

Statutory Social Workers: Stress, Job Satisfaction, Coping, Social Support and Individual Differences

Stewart Collins

Stewart Collins is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Wales, Bangor, and an Associate Lecturer for the Open University.

Correspondence to Stewart Collins, 19 Milton Hill, Milton by Dumbarton, Dumbarton G82 2TS, UK. E-mail: stewartcollins@blueyonder.co.uk

Summary

Many pieces of research have been undertaken in recent years that consider stress in statutory social work. The research has tended, inevitably, to focus on negatives in social workers' lives, by considering dissatisfaction with the job, absences from work and other physical, psychological and behavioural symptoms of stress. Little attention has been given in the studies of stress and social work to expanding on the positives of social work, the rewards involved, high job satisfaction, the importance of how workers cope with the job, the contribution of supervision, personal and group support at work and home, alongside the positive well-being of many individual social workers. This article highlights the satisfaction social workers feel about their work, considers healthy and unhealthy coping strategies that are, and might be, used, gender differences and the importance of various forms of support from within the work setting, especially mutual group support, accompanied by individual differences linked to good self-esteem, personal hardiness and resilience.

Keywords: stress, job satisfaction, coping, social support, hardiness, resilience

Introduction

Social work is a demanding job, in which individuals often work within statutory organizations that are subject to frequent changes of policies and practices, with severe limitations of resources. It has been noted that there are problems in the recruitment and retention of staff, practitioners' morale is poor; they are anxious about their work and experience a lack of job satisfaction, with many seeking work in less demanding areas (McLean, 1999; McLean and Dolan, 1999; Lymbery, 2001; Morris, 2005).

Chris Jones (2001, pp. 550–1) wrote a particularly striking account of the experiences of a group of statutory social workers which led him to comment about their perceptions of social work as a:

... traumatised, even defeated occupation ... the manifestations of stress and unhappiness in ... social services departments were various, serious and pervasive. Social workers talked of how commonplace it was to see colleagues in tears ... [with] social workers ... walking out ... of people locking themselves into their rooms or just disappearing from the office for hours on end. Going sick for some time each week or month seemed routinized in many agencies. A large number of the long serving fieldworkers had recurring and serious health problems which resulted in extended periods of absence. Many spoke of being emotionally and physically exhausted by the demands of their work.

Negative conclusions also emerged from a recent study by Coffey *et al.* (2004), who undertook a survey of the staff of two UK social services departments, revealing job dissatisfaction particularly with the management of the organization, limited chances of promotion, poor rates of pay and little recognition for good work. They concluded, pessimistically, from the results of their study that 'mental well being [amongst social workers] is poorer than previous studies have indicated; job satisfaction is considerably lower ... [and] organizational constraints ... are higher ... suggesting that the situation in social services was worse than previously thought' (Coffey *et al.*, 2004, p. 744).

Clearly, then, all is not well in social work. But is it as bad as the various studies on stress indicate? Some writers have started to question what they consider to be an excessive emphasis on the stress 'industry' and its discourses (Newton, 1999; Jones and Bright, 2001). By the very nature of stress, the emphasis becomes pessimistic and the related research tends to focus on the negative elements rather than the positives. Indeed, the stress 'industry' can become embroiled with organizing research into stress without giving sufficient attention to good things in the workplace and what can be done to improve stressful situations (Murphy, 2002). For example, in the Coffey *et al.* (2004) study, it was noted that 4.1 per cent of the salaried staff was off work due to stress-related illness. But what about the 95.9 per cent who were *not* off work as a consequence of stress? What factors contributed to them apparently coping adequately with stress and to their feelings of well-being? In fact, most of the studies on stress comment about job satisfaction, support and coping that enable people to deal with stress. Additional concepts such as resilience and 'hardiness' have been also evident in the literature of recent years. Clearly, therefore, there are some factors that can reduce and inhibit stress that perhaps have been underemphasized in the social work literature. This article focuses upon a review of the literature linked to job satisfaction, coping and support, resilience and 'hardiness' and their relevance to the work of statutory social workers.

Social work in the UK takes place with a variety of user groups in different settings and organizations. Most of the research on stress and social work in the

UK has taken place within statutory settings. The context for statutory social work is now changing, such as with the joining together of children's services with education in England and closer ties between adults' services, health and housing. These changes may have implications for the levels of stress and job satisfaction experienced by social workers. Such agencies will have different organizational policies and procedures that impact upon the way job satisfaction is perceived and experienced (Thompson *et al.*, 1996). Also, interactions with some user 'groups' may be more demanding and less satisfying for social workers. For instance, several studies have noted the particular demands made upon child-care social workers in social services settings which may lead to them experiencing more stress, less job satisfaction, limited support and more difficulties in coping (Fineman, 1985; Lecroy and Rank, 1987; Bennett *et al.*, 1993; Coffey *et al.*, 2004). Bennett *et al.* (1993) note that while the social workers in their study all shared the same organizational structure, there were significant differences for child-care workers, with their work in dealing with particularly ambiguous and delicate situations being the most important source of stress for the entire sample of social workers and that the child-care workers were 'least able to distance themselves emotionally from the work they were engaged in' (Bennett *et al.*, 1993, p. 37). Similarly, Coffey *et al.* (2004) found the highest levels of organizational constraints, sickness levels and mental distress amongst child-care social workers compared with social workers working with other user groups. Yet, at the same time, child-care social workers did *not* report lower levels of satisfaction than other workers.

Other studies have produced different and contradictory findings. For example, Thompson *et al.*'s (1996) work indicated that working with particular user groups was *not* a significant variable in the perceptions of stress of the social workers in their study. It was the organizational context of one of the three local authorities in the study that generated the most significant stress. Collings and Murray (1996) also concluded that stress was not significantly associated with working with a particular user group, while Balloch *et al.*'s (1998) extensive research survey suggested that, contrary to expectations, statutory social workers working with older people experienced *higher* levels of stress than those undertaking child-care work.

Job satisfaction

It is clear that, compared with other occupations, social workers do, indeed, enjoy high job satisfaction. A survey of a wide variety of occupational groups in the UK indicated that social work sits just within the top twenty groups that enjoy high job satisfaction (Rose, 2003). Also, writers indicate that statutory social workers generally get much satisfaction from their actual work with users, compared with the stress generated by government and agency policy and practices (Jones, 2001). This is supported by evidence from other research studies which indicate that statutory social workers have a high commitment to

their work, are well motivated by contact with service users and feel they can make a real difference to people's lives (McLean and Andrew, 2000; Eborall and Garmeson, 2001; Huxley *et al.*, 2005). For instance, only one in ten respondents in Gibson *et al.*'s (1989) study in Northern Ireland found social work to be 'dissatisfying' or 'very dissatisfying', with nearly three-quarters of respondents finding it 'very satisfying' or 'satisfying'. Social workers also find satisfaction, reward and enjoyment not only in direct user contact, but also in helping users, challenge, task variety, team and multidisciplinary work and autonomy in their roles (Davies and Brandon, 1988; Balloch *et al.*, 1995; Parry Jones *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, Huxley *et al.*'s (2005, p. 1071) recent study of mental health social workers revealed that 'as many themes emerged with regard to positive features of the work environment as to negative features'. The most popular theme was, again, enjoying user contact. Therefore, as Huxley *et al.* (2005) note, cross-national studies of the care workforce show that there is enjoyment in relationships and working with people and there is high intrinsic job satisfaction (Barreau *et al.*, 2001; Moss and Cameron, 2002; Cameron, 2003). Surveys in the magazine *Community Care* also reveal high job satisfaction, with 80 per cent of social workers in London being satisfied with their jobs, listing interaction with people, making a difference to their lives and the community, challenging work and variety of tasks as being the reasons for their satisfaction (Leason, 2002). A further large-scale survey of 2,000 people in social work indicated that job satisfaction related to 'being valued', doing something valuable for the community and good relationships with colleagues were the main reasons for those people staying in their jobs (Winchester, 2003).

Hence, there is clear evidence that social workers get satisfaction and enjoyment from their work, *despite* the fact that this may take place within demanding and stressful organizational settings.

Stress, demands and moderators

Stress has been described as a 'response to an inappropriate level of pressure. It is a response to pressure not the pressure itself' (Arroba and James, 1987, p. 21). It is seen as the product of complex interactions between environmental and organizational demands and the individual's ability to cope with these demands. Stress has been said to arise from a disparity between the *perceived* demands made on an individual and their *perceived* ability to cope with these demands. If demands are high and perceived ability to cope are high, then a person will not feel stressed (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Bennett *et al.*, 1993). We will examine some 'moderators' of stress which include a wide variety and range of protectors which help reduce it. These are coping skills, social support, individual differences such as good self-esteem, resilience, hardiness and personal control, along with generally well known physiological release mechanisms such as exercise, although the latter will not be a focus of this article (Carson and Kuipers, 1998).

Coping

Stress has been described as comprising three processes (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Primary appraisal consists of the process of perceiving a threat to oneself. Secondary appraisal consists of the process of bringing to mind a potential response to the threat. Coping is the process of executing that response. Coping has been defined as the 'person's constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to meet specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person' (Lazarus, 1998, p. 201). It has been seen as very important to the extent that 'stress itself as a concept pales in significance . . . compared with coping and without giving attention to coping we cannot understand how stress works' (Lazarus, 1998, p. 202).

Generally, a distinction is made between two ways of coping. Problem-focused coping is 'vigilant coping', aimed at problem solving, or doing something to alter the source of the stress to prevent or control it. Emotion-focused coping is aimed at reducing or managing the emotional distress associated with the situation (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Carver *et al.*, 1989). The former tends to predominate when something constructive can be done. It has been described as active coping; the latter tends to predominate when the stress is something that must be endured.

Coping can involve positive cognitive restructuring, which is re-interpreting stressful situations more positively—a type of emotion-focused coping aimed at managing distress emotions, rather than dealing with the stressor itself. Examples of this include putting stressful circumstances into a broader and wider perspective (Matteson and Ivancevich, 1987), making positive social comparisons with others in worse situations than oneself (Taylor, 1983) and using humour selectively, sensitively and appropriately (Moran and Massam, 1997; Martin, 2001). Also, by using cognitive-behavioural approaches such as stress inoculation, by preparing for possible stressful situations and rehearsing possible responses (Meichenbaum, 1985) or rational emotive therapy, which, for example, can involve avoiding 'awfulizing' and 'catastrophizing' about demanding events and making positive reappraisals (Zastrow, 1984). Construing a stressful transaction in more positive terms should lead a person to continue, or resume, active problem-focused coping. Acceptance is another important aspect of coping. It is seen as a functional coping response in that a person who accepts the reality of a stressful situation will be willing to be engaged in an attempt to resolve it (Carver *et al.*, 1989). This would seem to be particularly important in situations in which the stressor is something that must be accommodated, as opposed to circumstances in which the stressor can be easily changed.

Positive problem-focused coping strategies include planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint and seeking out social support. Support is examined later in this article. Planning involves thinking about how we cope with a stressor, coming up with action strategies, thinking about what steps to take and how best to handle the problem. Suppression of competing activities involves putting other competing information and projects aside, to avoid

distractions in order to cope with the stressor. Restraint coping involves waiting for an appropriate opportunity, holding oneself back and not acting prematurely (Carver *et al.*, 1989).

Unhelpful coping strategies

However, not all coping strategies are necessarily positive and two strategies—behavioural and mental disengagement—may be dysfunctional. Behavioural disengagement involves reducing one's efforts to deal with a stressor, even giving up the effort to attain the goals with which the stressor is interfering. Such disengagement is identified with terms such as helplessness (Carver *et al.*, 1989). Mental disengagement occurs when conditions prevent behavioural disengagement. It involves distancing oneself by the use of a wide variety of escape avoidance activities, distracting the person from thinking about the required behavioural responses, such as by excessive drinking, drug use, wishful thinking, day dreaming and inappropriate sleeping.

Denial has been seen as a controversial coping strategy. It is sometimes seen as useful in minimizing distress and facilitating coping, or it can be argued that denial only creates additional problems, unless the stressor can be profitably ignored. Another view is that denial is useful in the early stages of a stressful event/interaction, but can impede coping later on. In general, denial would seem to be a negative form of coping—an opposite to acceptance—as it tends to involve a refusal to believe that a stressor exists and in a person trying to act as if the stressor is not real (Carver *et al.*, 1989).

Coping and social work

Although the research and literature on coping have been developing very rapidly in the discipline of psychology, their potential for researching social work has not really developed (Valtonen *et al.*, 2006). The research studies focusing on stress and social workers have given only limited attention to coping, as noted by Latack (1986) and Um and Harrison (1998). In the USA, the valuable study by Um and Harrison (1998) indicated that coping strategies had a significant impact on clinical social workers' job satisfaction; the more strongly control coping strategies were used, the less job dissatisfaction was evident.

In the UK, while most authors have only touched on coping, Thompson *et al.* (1994) gave these matters more attention. When examining coping methods used by social workers in the UK, Thompson *et al.* (1994) observed that different authors have found differing styles of coping were used. For instance, Fineman (1985) suggested that internalization of difficulties was the dominant style of coping used by social workers, where anxiety built up, with the hope that it would disappear, or be released elsewhere. Some workers did reappraise situations more positively, whilst others did not. Local authority social workers

in Satymurti's (1981) study most commonly put their stress into perspective by reappraisal and using a positive coping strategy of 'it could happen to anyone' and 'it's not just me', but some also disengaged mentally and behaviourally and diverted attention elsewhere, by taking time off work or even resigning. According to Satymurti, the prevalent coping strategy used was defensive disengaging, depersonalizing distancing, which led to workers stereotyping users as helpless, immature and difficult. This is clearly a negative and unhelpful approach and one that is a significant feature of burnout (Maslach *et al.*, 1996). It has implications for both qualifying and post-qualifying education and training. Developing knowledge and understanding of coping strategies by social work students and social workers could put them in touch, not only with general knowledge about these matters, but also in applying them to their own coping skills, thus reinforcing the positives in their existing repertoire of skills and opening up the flexible possibilities for developing new ones.

In relation to coping strategies, Stanton *et al.* (2000) and Soderstrom *et al.* (2000) found significant differences in coping strategies between men and women. Women tended to focus more on ventilating feelings and emotions to a far greater extent than did men, who focused more on autonomy, minimizing vulnerability and making more use of aggressive, negative coping strategies, such as using alcohol and drugs. Women also associated emotion-focused coping with hope and better functioning, while emotion-focused coping in some studies was less strongly associated with better functioning for men (Stanton *et al.*, 2000). Hence, this work on emotion-focused coping has implications for styles of supervision in social work, as it would seem female social workers are more likely to appreciate emotion-focused supervision than men, while male supervisors, in turn, may be more likely to focus on problem-solving coping at the expense of emotions. However, there is mixed evidence around gender issues in the use of problem-focused coping strategies and no clear pattern is evident there, while, in relation to age and coping, it has been suggested that older individuals may well have a more effective and mature repertoire of coping styles (Soderstrom *et al.*, 2000).

As Thompson *et al.* (1994, pp. 30–1) point out, 'coping methods are crucial in resisting stress and so the development and expansion of a repertoire of helpful coping methods (and a sensitivity to the dangers of unhelpful methods) is something that all social workers should pursue and which all managers should encourage and facilitate . . . it is crucial to note that managers have a dual responsibility . . . first, to facilitate coping in others . . . second, to ensure that they themselves are developing appropriate strategies for coping'. Clearly, then, this is an important area and one that merits further attention and research in social work.

Social support

Support is one of the most important strategies involved in coping. Several studies have noted that support is an important factor that mediates the

demands of stress. Support has been defined as 'the degree to which the environment makes available resources . . . relevant to the demands made upon the system' (Payne, 1980, p. 284) and 'a resource that helps people cope with job stress through supportive relationships with others' (Thompson *et al.*, 1994, p. 36). Support systems in social work can be divided into two categories: formal and informal. Formal support involves line management, supervision and appraisal systems. Informal support involves support from inside and outside the social work setting, involving, for example, family and friends.

Carver *et al.* (1989) suggest that social support is sought for two reasons. One is seeking support for instrumental reasons, namely seeking practical advice, assistance or information—part of problem-focused coping. The second is seeking support for emotional reasons, namely getting moral support, sympathy or understanding—part of emotion-focused coping. Talking about stress-related thoughts and feelings helps people to impose a cognitive structure to facilitate integration and resolution of stressful experiences, whereas constraints on disclosure of these feelings can impede these processes (Lepore *et al.*, 2000). Healthy emotional adjustment thus can be facilitated by talking about stress, by extinguishing negative emotional responses to it or by creating more benign or neutral associations with memories of the stressor (Lepore *et al.*, 2000). Disclosure of stressful events and talking about the emotions associated with them is much more likely to lead to positive psychological adjustment when supportive social networks are available (Lepore *et al.*, 2000). Nevertheless, the seeking out of emotional social support is seen as a double-edged sword (Carver *et al.*, 1989). Emotional support can offer very positive reassurance and a return to problem-based coping, but over-use of ventilation and sympathy seeking *for long periods* may not always be adaptive and can impede 'adjustment', as it is believed too much focus on distress can distract people from active coping and movement beyond distress (Carver *et al.*, 1989).

There are interesting issues surrounding gender in relation to support. For instance, the more support a woman receives from her husband/partner, the weaker her feelings of being overloaded with conflicting job and family demands (Berkowitz and Perkins, 1984). Considerable and strong evidence suggests that women are better at seeking out and providing support for themselves than men and get more satisfaction from receiving it (Guteck *et al.*, 1988; McDonald and Korabik, 1991; Ogus *et al.*, 1990; Taylor *et al.*, 2000). However, although men are much less likely both to seek and to give social support than women, they are often *recipients* of support from a female partner, close relative or close female friend (Kirschbaum *et al.*, 1995). Findings from Huxley *et al.*'s (2005) study of mental health social workers suggested that women's lower levels of stress in their study might well be the result of their making better use of opportunities for support, confirming the findings of an earlier National Institute for Social Work study (McLean, 1999).

Supervision, the organization and support from colleagues

Gibson *et al.*'s (1989) work with social workers in Northern Ireland indicated that colleagues were a primary source of support for 80 per cent of the respondents—way ahead of support from one's own organization (3 per cent) and professional organizations (2 per cent). Interestingly, very few respondents in this research noted the significance of family and friends as support and over a third wanted more support from their supervisor. Jones *et al.*'s (1991) study of generic and hospital social workers in Hertfordshire again revealed the significance of support from colleagues which was noted by three-quarters of respondents, but, in this research study, support from family and friends was thought to make the job easier for 64 per cent and support from seniors/supervisors made the job easier for over half of the respondents.

However, over one in ten felt that support from supervisors made no difference or made things worse, while half of the social workers in Balloch *et al.*'s (1998) work suggested that support from their manager/supervisor was not important. A quarter of the social workers in Jones *et al.*'s (1991) study didn't receive supervision regularly, as was the case with a third of the respondents in Thompson *et al.*'s (1994) work. In a qualitative study of front line child protection workers in Australia, it was found that supervision gave insufficient attention to the emotional demands of work and to the workers' self-esteem and resilience (Gibbs, 2001). Another study of child welfare social workers in Canada indicated that social support from supervisors and line managers was of limited value in relieving symptoms of distress (Regehr *et al.*, 2004). Alternatively, the findings of Collings and Murray (1996), Storey and Billingham (2001) and Huxley *et al.*'s (2005) studies in the UK indicated good and positive support from senior and supervisory figures.

Much has been written about the influence of new managerialism in social work organizations and its neglect of the strong emotions generated by interactions in social work (Morrison, 1990; Rushton and Nathan, 1996; Gorman, 2000; Rogers, 2001; Harlow, 2004). The emphasis on economy, efficiency and effectiveness, positivist approaches, the growth of scientific and total quality, best-value management has led to a focus on measurable inputs and outcomes at the expense of process. This has influenced supervision experiences with an emphasis on accountability and sometimes on the inquisitorial, with limited attention being given to the emotional content of interactions with users and other professionals, along with a repression of it, so that feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, pleasures and desires become harder to voice to a supervisor. Consequently, there is less supportive nurturing within supervision and less satisfaction with the experience of supervision (Rogers, 2001). Being valued, receiving praise and positive feedback are important aspects of job satisfaction (Gibbs, 2001). A nurturing supervision is one way of helping social workers feel significant to users and their organization, while supporting them to cope

with the emotional demands of their work (Gibbs, 2001). Most recently, Ruch (in press) has also noted that, beyond offering individual support, the supervisor has a key role in acting as a link for the team to the wider organization, in fighting for clarity of task, for appropriate workloads and resources. Also encouraging, facilitating and co-ordinating the participation of individual social workers in forming or attending various diverse support groups.

The implications drawn from the literature and research findings are that more frequent, regular, extensive supervision, better informed and more sensitive supervision is likely to develop and to provide more effective support for social workers, with an emphasis on trusting and valuing individuals, with less emphasis on bureaucratic checks (Cherniss, 1995).

Organizations also have a responsibility to ensure that staff have appropriate appraisal and staff development opportunities, such as opportunities to build upon and expand special interests, to change work roles, if necessary, after a prolonged period in one post, to regularly review career development in order to consider the changing needs of the individual social worker in the organization. At the same time, when changes are being planned at a wider level in the organization, then collaboration on change with social workers is essential in order that 'grass roots' ownership is maintained from within, rather than a feeling that change has been imposed either from the outside and/or 'from above' (Cherniss, 1995). Training for organizational negotiating skills in order to develop strategies and techniques for dealing with work problems is also important—and, again, these should be acted on and reviewed regularly.

Support from colleagues

Studies by Bennett *et al.* (1993), Bradley and Sutherland (1995), Thompson *et al.* (1996) and Smith and Nursten (1998) in the UK have all emphasized the importance of support *from colleagues*, while Bennett *et al.* (1993) drew attention to the possible use of a 'buddy system' and a role for peer mentors to provide additional support, listening opportunities, counselling and empowerment. In the USA, in a group of Pittsburgh social workers, Koeske and Koeske (1989, pp. 246–7) found that 'social support provided by co-workers can buffer against the negative effects of workload on burnout . . . while low social support, especially low co-worker support was associated with burnout'. Also, in the USA, the valuable research study by Um and Harrison (1998) of over 160 clinical social workers revealed that social support, the role of co-workers, collectives and support groups had a particularly significant effect in mediating burnout, and also improved job satisfaction. These were found to be much more preferable to teaching stress coping skills, namely individual strategies to reduce stress. Koeske and Koeske (1989), Himle *et al.* (1989) and Shin *et al.* (1984) were other American researchers to have emphasized the positive significance of social worker support groups compared with other forms of support. Otkay (1992), in a survey of almost 130 hospital social workers helping

AIDS patients in the USA, came to similar conclusions. The workers' support groups encouraged discussion, built consensus, coalitions and networks, helped members articulate agency demands, enabled them to be clearer about explicit and implicit rules and role conflict issues—encouraging movement towards resolution of these issues, while clarifying the workers' own sense of role and mission. Furthermore, a high note of personal accomplishment and rewards came through involvement in group membership. Therefore, the clear message from most research studies of stress and social workers is that support from colleagues is a significant buffer against stress and that social work organizations should commit themselves to making time available for support meetings as part of routine work patterns, not as an optional 'add-on'.

Team meeting agendas should include more time for support issues around discussion and resolution of problems with particular users, groups of users, communication of problems within the organization and with other organizations, rather than focusing too much on bureaucratic matters, case allocation and routines (Cherniss, 1995). At the same time, particular support groups of individual colleagues, such as males, females, workers from black communities, workers with particular interests and new workers, should have recognized time and space, if required, for regular discussion opportunities, for mutual sharing of common experiences, strengths, problems and possible resolutions within their social work setting. Learning sets or seminars based around social workers' own agendas, work-based issues, seeking practical outcomes, are another possible means of providing mutual group support and shared problem solving (Coulshed and Mullender, 2006). The important point is that a range of opportunities for mutual group support should be available, dependent on the particular needs, wishes and wants of the staff of the organization.

Individual differences

Whilst the organizational context clearly has a very significant impact on social workers and is seen as the most powerful element in determining job satisfaction and how people cope with stress, individual differences also play a part in coping behaviours (Thompson *et al.*, 1994; Storey and Billingham, 2001; Lloyd *et al.*, 2002). Individual differences related to optimism, internal locus of control, good self-esteem, resilience and hardiness are, in turn, all linked to coping (Major *et al.*, 1998). Individual differences and coping *dispositions* both play roles in *situational* coping and the degree of fit between these is how people deal with the constraints of a situation (Major *et al.*, 1998). Personality variables can account for a preference for active, task-engaged coping or a tendency to respond poorly to work stressors. For example, optimism involves positive, favourable expectations and outcomes for the future; it is associated with making active, engaged coping efforts to deal with stress, rather than denial, making the best of whatever is encountered. Pessimism, or negative affectivity, involves unfavourable expectations, and is associated with excessive focus on

emotional distress and disengagement (Sheier and Carver, 1992; Chang, 1998; Segerstrom *et al.*, 1998).

Another variable linked to coping is perceptions of the controllability of the stressor (Carver *et al.*, 1989). When situations are seen as controllable, active coping strategies predominate; when situations are seen as less controllable, alternative strategies predominate. People who believe that they can do something to alter situations tend to rely on active coping strategies.

People who believe that they can do little externalize control and attribute control externally to events or other factors, marginalizing the part they feel they can play in determining circumstances. They tend to rely more on strategies such as denial and disengagement (Seligman, 1975; Carver *et al.*, 1989). Those with an internal locus of control engage in planning and active coping more than those with an external locus of control (Parkes, 1984) and enjoy more job satisfaction (Andrisani and Nestel, 1976). Other personality variables which predict positive patterns of coping include resilience, hardiness and self-esteem. Those with higher self-esteem engage in positive and active attempts to cope with stressors (Perlin and Shooler, 1978); those with lower self-esteem tend to become preoccupied with self-blaming and distress emotions, being more likely to disengage from goals when under stress (Carver *et al.*, 1989).

Few researchers have attempted to explore the importance of individual differences in coping with stress in the social work/social care field. Rose *et al.* (2003) explored the reactions of care staff in community-based homes for people experiencing learning disabilities. It was found that independent personality and coping variables such as neuroticism and, in particular, wishful thinking were significantly and highly correlated with negative psychological outcomes, when compared with work-based stressors and supports. Also, Regehr *et al.* (2004), in their study of Canadian child welfare workers, noted that individual workers who were mistrustful, who were shy and nervous in relation to others and who were sensitive to rejection were more likely to report higher levels of stress. In addition, those who felt that they had greater amounts of control over the outcomes of events experienced less stress and depression symptoms.

Individual differences may be also evident in the way social workers undertake their tasks. Two social workers may have a similar job but the quantity and quality of their workloads will differ, job events will differ and, more particularly, individual social workers will place different emphases on time spent on different aspects of their work, such as attending meetings, administration, record keeping, report writing, phone calls, emails, direct client/user contact and interview length. All these may well affect how an individual copes with stress. The idea of 'job crafting' (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001, p. 179) considers the 'physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task boundaries of their work . . . and exert influence . . . on what is the essence of their work', focusing on some tasks rather than others. Hence, in relation to stress and coping, the number, manner, scope and type of job tasks and, therefore, the potential stressors that social workers are exposed to will be influenced by

the way social workers ‘craft’ their job. Stress—or lack of it—can be created by their own activities. This has implications for social workers developing greater awareness themselves of their own particular styles and emphases in their approach to tasks, which could be ‘self-adjusted’ to enable more effective use of time, or this could be a possible outcome of awareness developed by sensitive and skilled supervision.

Lazarus (1999), Lazarus and Cohen-Charash (2001), Wainwright and Calnan (2002) and Dewe and Trenberth (2004) go further and point out that the manner in which individual workers invest their experiences of stress and coping with meaning and emotions is particularly important. The implications for social work are that more attention should be given to the meanings that individual social workers give to stressful events, how the individual copes with them and the emotions they associate with them. The notion of individual differences and individual emotions helps us maintain sensitivity to the uniqueness of responses by particular social workers to stressful demands. This calls for flexible, individualized responses from organizations in relation, for instance, to supervision and support needs. Interestingly, it has been noted by Graen *et al.* (1982) that different supervisees may have quite different perceptions of the same supervisor. Furthermore, in experiencing stress and difficulties in coping, some social workers may need to make use of an independent, confidential staff counselling service, with this service being made readily available without stigma or censure. Many social workers in studies of stress have noted how expressions of being unable to cope are hard to discuss with immediate supervisors (Gibbs, 2001).

Hardiness and resilience

Hardiness is an important concept. It has been described as ‘a constellation of personality characteristics that function as a resistance resource in the encounter with stressful events’ (Kobasa *et al.*, 1982, p. 169). The three personality characteristics are control, commitment and challenge. There has been surprisingly little work done examining hardiness in social workers, although Kanya (2000) examined this concept in social work students in the USA. Age differences seem to play a part in hardiness, with a suggestion that hardiness was associated with being older and the more experiences of working life one has, the harder one becomes (Schmied and Lawler, 1986; Soderstrom *et al.*, 2000). This links in with Otkay (1992), Fortune (1987) and Storey and Billingham’s (2001) suggestions that younger, single social work students and younger social workers are more prone to stress and burnout on account of, for example, pre-occupation with social work, idealistic expectations of the job and excessive emotional involvement in it, along with weaker support networks and less competent coping strategies.

Some may have problems with the words ‘hardiness’ and the ‘hardy’ personality, preferring to use ‘resilience’. However, literature relating to stress and

social work makes little use of the latter term, two exceptions being Horowitz (1998) and Cherniss (1995), although it is obviously in common use in work with children and young people and has been used extensively in looking at how people cope with stress (Major *et al.*, 1998; Frederickson *et al.*, 2003; Tugade and Frederickson, 2004). Emotional resilience has been described as 'the general capacity for flexible and resourceful adaptation to external and internal stressors' (Klohen, 1996, p. 1067). It refers to effective coping and adaptation when faced with hardship and adversity; it has been characterized by an ability to experience and 'bounce back' from negative emotional experiences by adaptation, to check the changing demands of stressful experiences (Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004).

There are different views of the hardiness—or otherwise—of the personalities of those who become social workers. Some, such as Thompson *et al.* (1994), describe social workers as hardy, resilient people and good, professional copers, with the accompanying dangers of being perceived in an excessively positive light that lead to their being asked to cope with excessive workloads and limited resources. Others such as Rushton (1987) have queried 'whether people who are vulnerable to depression choose social work rather than another occupation because unconsciously they wish to work through personal problems by helping others' (Lloyd *et al.*, 2002, p. 256). However, Lloyd *et al.* (2002, p. 262) go on to note that the 'literature suggesting that the [social work] profession appeals to vulnerable or unstable people is either taken from personal accounts or an expressed belief [and there] is little evidence to support this'. Lloyd *et al.* (2002) note the difficulty in determining whether 'psychiatric symptomology' was already present in the individual's personality, or whether the perceived stresses experienced by social workers result in high levels of emotional distress. It is interesting to note a survey by Stanley *et al.* (2002) which indicated that 75 per cent of the 700 social workers involved in their survey had developed depression only *following* the start of their social work careers.

There are also dangers in emphasizing individual resilience and hardiness at the expense of the context, or the organizations in which social workers are located, where they may be asked to take on too many demands and work that would sorely tax the 'hardiness' of any individual (Thompson *et al.*, 1994; Lloyd *et al.*, 2002; Coffey *et al.*, 2004). Whilst various elements of the hardiness model have not been without critics, with the early research focused on business organizations (Funk, 1992), there do seem to be important implications for social work. The theoretical concepts would appear to be very relevant for social workers, who generally are known to have a high degree of commitment to users and gain much satisfaction from that, but often work in organizations which offer only limited opportunities for control of work allocation, workload and work tasks. Their organizations are often in states of flux and change, sometimes responding to internal reorganizations, but more often to new and expanding demands from recently instituted legislation, policies and practices. The ideas underpinning the hardiness model encourage a more positive outlook

on working life—a more co-operative approach. They fit well with the ideas of reflective learning and development through emphasizing challenging opportunities and possibilities rather than potential stressors and overwhelming threats. The powerful influence of the organizational context of social work should be emphasized, as agency-level coping strategies are a very important avenue for reducing stress, so developing the ‘hardy’ organization must always be a target, as well as developing the ‘hardy’ individual (Maddi, 2002). Organizations themselves can give attention to, and work on, commitment, control and challenge, just as much as the individual, in order to maintain resilience, coping and co-operation, credibility, flexibility, creativity, sound problem solving and informed decision making (Maddi *et al.*, 1999).

The concepts of resilience and hardiness also raise issues about selection of students for social work courses and the extent to which the ‘hardiness’ characteristics of commitment, challenge and personal control should be sought out and examined. Also, there are issues around the extent to which the potential characteristics of resilience and hardiness can be developed during a course. For instance, there are dangers of discriminating against students who may have experienced offending and/or mental health problems, but are putting/have put those behind them (Collins, 2006). Certainly, attention can be given to how candidates have coped previously in their work and personal lives before undertaking a professional social work programme. For example, there may well be sound, extensive evidence that a candidate has demonstrated commitment, challenge and control with work in a particular setting that has involved many demands, few supports and many constraints (Payne, 1980). A candidate may well also have demonstrated good-quality, clear evidence that they have coped with the demands and challenge of extensive family commitments, either in themselves or in association with particular jobs (Cherniss, 1995). However, selection interviews are now obligatory as part of the new degree requirements and a programme has the right to obtain information about a candidate’s health, including mental health, as well as criminal convictions (General Social Care Council, 2002). Some of the areas that could be explored at selection include:

- What are the current strengths?
- What is the evidence of the applicants’ commitment to social work?
- How serious were the previous challenges?
- How has the applicant coped with previous problems?
- To what extent have they been controlled and resolved over time?
- How will the applicant cope with the rigours and demands of a social work programme?
- How will the applicant cope with the demands of social work itself?
- What support is available to the applicant from friends, family, social work lecturing staff and the wider educational institution? (adapted from Collins, 2006, p. 451).

Such questions may not necessarily be easily answered, because the 'measures' of the above criteria are somewhat unproven. Also, the restricted time available for interviews may prohibit in-depth exploration, although this could be done, if necessary, in a follow-up interview with a programme leader or after obtaining additional information from relevant persons, such as a general practitioner.

The hardiness characteristics are linked to psychological and existential concepts. Students and social workers can be empowered to develop knowledge and understanding of these concepts and skills during a course, as well as attempting to put them into action in their practical work. Teaching and learning experiences linked to commitment, challenge and control have been extensively tested, such as by Maddi *et al.* (1998). There is no reason why these should not be incorporated within qualifying or post-qualifying social work programmes as lectures and learning experiences on 'hardiness' and coping techniques, within a module based on the stress experiences of social workers, looking at turning stress into opportunity by situational reconstruction, considering alternative ways of thinking about the situation to broaden perspectives, deepening understanding and planning other ways of coping. Such learning experiences can not only develop hardiness, but also increase job satisfaction and the use of social support (Maddi, 2002).

Conclusion

In addition to giving more attention to hardiness and past experiences of coping when selecting social work students and facilitating additional learning about these concepts during qualifying social work education programmes, there are also particular implications for professionally qualified social workers. In order to empower social workers to combat stress, maximize job satisfaction, build appropriate coping strategies and support systems, develop resilient personalities who enjoy good self-esteem and a sense of self-control, then work is needed to encourage appropriate developments at individual, team and organizational levels. Ongoing awareness of one's own changing strengths and weaknesses, knowledge and understanding of the important components in stress, job satisfaction, coping, hardiness, resilience and control is a part of the solution. Group support of a formal and informal nature is a vital element which organizations should appropriately facilitate. With further reorganizations occurring in the settings for statutory social work, there are more opportunities to emphasize once again the enhancement of job satisfaction and the reduction of stress. The Care Council requirements in various parts of the UK for ongoing professional development also forms another part of the solution, ensuring better opportunities for education and training of staff. Furthermore, statutory social work organizations obviously need to care for, value and recognize workers also by providing regular, well informed, sensitive supervision emphasizing care and appropriate autonomy, rather than an

excessive focus on standard setting, or 'inquisition', whilst also providing appropriate advice and clear information about agency procedures, policies and practices. All these elements combine together to enhance support opportunities and better coping strategies for social workers. It is in such circumstances, along with the absolutely prerequisite provision of essential resources and manageable workloads, that social workers can thrive and develop positively. Finally, in Otkay's (1992, p. 437) concise and wise words, in social work, more 'studies of factors that make jobs exciting, challenging and fulfilling would be welcome'.

Accepted: March 2007

References

- Andrisani, P. and Nestel, G. (1976) 'Internal-external control as a contributor to, and outcome of, work experience', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **61**, pp. 16-31.
- Arroba, T. and James, K. (1987) *Pressure at Work: A Survival Guide*, London, McGraw Hill.
- Balloch, S., Andrew, T., Ginn, J., MacLean, J., Pahl, J. and Williams, J. (1995) *Working in the Social Services*, London, National Institute for Social Work.
- Balloch, S., Pahl, J. and MacLean, J. (1998) 'Working in the social services: Job satisfaction, stress and violence', *British Journal of Social Work*, **28**(3), pp. 329-50.
- Barreau, S., Cameron, C. and Moss, P. (2001) *Mapping the Care Workforce: Supporting Joined-Up Thinking: Literature Review*, London, Institute of Education, London University.
- Bennett, P., Evans, R. and Tattersall, A. (1993) 'Stress and coping in social workers: A preliminary investigation', *British Journal of Social Work*, **23**, pp. 31-44.
- Berkowitz, A. and Perkins, H. (1984) 'Stress among farm women: Work and family as interacting systems', *Journal of Marriage and Family*, **46**, pp. 52-67.
- Bradley, J. and Sutherland, V. (1995) 'Occupational stress in social services: A study of social workers and home help staff', *British Journal of Social Work*, **25**(3), pp. 313-31.
- Cameron, C. (2003) 'Care work and care workers', in *Social Care Workforce Research: Needs and Priorities*, Kings College, London, Social Care Workforce Research Unit.
- Carson, J. and Kuipers, E. (1998) 'Stress management and interventions', in Hardy, S., Carson, J. and Thomas, B. (eds), *Occupational Stress: Personal and Professional Approaches*, Cheltenham, Stanley Thomas.
- Carver, C., Scheier, M. and Weintraub, J. (1989) 'Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **56**, pp. 267-83.
- Chang, E. (1998) 'Dispositional optimism and primary and secondary appraisal of a stressor: Controlling for confounding influences and relations to coping and psychological and physical adjustment', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **74**(4), pp. 1109-20.
- Cherniss, C. (1995) *Beyond Burnout*, London, Routledge.
- Coffey, M., Dugdill, L. and Tattersall, A. (2004) 'Research note: Stress in social services: Mental well-being, constraints and job satisfaction', *British Journal of Social Work*, **34**(5), pp. 735-47.
- Collings, J. and Murray, P. (1996) 'Predictors of stress amongst social workers: An empirical study', *British Journal of Social Work*, **26**(3), pp. 375-87.

- Collins, S. (2006) 'Mental health difficulties and the support needs of social work students: Dilemmas, tensions and contradictions', *Social Work Education*, **29**(5), pp. 446–60.
- Coulshed, V. and Mullender, A. (2006) *Management in Social Work*, Basingstoke, Palgrave.
- Davies, M. and Brandon, M. (1988) 'The summer of '88', *Community Care*, **13 October**, pp. 16–18.
- Dewe, P. and Trenberth, L. (2004) 'Work stress and coping: Drawing together research and practice', *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, **32**, pp. 157–69.
- Eborall, C. and Garmeson, K. (2001) *Desk Research on Recruitment and Retention in Social Care and Social Work*, London, Business and Industrial Market Research.
- Fineman, S. (1985) *Social Work, Stress and Intervention*, Aldershot, Gower.
- Fortune, A. (1987) 'Multiple roles, stress and well-being among MSW students', *Journal of Social Work Education*, **87**(3), pp. 81–91.
- Frederickson, B., Tugade, M., Waugh, C. and Larkin G. (2003) 'What good are positive emotions in crises?', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **84**(2), pp. 365–76.
- Funk, S. (1992) 'Hardiness: A review of theory and research', *Health Psychology*, **11**, pp. 335–45.
- General Social Care Council (2002) *Rules and Requirements for the Degree in Social Work*, London, GSCC.
- Gibbs, J. (2001) 'Maintaining front line workers in child protection: A case for refocusing supervision', *Child Abuse Review*, **10**, pp. 323–35.
- Gibson, F., McGrath, A. and Reid, N. (1989) 'Occupational stress in social work', *British Journal of Social Work*, **19**(1), pp. 1–18.
- Gorman, H. (2000) 'Winning hearts and minds: Emotional labour and learning for care management work', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, **14**(2), pp. 149–58.
- Graen, G., Novak, M. and Sommerkamp, P. (1982) 'The effects of leader/member exchange and job design on productivity and satisfaction: Testing a dual attachment model', *Organisational Behaviour and Human Performance*, **7**(2), pp. 26–34.
- Gutek, B., Repetti, R. and Silver, D. (1988) 'Non work roles and stress at work', in Cooper, C. and Payne, R. (eds), *Causes, Coping and Consequences of Stress at Work*, London, Wiley.
- Harlow, E. (2004) 'Why don't women want to be social workers anymore? New managerialism, post feminism and the shortage of social workers in England and Wales', *European Journal of Social Work*, **7**(2), pp. 167–79.
- Himle, D., Jayaratne, S. and Thyness, P. (1989) 'The effects of emotional support on burnout, work stress and mental health among Norwegian and American social workers', *Journal of Social Services Research*, **13**, pp. 27–45.
- Horowitz, M. (1998) 'Social work trauma: Building resilience in child protection social workers', *Smith College Studies of Social Work*, **68**(3), pp. 363–77.
- Huxley, P., Evans, S., Gately, C., Webber, M., Mears, A., Pajak, S., Kendall, T., Medina, J. and Katona, C. (2005) 'Stress and pressure in mental health social work: The worker speaks', *British Journal of Social Work*, **35**(7), pp. 1063–79.
- Jones, C. (2001) 'Voices from the front line: State social workers and New Labour', *British Journal of Social Work*, **31**(4), pp. 547–63.
- Jones, F. and Bright, J. (2001) *Stress: Myth, Theory and Research*, Harlow, Prentice-Hall.
- Jones, F., Fletcher, B. and Ibbetson, K. (1991) 'Stressors and strains amongst social workers: Demands, supports, constraints and psychological health', *British Journal of Social Work*, **21**(5), pp. 443–69.
- Kamya, H. (2000) 'Hardiness and spiritual well-being among social work students: Implications for social work education', *Journal of Social Work Education*, **36**(2), pp. 231–41.

- Kirschbaum, C., Klaver, T., Flipp, S. and Hellhammer, D. (1995) 'Sex specific effects of social support on cortisol and subjective responses to acute psychological distress', *Psychosomatic Medicine*, **57**, pp. 23–31.
- Klohen, E. (1996) 'Conceptual analysis and measurement of the construct of ego resiliency', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **70**(5), pp. 1067–79.
- Kobasa, S., Maddi, S. and Kahn, S. (1982) 'Hardiness and health: A prospective study', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **42**, pp. 168–77.
- Koeske, G. and Koeske, G. (1989) 'Workload and burnout: Can social support and perceived accomplishment help?', *Social Work*, **34**, pp. 243–8.
- Latack, J. (1986) 'Coping with stress: Measures and future directions for scale development', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **7**(3), pp. 337–85.
- Lazarus, R. (1998) *The Life and Work of an Eminent Psychologist: Autobiography of Richard S. Lazarus*, New York, Springer.
- Lazarus, R. (1999) *Stress and Emotion: A New Synthesis*, London, Free Association.
- Lazarus, R. and Cohen-Charash, Y. (2001) 'Discrete emotions in organizational life', in Payne, R. and Copper, C. (eds), *Emotions at Work: Theory, Research and Applications for Management*, Chichester, John Wiley.
- Lazarus, R. and Folkman, S. (1984) *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*, New York, Springer.
- Leason, J. (2002) 'High levels of satisfaction among London's social workers', *Community Care*, **20 June**, p. 1427.
- Lecroy, C. and Rank, M. (1987) 'Factors associated with burnout in the social services: An exploratory study', *Journal of Social Services Research*, **11**, pp. 23–39.
- Lepore, S., Ragan, J. and Jones, S. (2000) 'Talking facilitates cognitive emotional processes of adaptation to an acute stressor', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **78**(3), pp. 499–508.
- Lloyd, C., King, R. and Chenoweth, L. (2002) 'Social work stress and burnout: A review', *Journal of Mental Health*, **11**(3), pp. 255–65.
- Lymbery, M. (2001) 'Social work at the cross roads', *British Journal of Social Work*, **31**(3), pp. 369–85.
- Maddi, S. (2002) 'The story of hardiness: Twenty years of theorising, research and practice', *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, **53**(3), pp. 1–11.
- Maddi, S., Kahn, S. and Maddi, K. (1998) 'The effectiveness of hardiness training', *Consulting Psychology Journal*, **50**, pp. 78–86.
- Maddi, S., Khosaba, D. and Pammenter, E. (1999) 'The hardy organisation: Success by turning change to advantage', *Consulting Psychology Journal*, **57**, pp. 117–24.
- Major, B., Richards, C., Cooper, L., Cozzarelli, C. and Zubeck, J. (1998) 'Personal resilience, cognitive appraisals and coping: An integrative model', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **74**(3), pp. 735–52.
- Martin, R. (2001) 'Humour, laughter and physical health', *Psychological Bulletin*, **127**(4), pp. 504–19.
- Maslach, C., Jackson, S. and Leiter, M. (1996) *Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual*, Palo Alto, Consulting Psychological Press.
- Matteson, M. and Ivancevich, J. (1987) *Controlling Work Stress: Effective Human Resource and Management Strategies*, London, Josey-Bass.
- McDonald, L. and Korabik, K. (1991) 'Sources of stress and ways of coping among male and female managers', *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality*, **6**, pp. 185–98.
- McLean, J. (1999) 'Satisfaction, stress and control over work', in Balloch, S., McLean, J. and Fisher, M. (eds), *Social Services: Working Under Pressure*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- McLean, J. and Dolan, L. (1999) 'Moving jobs and staying put', in Balloch, S., McLean, J. and Fisher, M. (eds), *Social Services: Working under Pressure*, Bristol, Policy Press.

- McLean, J. and Andrew, T. (2000) 'Commitment, satisfaction, stress and control among social service managers and social workers in the UK', *Administration in Social Work*, **23**(3/4), pp. 93–117.
- Meichenbaum, D. (1985) *Stress Inoculation Training*, Oxford, Pergamon.
- Moran, C. and Massam, M. (1997) 'An evaluation of humour in emergency work', *The Australian Journal of Disaster and Trauma Studies*, **3**, pp. 26–38.
- Morris, L. (2005) 'The process of decision making by stressed social workers: To stay or leave the workplace', *International Review of Psychiatry*, **17**, pp. 345–54.
- Morrison, T. (1990) 'The emotional effects of child protection on the worker', *Practice*, **4**(4), pp. 253–71.
- Moss, P. and Cameron, C. (2002) *Care Work and the Care Workforce: Report on Stage One and State of the Art Review*, available online at <http://144.82.35.228/carework/reports>.
- Murphy, M. (2002) 'Review of Cooper, C., Dewe, P. and O'Driscoll, M. (eds) 2001, Stress: A review and critique of theory, research and application', *British Journal of Social Work*, **32**(5), p. 649.
- Newton, T. (1999) 'Stress discourses and individualisation', in C. Feltham (ed.), *Controversial Issues in Psychotherapy and Counselling*, London, Sage.
- Ogus, E., Greenglass, E. and Burke, R. (1990) 'Gender–role differences, work stress and depersonalisation', *Journal of Social Behaviour and Personality*, **5**, pp. 387–98.
- Otkay, J. (1992) 'Burnout in hospital social workers who work with AIDS patients', *Social Work*, **37**, pp. 432–9.
- Parkes, K. (1984) 'Locus of control, cognitive appraisal and coping in stressful episodes', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **46**, pp. 655–68.
- Parry Jones, B., Grant, G., McGrath, M., Caldock, K., Ramcharan, P. and Robinson, C. (1998) 'Stress and job satisfaction among social workers, community nurses and community psychiatric nurses: Implications for the care management model', *Health and Social Care in the Community*, **123**, pp. 1–15.
- Payne, R. (1980) 'Organisational stress and support', in Cooper, C. and Payne, R. (1980), *Current Concerns in Occupational Stress*, London, Wiley.
- Perlin, L. and Shooler, C. (1978) 'The structure of coping', *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, **19**, pp. 2–21.
- Regehr, C., Hemsworth, D., Leslie, B., Howe, P. and Chau, S. (2004) 'Predictors of post traumatic distress in child welfare workers: A linear structural equation model', *Children and Youth Services Review*, **26**(4), pp. 331–46.
- Rogers, A. (2001) 'Nurture, bureaucracy and rebalancing the mind and heart', *Journal of Social Work Practice*, **15**(2), pp. 181–91.
- Rose, M. (2003) 'Good deal, bad deal? Job satisfaction in occupations', *Work Employment and Society*, **17**(3), pp. 503–30.
- Rose, J., David, G. and Jones, C. (2003) 'Staff who work with people who have intellectual difficulties: The importance of personality', *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, **16**, pp. 267–77.
- Ruch, G. (in press) 'Reflective practice in contemporary child care social work: The role of containment', *British Journal of Social Work*.
- Rushton, A. (1987) 'Stress among social workers', in Payne, R. and Firth-Cozens, J. (eds), *Stress in Health Professionals*, Chichester, John Wiley.
- Rushton, A. and Nathan, J. (1996) 'The supervision of child protection', *British Journal of Social Work*, **26**(3), pp. 357–64.
- Satymurti, C. (1981) *Occupational Survival*, Oxford, Pergamon.
- Scheier, M. and Carver, C. (1992) 'Effects of optimism on psychological and physical well being: Theoretical review and empirical update', *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, **16**, pp. 201–28.

- Schmied, L. and Lawler, K. (1986) 'Hardiness, type A behaviour and the stress-illness relation in working women', *Journal of Personality and Coping Psychology*, **51**, pp. 1218-23.
- Segerstrom, S., Taylor, S., Kemeny, M. and Fahey, J. (1998) 'Optimism is associated with mood coping and immune change in response to stress', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **74**(6), pp. 1646-55.
- Seligman, M. (1975) *Learned Helplessness*, San Francisco, Freeman.
- Shin, M., Rosario, M., Morch, H. and Chestnut, D. (1984) 'Coping with job stress and burnout in the human sciences', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **46**, pp. 464-76.
- Smith, M. and Nursten, J. (1998) 'Social workers experience of distress: Moving towards change', *British Journal of Social Work*, **28**(3), pp. 351-68.
- Soderstrom, M., Dolbier, C., Leiferman, J. and Steinhardt, M. (2000) 'The relationship of hardiness, coping strategies and perceived stress to symptoms of illness', *Journal of Behavioural Medicine*, **23**(3), pp. 311-28.
- Stanley, N., Manthorpe, J., Brandon, D. and Caan, W. (2002) 'Down on record', *Community Care*, **17 January**, pp. 18-19.
- Stanton, A., Kirk, S., Cameron, C. and Danoff-Burg, S. (2000) 'Coping through emotional approach, scale construction and validation', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **78**(6), pp. 1150-69.
- Storey, J. and Billingham, J. (2001) 'Occupational stress and social work', *Social Work Education*, **20**, pp. 659-69.
- Taylor, S. (1983) 'Adjustment to threatening life events: A theory of cognitive adaptation', *American Psychologist*, **38**(11), pp. 1161-73.
- Taylor, S., Klein, L., Lewis, B., Grunewald, T., Gurung, R. and Updergraff, J. (2000) 'Biobehavioural responses to stress in females: Tend and befriend, not fight or flight', *Psychological Review*, **107**(3), pp. 411-29.
- Thompson, N., Murphy, M. and Stradling, S. (1994) *Dealing with Stress*, Basingstoke, Macmillan.
- Thompson, N., Stradling, S., Murphy, M. and O'Neill, P. (1996) 'Stress and organisational culture', *British Journal of Social Work*, **26**(5), pp. 647-67.
- Tugade, M. and Frederickson, B. (2004) 'Resilient individuals use positive emotions to bounce back from negative emotional experiences', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **86**(2), pp. 320-33.
- Um, M.-Y. and Harrison, D. (1998) 'Role stressors, burnout, mediators and job satisfaction: A stress strain outcome model and an empirical test', *Social Work Research*, **22**(2), pp. 110-15.
- Valtonen, K., Sogren, M. and Cameron-Padmore, J. (2006) 'Coping styles in persons recovering from substance use', *British Journal of Social Work*, **36**(1), pp. 57-73.
- Wainwright, D. and Calnan, M. (2002) *Work Stress: The Making of a Modern Epidemic*, Buckingham, OUP.
- Winchester, R. (2003) 'Stay or go?', *Community Care*, **16 October**, p. 1494.
- Wrzesniewski, A. and Dutton, J. (2001) 'Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work', *Academy of Management Review*, **26**, pp. 179-201.
- Zastrow, C. (1984) 'Understanding and preventing burnout', *British Journal of Social Work*, **14**, pp. 141-55.