

Shelter-Specific Occupational Stress among Employees in Animal Shelters

Margaret Schneider & Jesse Roberts

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

In the past 10 years a small number of articles have examined the personal and organizational costs associated with euthanasia-related strain among employees in animal shelters. However, there is very little research focusing on a wider range of potential stressors especially without a pre-existing assumption that euthanasia is the most stressful part of the job. A few studies have identified other sources of stress among shelter workers. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to investigate the range of factors that may contribute to occupational stress in shelter workers. This study utilized a semi-structured interview. The participants were 22 shelter employees from seven shelters in Ontario, Canada and the northeastern United States. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. Three categories of stressors were identified: a) those that are unique or largely unique to the shelter setting; b) those that can be found in a wide variety of occupations; and c) those that can be found in a wide variety of occupations, but are played out in unique ways in shelters. The stressors in the first category are reported here. Although euthanasia was a significant factor for 21 participants, five other major sources of stress were identified. Twenty-one participants cited the public's perceptions of animal shelters and 18 cited rude and abusive human clients. Twelve cited relationships with the animals including attachment issues. Eight identified responsibility for life as a stressor. Eleven identified witnessing animal suffering.

keywords: animal shelters, occupational stress

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Margaret Schneider, Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, 252 Bloor St. W., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, L5S 1V6. E-mail: margaret.schneider@utoronto.ca.

In the past 10 years a small number of articles have examined the personal and organizational costs associated with euthanasia-related strain among employees in animal shelters (Baran et al., 2009; Reeve, et al., 2004; Reeve, Rogelberg, Spitzmuller, & DiGiacomo, 2005; Rogelberg et al., 2007a; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005) and the coping strategies that shelter workers use to reduce stress (Baran et al., 2009; Frommer & Arluke, 1999; Rogelberg et al., 2007b). However, there is very little research focusing on a wider range of potential stressors especially without a pre-existing assumption that euthanasia is the most stressful part of the job. Although euthanasia-

related issues have been viewed as the most significant source of stress among shelter workers, other stressors have been identified including a negative public perception of the work, negative media reports, lack of understanding among friends and family, conflict among colleagues, and poor physical working conditions (Figley & Roop, 2006). The welfare of lost, unwanted, dangerous, abused, and sick animals is in the hands of people who work in animal shelters. In order to best care for the animals we must also be concerned about the welfare of their caretakers. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the range of factors that may contribute to occupational

stress in shelter workers.

The majority of shelter employees enter the profession motivated by a love of animals and an interest in alleviating suffering (Figley & Roop, 2006; Reeve et al., 2005; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005), yet they experience prolonged exposure to the death and suffering of animals (Baran et al., 2009). The animal deaths are often ongoing and there is little time to work through grief (Figley & Roop, 2006). Furthermore, shelter workers in settings where euthanasia is practiced become involved in ending the life of animals that they have sometimes spent significant amounts of time caring for and building a bond with. Many experience moral stress (Rollin, 2011) due to conflict between their personal values and shelter procedures compounded by a lack of control over organizational level decisions that have an impact on their everyday work (Reeve et al., 2005). Thus the emotions and inner conflicts that euthanasia can engender make shelter work unique.

Occupational Stress and its Consequences

The word “stress” is used in several different and sometimes imprecise ways both in the research literature and in popular culture. In the present study the term “stressor” will refer to the factors in the physical, social, or psychological environment that cause a reaction, referred to as “strain” which can have a variety of negative individual and organizational outcomes. “Stress” will refer to the entire process of the interaction between the individual and the environment, encompassing stressors, appraisals, strains, and outcomes (Beehr, 1998; Cooper, Dewe, & O’Driscoll, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Sulsky & Smith, 2005). This is referred to as a dynamic or transactional approach to the study of stress. Though not without its critics, it has been applied widely

in the occupational stress literature (Mark & Smith, 2011). Stress theories based on the transactional perspective “emphasize the importance of thoroughly exploring the nature and scope of environmental factors that have the potential to create strain for individuals in the workplace (Cooper et al., 2001, p. 27).”

Occupational stress can be caused by a wide range of factors. There are a variety of models that organize and conceptualize these factors, but there is general agreement about the components. Job satisfaction is a broad category with several elements including the nature of the work (for example, content, demands, level of responsibility), the physical environment, risks and hazards, workload and scheduling, opportunity for creativity, remuneration (salary, vacation, benefits, opportunities for professional development), and many others. The social and organizational context is another broad category that can contribute to stress. It includes roles, relationships with peers and supervisors, administration and leadership style, and communication. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it does provide a glimpse into the complexity of occupational stress.

Most people who work in shelters agree that it is stressful, and, for those who work in shelters where euthanasia is practiced, this is often cited as the foremost stressor (Rogelberg et al., 2007b; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005). Employees report strong emotional responses to euthanasia including anger, guilt, frustration, disgust, and sadness. Coping behaviors include attempts to limit attachment to the animals, taking steps to instill guilt in surrenderers, blaming surrenderers and the general public for making euthanasia necessary in the first place, and leaving the profession (Arluke, 1994; Baran et al., 2009; Frommer & Arluke, 1999; Hart & Mader, 1995). There is evidence that employees involved in

euthanasia related work experience higher levels of work strain, somatic complaints, and work-family conflict and lower levels of job satisfaction than those not directly involved with euthanasia (Reeve & Rogelberg, 2005). They also have higher turnover rates (Rogelberg et al., 2007b).

Research conducted by the Humane Society of the United States concluded that stress is found in shelter employees at all organizational levels (Human Society of the United States [HSUS], 2003-2004). However, there is limited information about stressors other than those related to euthanasia. Stressors that have been identified include size of shelter (smaller shelters are related to greater strain) (Reeve & Rogelberg, 2005), understaffing (Figley & Roop, 2006), unpleasant interactions with the public (Figley & Roop, 2006; Rohlf & Bennett, 2005), lack of social support (particularly from management), physical characteristics such as smells, mess, and the threat of personal injury (Rohlf & Bennett, 2005), concern for the animals under their care (Rohlf & Bennett, 2005), government regulations and a sense of indispensability (Figley & Roop, 2006). The public's perceptions or misperceptions about shelter work, along with negative media portrayals, are also contributors (Reeve et al., 2005). These studies suggest that the focus on euthanasia, while certainly understandable, may obscure the presence of other stressors that have a significant impact on shelter workers.

The importance of understanding occupational stress in shelter workers is underscored by decades of research that identifies the physiological, psychological, and organizational consequences of work-related strain. These can include substance abuse and use of tobacco or caffeine (Conway, Vickers, Ward, & Rahe, 1981), mental health difficulties (Baba, Jamal, & Tourigny, 1998; Wang & Patten, 2001),

fatigue (Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003), cardiovascular and respiratory diseases (Belkic, Schnall, Landsbergis, & Baker, 2000; Ganster & Rosen, 2013; Rosenthal & Alter, 2012), gastrointestinal illnesses (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997), absenteeism, increased turnover, workplace accidents (Cox et al., 2000), and increased health care costs (Ganster, Fox, & Dwyer, 2001; Manning, Jackson, & Fusilier, 1996). These consequences are shared by employees in a variety of occupations.

Shelter work is sometimes compared to human care-giving occupations such as mental health professions, crisis counselling, and nursing (Baran et al., 2009; Canadian Institute for Health Information [CIHI], 2007). These occupations require an ability to empathize with often traumatized clients. This empathic ability and intense involvement that make an individual a valuable employee may also put the practitioner at special risk. The potential consequences of this risk have been referred to as the costs of caring (Figley & Roop, 2006; White, 2006). They include: anxiety, feeling helpless as a caregiver; guilt for feeling they could have done more, feeling responsible for the clients' situation, numbness or an inability to empathize anymore, sadness, depression, hypersensitivity, and feeling overwhelmed or depleted (Figley & Roop, 2006; Figley, 1995; 2002). These are all signs of compassion fatigue which is defined as physical and emotional exhaustion due to "the demands of being empathetic and helpful to those who are suffering (Figley & Roop, 2006, p. 11)." Research conducted by HSUS found that 54% of the 1000 respondents were at extremely high risk of developing compassion fatigue (Human Society of the United States, 2003-2004) and that employees at all levels, from kennel attendants to executive directors, were at

equal risk regardless of involvement in euthanasia (Figley & Roop, 2006).

In summary, there are many reasons to believe that shelter workers experience a wide range of stressors. Some may be related to the unique aspects of shelter work, while others may be typical of those found in any organization. In keeping with the comments of Cooper et al. (2001) regarding the importance of investigating the nature and scope of stressors, this study used semi-structured interviews in order to identify a wide range of factors contributing to occupations stress among people who work in animal shelters.

Method

Participants

Thirty-four people initially volunteered to be interviewed in response to electronic and hard-copy flyers describing the study. Of those, 12 were not able to participate, leaving a final sample of 22 Caucasian female adults. At the time of the interview, 21 were employed at an animal shelter. One additional participant had recently quit her job at an animal shelter. Inclusion criteria required that participants' work involve direct daily contact with the animals residing in their shelter.

Procedure

Recruitment and data collection began in April 2013 following approval from the Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Research Ethics Board at the University of Toronto. Participants were recruited through email and hard-copy flyers distributed directly to shelters in the Greater Toronto area and at dog training seminars likely to be attended by shelter workers. The flyers described the study and asked potential participants to contact the researcher if they

were interested in participating or wanted further information. Interested participants were provided with an electronic copy of a more detailed information letter along with a consent form.

Those who agreed to participate met with the interviewer in person or were interviewed by phone. The interviews took approximately 1.5 hours each and were audio recorded. The recordings were then transcribed. Participants were assigned pseudonyms and any identifying information was modified. Twenty-five dollars were donated to a shelter of the participant's choice in recognition of the time required for them to participate in this study.

Interviews

Each interview began by collecting demographic information and details of the participant's job. The rest of the interview was semi-structured and open-ended to allow participants the opportunity to fully explore and elaborate on topics of personal significance. Participants were asked to describe their general experience of stress while working in an animal shelter. The interview schedule also contained a list of factors known to contribute to workplace stress in general and in shelters in particular. When participants finished describing their experience, they were then asked about any of these factors that they had not mentioned. This interview structure helped the participant to explore a wider range of stressors that might be relevant to them, thus avoiding an exclusive focus on the most conspicuous issue, that is, euthanasia. Care was taken to avoid "leading" the participant and the data show that this did not take place. For example, when asked about remuneration and opportunities for professional development and advancement, most participants indicated that they were not well paid and that there was little chance for

advancement, yet did not identify these as sources of stress.

Data Analysis

The interviews were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in order to identify common themes. A particular observation, opinion, or thought was deemed to be a theme if it was mentioned by three or more participants. The program NVIVO was used to assist in the data analysis. To ensure inter-rater reliability, 10% (n=79) of the 791 items extracted from the transcripts were randomly selected and coded by a third party. Inter-rater agreement reached 98% indicating high reliability for assigning items to themes. In the few cases where there was disagreement, the description of the theme was refined and clarified.

It became apparent that the stressors fell into three categories. Some stressors were a function of working in a shelter (the most obvious being the euthanasia of animals) in contrast to generic stressors that can be found in any organization, such as poor communication between management and staff, top-down management style, or conflicts among workers. The third category consisted of stressors that can be found in many work settings, for example, noise, odors, and lack of sufficient work space, but were manifested in ways that were a function of working in shelters. This report focuses on the first category, shelter-specific stressors, because there is extensive research on generic organizational stress, and much less on particular stressors that are a function of shelter work, itself. Six overall stressors or themes were identified and participants' narratives were used to elaborate on those themes.

Results

Demographics

The 22 participants represented seven animal shelters located in Ontario, Canada and in the Northeastern United States. These shelters included three humane societies, three municipal animal shelters, and one private animal shelter. In terms of resources they ranged from being reasonably well funded, as shelter funding goes, to being significantly lacking in resources. All these shelters euthanized animals, although the policies differed. Therefore, all participants were exposed to the practice of euthanasia in their workplace.

Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 58 years with a mean age of 38.45. All participants identified as female and Caucasian. Seven participants were in management or supervisory positions and the remaining 15 were in non-managerial positions including animal care, animal control officers, community outreach and education officers, animal behavior workers, adoptions counsellors, veterinary technicians, and customer care workers.

Nineteen participants were full-time employees, three were part-time, and one had recently left her job. The mean salary for the full sample was \$36,500 with a range of \$8,000 to \$100,000. When the part-time employees were removed the mean salary became \$39,947.37 with a range of \$12,000 to \$100,000.

The data revealed six stressors. Within these broad themes more specific themes were identified.

Theme 1: Euthanasia

Twenty-one participants representing all seven shelters cited euthanasia as a stressor – both the act of euthanasia and the decision-making process leading up to it.

Euthanasia and its aftermath.

Euthanasia posed complex issues for workers. This was the case both when the animal was sick or severely injured or when the animal was deemed to be unadoptable. It was particularly difficult when the worker had an emotional attachment to the animal.

It hit me that I was the one responsible for taking that animal's life. Even though I knew that it was to ease the animal's pain and suffering ... I guess it was just being alone, you know, in a quiet room, just me and this creature, just being, being the last thing he saw and wondering what it was he was thinking that I was doing. I guess that is just when it hits you most. You just wonder what it is that that animal is going through. It was just me and him and just the room. (Nicole)

Sometimes I would say [to myself], "I'm not doing that no matter what, get someone else to do it, I'm too emotionally attached." But then I battle in my own head that, "No, this dog trusts you. You're doing it because the last time with a person should be comforting." So I end up doing it because I think it would be a selfish act to walk away from it at that point. So I will be with it at the end. (Jessica)

There was one ... she had to get euthanized, she was too sick. Obviously I had really bonded to her. It was like losing a pet; I spent more time with her than my own animal, so that was devastating but again that was needed and it was best for her. I definitely cried for a long time. (Nancy)

But it's really tough when you see a dog that you've spent months and months with that has come to think of you

as their person, they don't know any better; they spend all their time with you and they think, "Oh this is my person coming for me, she's back here now." And it's hard to see them look at you and know that they won't be there the next day, that's always very hard. (Lauren)

Euthanasia was even more difficult when the reasoning behind the decision was unclear, if the worker disagreed with the decision, or if, with more resources, the animal could have been successfully rehomed.

Quite frequently the vast majority of shelter staff, and that would include the people who are literally hands-on caring for the animals every day, don't know why a certain animal was euthanized and I think that makes it more difficult because then you're not sure [whether it was the right thing to do]. (Tina)

The hardest part of when an animal has to be put down, it's not when there is kind of a good reason which you can get your head around. It's the ones ... that have nothing wrong with them, no reason they couldn't be adopted ... those are the hard ones to take, the ones where they are unnecessary ... Those are the ones that are devastating, and those are the ones that cause you to cry, even after 18 years. (Mallory)

Participants experienced a variety of emotions when an animal was euthanized.

I mean, I get pretty weepy [after euthanasia]... Not at the shelter; I don't weep in front of people I don't know extremely well. So I have a good cry even if it's a dog I knew was never going to pass. (Amanda)

He was a really cute, energetic dog

and he had a meet and greet with another dog later in the day so I went in his kennel to see him and he was just jumping all over me and he was super excited and the next day I went to see how the meet and greet went and they said he'd been euthanized because he just got overstimulated and started getting mean. And it was just a shock I thought they'd done the wrong thing. And also I felt a little bit guilty because I went into his kennel before his meet and greet and then they said he was overstimulated afterwards so I wasn't sure if maybe my being in there started the overstimulation. (Ingrid)

Oh definitely anxiety. A lot of it is when the animal is suffering and you're trying to find a vein and all you want to do is end the suffering and the vein's blowing or something and you're upset because you can't get it. At that point what I usually do is get another technician in there and say, "You've got to do it." Because the animal maybe was hit by a car where they're having difficulty breathing and you know they're suffering and you want to end the suffering ... I can't help them fast enough. I would feel like somebody punches me in the gut. (Eva)

And even with the animals that I've voted to go ahead and euthanize...a life is a life and this is a life that we've failed. Maybe I personally didn't fail it but we have failed it. We put this life on earth as an animal to serve people, depending on how you look at it, and we've failed the animal. So I'm always saddened by that and depending on the degree of connection I have my usual route is I will go get a coffee and drive down to the lake, have a little cry, get over it, drive back home. I kind of deal with it that

way. I have my little grief thing. (Andrea)

I don't know if it's the loss, that I'm feeling the loss or I'm feeling compassion for them or something...I don't know. But I just feel a little bit...it's more like I dwell on it. It was the right decision...but was it, was it, was it? And how many more times do I have to do this, basically...because it's the worst part about working at a shelter...is making a decision because part of it is, "Is it your life to give away?" (Lauren)

The decision-making process.

Thirteen participants described the decision-making process as stressful. They reported feeling overwhelmed, fatigued, and guilt-ridden by their responsibility for making life and death decisions, especially when attached to a particular animal. The decision-making process was further complicated when there were conflicting priorities among various departments, be it a focus on rehabilitation, fostering, public safety, space, or finances, when a breed bias or fear seemed to be influencing a decision, or when the decision was top-down.

But not just necessarily their quality of life but also the public's health and safety. Because that is something that we have to consider in terms of, for example, a dog comes in here and it's placed under quarantine because it has bitten someone. We have to also weight the public's health and safety against the animal's life. That is sometimes a hard decision. (Nicole)

So we had a dog that came in here under quarantine. The dog was actually adopted from us. We worked with it extensively on its behaviour. But the new owner who we had adopted it to could no

longer look after it and had given it to someone else who we probably would not have adopted the dog out to.... The dog was put in a bad situation and it turned around and bit somebody quite badly. When that dog came in I made the decision that it wasn't going back up for adoption because of the severity of the bite and that we were going to euthanize that dog. That [upset a lot of people]; I felt bad for the dog but I felt worse for the staff. Because I know that they didn't like my decision and everyone had worked so hard years ago to get this dog to come around. That's more stressful than the actual euthanasia of the dog. (Susan)

The vet will come in and they've seen the dog for five minutes and they give the dog a vaccine and it turns its head quickly and they're like, "Oh this dog tried to bite me, kill it." It's like, "Are you kidding me? I've been working with that dog for two weeks. It's fine." You just poked him with a needle and it's looking at you. (Ingrid)

That's the thing that makes it very stressful too because things come down from the vet and supervisors and then you have the staff who don't necessarily agree with the decisions but are the ones who actually do the euthanizing. (Erin)

Participants expressed frustration that the decision would often be determined by whomever made the most eloquent argument or by which employees happened to be present on a particular day.

It's so sad that you have to hold court, a trial, where you better hope somebody good is coming to that dog's defence or you better hope you're not off

work that day because you're going to miss the opportunity to stand in that dog's corner and they're going to be euthanized without you knowing it. (Judith)

You have dogs that come in and there's a minor behaviour problem, like they don't like going in the kennel, so they show a little, that they're scared. If it's a big huge dog not everyone is comfortable or have experience working with large dogs so if other staff don't like these dogs, then they might say that that dog needs to be euthanized because they think it's aggressive, as well ... so then you have to euthanize a dog that you know in a different situation would thrive. (Carol)

Theme 2: Public Perceptions of Animal Shelters

Twenty-one participants representing all seven shelters reported that the public's perception of shelter work contributed to strain. The following are the most commonly cited perceptions.

Beliefs about euthanasia. The most common situation reported by 16 participants, concerned the public associating shelter work with euthanasia. The participants reported several erroneous beliefs about animal shelters – that all animals are euthanized and/or that animals will be euthanized if they are not adopted within a short amount of time. Furthermore, they observed that the public does not understand how hard employees work to rehabilitate and place animals.

What I do hear most often ... is, "If you take it to a shelter it'll be killed," and most shelters try very hard not to do that but it's that one bad story, that one

euthanized dog that overrides all of the times that it didn't happen ... that one perception does frustrate me because I'm the one responsible for making those calls and I don't do it flippantly and I take a lot of care in making those choices. I try not to take it personally but I guess on one level I kind of do. (Karen)

Very few of our patrons realize that we only euthanize sick or behaviorally distressed animals. Most of our patrons will say, "How long does this dog have?" Like, until it gets adopted. We're not going to euthanize it just because it's here. (Wendy)

Some people still think that we have time limits on adoptions, and if they don't get adopted within a certain time limit we're going to euthanize them, which is completely untrue. We haven't done that in years and years, but that's a lot of the public who believe that that's what we do. (Tina)

Probably about half the time somebody will bring in a stray dog and, this is a quote, people are always like, "You're just going to kill it right?" They always assume that because we're an animal shelter our business is euthanasia and not rehabilitation. (Lauren)

Employees do not care. Eight participants observed that the public seems to believe that shelter employees do not care about the animals in their shelters or that it is "just a job" for them. Comments such as, "How can you work there?" and "I could never work there, I love animals too much," are taken to imply a lack of respect for, or understanding of, the work. Participants found these comments frustrating "because we do the best we can" and "care enough to

make these hard decisions."

The public needs to understand that we do our very best and we are running at maximum capacity and, while the decisions are not easy, and every one may not agree with them, we're always trying to keep the greater good at heart and the animals' best interest at heart and it's tough. I just wish they had a little sympathy for that, yes, we feel for the animals too, they seem to think that we are detached from them. (Nicole)

One of the things I always tell the volunteers when we talk about two things which are going to impact them, one of them is going to be the subject of euthanasia, from the perspective of experiencing it but also from the outside perception of you working in an organization where there is this idea that you'd rather kill an animal than adopt an animal...that they're going to have to deal with that. (Andrea)

No-kill shelters are superior. Four participants observed that the public perceived no-kill shelters and the people who work there to be morally superior to shelters in which euthanasia is performed. The contention around this issue was evident from their comments.

People pretty much know two different aspects of shelters; they know kill shelters and no-kill shelters. And to be a no-kill shelter means animals are going to be suffering. That's the way I look at it because you're going to have a sick animal that needs care or that can't have care, you can't afford care or something like that, and if you are a no-kill shelter that animal just suffers until it dies. (Leslie)

[The public] come and go, “Oh do you kill animals?” or “Oh I don’t like you because you’re not a no-kill shelter.” If anyone in their right mind has actually been to a true no-kill shelter and saw those animals live there for 12 years and haven’t been touched in six years, they wouldn’t want anybody to be a no-kill shelter. But the whole perception is making it all pretty with the numbers; “Oh we don’t kill our animals.” Well yeah [they] can be picky about what they take in; we offer them six animals they might take one. They’ll take a kitten over a dog [with behaviour problems] ... because the kitten, they go, “Oh we can adopt that really quickly.” (Carol)

A lot of people are really big talkers and want to see us be no-kill which ... means different things to different people. We are an open admission shelter. We will always be an open admission shelter. A no-kill shelter sends the dogs they can’t place down the street to us. So people do not get this. You get the people out there, these activists, who talk about no-kill when really it’s just passing the buck. I went to a shelter ... that was no-kill and they had [aggressive] dogs there that you couldn’t touch for the rest of their lives.

They couldn’t have human contact, they’d toss them food and lock them out to clean them up. But no, I wouldn’t work somewhere that did that. I just couldn’t do it. That would be far more stressful and horrific to me than anything that I’ve had to do. So people do not understand, don’t get it. They think that no-kill really means that; that there should be some way to save everybody. However, they’re not the ones who are willing to take some of these dogs. (Mary)

All shelters are the same. Nine participants noted that the public seems to assume that all animal shelters are the same or connected as one organization. They explained that the public does not understand the differences between municipal control facilities, humane societies, and private non-profit shelters or rescues. As a result, when members of the public hear about questionable policies regarding euthanasia at one shelter, they generalize to all shelters. Participants described having to defend their workplace and being personally blamed for the actions of an entirely different animal shelter whose policies may clash with their personal and professional values.

You’ll be wearing the uniform or jacket and you run into a store and people approach us and say things like, “You killed my dog,” and I was trying to ignore her but I knew who she was talking to. I mean, I’m in a grocery store hearing this and she kept it up and finally I said, “Excuse me, what are you talking about?” Well, turns out it wasn’t even our shelter she was talking about. But talk about stressful because everyone was staring at you and you’re wearing a uniform that says what shelter you’re from and nobody else heard that it was the other shelter in the next county. Because a lot of people have a misconception that all the SPCA’s are connected. And they’re not. (Eva)

The weird part about it is that most of the time when you get cornered by somebody it’s the negative; they’ll tell you a negative story or an experience that they had with you as an organization. And it may not even be your organization they had a bad experience with but it was a humane society and because they don’t realize that we’re all individuals the brush is

across the board which can be frustrating. You can try to explain how you're different but often they've already made up their mind about that. (Andrea)

There was so much mean talk about shelters on [a Facebook group] and every time that somebody would say something about shelters just love to kill and the people who work there hate animals and how do you sleep at night and all of that stuff ... they just kept lumping all shelters into that and the first 50 times I would defend and say, "Don't lump all shelters together, there's a way to have a shelter that's not like this." And eventually I abandoned that cause because that was so hurtful to me. (Trudi)

Theme 3: Responsibility for Life

Eight participants from six different shelters described feeling personally responsible for the lives of the animals they work with even after the animal is adopted. This begins when the animal enters the shelter. Participants reported feeling guilty when they are unable to find an animal a good home, unable to prevent the euthanasia of a particular animal or when they cannot adopt animals in order to save them. The sense of responsibility is also manifested in concern about the outcome of animals with a new owner or with other employees when the participant was planning on retiring or quitting.

I feel guilty for certain dogs that I can't bring home because I have a dog that doesn't like other dogs. So I feel guilty that I can't save more of them. (Sarah)

He came in as a [very unattractive] puppy and nobody wanted to adopt him.

I thought he was awesomely cool but it wasn't at the right time in my life. You can't save them all and so I had to compartmentalize... "Can't save them all, can't save them all." And he was one that I hated to leave behind at the shelter [when I quit] but I just knew, you know, you can't have 30 dogs. So I left him behind but still tried to be his advocate; got him adopted into a home but he didn't work out. He had spent too much time at the shelter...he was too reactive and when the time came I went to the shelter and adopted him and took him to my place and had him euthanized at my job because I felt like I owed that to him and I just felt so guilty. So guilty that I was willing to pay the \$100 fee to adopt him, and then pay the 100 something dollars to euthanize him at my clinic. Not that that fixed anything. The \$200...it helped nothing. It didn't help him, it didn't help me, but I felt like you have to try and show somebody somewhere something, that you're sorry, and that was the only thing that I could think to do for him was bring him somewhere nice to have him euthanized versus in the back of a dingy shelter. (Judith)

When I know a dog's going to fail and I know it's a bad home...I can't live with that...I can't go, "Oh well just because somebody else said it's ok." I can't go, "Oh I wash my hands of it." I mean that's just not how I am. I worry about the animals when they leave. (Carol)

For me, I'd rather see a dog get euthanized than go to an abusive home because if it can't get out of here, it can't live its whole life in here but I'm concerned about what happens to it once it gets out in the public. So I always give

people my email and ask them to update me on how the dog's doing because to me that's my reward; if I'm able to follow up and say, "Oh look at this, they sent me a picture." This is what I work hard for. So that's a huge thing with me. I don't do out of sight out of mind. (Jessica)

You also can't leave because you feel like you can't leave the animals in the hands of the crazy people. You've got even more reason to have to stay, you've got to try to do what you can to help the animals. But yes, I think about quitting all the time. (Mallory)

Theme 4: Human Clients

Difficulty interacting with the public is a theme that can apply to a variety of work settings. However, the decision was made to include it in shelter-specific stressors because the content of the difficulties is so clearly rooted in caring for the animals.

Eighteen participants from six shelters found interactions with the human clients stressful. Some of the people they encountered were rude, seemed to have a sense of entitlement, or attempted to use guilt or threaten employees into bending rules.

People think that we are there for them and we're not. We are there for the animals. Honestly, if I could work at that place and not have to deal with another human being every day, I'd do it. That would be great. That would be like the biggest promotion I could get. But unfortunately I'm in customer service at this job and people don't understand that it's not about them. None of this is about them. We try to help them but that's not our number one priority which is why when they have a two-year-old that sure, "It's been around dogs, why can't you waive this 13 and up restriction?"...

We're not going to do it because we don't care about your two-year-old. We care about the dog that's going to get returned here because your two-year-old pulled its tail and it growled. (Leslie)

And a lot of times we have people call from those other jurisdictions and we'll say, "Sorry, you have to call your local [shelter]"...It's not unusual for someone to say, "Oh I'll just kill it then," or "Oh I'll let it go then," because they know we care about animals more than they do and that's going to hurt us and that might make us break. And that's hard...people do it. People are jerks. (Trudy)

It's like they're moving two days from now and call us, or just walk in, and (I love this), say, "I'm here to donate my cat to you." Oh yeah, we hear that a lot. And first of all we have a waiting list now. And then they get mad and start yelling at us [saying], "Well I'm just going to leave it out on the rail track," or "I'm going to take it out and shoot it." And at that point we will take it because you worry about the animal and then we try to crowd the animal into an already crowded shelter. So it's like they just don't take responsibility. So that's sad to me. (Eva)

Other participants reported being upset when human clients ignored advice regarding animal care or adoption matches.

... You try and educate this owner and he turns around and tells you to f-k off, excuse the language. I can't turn around and tell him, "You know what, you are a frigging idiot," right? All we can do is encourage him to be a more responsible pet owner. Tell him the cons

of what he is doing and how that can affect the animal...you can't really turn around and tell him what you really think of him. (Susan)

Yes if they ignore [my advice] I will take that home. If they ignore what I'm saying I worry about that. I lose more sleep over that than I do over euthanasia believe it or not. I will come home and not be able to sleep because somebody adopted a dog and I know they didn't listen. (Amanda)

Not listening to us, in general, I think is a big stressor. Sometimes it's about, you know, this dog is not appropriate because you have an infant and he will eat your infant and sometimes it's that they don't listen if we say these dogs will probably not get along, they don't want to kill each other now, they don't want to hurt each other, but you need to keep them separate, and we give them all these instructions, and two days later our dog is returned for fighting with the other dog because they didn't follow any of our instructions. We see a lot of dogs get returned for reasons that we have said to these people, "You need to do this or this will happen," and the dog will come back and then that dog will have a mark on their record because they were returned for behaviour and that makes them less adoptable. (Lauren)

Some people lie or misrepresent themselves in order to evade fees during the adoption or surrender process.

Ok, for me personally the most difficult thing I think is dealing with people who are not being totally honest, whether that is someone who is pretending they found a stray animal

when it's actually their animal, to somebody who is wanting to surrender an animal and is making up a reason why and it doesn't make sense. (Trudy)

Oh that's another stress is the people that come in and their story changes so that they could leave the cat or the dog. They come in and they say that, "I have to surrender my cat"...well you have to make an appointment and they say, "Oh no I just found it... And here's its carrying case and here's its bowl" so you know it's their cat ... And the fee is \$22 so at least pay that to help the shelter right? But no they don't want to do that. But some people just think we're stupid. (Karen)

Participants were particularly frustrated by clients who lied about their home situation or ignored advice about adoption matches which then results in an animal being returned to the shelter due to a poor match.

And when people listen and when people truly take that information and use it, it can be so rewarding when it's a positive outcome. But oftentimes we'll get animals returned or we'll get a beagle that comes back over and over again and when you adopted that beagle to them you told them they can't leave it unsupervised in the backyard and time after time they leave it unsupervised in the backyard and it escapes and we pick it up as a stray and it's very frustrating when you spent the time to talk to them about that and explain to them that the dog they have chosen, this is what they need to understand about it and they just don't listen. (Sarah)

Somebody came in once with a 3 year old and a baby in their arms and they wanted a 120 pound Rottweiler...

I'm not giving you this dog and then reading in the paper tomorrow about how it ate your baby. No. That's setting this dog up for failure. I can adopt this dog out to somebody that can be a good home for it. And it always bothers me a little bit when people don't show any consideration for their pets at home. Some don't even show consideration for their children at home. (Erin)

The way that some people treated their pets was stressful and frustrating for 13 participants. These "irresponsible owners" included "repeat offenders" whose animals would be regularly picked up by the shelter off the street, who trained their dogs to attack, who treated their animals as disposable items, and/or abused their animals.

... Like somebody will try to surrender a cat, we don't have room so we put them on a waiting list and then I go out to the parking lot an hour later and they left the cat in the carrier in the sun in the parking lot. ... So now we have a dehydrated cat and no room. Now we have to triage this cat because it's half dead. (Amanda)

Most of us, myself included, who work there, we all have our own animals, we've all pretty much gone broke caring for animals during medical crises and, you know, we're all making really low income and yet these people will call me from really rich areas where they own a huge seven-bedroom house with five bathrooms and their kids are in private school and they can't afford to care for a bladder infection in their cat or something like that. So it's kind of exhausting dealing with...but it's really stressful and it makes you angry and you start to distrust everyone because you're constantly getting lied to. (Trudy)

And people just surrendering in general. Not for euthanasia but, "I got this dog. It peed on my couch. I don't want it anymore." That's rough. A lot of people treat their pets as just a willy nilly item to buy and not really realize, or care, that it's a life-long commitment...it's just another piece of property. (Anna)

Like the people who pick up their dog for the sixth time in like three months and they turn away and say, "Well it's not my fault." Or the people dumping their animal off because they just don't like it anymore and they make up an excuse saying, "Oh, I'm allergic." I'm like, why don't you just be truthful. I've had one person in 10 years tell me, "I just don't want the animal anymore." You know what, at least you were honest. And then there's the people, "Oh I got this dog off of Kijiji two weeks ago and it barks too much." Or, "I got a puppy and it grew too big." They're not disposable things. "Oh well you know, my cat's peeing all over the house, can you put it up for adoption?" And they get mad at you when you say no, we will have to euthanize it because no one's going to want a cat that pisses all over your house. Or it's the people who come and euthanize their dogs here just because they're too cheap to take them to their own vet...and their dog has a tumour the size of a basketball on the side of their leg. We're supposed to be euthanizing public animals for the ones that can't afford it. But I'm sorry, when they pull up in a Mercedes to drop off their cat to euthanize it that they've had for 18 years and it's a bag of bones because all they have to do is pay \$22 to drop it off and then just walk out the door. (Carol)

Theme 5: Relationships with the Animals

Twelve participants from six different shelter locations described strain related to their relationships with the animals in their shelter and discussed their attachment to particular animals in the shelter. They explained that the longer a dog stays in the shelter, the more likely it is that employees will become very attached and, in some cases, may begin to view the dog as their own. This can make it difficult and sometimes “heartbreaking” to hand the dog over to adopters and accept that someone else could care for the animal as well as they do.

When you build a relationship with one it's hard to see them go. It's also hard to accept someone else being as good an owner as you, which sounds awful but I hear that a lot at work When you bond with an animal you often get super critical of who might be interested in them. We have adoption counsellors, who when they have a special relationship with a dog, they'll specifically say, “Don't book any adoption meetings with me,” because they're going to be super harsh on that person and not think they're good enough even though we have pretty strict adoption policies. (Nancy)

If an animal is euthanized, sometimes it is like losing a personal pet, intensifying the impact of the loss. One participant explained that she wanted to spend quality time with each animal but at the same time wanted to protect herself from the emotional impact of the inevitable loss. Several participants described avoiding attachment to at-risk animals because of how hard a previous experience of loss was. They described feeling as if they had lost a piece of themselves, empty, heartbroken, and sad.

I can't tell you how much sleep I lost over that dog. I never ever want to become attached to a dog in a shelter like that again because I literally felt like I was sealing the fate of my own animal and I don't want to do that. (Amanda)

It feels like at first you feel like you want to have [a special bond] with all the animals and then the longer you do it and you recognize how big a task this is and you can't do it all yourself you start to realize rationally you can't have that with everyone...and also for your own self-protection because things happen and we've all got our own animals that are going to break our hearts someday. It's difficult. (Trudy)

One participant noted that when she is the first contact an animal has upon being admitted to the shelter she feels a greater bond and responsibility toward the animal because of the history they share, increasing the emotional intensity of the outcome.

I find those are the most emotional - the ones you take in yourself versus you come in and there's a dog, there's a dog and you don't even know how they got here. But when I actually take the dog out of the truck or I take the dog from the person at that counter I find there's more of a history with me and that dog if that makes any sense ... So when I take it out of the back of the truck and it licks me well guess what? I'm the first interaction with that dog so those ones I tend to give a little bit more... When I was on the road and picked up an animal I would always check, “How's my guy that I brought in? How's he doing?” because you're the one that picked him up ... I brought you here and I want to bring you somewhere safe. I don't want

to be bringing you to your last destination. (Jessica)

Theme 6. Witnessing Animal Suffering

Eleven participants described strain associated with witnessing animals suffer. They explained that seeing the conditions of animals being picked up or brought into the shelter, be it the consequences of abuse, neglect, and injuries, can be stressful.

We take in injured wildlife as well so in the summertime especially it tends to be we're overwhelmed with, practically all day long, injured rabbits, injured birds, all sorts of injured animals so after a while it does tend to get very stressful. You don't want to see one more baby rabbit that's been chewed by a dog. (Sarah)

It's pretty awful to see some of the horrific things that come in; we had a dog that was very badly burned in a house fire that we've been treating since ... So there's a lot of special cases that you become very emotionally involved in. Certainly when they're successful those are the high high highs, and when something like our cocker spaniel that we lost despite your best effort, you know, that's very upsetting. (Mary)

I suppose also it's very stressful when you see somebody surrender their animal that's in extremely poor shape and you just wonder, "Why did you let it go this long?" That's very stressful for me and it just happened recently with a dog. It was in such bad shape I thought it was going to die before I got the euthanasia drugs in. I almost had to go home that day. I was in tears. (Anna)

Witnessing the deterioration of an animal's behavior and health, particularly dogs, due to long stays in the shelter was stressful. The participants described this deterioration as especially difficult to observe when they felt the dog could do well in a home environment but was not coping with the shelter environment. Thus, a dog they have bonded with transforms into a dog who is no longer adoptable.

A big stressor is watching the dogs that come in and have excellent skills and pass the tests with flying colors and do everything right and we think they're going to succeed ... a pitbull that's going to a kennel that waits for adoption for months and months and months and we watch them deteriorate and go from an excellent dog that would fit into a family with dogs and cats and everything to a dog that has become a danger because they're trapped in a kennel. And we get them out two or three times a day, we give them enrichment, we give them playgroups, but something snaps, they're not meant to be confined for that long. So we just watch a life collapse...that's pretty stressful. That's one of the worst parts. (Nancy)

Yeah, and [the dogs] break down ... And that was the biggest heart break of it was when you had a dog that you'd see the promise in as a young dog, you would watch him fade away, you would know their time was coming and they would get in that dog fight, bite that person, get an illness, you know, something that you knew was going to come on from the stress of living there. (Judith)

Summary

It was not surprising that euthanasia

emerged as a significant stressor. It represented a complex process in which the basis for decisions, as described by some participants, seemed to be unclear, top-down, and hit-and-miss. However, there were other significant stressors. Almost everyone identified the behavior of human clients, public perceptions of shelters, and relationships with the animals. About half cited witnessing animal suffering as a stressor, as well. About one third of participants also noted that a sense of responsibility for the animals contributed to strain. Thus, the results demonstrate that stress among shelter workers is complex and involves multiple factors.

Discussion

These results are part of a larger study examining sources of occupational stress for employees in animal shelters. The larger study identified three categories of stressors: a) those that are unique or largely unique to the shelter setting; b) those that can be found in a wide variety of occupations; and c) those that can be found in a wide variety of occupations but are played out in unique ways in shelters. The stressors in the first category were reported here.

Euthanasia was an important contributor to strain. Participants' comments contained evidence of moral stress around the practice which became even more complicated by a problematic decision-making process and a strong bond with and sense of responsibility for the animals. However, it represented one of six themes, demonstrating that in order to address stress among shelter workers, a wider range of components must be examined.

The emotional content of the participants' comments was evident in each of the six themes, demonstrating that shelter workers are experiencing the costs of caring. Some participants described feeling anxious, guilty, sad, and depressed, all signs of

compassion fatigue among human caregiving professionals. Some of the quotes conveyed a sense of barely being able to cope at times. Some participants described very strong bonds with the animals. While these bonds no doubt contributed to conscientious care of the animals, they also contributed to the costs of caring.

As in previous studies (Figley & Roop, 2006; Reeve, et al., 2005) participants identified the public's perceptions of shelter work as a stressor. In fact, in this study, public perceptions were mentioned as frequently as euthanasia. Clearly, shelter work can be viewed as "dirty work" – that is, a stigmatized occupation that includes garbage collectors, bill collectors, and prison guards. According to Ashford and Kreiner, (2014), "What they have in common is that the nature of the work is seen by a significant portion of society as distasteful, disgusting, dangerous, demeaning, immoral, or contemptible – as somehow tainted or 'dirty', whether physically, socially or morally (pg. 81)." Dirty work can be a serious threat to one's occupational identity. What is referred to as "moral dirty work" constitutes the most serious threat to identity (Ashford & Kreiner, 2014). In the case of shelter workers, it is not clear whether the public perceptions are solely based on the practice of euthanasia (although reference to "killing animals" was a common comment from the public) or based on a wider perception of a job that includes contact with sick, unwanted animals. However, as noted in previous research, blaming the public is one coping strategy for shelter workers (Arluke, 1994; Baran et al., 2009; Frommer & Arluke, 1999). Perhaps some of participants' negative focus on the public is rooted in trying to cope. This raises the question as to how pervasive are the public's negative perceptions of animal shelters and the impact of these perceptions on employees.

It is apparent that shelter work is stressful in ways that are similar to the stress in other professions. Therefore, it is important to look at strategies developed in these professions for addressing occupational stress (White, 2006). For example, participants noted cases in which policies were unclear or applied inconsistently. This is a management issue that can be addressed through training and professional development. In occupations that are considered dirty, employees can be helped to refocus and reframe their perceptions of the job and therefore feel more positive about their occupation (Ashford & Kreiner, 2014; Harvard Business Review, 2007). For example, shelter workers can learn to focus on the animals they help, rather than dwelling on the ones they are unable to help.

Limitations and Future Research

The participants in this study represent shelters in a wide geographic area with a range of available resources. However, the extent to which these results are generalizable to the larger population of shelter workers is unclear, especially since all participants were from shelters that euthanized animals. Demographically, the sample was female and Caucasian. Although there are no statistics on ethnic backgrounds of shelter workers, it is arguably a female-dominated occupation (Markovitz & Queen, 2009), as is the general category of animal care workers in Canada (Service Canada, 2006), and no doubt in the United States, as well. However, we do not know how these participants would compare to shelter workers with more varied demographics. We also do not know whether these participants are coping well with stress or, conversely, volunteered to be part of the research because they experience a high level of stress, and wanted to talk about it. In future research it will be important to broaden the demographic

characteristics of the sample, increase the sample size, and measure levels of stress.

In addition, most of the participants talked primarily about dogs. It is not clear whether different stressors would emerge in the care of other species. Future research in this area must also include participants from shelters that do not euthanize animals and participants who work with a wider variety of animals. It is also important to note that participants in this study were not asked about the rewards of their job. To provide balance, research should incorporate this line of inquiry in order to also understand the factors that buffer shelter workers from stress.

Shelter workers shoulder a considerable amount of society's responsibility to care for animals. If we care about the animals, we must also care about the workers and take steps to ameliorate their occupational stress. The next step in this program of research will be to develop a survey in order to reach a wider sample of participants.

Reference List

- Ashford, B.E., & Kreiner, G.E. (2014). Dirty work and dirtier work: Differences in countering physical, social, and moral stigma. *Management and Organization Review*, 10(1), 81-108.
- Arluke, A. (1994). Managing emotions in an animal shelter. In A. Manning & J. Serpell (Eds.), *Animals and society: Changing perspectives* (pp. 145-165). London, UK: Routledge.
- Baba, V. V., Jamal, M., & Tourigny, L. (1998). Work and mental health: A decade in Canadian research. *Canadian Psychology*, 39, 94-107.
- Baran, B. E., Allen, J. A., Rogelberg, S. G., Spitzmuller, C., DiGiacomo, N. A., Webb, J. B., ... Walker, A. G. (2009). Euthanasia-related strain and coping

- strategies in animal shelter employees. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 235, 1-6.
- Beehr, T. (1998). An organizational psychology meta-model of occupational stress. In C. Cooper (Ed.), *Theories of organizational stress* (pp. 6-27). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Belkic, K., Schnall, P., Landsbergis, P., & Baker, D. (2000). The workplace and CV health: Conclusions and thoughts for a future agenda. In P. L. Schnall, K. Belkic, P. Landsbergis & D. Baker (Eds.), *The workplace and cardiovascular disease, Vol. 15* (pp. 307-321). Philadelphia, PA: Hanley and Belfus, Inc.
- Cartwright, S., & Cooper, C. L. (1997). *Managing workplace stress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) (2007). *Canada's health care providers*. Ottawa: CIHI.
- Conway, T. L., Vickers, R. R., Ward, H. W., & Rahe, R. H. (1981). Occupational stress and variation in cigarette, coffee and alcohol consumption. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 22, 155-165.
- Cooper, C. L., Dewe, P. J., & O'Driscoll, M. P. (2001). *Organizational stress: A review and critique of theory, research, and applications*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cox, T., Griffiths, A., Barlowe, C., Randall, R., Thomson, L., & Rial-Gonzalez, E. (2000). *Organizational interventions for work stress: A risk management approach*. Norwich, UK: Health & Safety Executive.
- Cropanzano, R., Rupp, D. E., & Byrne, Z. S. (2003). The relationship of emotional exhaustion to work attitudes, job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 160-169.
- Figley, C. R. (1995). Compassion fatigue as secondary traumatic stress disorder: An overview. In C. R. Figley (Ed.), *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder*, (pp. 1-20). New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel.
- Figley, C. R. (2002). *Treating compassion fatigue*. New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge.
- Figley, C. R., & Roop, R. (2006). *Compassion fatigue in the animal care community*. Washington, DC: Humane Society Press.
- Frommer, S. S., & Arluke, A. (1999). Loving them to death: Blame-displacing strategies of animal shelter workers and surrenderers. *Society and Animals*, 7, 1-16.
- Ganster, D. C., Fox, M. L., & Dwyer, D. J. (2001). Explaining employees' health care costs: A prospective examination of stressful job demands, personal control and psychological reactivity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 954-964.
- Ganster, D. C., & Rosen, C. C. (2013). Work stress and employee health: A multidisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, 39, 1085-1122.
- Hart, L. A., & Mader, B. (1995). Pretense and hidden feelings in the humane society environment: A source of stress. *Psychological Reports*, 77, 554.
- Harvard Business Review (2009). How to teach pride in "dirty work." August. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2007/09/how-to-teach-pride-in-dirty-work>.
- Humane Society of the United States (2003-2004). Compassion satisfaction/fatigue self-test: Animal care. Adapted with permission from C. R. Figley (1995), *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder*. Washington, DC: HSUS.

- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal and coping*. New York, NY: Springer.
- Manning, M. R., Jackson, C. N., & Fusilier, M. R. (1996). Occupational stress and health care use. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 1*, 100-109.
- Mark, G., & Smith, A. P. (2012). Occupational stress, job characteristics, coping, and the mental health of nurses. *British Journal of Health Psychology, 17*, 505-521.
- Markovitz, A., & Queen, R. (2009). Women and the world of dog rescue: A case study of the State of Michigan. *Society and Animals 17*, 325-342.
- Reeve, C. L., Spitzmuller, C., Rogelberg, S. G., Walker, A., Schultz, L., & Clark, O. (2004). Employee reactions and adjustment to euthanasia-related work: Identifying turning-point events through retrospective narratives. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, 7*, 1-25.
- Reeve, C. L., Rogelberg, S. G., Spitzmuller, C., & DiGiacomo, N. (2005). The caring-killing paradox: Euthanasia-related strain among animal-shelter workers. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 35*, 119-143.
- Rogelberg, S. G., DiGiacomo, N., Reeve, C. L., Spitzmuller, C., Clark, O. L., Teeter, L., ... Starling, P. G. (2007a). What shelters can do about euthanasia-related stress: An examination of recommendations from those on the front line. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science, 10*, 331-347.
- Rogelberg, S. G., Reeve, C. L., Spitzmuller, C., DiGiacomo, N., Clark, O. L., Teeter, L., ... Carter, N. T. (2007b). Impact of euthanasia rates, euthanasia practices, and human resource practices on employee turnover in animal shelters. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, 230*, 1-7.
- Rohlf, V., & Bennett, P. (2005). Perpetration-induced traumatic stress in persons who euthanize nonhuman animals in surgeries, animal shelters, and laboratories. *Society and Animals, 13*, 201-219.
- Rollin, B.E. (2011). Stress and chronic illness in veterinary medicine. *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice, 41*, 651-659.
- Rosenthal, T., & Alter, A. (2012). Occupational stress and hypertension. *Journal of the American Society of Hypertension, 6*, 2-22.
- Service Canada (2006). Occupational profiles: Pet groomers and animal care workers. Retrieved from http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/qc/job_futures/statistics/6483.shtml
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. London: Sage.
- Sulsky, L., & Smith, C. (2005). *Work stress*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Wang, J. L., & Patten, S. B. (2001). Perceived work stress and major depression in the Canadian employed population 20-49 years old. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 6*, 283-289.
- White, D. (2006). The hidden costs of caring: What managers need to know. *The Health Care Manager, 25*, 341-347.