# Chapter 13 Psychological Stressors

# Overview

S.M. Monroe and G.M. Slavich

2 University of California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

1 University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN, USA

# Abstract

Psychological stressors are social and physical environmental circumstances that challenge the adaptive capabilities and resources of an organism. These circumstances represent an extremely wide and varied array of different situations that possess both common and specific psychological and physical attributes. The challenge for theory, research, and practice is to abstract and understand the specific qualities and characteristics of environmental exposures that most strongly elicit noxious psychological and biological responses, which in turn can lead to serious mental and physical health problems over the life course. In the present article, historical perspectives and conceptual considerations are addressed first, which provides the context for the subsequent discussion of key issues for defining and assessing psychological stressors. Susceptibility to psychological stressors is subject to individual differences, which can alter the impact and adverse consequences of such environmental exposures, necessitating a discussion of these moderating influences as well.