspaper that was not printed under the influence of Chinese press regulations and inputs from the Chinese official press agency Xinhua in March 2008. Therefore, I have to choose a Tibetan news source among online news providers. The most prominent option is the TPI, which is hosted by exiled Tibetans in India. With a general readership of 5000 to 7500 readers per day, the TPI (2010) claims to be the "[…] only online Tibetan newspaper-in-exile with a reader-ship of this magnitude".

From a host of possible alternatives I choose IHT, CD, and the TPI because I consider them to offer rich and differing representations of the events of March 2008 in Tibet in English language. The newspapers present diversity in the country of origin, ownership, target audience, readership, focus of news, scale of circulation, and age of paper. Yet they share the basic elements of articles and suitable codes of conduct in journalism, which makes it possible to use them as material in the same research. Furthermore, I choose to include an online newspaper to my analysis, because I regard it as interesting to have as a reference point "one Tibetan version" of the events of March 2008 as well. This way discourse theoretical analysis can be made richer, as more pluralities of the same discursive event are included.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the variations between the newspapers' format and background might also be considered problematic. The differences place the newspapers on different relative levels. For example, on the one hand it might have been easier for the TPI to produce information and include press photos due to its online

format. On the other hand, the financial resources of IHT and CD might have provided them with more capabilities for news production. I do not, however, consider the previous observations to disqualify the newspapers as empirical material for the study.

From the previously introduced three newspapers, I select such news articles and front-page news headlines or inserts that were published in March 2008, focused on the Tibetan riots, and included textual and/or visual reference to women.[6] The term 'woman' needs not explicitly appear in the articles' text to be valid. Instead, the text could refer to women using other terms that relate to female gender,[7] such as 'her', 'girl', 'mother', and 'spokeswoman' and so on. In addition, I use the same logic when determining the "ethnicity" of textually represented women. For example, if a text referred to a wife of a Chinese man, I expect the wife to be Chinese, too. I count as one all the textual references to the "same ethnic woman" that were included within a single article.

I do not refer to accompanying text when deciding a featured person's gender and "ethnicity" in press photos. Thus, the visual classification of a person is based on my cultural knowledge and perception of gender and western, Chinese, and Tibetan "ethnicities". Furthermore, I count a press photo featuring women as one visual reference to them. In other words, I do not count the amount of women within a single press photo.

In addition to the categories "gender" and "ethnicity", I bring in another one - "role" - which refers to the representation of women in either active or passive roles. The active roles represented women in a way that directly related to the handling of the Tibetan riots. The passive roles included representations of women in a way that either did not explicitly relate to the handling of the riots, or represented them as objects or observers of action instead of being a subject for action. The active roles included expert, government worker, organization worker, media worker, violent protester, non-violent protester, helper and protester "against her owns". The lastly mentioned role could for example refer to a Tibetan woman who condemned Tibetan rioters. The passive roles assigned to the women in the studied articles were victim, mourner, observer, and other. The role "other" is an overall category for a variety of "random" passive roles found in the articles. In broad terms, I regard that the active roles "empowered" women and the passive "disempowered" them. In addition, as with the other visual categorizing, I do not use the caption and accompanying text to help me determining roles for women in the press photos.

Altogether, the three newspapers wrote 155 news articles on the Tibetan riots. However, only 62 of these articles referred to women in their text and/ or press photos. As shown by statistical outlook of the material, women were underrepresented in the newspapers' coverage of the Tibetan riots. In total, 50 articles on the riots included mentions of women in their text and 25 articles featured women in their press photos.

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[6] In my criteria of empirical material and analysis of it, I did not pay attention to the gender of an article's author. This aspect is beyond my scope of analysis.

[7] I will not address the division between biological and cultural gender here. For further reading, see e.g. Butler (1999).

That is, approximately every third article on the Tibetan riots represented women textually and approximately every sixth article represented women visually. Furthermore, the selected newspapers' coverage of the Tibetan riots enforced gender distortion in the sense that nearly half of their textual and visual references to women represented the women in passive roles, namely as victims and observers. This gender bias is illustrated with concrete examples further on in the text.

Is the Tibet Post International's representation of women exceptional?
When looking at the three newspapers' coverage of the Tibetan riots as separate categories, the TPI differs from the two other newspapers in some respects. The TPI not only included women in its press photos with higher frequency, but it also represented the women more often in active roles, namely as non-violent protesters and government workers. Around one-third (32 percent) of the TPI's articles on the Tibetan riots contained press photos with women whereas the respective figures for IHT and CD were about one-tenth (IHT 11 and CD 13 percent). Furthermore, a clear majority, 88 percent of the TPI's press photos with women featured them as active whereas the respective figure for IHT was 20 and for CD 10.

Table 1. The frequencies to include women in the articles' text and press photos
This table shows the frequency with which the newspapers included women in the articles' text and press photos on the Tibetan riots.

Newspaper	Total n of articles on the riots	Articles with women in text and/or images	W. in text	W. in images
IHT	46	16	16	5
CD	78	27	23	10
The TPI	31	19	11	10

Thus, the TPI seems to deviate from the other newspapers, especially in its visual representation of women. In other words, women were missing from IHT's and CD's press photos of the Tibetan riots whereas the TPI not only featured the women but also represented them as active. Indeed, Chi-square testing of the material shows that the variation between the three newspapers in assigning visual roles for women is the only statistically significant case. The Chi-square of visual representation affirms that there is an association between active and passive roles for women and newspaper reporting (Chi-square = 15.99, p < .001). I consider the TPI's deviation from CD and IHT an interesting finding and want to explore it further.

Table 2. The frequencies of press photos featuring women in active and passive roles
This table shows the frequencies of active and passive visual representation of women in the newspapers. The data for International Herald Tribune was too sparse, and it was excluded from the analysis.

Newspaper	Active roles	Passive roles
(IHT	1	4)
CD	1	9
The TPI	15	2

As the clear majority, 76 percent,[8] of the TPI visual representation of women featured Tibetan women I decide to concentrate on them. I then set out to discover how the TPI's press photos of active Tibetan women corresponded with its articles' text. Would the text confirm the active roles the images assigned to the Tibetan women? Or, alternatively, would the text tell a different story of the Tibetan women in the Tibetan riots? In other words, I will investigate what happens to the perception of active Tibetan women in the press photos when text is added to the interpretation of these women's roles in the Tibetan riots.

Not just content, but the context of a press photo matters
With textual and visual means, the TPI represented the situation in Tibet as alarming, intense, and only few steps away from a full-scale violent conflict. The newspaper articulated 'the Tibetan riots' to signify 'urgency of Tibetan people's wellbeing and safety in Tibet'. It constructed this understanding on the one hand, by representing Chinese authorities as 'threatening and violent aggressors' in both its text and press photos. On the other hand, the TPI represented Tibetans as 'united' and especially the women as 'non-violent' and 'potential victims of the Chinese'. This contrast between Tibetan civilians and armed Chinese security forces was central to the TPI's rather black-and-white framing of the Tibetan riots. In the TPI's version, Chinese were the "evil enemy" and Tibetans the "peacemakers".

   Tibetan women did not appear as "victimized" and "vulnerable" in the TPI's press photos as they did in the "joint discourses" of text and photos. The majority of press photos featured Tibetan women as active non-violent protesters and government workers. However, the accompanying text did not refer to these women and their agency was lost in the joint discourse. The women were left as anonymous illustration. This happened especially in the articles featuring Tibetan female protesters. The accompanying text transformed the perception of them from non-violent protesters into potential victims of the Chinese security forces. In other words, the articles' text anchored the reading of Tibetan women's role in a way that disregarded the perception of them as active protesters.

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[8] The 76 percent equals 13 press photos with Tibetan women.

As Barthes (1977, 41) puts it: "Here [in anchorage of meaning in a discourse] text […] and image stand in a complementary relationship […]". Not all of the meanings are found from the press photos or text alone, but from the interaction between the two. In the case of the TPI, the complementary relationship between images and text was dominated by text. I will exemplify this text-image interaction with reference to two articles from the TPI's coverage on the Tibetan riots. The articles are "Chinese have killed around 100 Tibetans and injured many for taking part in peace" and "Crackdown in Tibet away from the eye of the media in new violation of Olympics pledge".

Example 1
The TPI's article "Chinese have killed around 100 Tibetans and injured many for taking part in peace", published on 15th March 2008 included five press photos of Tibetan men and women protesting along a street. The photos came across very similar, and most likely by mistake, one of the article's press photos was featured twice. In the press photos, Tibetans are waving Tibetan flags and shouting while personnel carrying shields and wearing blue and green uniforms, presumably the Chinese security forces, stand in the background. The plentitude of rather homogeneous photos in one article constructed a strong visual discourse about the realities of the Tibetan riots.

Firstly, these five images featuring the Tibetan flag and Tibetan protesters of differing social background and gender, gave an impression of a united Tibetan people. Secondly, these images created contrast between unarmed Tibetan civilian protesters and presumably armed professional Chinese security forces. Furthermore, by featuring Tibetan women as part of the "Tibetan movement",[9] the TPI created an understanding of these women as active and full participants to the conflict situation. The Tibetan women were protesting alongside with the men. This inclusion of female protesters strengthened the implicit dichotomy between presumably nonviolent Tibetans and violent Chinese.

The article's text awakened a latent threat embedded in these images. The text represented the Chinese security forces as engaged in violence instead of representing the forces as just capable of violence, as was shown in the images. For example, already the article's title "*Chinese* have *killed* around 100 Tibetans and *injured* many for taking part in peace" (my own emphasis), claimed this. Furthermore, in its text the TPI referred to confrontation between peaceful Tibetan protesters and Chinese security forces: "The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) has received numerous confirmed reports concerning *the recent spate of protests, subsequent arrests and detentions* of people having taken place inside Tibet […]" (my own emphasis).

With textual means, the newspaper created a sense of threat that trespassed into the images transforming the Tibetan protesters into potential victims. However, this change in perception applied to the featured Tibetan women only. The featured men were better able to keep their agency as they were mentioned in the text and assigned with agency. This notion comes for example across in the following excerpt: "Tibet is said to be

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[9] In this context, I understand as Tibetan movement an ongoing struggle by Tibetans for the independence and/or genuine autonomy of Tibetan populated area. The movement began in 1959 as uprising in Lhasa.

increasingly reeling under a tense situation following a recent spate of peaceful protests by *monks* of the three main *monasteries* in Lhasa […]" (own emphasis).

Images 1-4: From the *Tibet Post International*'s article "Chinese have killed around 100 Tibetans and injured many for taking part in peace" published on 15th March 2008. In the original article, the photo on the left upper row appeared twice.

Example 2

In its article "Crackdown in Tibet away from the eye of the media in new violation of Olympics pledge" published on 18th March 2008, the TPI had two press photos in color. The first photo featured a street filled with a mass of armed personnel that, based on their uniforms, I regard to be Chinese security forces. In contrast, the second photo featured Tibetan and western civilians in nature. The majority of the people waved Tibetan and Indian flags and some had posters with images of Dalai Lama and Gandhi. I can also spot a Tibetan woman wearing a traditional Tibetan costume, from the second photo. To me it looks like the photo represented non-violent pro-Tibet protesters based in India.

When relating these two press photos to each other, I argue that they expressed contrast and tension. By featuring a mass of soldiers in a street empty of normal life in the first image, the TPI represented the Chinese security forces as a "faceless enemy", a threat that is impersonal and armed. In the second image, the newspaper represented the

Tibetan protesters as a group of non-violent civilians enjoying international support. This was achieved by showing western and Tibetan activists in India, amongst green nature, wearing facial expressions that signal determination instead of, for example, anger, or rage. Furthermore, the perception of the protesters as non-violent was strengthened by depicting them with posters of figures know for non-violent resistance.

The tension created in the two press photos was confirmed in the article's text. There the TPI represented the Chinese security forces as preparing a crackdown on the Tibetan rioters in the absence of foreign media: "Yet again the Chinese government is trampling on the promises it made linked to the Olympics and has *preparing the ground to crackdown on the Tibetan revolt* in the absence of witnesses" and "Online censorship is also veering into racism, with comment items *urging the killing of Tibetan separatists*, while all independent news on the events is being censored […]" (my emphasis).

Like in the previous example, also here the newspaper's text transformed the featured Tibetan female protesters into possible targets of Chinese security forces. This was done in a similar way as in the first example. While maintaining Tibetan men's agency in the text, the TPI left the active women without mention. The newspaper represented the Tibetan men as defying authorities: "Many *monks* do *continue to secretly listen* to these broadcasts [international broadcast programmes to Tibet in Tibetan language that are jammed and banned by the Chinese authorities] inside their *monasteries*" (my emphasis). Therefore, when the perceived "threat" emanating from the text trespassed into the images, the Tibetan men were better able to keep their agency.

These two discussed examples demonstrate my main finding that illustrates how text-image interaction influences the perception of women in conflict news. In this study, the text-image interaction diminished the perception of Tibetan women's participation to the Tibetan riots. This in short was done by first featuring a "tense conflict situation" in the press photos. Then by confirming and intensifying the perceived threat in the text while leaving without mention active women, the newspaper's text-image interaction transformed the visually active Tibetan female protesters into potential victims of the Chinese security forces.

Images 5-6: From the *Tibet Post International*'s article "Crackdown in Tibet away from the eye of the media in new violation of Olympics pledge" published on 18th March 2008.

Why this finding matters

I regard peace journalism as an effective way to illustrate the direct link between news media's gender imbalance and peace. According to peace journalism, news media can be either part of a solution to a conflict or a prolongation of it (Ottosen 2007, Lynch 2006). The way news media, as "[…] the major and most influential source of information, ideas and opinions for most people around the world" (Global Media Monitoring Project 2010, 3) represents conflicts bears an impact on the conflict in question. Mainstream conflict reporting, or so-called war journalism, tends to represent conflict as a zero-sum game between the elite parties to a conflict. Such news coverage allows only some aspects of the social reality to break through. Instead of sensationalizing the apex of a conflict, journalism could alternatively mediate it (Ottosen 2007, 2; Lynch 2006, 75). The news media could then question the conflict situation, and broaden the contextual understanding of a conflict by including the critical voice of civil society and women in the representation of a conflict (Söderberg 2010, 113).

Looking at gender representations in conflict coverage, and being gender-sensitive, contributes to the transformation of news media into a more conflict sensitive domain. In this sense "Gender analysis is an inevitable means for action in the struggle to improve conflict reporting […]" (ibid). For example, the news media's focus on the vulnerability of women hides the influence women have to conflict outcomes: "When women are presented almost exclusively as victims it becomes easy to forget that women are also protagonists who influence, and are influenced by, conflict outcomes" (Söderberg 2010, 110). Gender inequality in news reporting can also become a vital explanation of direct, structural, and cultural violence[10] as causes of conflict (Söderberg 2010, 114).

My study looked into how women are represented in conflict news. The findings largely confirmed the acclaimed gender bias in that active women are seldom present in the conflict news coverage and the perception of women as victims stays prevalent. Furthermore, with two exemplary cases of text-image interaction I illustrated that it is not enough for conflict news to include women in the news per se, but the way these women are represented also influences the perception of their agency in a conflict situation. In other words, the examples revealed how it is not just the content, but also the context of a press photo that matters in determining the featured women's agency.

I argue that focus on the vulnerability of women hides their possibilities for action. By representing a conflict situation in a given way, the conflict news constructs and legitimizes certain frames for agency for women to take during times of conflict (Väyrynen 2007, 126; Goldstein 2001, 331). If, for example, the TPI predominantly created an understanding of the Tibetan riots as a "male domain" and dangerous to women, the newspaper naturalized a perception of women as passive victims in the Tibetan riots. Instead, by covering the women in active roles, the TPI's conflict news could have enforced an understanding of the women as important and legitimized actors

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[10] In brief, Galtung (1996) defines direct violence as physical violence and structural violence as indirect violence stemming from societal structures. For Galtung cultural violence legitimizes direct and structural violence.

in the handling of the situation. News discourse then is political in the sense that the way it represents for example women involves a choice over other potential representations (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 36).

Indeed, as conflict news, like any other discursive claim about social reality and "truth", is all the time open to transformative change, perception of women as passive victims can be challenged and changed (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 112-4; Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 6, 38 & 54). As there exist other possible ways to describe an event, it becomes important to be aware of what versions of social realities conflict news provides and especially what is excluded from the news coverage. Are the female activists', breadwinners', experts' and so on lived realities included in the news? Does news' representation of women enforce gender stereotypical understanding of their roles in a conflict? By deconstructing the "taken for granted" claims the conflict news entails, one can start to question the often stereotypical representation of women in conflict situations.

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Summary

This mixed methods case study on the international newspaper coverage of women in
the Tibetan riots in March 2008 analyses to what extent women are represented
according to prevailing gender stereotypes in conflict news. The study largely confirms
news media's gender bias, in that news media hides women's agency. Women are either
not included in the studied 62 articles from *International Herald Tribune*, *China Daily,*
and *the Tibet Post International*, or represented according to prevailing gender
stereotypes, namely as passive feminine objects.

   Interestingly, Chi-square testing reveals that *the Tibet Post International*, an online
newspaper run by Tibetan exiles, deviated from the general tendency by representing
remarkably frequent images of active Tibetan women. Around one-third (32 percent) of
the Tibet Post International's articles included press photos featuring women and the
clear majority (88 percent) of these images represented them as active. However, the
qualitative part of the study tells that text associated with the newspaper's images of
active Tibetan women reduced these women's perceived agency. When introducing text
into the interpretation of these images, the women in many cases were turned into
potential victims. This points out that text-image interaction is an often overlooked, yet
integral part of assigning meaning in conflict news.

Keywords
Conflict, media, news, discourse, gender, agency