Introduction

A survey of research books on stress over the past 25 years shows that no book has been published during this time that has reviewed occupational stress in specific occupations. This focus seems to be the preserve of journal articles, of which there are hundreds. There are books that, by their title, appear to cater for ‘occupational stress’, but on inspection, do not review stress in particular occupations. Thus there is a substantial gap in the book publication field in the area of occupational stress.

Recently there has been a real shift in the stress-research literature, with greater attention being given to the ‘big issues’ affecting workplace stress and well-being, such as work–family tensions and conflicts, the impact of new technology and so on. Thus, for a long time now, stress-research books have shifted their focus of attention to concentrate on stress and well-being in general – perhaps in particular industries such as manufacturing – but not within specific occupations.

This book aims to bring the research spotlight back on to jobs and occupations, because it is the jobs people hold in the workplace, and not just the industry they work in, that lead to stress.

Handbook of Stress in the Occupations provides reviews and updates on stress research into a broad range of occupations, in transport, education, farming, fishing, oil rig drilling, finance, law enforcement, firefighting, entrepreneurship, music, social services, prisons, sport and health (surgery, internship, dentistry, nursing, paramedics, psychiatry, social work).

The book serves as the first comprehensive collection of reviews on stress research in occupations, many of which have had little attention from researchers, even in international journals. The book sets a new agenda for stress research and gives fresh impetus to scholars who wish to focus on issues and problems associated with specific jobs.

The reviews presented here are written by researchers who have researched and/or published work on a particular occupation, and therefore bring a high level of expertise to examine and discuss the unique aspects of particular occupations and the stress associated with them.

Part I presents a collection of reviews on stress research in health. Felblinger examines the literature concerned with chronic problems in nursing: disruptive behaviours, incivility and bullying. Opie, Lenthall and Dollard brings to light the neglected problems of remote-location nursing: ‘serving populations with relatively high health needs; a physical environment of climatic extremes’. Langan-Fox and Vranic’s chapter reviews the stressful job of surgeons: the impact of high patient expectations, new technology and operating on critically ill patients. Lasalvia’s chapter on psychiatrists brings understanding to the problems experienced by professionals caring for long-term and seriously ill patients; such professionals frequently experience distressing emotional situations and profound suffering as a consequence of their job. Wooten, Kim and Fakunmoju, writing about social workers, remind us of the difficulty of this job, an occupation vulnerable to high levels of stress – dealing with complex social problems as well as the dynamics

of organizational culture and climate. Langan-Fox and Vranic examine the work of interns or medical residents who are at the bottom of the medical hierarchy. Sometimes their work results in adverse events for patients. Moore reviews stress research on dentists, who have jobs commonly thought to be 'more stressful than other occupations'; their stressors include causing pain or anxiety in patients, and lack of cooperation from patients. Halpern and Maunder reveal problems of stress for emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics. These individuals are 'first responders', and provide pre-hospital emergency care, functioning at the interface of healthcare and emergency response.

Part II, on education, presents two chapters. Kyriacou reviews the long-recognized stressful job of school teaching, and brings a fresh perspective to the dynamics of teaching. This author sees teacher stress as triggered by perceptions of threat in dealing with the demands of the job. Phillips and Sen, writing on headteacher stress, illustrate how the job has been recognized as stressful for more than a hundred years, and discuss its many stressful features.

Part III has three chapters – on emergency services, firefighting and prisons. Regehr and LeBlanc review research on those in the emergency services, many of whom suffer post-traumatic stress disorder and trauma symptoms as a consequence of their job. The authors focus on three broad themes. Sluiter, Plat and Frings-Dresen review two main topics concerning firefighters: stress-related health complaints and the known work-related risk factors. Kunst's chapter on prison correctional officers (COs) mentions that officers have often been portrayed as John Wayne-like characters, but in fact COs frequently experience high levels of stress, often due to aggressive encounters with inmates.

Part IV includes chapters on occupations on oil rigs, in fishing and in engineering. Burke and Richardsen review the newly emerging area of research on the job of drillers on oil rigs; this is a field where onshore and offshore installations increase every year. The authors review the many factors affecting work on oil rigs, for instance the job environment, safety concerns, health and well-being, and individual differences. Pollnac, Monnereau, Poggie, Ruiz and Westwood review stress research on fishing – a highly dangerous and risky occupation. They identify stressors, and the methods fishers use to cope with potential danger and associated stress; they present a model aimed at understanding adaptation to the job. Wandel, Råberg Kjøllesdal and Roos discuss how work influences health behaviour among a number of occupations but then focus on three occupational groups, namely engineers, carpenters and drivers, with a particular interest in the different experiences of control and demands during work days.

Part V reviews stress research in finance, entrepreneurship and music. Kahn and Cooper review stress among financial dealers – a hot topic given the recent global financial crisis. It appears that the major source of occupational stress was 'role conflict and changes' involving conflicting job tasks and demands, staff shortages and unsettling turnover rates, and job role change. Grant reviews stress in entrepreneurs, an under-explored research topic in what is a risk-prone activity. In her own research, she sets out to improve measurement in the area, and asks: why do entrepreneurs choose to pursue a stressful career, what separates successful from unsuccessful entrepreneurs, and how do entrepreneurs cope with stress? Kallioniemi, Simola, Kinnunen and Kymäläinen address stress in farming; worldwide this occupation has been widely acknowledged as one of the most difficult occupations, and it has a high suicide rate. The authors draw

out the contrast between what is visually a 'peaceful living environment' and the reality of life on the farm. The authors discuss changes in the international agricultural product market, the world economy and globalization processes, and how these and other factors lead to stress in farming. Yoshie, Kanazawa, Kudo, Ohtsuki and Nakazawa review and discuss the phenomenon of music performance anxiety (MPA) – 'persisting, distressful apprehension about and/or actual impairment of, performance skills in a public context', which manifests itself at the subjective, physiological and behavioural levels and leads to anxiety, tension, apprehension, dread or panic, loss of concentration, memory failure and misreading of the musical score.

Part VI contains four chapters on transport, sport, social services and high-intense occupations. Apostolopoulos, Peachey and Sönmez review research on commercial drivers and licensed truck and bus drivers – jobs that require long periods of concentration and challenging physical conditions, and involve a work environment characterized by high job demand. This is a job requiring zero-error job performance given the potential impact on public safety. The authors apply theoretical perspectives to discuss how the environment may affect driver health. Voight examines the job of those wearing 'the zebra stripes and whistle' – sports officials – in assisting players, teams and coaches in adhering to the rules of their particular sport. This is a job that anyone watching sport on TV realizes is highly risky! Sports officiating, as the author notes, receives worldwide attention. The author identifies the most salient sources of stress experienced by sports officials and the ways they attempt to cope with these job-related stressors. Kosny reviews stress in employees of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) providing social services, and how such organizations, rarely regarded as 'workplaces', carry out roles, sometimes unpaid, that are 'intangible' – counselling, care and support. The author reveals stressors unique to these workers that include the sociopolitical environment, poor work conditions and psychosocial demands. Different from all other chapters is the final chapter in the book by Cropley and Zijlstra, who discuss the chronic problem of 'ruminating' in jobs. Many of us do this! Recovering from the demands of work is now recognized as important, especially with the intensification of the 'knowledge-rich' workplace. Many jobs are primarily cognitive in nature, and thus result in complaints about work pressure. The authors focus on the cognitive aspects of work, and how 'thinking of work' is a main determinant of recovery.

To conclude, the reader might notice that there is a common theme running through all the book chapters: the occupation the author is researching and reviewing is regarded by that author as a job that is highly prone to reports of stress. Thus our book appears to be about the **most stressful jobs** in the workplace.

Janice Langan-Fox

Dedication

To my (grown-up) children, Julian and Caroline, who have been so supportive and encouraging the whole while, and, who have been an inspiration to me.

Thanks – with all my heart.

Janice Langan-Fox