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## Suffering as a discipline? Scholarly accounts on the current and future state of research on media and suffering

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**ABSTRACT**

An emerging field of research within humanities and social sciences concerns itself with the issue of suffering. Following its growing (mediated) societal prevalence and impact in recent years, forms of social suffering have intrigued an increasing number of scholars and have already spurred a rich body of work, reflecting an astonishing richness in terms of approaches, theoretical perspectives and topics of study. Many have recognized the research on media and suffering as a legitimate, timely and necessary field of study, but alongside its emergence within academia, questions arose on its disciplinary home, scope and nature. The purpose of this working paper is twofold. Firstly, we address the key question of (inter)disciplinarity by charting the different strands of social science studies on suffering, with a particular focus on the relation between (news) media and suffering. Secondly, we aim to identify future directions to move the research forward. In order to do so we draw on a literature review and semi-structured elite interviews with twelve leading scholars in the field: Jonathan Benthall, David Campbell, Lilie Chouliaraki, Simon Cottle, Suzanne Franks, Paul Frosh, Folker Hanusch, Susan Moeller, Shani Orgad, Mervi Pantti, Keith Tester and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen.

The twelve interviewees demonstrated a strong reluctance towards conceiving the ongoing research on media and suffering as a discipline on its own. All interviewees prefered to look at it as a constellation of people, working from different perspectives and backgrounds but all interested in the same topic. In other words, an area of research that is defined by an inter- and multidisciplinary coming together of research interests, expertise and people. The inherent social nature of suffering and its status as a fundamentally human experience informed this debate and resulted in a positioning of the research on media and suffering at the heart of social sciences and humanities as well as at the crossroads of different disciplines. This overall open view was also reflected in the discussion on the scope of the research and the future directions in research. The scholars identified a wide range of driving concepts and key issues which we can summarize by the following tropes: mediation, emotions, audiences and societal trends. However, the interviewees tended to stress the need for some measure of conceptual hygiene, a potential drawback of the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Regarding future directions, the scholars pointed towards a number of directions to move the research forward. Especially empirical audience research is high on the academic agenda as are studies that look into the role of new media with regard to (witnessing) suffering. Other widely shared comments included a further opening up of the research in terms of methodological and disciplinary approaches.

# INTRODUCTION

In his seminal work *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992) assessed our modern society as increasingly preoccupied with invisible, unpredictable and uncontrollable risks such as disasters, terrorism, poverty, pandemics and conflicts. These risk situations are 'global in their nature, scope, and potential impacts' (Cottle, 2009b: 351) and appear to have increased in frequency and intensity over the last years (Guha-Sapir, *et al.*, 2004: 13). To take the case of natural disasters, a total of 29,782 people died in 2011 and nearly 206 million others were directly affected. These 302 natural disasters inflicted record economic damages of $366 billion (UNISDR, 2012). Each year, crisis situations thus cause severe damage and human suffering around the globe. Acknowledging the rise in (representations of) global suffering, Cottle (2009a: 70) argues that '[m]ediated global disasters demand increased attention from media researchers in the future, both empirically and theoretically.' In recent years, social scientists have certainly picked up on the emerging presence and mediated manifestation of suffering within our contemporary society. Scholars from different disciplines have particularly been paying attention to the relationship between suffering and media. This increasing academic attention has resulted in a wide range of research foci – varying from disaster news coverage, representation of distant suffering, sociological concerns on the risk society, media witnessing, peace and conflict studies. In addition to this, new journal titles, high-profile book series and recently established sections at different international academic associations underline the growing and very diverse interest in the field and the professional scholarly occupation with it. However, this has led to a definitional vagueness of this emerging field that is seemingly in search of an identity. Acknowledging the diversity of research and the richness of the ongoing academic debate, how can we then define the field in terms of scope, key concepts and research questions with regard to suffering and media? Can we mark out the disciplinary borders? And, most importantly, related to the value of interdisciplinary research, is there any need to do so? One of the prominent debates that will be addressed in this paper is whether the research on media and suffering constitutes an established or emerging discipline, or rather an interdisciplinary field? Another main issue that arises from this growing academic attention for and societal relevance of suffering is the question why and how this research topic has become so central to the scholarly work of so many in recent years?

Observing the interdisciplinary dialogues as well as charting the different strands of media and communication studies on suffering, this working paper aims to assess the current and future state of the research conducted on suffering, with a particular focus on the relation between (news) media and suffering. The key issue explored in this paper is the question of (inter)disciplinarity of research on suffering. It further aims to identify future directions to

move the research forward. For this purpose, we draw on a literature review and elite interviews with leading scholars in the field. The latter includes nine semi-structured face-to-face interviews that were conducted during February and March of 2012 while additional data was gathered through three interviews via mail (cf. appendix). The literature review is divided in two parts. First, we address suffering as object of scholarly inquiry within the broad field of social sciences. Secondly, we give a general outline of the research on media and suffering.

## SUFFERING AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Before going into the various research strands, it is important to flesh out our interpretation of suffering. In this paper the definition by Kleinman, et al. (1997: xi) is used. They approach suffering as 'an assemblage of human problems that have their origins and consequences in the devastating injuries that social force can inflict on human experience', including political, social, institutional and economic conditions that involve health, welfare, legal, moral and religious issues. This is a very broad definition, but it allows us to address the field in its full complexity as it reflects the variety in possible causes of human suffering. In addition, it does not limit the concept of suffering to the individual experience of pain, loss or psychological distress (Steeves and Kahn, 1987), but opens it up for collective forms of suffering and manners of coping with it. Nonetheless, forms of social suffering also evoke individual lives and personal accounts, but embeds these in the broader social context (Kleinman, et al., 1997: xxvii). This distinction between individual and social suffering arguably echoes a broader dialectic within social sciences between on the one hand *agency* or an individual actor's power or capability to act and on the other hand *structure* or the societal contexts which constrain and enable human action (see a.o. Nakamori, 2012: 179). These paradigms are not only applicable to (the disposition of) the sufferer but, as we shall see later, also to the spectator of suffering and his/her reaction to it. In our interpretation of suffering, we further focus on acts of misfortune that are inflicted upon (a collectivity of) people.

The causes or the events of suffering are often situated outside of the human control or will of the sufferer such as (natural and technological) disasters, complex emergencies (domestic disturbances, armed conflicts) or conditions of deprivation and poverty. Furthermore, given the emphasis of the paper on the relationship between media and suffering, we will focus on a particular type of suffering, which is distant suffering. Drawing on the work of Boltanski (1999), we hereby refer to the suffering of distant others that is presented through the media. It thus implies moral and political issues for the spectator who cannot act directly to affect the circumstances in which the suffering takes place (cf. infra). In conclusion, the nature of suffering is incontrovertibly complex and its ramifications diverse, henceforth assuming an

interdisciplinary approach when studying it. Acknowledging the multidimensional character of suffering is equally important to 'avoid disciplinary tunnel vision or fragmenting perspectives' (Cottle, 2009a: 17).

Following this conceptualization, it is evident to see why suffering has attracted the attention of social sciences. Suffering appeals to basic human emotions of care and empathy, and its mediation resonates to the ethics of public life, issues of morality and the nature of the society in which we live. The subject of suffering touches the very foundations of what being human is about and does this in two fundamentally opposite ways which we could divide along the lines of the *act* of suffering and the *reaction* to suffering in relation to the human condition. This dual relation between suffering and humanity is eloquently touched upon by Wilkinson (2005: 2): '[w]hilst with one voice we empathically denounce this experience [of suffering] as a desecration of our humanity, with another we declare it to have the potential to reveal us in our most sanctified form.' On the one hand, the act of suffering deconstructs and violates the core of being human. Suffering here relates to the notion of vulnerability as an intrinsic aspect of human beings. Hannah Arendt argued that in the most extreme forms of suffering we are even deprived of our humanity as suffering 'destroys our bodies, ruins our minds, and smashes our "spirit"' (cited in Wilkinson, 2005: 1). On the other hand, suffering can bring out the very best in humans by disclosing and raising emotions of pity, empathy and compassion with a (distant) other. Charity appeals, international relief aid, humanitarian organizations, telethons, volunteering, etc. are all exemplary for this line of thought on suffering and humanitarianism. To theorize the reaction of people to suffering, most scholars dwell on the concepts of pity, compassion and morality. We hereby refer to seminal work by Chouliaraki (2006/2008), Höijer (2004), Silverstone (2007), Sznaider (1998) and Tester (1994/2001).

**Scholarly interest in suffering: a characterization**

In terms of the scholarly attention for suffering and its historical development, a brief overview allows us to make some general statements on the area's key characteristics.

First of all, research on suffering displays a multifaceted variety of disciplinary interests and contributions, mostly rooted within social sciences but also humanities. According to Kleinman, et al. (1997: xxvi), the shift away from a dominant medical perspective on suffering as individual pain or misfortune that was contingent on illness, has only happened quite recently and was informed by the emerging conception of suffering as profoundly *social* instead of individual (cf. supra). Defining suffering as fundamentally social opened the discussion to a variety of disciplines and fields within the broad realm of social sciences and

humanities. These fields have theorized and studied suffering from their particular scopes or interests: sociology, political science, economics, media studies, arts and literature, anthropology, theology, law and ethics, ... and all have contributed to our understanding of suffering, its causes and consequences. Moreover, due to the diverse realities and nature of human suffering, several scholars such as Kleinman (1988), Graubard (1996) and Wilkinson (2005) are opposed to constraining the debate on suffering to a single discipline of study and therefore highly appraise the value of cross-disciplinary study as exemplified in the literature on suffering. Having said that, we should be aware of or at least acknowledge what MacIntyre (1981/2007) has called the modern problem of incommensurability in academic research. Despite interdisciplinary dialogues, each discipline dwells on its own premises and standards, leading us to the question whether the various disciplinary narratives on, conceptualizations of and meanings awarded to suffering do not diverge epistemologically even if all use the same word(s) and terminology? In other words, is suffering a common term of reference across all disciplines? And does this lead to a totalizing body of knowledge or only to different partial understandings of suffering? This does not question the value of interdisciplinary research on suffering as such, but it is an important element to take into account when discussing the (need for) disciplinary boundaries of research on media and suffering (cf. infra).

Secondly, within social sciences, it appears that disciplines are exploring suffering at very different paces. While for instance theology and philosophy have a long-standing tradition of debate on the subject of suffering, other disciplines such as sociology or media and communication studies have only (re)discovered suffering since the 1980s and 1990s (Wilkinson, 2005: 3). In addition, Wilkinson (2005: 4-6) discerns four particular fields of inquiry that spearhead the contemporary scholarly debate and preoccupation with suffering: *medical anthropology* that looks into the socio-cultural components of experiencing suffering and pain; *ethnography* that explores human suffering in a context of extreme social adversity and political atrocity; *sociology* that according to Wilkinson is given the particular responsibility to develop a language and framework for understanding what the experience of suffering actually does to people and our humanity; and *media studies* in which the role of media and mediation is investigated in the formation of moral behavior, social consciousness and humanitarian concern with suffering. The latter field of research will be the focus of the next section. Before doing so, let us take a brief look at the broader set of historical forces that have shaped the academic debate on suffering and its emergence.

**Contextualization**

Resonating the broad conceptualization of suffering adopted in this paper, the interdisciplinary academic debate on suffering is closely related to a set of societal transformations in terms of political, social, cultural, religious, economic and technological developments that occurred over the past decades. In an inclusive effort, several scholars such as Giddens (1990), Beck (1999), Wilkinson (2005) and Pantti, et al. (2012) have linked the increase in risks or threats to humanity and the widespread misery of our human condition to some key characteristics of industrialized societies and our modern times. Among others, they point to a secular 'age of great social injustice, cultural poverty and moral anxiety' (Wilkinson, 2005: 3) as well as to the processes of industrial civilization and their implications. Pantti et al. (2012: 1) also refer to a powerful combination of several worldwide and interconnected processes such as 'climate change, population growth, urban migration and increased resource scarcity.' Without further going too much in detail, it is worthwhile to reflect on which particular elements have prompted or revived the attentiveness to suffering in scholarly work. This is not an easy task to do as there is no single reason or event that explains why suffering has become so central to recent debates within social sciences. One could refer to societal changes of intensified globalization and the emergence of post-modern theories on world risk society (Beck, 1999) and cosmopolitanism (Hannerz, 1996) or communitarianism (Chouliaraki, 2006) in which suffering also takes up a central role as it provides us with a very particular view on the global world system and its dynamics. A critical study of suffering questions our moral commitment to distant others, while at the same time it can be argued that suffering lays bare the undisputable power imbalances and the assymetrical distributions of danger/safety and poverty/wealth at a global level of analysis.

From a media and communication studies' point of view, we can point to the intensified process of mediation since the 1990s as a catalyst for scholarly attention and societal transformations. Upcoming issues in relation to suffering were, among others, such aspects as televised witnessing of live unfolding disasters or terrorist attacks, the rise of 24/24 global television news channels, technological changes such as digital media, and a dominance of infotainment formats that focus on the spectacle of suffering (cf. infra). Furthermore, we can point to the increasing instrumentalization of the aid and development field (Chouliaraki, 2012) and the dramatic rise in the number of NGOs over the last decades (Kennedy, 2009) which have also played a vital role in making human suffering more visible to audiences and putting it on the agenda of policy makers as well as making it a disciplinary concern for scholars. In taking this view, Wright (2002) also points to the current development of a new culture of cosmopolitan altruism. Other explanatory factors could be related to an apparent quantitative or qualitative increase in suffering itself and its growing human, economic and

political (destructive) impact as alluded to in the introduction when discussing natural disasters. Wilkinson (2005: 7) adds to this that we should always expect a considerable interval of time before people are ready to grasp the extent and meaning of an atrocity and the ensuing suffering. He considers the recent upsurge of scholarly interest as a next stage or development in the ongoing struggle to understand and interpret the unprecedented amount of documented suffering that the world has encountered in the last three decades. Along these lines, he regards the increasing concern of social science with suffering as a 'sign of the intensifying force of "moral individualism" within [modern] society' (Wilkinson, 2005: 134) that serves to involve scholars in such pressing issues of suffering and humanity. This issue will be fleshed out further in the empirical section of the paper. The following part of the literature review takes a closer look at the research on media and suffering.

## RESEARCH ON MEDIA AND SUFFERING

Within the scope of this working paper, it is impossible to present an all-inclusive and comprehensive overview in terms of individual projects, scholars and contributions from all the different disciplines. Therefore, we will mainly explore suffering in relation to media by presenting a brief historical overview and the major strands of research. Before doing so, we first need to address a key issue: why study suffering in relation to media?

First of all, this approach is premised on the general understanding of media as 'sources of power as well as of meaning - mediated meanings can have powerful social consequences' (Jensen, 2002: 273) such as raising public action or moral dispositions towards it – be it compassion, pity or irony – which the mediation of suffering problematizes (Chouliaraki, 2006/2012). In exercising their symbolic power, contemporary (news) media occupy a key position in social processes of for instance public understanding and political response (Cottle, 2009a: 2). Echoing the notion of suffering as profoundly social, a study of the mediation of suffering and the accommodating discourses therefore involve several aspects of the social realm which critical media research aims to expose. We have already referred to the articulation of power imbalances through representations of suffering. Other examples are the role of media in forming social conscience and moral behavior; the process of witnessing (distant) suffering in, by and through media; the commodification of charity; etc.

A critical orientation to suffering and media thus implies a readiness to accept such a conception of mediated suffering as a representation and as a construction of social life (Schrøder, 2002: 100). This critically informed debate on power structures and social matters in media representations of suffering also has repercussions on the level of the individual actor, that is the 'spectator' of misfortune and atrocity who is, through mediation, placed in a

certain relationship of power to another human being in need (Calhoun, 2002; Chouliaraki, 2006: 7). How can and should one then act on these mediated instances of distant suffering, given his/her position as an individual member of an audience that is entangled in local and global social structures, power relations and different ethics of public life? Related to the representation of the sufferer, questions of agency arise as well. Media representations of the distant other generally portray the sufferer as passive and as an anonymous member of a larger group (Joye, 2009), lacking (significant) agency. Taking both perspectives, '[w]ho watches and who suffers reflects the […] differences in economic resources, political stability, governmental regimes and everyday life' (Chouliaraki, 2006: 4) – i.e. structure – as well as differences in patterns of economic and political agency. A study of suffering in relation to media thus bears substantial resemblance to the broader and above discussed dialectic between agency and structure.

Secondly, a media-centered perspective on suffering is also very relevant for another important reason. Several scholars have demonstrated that for most people living in the developed world, disasters and other causes of suffering such as complex emergencies are distant events with whom they are only confronted with through media and their mediation (Benthall, 1993; Boltanski, 1999; Franks, 2008). According to Kitch and Hume (2007), it is such mediated and hence indirect exposure to human suffering that for most people is their most common grief and death experience in modern culture. Related is the emerging '"mediated ethics of care", an invitation [inscribed in media] to recognize, better understand and care about the plight of others' (Cottle, 2009a: 93). Given the current and foreseeable future dominant role of mediation with regard to the social experience of suffering, it could even be argued that media and communication studies represents the disciplinary home of suffering. Acknowledging the high amount of studies conducted within this field, few would even dispute this. Other indicators in that respect are conferences on mediated suffering, recently established sections on crisis communication within international academic networks such as *IAMCR* and *ECREA[1]*, new journals such as *Media, War and Conflict* and special journal issues on risk and crisis, and various interventions in the public debate.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the body of work on media and suffering remains very heterogeneous in terms of disciplinary perspectives. Henceforth and linking up to the previous discussion on (inter)disciplinarity, we explicitly wish to keep the issue open for argument and debate. For now, we refer to the analysis of the interviews where the topic is raised as well. In order to get to a better understanding of the current upsurge in scholarly

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[1] IAMCR = International Association for Media and Communication Research and ECREA = European Communication Research and Education Association

work on media and suffering, we will continue with a historical account on (the research on) mediated suffering.

## Historical reflections

Taking the discipline of media and communication studies as a starting point of discussion, the brief historical overview by Wilkinson (cf. supra) already exposed the recent emergence of the academic research on media and suffering. A number of general explanations have been discussed earlier, but we wish to devote some further attention to the changing nature of witnessing suffering as an additional factor that might have fuelled the scholarly debate. Nowadays, we are no longer just witnessing the *aftermath* of a disaster, crisis or war which is reported to us by news media, but we are able to watch all in real time and experience it live while it is unfolding. And we are increasingly doing so through the position of the sufferer and the direct eyewitness who are taking pictures, twittering or streaming videos. 9/11 was a turning point in this respect (Frosh and Pinchevski, 2011: 7-10). Through user generated content and an incessant stream of video footage, people all over the world experienced how unexpected and to what massive extent the terrorist attacks hit the city of New York. With every other major event afterwards - among others the South-East Asian tsunami in 2004, the war on terror, the Haitian earthquake in 2010, the Japanese earthquake and tsunami in 2011, the 2011 and 2012 protests and insurgence in Syria and other Arab countries – the amount of eyewitness videos skyrocketed, in online environments as well as redistributed through mainstream media.

The extent and intensity of being exposed to images and narratives of distant and often horrifying events have radically grown in recent years and has led to a dramatically different (news media) context. In our opinion, this increased visibility of suffering thus poses new and vital questions to the realm and nature of the mediation and experience of misfortune, henceforth urging the discipline of media and communication studies to take on suffering as a timely issue of academic interest and labor. Therefore, we argue that within the discipline we can observe a revival of a line of research around media and suffering that was quite prolific in the 1980s, although the focus then was predominantly on disasters.

Up till the 1970s, disasters and crises mainly featured as case studies within international and foreign news research. In 1980, the 'National Academy of Sciences Committee on Media in Disasters' conducted a wide-scale survey of the field in the USA and even concluded that 'very little was known' (cited in Wenger, 1985: 4) about the nature, quantity and quality of disaster coverage (Nimmo and Combs, 1985: 5). The 1980s were characterized by a growing interest of mainly American and British scholars in the issue of mediated crises, disasters and

suffering. Due to technological developments, the world increasingly watched the plights and misfortunes of distant others (Ashuri and Pinchevski, 2011) which was reflected in the scholarly output on the issue. Exemplary for this were a series of studies by the US 'Disaster Research Center' and a number of seminal articles that were published in *Journal of Communication* (a.o. Adams, 1986; Gaddy and Tanjong, 1986; Sood, *et al.*, 1987).

In later years, the focus shifted away from disasters to incorporate more causes of suffering (cf. infra) and other fields of research such as sociology and psychology have significantly contributed (cf. supra). These writings from different backgrounds have brought additional analytical depth and historical insights to the media-driven inquiries. With few exceptions, it was however not till the late 1990s and even mid-2000s that the field also broadened in terms of methodological perspectives with, among others, more qualitative driven research on the audience, framing analysis and discourse analysis. Since then the subject of media and suffering has boomed in the number of publications devoted to these issues, scholars focusing on it and the variety of disciplinary perspectives.

## Media and suffering: a wide field of research

To conclude this section on media and suffering, the current state and particularly the scope of media-driven research is assessed. Given the wide range of aspects and perspectives, I certainly do not claim to represent an exhaustive overview of all the ways in which media and communication studies might inform our understanding of suffering, but I will identify three main subfields of scholarly inquiry.

1) A first major strand of research investigates the process of *producing*[2] images and narratives of suffering, generally against the backdrop of journalism studies. Theories and studies on news values or newsworthiness, gatekeeping, the work of foreign correspondents, etc. are very prominent, although the issue of suffering often appears to be of rather secondary importance or mainly serving as a case study. An interesting - interdisciplinary - subfield within journalism studies concerns the study of trauma of journalists that are covering scenes of misery and death (Rentschler, 2011). Other subjects of research are photojournalism and the moral issues involved with producing images of death, pain and suffering (Sontag, 2003; Hanusch, 2010; Zelizer, 2010).

Next to journalists, academia is increasingly paying attention to other producers of content such as relief aid and charity sector. Scholars as Benthall (1993/2007) and Cottle and Nolan

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[2] As the use of the term 'production' might stir some confusion, our overview of the field is restricted to the production of images and narratives on suffering in news media by journalists. This excludes for instance the strand of research on corporate crisis communication and risk or crisis management by authorities.

(2007) have written influential pieces on the changing dynamics of the aid-media field with a focus on NGOs while others have focused on celebrities who have become an key feature of contemporary humanitarian communication (Littler, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2012; Driessens, *et al.*, 2012).

2) Besides issues of production, a significant and expanding body of work has emerged relating to the *content* of mediated suffering (Kyriakidou, 2011: 16). Different research topics can be identified in this regard: the repetitive use of visual and narrative stereotypes, the representation of pity and the 'othering' of the distant sufferer, articulations of power (im)balances or hierarchies, the naturalization and de-politicization of suffering, discourses of emotion in news reports, etc. (see Benthall, 1993; Moeller, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2006; Kitch and Hume, 2007; Pantti and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2007; Cottle, 2009a; Pantti, 2009; Joye, 2010). A major contribution to this sub-field was the research by Chouliaraki (2006) which moved the debate beyond the relatively abstract and generalizing statements about the representation of human suffering. She has identified a three-dimensional typology of news discourses and corresponding regimes of pity. Chouliaraki's work is leading an emerging field that critically observes and explains the (discursive) reproduction of symbolic inequalities and representational hierarchies in the mediation of distant suffering. This line of research has also highlighted the generally understudied issue of the 'underlying relational and ethical dimension embedded within televised scenes of suffering' (Cottle, 2009a: 145).

3) A final dimension of scholarly interest concerns the matter of *audience* consumption and reception of suffering in, by and through the media. Research topics include the different categories of emotional commitment, moral response and dispositions of the audience (Höijer, 2004), the process of media witnessing (Frosh and Pinchevski, 2011), the notion of (mediatized) rituals (Cottle, 2006) and in particular mourning rituals (Pantti and Sumiala, 2009), and the role of media in the construction of a mediated cosmopolitan space in which people care for the suffering of a distant other (Tester, 2001; Silverstone, 2007). It goes without saying that the notion of suffering as fundamentally social is very central to this line of research. Another key characteristic is the deep distinction that needs to be drawn between the theoretical and the empirical research done in this area of study. The former appears to have a longer tradition, originating in sociological accounts on the position of the audience with regard to human suffering. Tester's 2001 book on compassion and the media is one of the examples in which theoretical and at times moral considerations are made on the audience reaction and disposition towards suffering in the media.

A central theoretical concept in these debates is *compassion fatigue*, which was coined by Kinnick, et al. in 1996 and further theorized by Moeller (1999) and others.[3] Compassion fatigue refers to a 'diminishing capacity to mobilize sentiments, sympathy and humanitarian forms of response' (Cottle, 2009b: 348). As a result of incessant media exposure to images and narratives of suffering, the audience may act increasingly indifferent and numb to the mediated spectacle of human misery (Moeller, 1999).

Another take on the individual's and the public's position towards suffering is the seminal work by Cohen (2001) who approaches the issue from a sociological and psychological perspective and introduces the concept of *states of denial*: a natural response of audiences to look away when faced with mediated suffering. It seems that in terms of analyses of audience reception and response to suffering, the field is biased towards a negative appraisal and tends to neglect or minimize the media's potential to cultivate compassion or pity. In contrast to the rich theoretical insights, Kyriakidou (2011: 17) and others refer to the absence 'of considerable amount of empirical work investigating and supporting the relevant theoretical arguments.' Höijer (2004) and Wilkinson (2005) have argued before that there are few empirical studies of audiences' reactions to and interpretations of mediated suffering. Likewise, Cottle (2009a: 134) points 'to the need for closer empirical engagement, refined concepts and further analytical distinctions' in the field of audience research related to (distant) suffering.

In addition to this outline and the overarching question of (inter)disciplinarity, it is imperative to recognize mediated suffering, its experience and the social, cultural and institutional developments that it brings about as a distinctively new process (Wilkinson, 2005: 146), henceforth acknowledging the scholarly work that lies ahead with regard to the refined concepts, theoretical framework and empirical analysis of suffering and media. Accordingly, one of the objectives of the interviews is to set out future directions in research on media and suffering.

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[3] The compassion fatigue thesis has received a lot of criticism. In his work, Cottle (2009a: 128 & 132-133) sums up the main points: the unquestioned media-centric premise on which it heavily dwells; the lack of analytical precision as the concept appears to cover a very diverse set of issues and facets; and the lack of empirical evidence which results in relatively speculative statements on for instance audience response. From a sociological perspective, Tester (2001: 17-22) and Wilkinson (2005: 140-141) further add the unquestioned and one-sided commitment of many scholars in this area to the position that we have a moral responsibility to care and that compassion is a *natural* part of our human condition. Wilkinson (2005: 149-151) also points out a neglect of the broader societal context in the debate on compassion fatigue.

## METHODOLOGY

In 2012, a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with twelve internationally renowned scholars whom are experts regarding the mediated representation of suffering. The topic-list addressed a number of issues that were derived from the literature review as well as dealt with broader reflections on the state and nature of the field. All conversations were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Due to practical issues, interviews via e-mail were conducted with three scholars in addition to the nine face-to-face interviews in person or via Skype. On average, the face-to-face interviews lasted about 39 minutes and the transcripts were analyzed using qualitative content analysis techniques following the method of thematic coding (Jensen, 2002: 247; Wester and Peters, 2004: 83-103). Accordingly, statements of the interviewees were identified, compared, contrasted and subsequently clustered into three particular categorizations of data in relation to the broader context and objectives of this study: the nature of the field, the conceptual complexity, and future directions in research.

Before going into the specific results of the interviews, a few more words on the selection of our respondents. As our initial sample of interviewees was inspired by the diversity of work conducted within the broad framework of media and suffering, scholars representing different disciplines within social sciences were selected: media and communication studies, sociology, anthropology and philosophy. Another criteria for the selection of the respondents was their seminal work and publications on the topic of mediated representation of suffering, henceforth stressing the idea of elite or expert interviews (Gogner, *et al.*, 2005). The choice of the face-to-face interviews was to a large extent determined by pragmatic considerations in terms of time, resources and spatial restrictions.

These criteria eventually resulted in an interview sample that consisted of Jonathan Benthall, Lilie Chouliaraki, Simon Cottle, Suzanne Franks, Folker Hanusch, Susan Moeller, Shani Orgad, Keith Tester and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen alongside interviews via mail with David Campbell, Paul Frosh and Mervi Pantti. Table 1 in appendix gives an overview of the respondents, their affiliation at the time of the interview, the date and the interview setting.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although the interviews tackled a wider range of topics, three key issues about the research on mediated suffering emerged from the thematic analysis of the interviews: the nature of the field, the key concepts, and the future directions in research.

### Between disciplinary borders and interdisciplinary dialogues

The literature review demonstrated the emerging nature of the research on media and suffering, henceforth exposing an area of study that is looking for more theoretical development and empirical exploration. Such general observation also raises questions about the position and status of this line of research within the broader field of social sciences. Does it constitute an established or a rather emerging *independent* discipline? Is it by contrast *embedded* in a broader strand of research and can we thus discern a disciplinary home? Or, alternatively, should we conceive it as an *interdisciplinary field*?

Without any exception, our interviewees are reluctant to label the research on the relationship between media and suffering as an independent field or discipline nor did they consider it to be a subfield of one particular discipline such as media studies or sociology. All value the multi- and interdisciplinary character of the crosscutting work conducted in this area of research and some scholars such as Lilie Chouliaraki and Keith Tester suggested to approach it as a site of common concern, a constellation or nexus of people who are all working and writing on the *same* topic[4] from *different* backgrounds by drawing on *different* theoretical strands. In discussing this issue, a broad range of disciplines were identified such as media and communication studies, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political science and law. Others refer to the wide scope of topics which all reside under the broad label of 'suffering' as well as to its key social nature and its status as a universal human experience, both demanding an interdisciplinary approach and openness to all social sciences and humanities. By implication, Paul Frosh, Simon Cottle and Chouliaraki argue that being named as a distinct 'field' or 'discipline' would not even benefit the research as it would prove to be counterproductive in terms of losing the input of various disciplines and vantage points.

There was a deep concern of seriously delimiting the academic work in its scope when raising borders or proceeding with a form of gatekeeping. Another element of caution to take into account when labeling it as a field is what Tester (personal interview, 14/02/2012) refers to as the process of naturalization.

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[4] Shani Orgad states that the common or shared topic of suffering is – as such – not sufficient to think of it as a *field* due to the rich diversity in backgrounds, methodological approaches and motivations to study it.

'If we have something called "suffering studies" we would be naturalizing suffering and accepting a world in which suffering occurs. Suffering would become defining of what it means to be human'

Particularly in the case of suffering incited by conflicts or other man-made events of misfortune and atrocity, Tester warns for an implicit acceptance and validation of such events when naturalizing the suffering. A final point hints at a broader epistemological discussion of how to define a field or a discipline? Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Folker Hanusch reflected on this issue and wondered whether this would mean that researchers share a particular view and critical mass. In Wahl-Jorgensen's opinion, the research on media and suffering hence represents an emerging interdisciplinary *area* of research rather than a *discipline* as such given that studies relating to suffering and media are 'quite diverse, spread out over a long period of time and represent a variety of different methodological approaches' (personal interview, 7/03,2012).

Despite the overall shared plea for interdisciplinarity, some critical comments are uttered as well. Firstly, Chouliaraki points out that looking beyond the confines of one's own discipline is not an easy task to do as it means to move out of your comfort zone, to challenge yourself and to confront new and possibly contradicting interpretations of what you have taken for granted. This is at the same time a situation of discomfort and agitation as well as it is one of intellectual satisfaction and richness, although the latter requires an open attitude and willingness to question oneself. The issue of disciplinary anchoring vis-à-vis interdisciplinary exchanges thus forces scholars to reflect on one's own position towards other scholars and disciplines as well as on the value of scholarly work that crosses disciplinary borders or, perhaps more important, fails to do so. Given the multifaceted issue of suffering, such questions are central in the daily praxis of scholars who are working in this broad field. Tester picks up on this position of discomfort by pointing towards a tendency of many scholars to stay within their disciplinary home and henceforth orient their dialogue to those who know the terms of reference which they are using. To some degree, disciplinarity would hence avert the earlier discussed problem of incommensurability. Although in favor of an interdisciplinary approach, Cottle also sees possible value in delineating some disciplinary boundaries as this might result in a more rigorous and in-depth research approach as well as a clustering of expertise and knowledge.

However, due to its multilayered and intrinsic human and social nature, the question of suffering is according to Tester 'never allowed easily to rest - or be claimed by - the context of a single (or a hegemonic bloc of) discipline(s)' (personal interview, 14/02/2012), hence demanding interdisciplinarity. This also follows from the absence of a totalizing knowledge of suffering, which can neither be fully achieved through interdisciplinary efforts. In other

words, we need to acknowledge that as individual scholars with particular disciplinary backgrounds, we are capable of generating only a *partial* understanding of suffering as a fundamental human experience. Mervi Pantti (personal communication, 30/03/2012) adds an important remark to this discussion as she urges scholars from different disciplines to engage in a far more widespread 'sharing of knowledge and thereby advancing theory rather than that we all keep on inventing the same wheel in our own disciplinary homes.' Shani Orgad also criticizes the insular and isolated discussions. In order to achieve a deeper, though not all-inclusive (cf. supra), understanding of suffering, we thus need to establish more interdisciplinary dialogue and exchange of knowledge. To sum up the discussion on the pros and cons of establishing disciplinary borders, Tester eloquently summarizes the main driving idea that this site of study should be 'delimited by its gates rather than by the high fences it builds to keep others out.' (personal interview, 14/02/2012)

However, respondents do recognize the institutional perils or challenges of not having a single disciplinary home with regard to grant applications or even job opportunities for young scholars who are working in such a dispersed area as media and suffering. The latter was most explicitly raised by Susan Moeller who hints at the competitive academic system in the U.S. and the current sway of tenure contracts which more often than not require a strong positioning within a distinct field or discipline. Related to this pragmatic value of naming it a discipline, is what Hanusch has referred to as the leading policy and increasing pressure of review boards or indexes[5] to label and categorize research into distinct or insular fields of interest and scholarly work.

To conclude this section, it is fair to say that all of our interviewees are definitely in favor of the interdisciplinary approach to suffering while simultaneously being attentive to some of the drawbacks that such an approach may cause, such as a sense of discomfort for the researcher and institutional preferences for clear-cut disciplinary borders. A final remark in this regard, however, refers to comments by several scholars such as Cottle, Franks and Hanusch who do not wish to exclude that the study of suffering (and its relationship with media) might eventually develop into a discipline of its own, one that is informed and enriched by various theoretical strands and insights.

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[5] Cf. Research Assessment Exercise, Research Excellence Framework, and other forms of academic assessments

*Rise in scholarly interest*

Alongside the main issue of (inter)disciplinarity, the scholars that were interviewed were asked to reflect on possible explanations for the current rise of interest in the topic of (mediated) suffering and the increasing scholarly preoccupation within social sciences for the issue of suffering. Before doing so, Cottle and Shani Orgad made a vital qualification when stressing the *historical* development of research on suffering and media as this dimension is often neglected in the debates. In their view, there has always been an academic interest in the topic, but nowadays it is more articulated and part of a new momentum. According to Cottle, the advent of Cultural Studies and its focus on the everyday and the popular pushed the theme of suffering off the academic agenda. The recent revival in scholarly attention for (mediated) suffering was attributed to a diverse number of explanations, but we were able to discern four commonly uttered determinants which to a large extent overlap with the arguments that we have identified in the literature review.

Firstly, the global nature and prevalence of risk and suffering-related events in general which affect a growing number of people is believed to be an essential factor in stimulating academic research on suffering. Wahl-Jorgensen and Cottle for instance detect an increasing coming of terms within social sciences with the realities of (global) suffering. In this respect, Tester makes an important point. As (Western) academics, most of us do not know what it is like to suffer. Scholarly work on suffering is thus conducted at the level of the *meaning* of suffering, taking a modest stance towards the sufferers when it comes to the *experience* of suffering. Secondly and related to the former, its status of being 'immanently and permanently on display through ubiquitous media' (Frosh, personal communication, 11/03/2012). People are thus experiencing a greater capacity to recognize suffering and respond to it. Campbell, Cottle and Pantti also refer to these vital technological changes which, according to them, have resulted in more scholarly attention to issues of mediation, representation and performance. Thirdly, this pervasive media representation of the other's suffering poses significant *moral* claims upon the audience which at the time challenged traditional theories of mediation to investigate this dimension of audience practices. The link with a globalization of the public sphere and a broader tendency towards cosmopolitanism is raised several times in this context, as is the relationship between media and the emerging humanitarian sector. Moeller, Chouliaraki and Orgad relate these elements to a general rise of humanitarianism and an accompanying scholarly acknowledgement of this, which has led, so they assert, to a moral turn in social sciences and academic debates. Wahl-Jorgensen prefers to define it as an affective turn due to the increasing role of emotions in public and media discourses.

Finally, scholars such as Campbell, Pantti and Tester refer to wider intellectual changes within social sciences and humanities as well, including new approaches, conceptualizations and shifts in focus and research topics. According to Tester, one of the reasons behind the emergence of suffering as a research area is as a kind of 'return of the repressed of modernity' within social sciences. The idea of modernity that with the application of knowledge the human situation can be improved and that problems such as social suffering would be overcome if correctly understood, collapsed. Suffering remained, according to Tester (personal interview, 14/02/2012) and 'the event which brought all of this together – for Western intellectuals at least – was the war in the former Yugoslavia. This showed that the old post-Holocaust conceit [of] "never again" was just hubris' and subsequently urged social sciences to readdress this. Other respondents such as Franks also recognize the war in Yugoslavia as an important turning point in the interest of Western scholars in suffering. Franks refers to the double standards that Western media explicitly deployed in their coverage of the event and their portrayal of sufferers who were now Westerners and no distant others.

*Western field?*

Further discussions briefly tackled the Western and even Eurocentric nature of the field as several interviewees point towards the absence of non-western scholars studying questions of media and suffering. Wahl-Jorgensen and Tester refer to global power relations and the possibility of imperialism to explain this, implying the positioning of the researcher's Western standpoint as a comfortable or 'privileged' (Orgad, personal interview, 22/03/2012) and enabling one to study such an issue as suffering. Having said that, Chouliaraki stresses that acknowledging this Western nature of the field cannot be misinterpreted as an absence of a critical stance towards Western media and their representation of suffering. For some respondents such as Frosh and Hanusch, this characterization of the field is however not surprising given that media studies, along with much of the humanities and social sciences in general, are predominantly Western and Eurocentric. Echoing the idea of incommensurability, Campbell states that it is only possible to have similar notions of, for instance, distant suffering within that particular (geographical) domain. Beyond it, that should not be assumed and would have to be researched. This is an objective that many of our respondents underwrite as research on suffering and humanitarian discourses from and in the so-called global South would provide the ongoing debate with significant empirical input and theoretical challenges. In the section on future directions, we will come back to this.

**Key concepts: in need of conceptual clarification?**

A next set of questions aimed to characterize the research on media and suffering in terms of the driving concepts and key issues at play. Unsurprisingly and resonating the above discussion, the range of perspectives and topics that were identified by our respondents did cross over different disciplines and reflected the wide scope of the research conducted on media and suffering, particularly the three main subfields of production, content and audience which were identified in the literature review. Taking a closer look, the enumerations were however to a large extent informed or determined by the individual scholars' own interest and expertise with regard to the topic of suffering. It would lead us too far to list all concepts here, so we restrict ourselves to the most cited (cluster of) concepts. *Mediation* was mentioned by all, often in relation to the aspect of distance in general and distant suffering in particular or to issues of news selection and gatekeeping (Franks, personal interview, 29/03/2012). Furthermpre, Campbell, Chouliaraki and Cottle make an additional differentiation between the notions of representation and performance/performativity. Another cluster of concepts hinted at the broad range of *emotions* involved with mediated suffering such as compassion (and compassion fatigue), pity and solidarity. Other notions related to the *audience* in a broad sense were witnessing, spectatorship and action at a distance, cosmopolitanism, morality but also citizen journalism. A final category of concepts referred to wider societal or structural levels such as risk society and globalization.

In the subsequent discussion of this list of sub-themes, several interviewees commented on a degree of conceptual indistinctiveness and a future need for some measure of conceptual hygiene. The latter was mainly directed towards the discussion on audiences' reactions to mediated suffering. With regard to the wide range of emotions, Wahl-Jorgensen criticizes scholarly accounts to focus on a limited range and to neglect the complexity of emotional concepts. All too often terms as pity, compassion and empathy are used interchangeably while they refer to very distinct types of audience involvement and reaction. For Chouliaraki and Orgad, this issue of conceptual language is closely related to the above discussed questions of disciplinarity and the different notions or concepts that are developed within each discipline. According to Cottle (personal interview, 07/03/2012), it is moreover informed by a tendency within each separate research tradition 'to continue to sort out concepts as if the Holy Grail is to be reached'. In other words, researchers operating in an intrinsic interdisciplinary field such as suffering are required to share knowledge (cf. supra), to be open to possible aberrant definitions and to accept a certain indispensable degree of contestation in terminology which echoes the previous discussion on a totalizing knowledge of suffering.

*Compassion fatigue*

A final element of discussion relates to the key concept of compassion fatigue that has seemingly governed the academic and public debate on media and suffering in the 1990s and early 2000s. Opinions were strongly divided on this issue. Some would consider it to be a 'nostalgic concept of the past' (Orgad, personal interview, 22/03/2012) or even a 'myth' (Campbell, personal communication, 16/03/2012) while others regard it as 'an everyday reality' (Benthall, personal interview, 16/02/2012) and a valuable analytical concept, with important reservations however. Frosh and Chouliaraki, for instance, believe it to exist, respectively because it has been named and bears real effects. It is considered to be a useful term as it asks us to reflect on the centrality of certain kinds of public moral emotions and their limitedness or constraints. Others such as Wahl-Jorgensen assess its significance as a salient conceptual approach to study for instance NGO discourses on suffering and relief aid or the formulaic nature of news reporting. Although Tester (personal interview, 14/02/2012) would prefer the term 'media fatigue' for the latter, hence stressing the predictable nature of the images and narratives involved. Nonetheless, critical comments were formulated regarding the driving force of compassion fatigue. Frosh signals the key problem of a disjunction between emotion and prevalent conceptions of action. He further argues that the 'lack of perceived efficacy is a keener problem for the mobilization of moral emotions than simple over-exposure to emotive images and narratives of suffering others.' (personal communication, 11/03/2012) This links up to a broader criticism of many respondents that the thesis of compassion fatigue suffers from a tendency to generalize and is therefore demonstrating a neglect of the rather discrete forms of audience reactions to suffering. Criticism further tackles the lack of detailed empirical evidence and conceptual clarity as it appears to cover everything alongside the implied assumption that compassion is a 'natural' feeling (Pantti, Tester) and a universal phenomenon (Cottle).

## Future directions in research

The literature review revealed the quite recent nature of the research on media and suffering, simultaneously exposing a wide range of future research lines. Our respondents were asked to reflect on what is currently lacking or in need of more theoretical and empirical study.

Remarkably, almost all scholars mentioned the need for more empirical work on *audiences* as their first point of future interest. As most scholarly work has focused on the textual dimension, there are only vague or sporadic references to how these texts affect audiences. In the words of Wahl-Jorgensen (personal interview, 07/03/2012), our 'understanding of audience reactions to and their perception of suffering is largely based on assumptions, not

on empirical evidence.' Following this, Wahl-Jorgensen calls for research that conceptualizes and investigates a more differentiated understanding of emotional expressions, instead of the predominantly negative interpretation that led to theories on compassion fatigue and states of denial (cf. supra). A number of scholars such as Campbell, Franks and Pantti would welcome more audience research because of the transformation of media witnessing in the digital era. According to Campbell (personal communication, 16/03/2012), the rise of social media would however demand a reconceptualization of media and the notion of audience as vital starting points of any audience study as these are 'outdated and limited by emphasis on broadcast rather than engagement.'

This brings us to our second most cited topic which is a widely shared call for more intensified theoretical and empirical studies of *new media* and the role they are playing with regard to (witnessing) suffering. Frosh foresees more work on the relationship of new media technologies with forms of affect, agency and moral response. To make this more tangible, Chouliaraki and Cottle wonder to what extent new communication technologies empower people in disaster situations to act on their suffering. In relation to the media and the use of social media in crisis events, Wahl-Jorgensen and Benthall furthermore point to the need for more research on the changing modes and practices of production.

A third cluster of future directions stems from a sense of *dissatisfaction* with the current state of research. In the previous section on concepts, several scholars referred to a degree of conceptual indistinctiveness and a need for more theoretical and conceptual work in this field. Wahl-Jorgensen addressed a bias in the current research to focus mainly on major or exceptional news events, hence missing the everyday routines and the smaller issues such as unemployment or the loss of a pet. Likewise, the suggestion to investigate other genres and formats of media, besides news media can also be seen in this light. Hanusch mentioned a closer look at the imaginary and visual culture of suffering. In the view of Tester, the field could also be advanced by approaching suffering as a social phenomenon and subsequently observing the producers and consumers of mediated suffering in a broader social context. In other words, a less media-centric and more sociological approach is being argued for. Benthall on the other hand would welcome more work on a political economy of the media-disasters relationship whereby northwards exported representations of suffering are studied as consumables, which are subsequently reciprocated by aid flows to the South. Finally, Chouliaraki and Tester find the historical perspective underdeveloped in much of the current research.

Fourthly, in terms of applied *methodologies*, Benthall and Cottle argue for more ethnographic fieldwork. For instance, they refer to a lack of knowledge on the work and daily

practices of mainly NGOs but also of journalists in areas and populations that were directly affected by a disaster or that experienced great suffering. Another issue is the slumbering tendency towards methodological nationalism – manifesting itself in a plethora of national case studies – which ignores the global nature of suffering and the changing geopolitical situation. Hanusch and Franks would welcome more international comparative research on the theme of mediated suffering. Related to this is a plea for more research on non-western cases and contexts by, preferably, non-western academics or what Orgad calls a de-westernized research area.

A final point of debate brings us back to the topic of *(inter)disciplinarity*. Several scholars such as Chouliaraki, Cottle and Orgad foresee future advances in enhancing the dialogue and exchange between the different disciplines which take up the topic of suffering. True to its interdisciplinary nature, suffering will continue to attract contributions from various backgrounds and interviewees thus value an opening up to even more disciplines within social sciences and humanities such as marketing related to relief aid and humanitarian appeals (Franks), social psychology (Cottle), development studies (Benthall), history and political philosophy (Chouliaraki), moral philosophy (Orgad), political science, and architecture (Wahl-Jorgensen). This final point also reflects the earlier mentioned perception of the field of suffering as an inclusive rather than an exclusive area of research.

## CONCLUSION

In recent years and informed by its widespread societal presence and impact, the issue of suffering has intrigued an increasing number of scholars and has already spurred a rich body of work, reflecting an astonishing richness in terms of approaches, theoretical perspectives and topics of study. Many have recognized the research on media and suffering as a legitimate, timely and necessary field of study, but alongside its emergence within academia questions arose on its disciplinary home and nature. This working paper mainly addressed the question whether the research on media and suffering constitutes an established or emerging discipline, or rather an interdisciplinary field? Or is it embedded in a broader strand of research and can we thus discern a disciplinary home?

Drawing on twelve semi-structured interviews with leading scholars, a strong reluctance towards conceiving the ongoing research as a discipline on its own was identified. All scholars prefer to look at it as a constellation of people, working from different perspectives and backgrounds but all interested in the same topic. In other words, an area of research that is defined by an inherent inter- and multidisciplinary coming together of research interests, expertise and people, characterized by its gates rather than by its borders. Advantages and

disadvantages of such conceptualization were discussed, but the social nature of suffering and its status as a fundamentally human experience informed the debates. This has resulted in a positioning of the research on media and suffering at the heart of social sciences and humanities as well as at the crossroads of different disciplines and with no urge to restrict or delimit the scope of research. This open view was also reflected in the discussion on the identified key concepts and the future directions in research. Regarding the latter, the scholars pointed towards a number of directions to move the research forward. Especially empirical audience research is high on the academic agenda as are studies that look into the role of new media. Other widely shared comments included a further opening up of the research in terms of new methodological and other disciplinary approaches.

To conclude, this working paper has been written with the purpose of initiating further interdisciplinary dialogue and debate within social science and humanities to come to a more comprehensive understanding of suffering and its (mediated) experience. We have raised key questions on (inter)disciplinarity as well as doubts concerning the state of research on suffering and media as a discipline on its own, henceforth arguing to perceive it as an area of research that underwrites its interdisciplinary nature. Coming full circle, the title of our paper – 'suffering as a discipline?' - not only hints at the debate on disciplinary accounts, but also refers to the emotional and moral disposition of scholars working in the area of suffering. In the words of Wilkinson (2005: 168), '[t]hose who engage in this work should recognize from the start that there is no morally comfortable or intellectually satisfying approach to research and writing on what suffering does to people.'

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## APPENDIX

## Table 1. Overview of the interviews

| Interviewee | Affiliation | Date of interview | Setting |
|---|---|---|---|
| Jonathan Benthall | University College London | 16/02/2012 | In person |
| David Campbell | Independent scholar | 16/03/2012 | E-mail |
| Lilie Chouliaraki | LSE | 27/02/2012 | In person |
| Simon Cottle | Cardiff University | 7/03/2012 | In person |
| Suzanne Franks | City University London | 29/03/2012 | In person |
| Paul Frosh | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem | 11/03/2012 | E-mail |
| Folker Hanusch | University of the Sunshine Coast | 22/03/2012 | Skype |
| Susan Moeller | University of Maryland | 20/03/2012 | Skype[6] |
| Shani Orgad | LSE | 22/03/2012 | In person |
| Mervi Pantti | University of Helsinki | 30/03/2012 | E-mail |
| Keith Tester | The University of Hull | 14/02/2012 | In person |
| Karin Wahl-Jorgensen | Cardiff University | 7/03/2012 | In person |

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[6] Due to technical problems, the interview only tackled the first section of questions on the nature of the field.

# Electronic Working Papers

Media@LSE Electronic Working Papers will:

- Present high quality research and writing (including research in-progress) to a wide audience of academics, policy-makers and commercial/media organisations.
- Set the agenda in the broad field of media and communication studies.
- Stimulate and inform debate and policy. All papers will be published electronically as PDF files, subject to review and approval by the Editors and will be given an ISSN.

An advantage of the series is a quick turnaround between submission and publication. Authors retain copyright, and publication here does not preclude the subsequent development of the paper for publication elsewhere.

The Editor of the series is Bart Cammaerts. The Deputy Editor is Nick Anstead. The editorial board is made up of other LSE academics and friends of Media@LSE with a wide range of interests in information and communication technologies, the media and communications from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (including economics, geography, law, politics, sociology, politics and information systems, cultural, gender and development studies).

**Notes for contributors:**

Contributors are encouraged to submit papers that address the social, political, economic and cultural context of the media and communication, including their forms, institutions, audiences and experiences, and their global, national, regional and local development. Papers addressing any of the themes mentioned below are welcome, but other themes related to media and communication are also acceptible:

- Communication and Difference
- Globalisation and Comparative Studies
- Innovation, Governance and Policy
- Democracy, Politics and Journalism Ethics
- Mediation and Resistance
- Media and Identity
- Media and New Media Literacies
- The Cultural Economy

Contributions are welcomed from academics and PhD students. In the Michaelmas Term each year we will invited selected Master's students from the preceding year to submit their dissertations which will be hosted in a separate part of this site as 'dissertations' rather than as Working Papers. Contributors should bear in mind when they are preparing their paper that it will be read online.

Papers should conform to the following format:

- 6,000-10,000 words (excluding bibliography, including footnotes)
- 150-200 word abstract
- Headings and sub-headings are encouraged
- The Harvard system of referencing should be used
- Papers should be prepared as a Word file
- Graphs, pictures and tables should be included as appropriate in the same file as the paper
- The paper should be sent by email to Bart Cammaerts (b.cammaerts@lse.ac.uk), the editor of the Media@LSE Electronic Working Paper-Series