Broad areas of research interest of academic staff in Psychology at RMIT. The following staff members will supervise Psychology honours students in 2021.

Staff Member	Research Interests (Maximum of 5 keywords each)
Dr. Wendell **Cockshaw**	Sense of belonging, Social causes of depression, Interpersonal rejection sensitivity, Mental well-being and flourishing. Psychometric analysis.
Dr. James **Collett**	Hoarding disorder, Decision-making, Attachment security, Managing chronic illness, Trait approaches to clinical disorders
Dr. Russell **Conduit**	Virtual Reality applications in Psychology, New sleep tracking technology, Effects of sleep on learning & performance, Sleep disorders, Autism spectrum disorders, Paediatric sleep
Dr. Alexander **De Foe**	Consciousness, perception, group cognition and decision-making.
Dr. Merv **Jackson**	Social psychology, Forensic psychology, Cross-cultural psychology, Gender issues, Qualitative methodology.
Dr. Robin **Laycock**	Autism Spectrum Disorders, Social Cognition, Social/Affective Neuroscience, Attention/perception impairments in neurodevelopmental/psychiatric disorders, emotion processing, sub-conscious processing, anxiety.
Dr. Eunro **Lee**	Social cognition: Autistic traits, eating behaviour, & environmental behaviour. Social identity and group performance, Restorative justice and therapeutic jurisprudence. Psychometrics, Applied statistics.
Dr. Mark **Lee**	Mental health and clinical psychology, positive psychology and well-being, organisational psychology, personality, motivation and Self-Determination Theory
Dr. Jasmine B. **MacDonald**	Occupational groups experiencing PTSD, mood disorders, substance use, burnout, suicidal thoughts and behaviours, secondary traumatic stress.
Dr. Robyn **Moffitt**	Diet and exercise behaviour, health and well-being, sport and exercise performance, self-compassion, body dissatisfaction
Dr. Prasada Rao **Podugu**	Clinical neuropsychology, Mental health of older adults, Cultural aspects of health and illness, Dementias, Neuroprotective factors of brain
Dr Chris **Powell**	Intelligence, personality traits, intellectual curiosity, confidence, and predicting academic achievement.

| Dr. Lauren **Saling** | Moral Psychology, Decision-Making, Procrastination, and, Self-Control. |
| A/Prof Sophia **Xenos** | Clinical/Forensic psychology, Narcissism and social media, Cross-cultural Psychology, Teaching and learning – assessment and feedback in the clinical setting. |

Broad areas of research interest of academic staff in Criminology & Justice Studies at RMIT (2021). The following staff members will supervise Psychology honours students in forensic topics.

| Dr Monica **Barratt** | Harm reduction, Digital drug market trading, Pill testing or drug checking, Psychedelics. Use of the Global Drug Survey data on topics related to drugs. |
| Prof Stuart **Thomas** | Miscarriages of justice, with a focus on race and gender, Forensic mental health, Mental health stigma. |

A sample of research projects that may be offered to Psychology honours students in 2021.

Dr. Wendell Cockshaw:
1. The association between belongingness and depressive symptoms: A review and meta-analysis.
Background: Several interpersonal theories of depression aetiology implicate a diminished sense of belonging as the immediate and causal antecedent of the development of depressive symptoms. A unifying perspective is the Social-Cognitive Interpersonal Process Model (Sacco & Vaughan, 1999, 2006). Consistent with this approach, there is now substantial empirical evidence confirming a strong association of belongingness and depressive symptoms. This research spans a range of cohorts and demographics. A strength of this approach is that belongingness is amenable to cost-effective and scalable social interventions. To further this research direction, it would be valuable to conduct a meta-analysis to establish both the strength of association and potential moderators such as age and gender.
2. Are well-being and belongingness one and the same?
There is now a strong focus on mental well-being as a key outcome for mental health services. Mental well-being signifies the presence of positive functioning rather than the absence of psychopathology. Some conceptualisations of well-being include "social well-being" as a subfactor, however other literature considers belongingness to be a discrete latent construct. There is, therefore, a need to conduct psychometric analyses to examine the structure and overlap of mental well-being and belongingness within the same sample.

Dr. James Collett:
1. Online Shopping, Attachment To Material Possessions, and Coping During COVID-19 Lockdown
Background: The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic has seen individuals spending more time at home due to lockdown restrictions. This has been accompanied by a dramatic rise in online shopping. This thesis project seeks to investigate the relationship between online shopping behaviour and

attachment to home and possessions are associated with coping during lockdown as well as vulnerability to mental health problems such as compulsive buying and hoarding.

2. Putting a Price on Emotional Security: How do our Possessions Influence our Financial Decision-Making?

Background: Modern consumer societies are economically driven by the relationship that individuals have with their material possessions. This thesis project seeks to examine attachment to material possessions in terms of its connection to financial decision-making tendencies, and how these are associated with broader phenomena such as ownership, nostalgia, and wellbeing. Implications will be generated concerning how individuals can enjoy their possessions without feeling overwhelmed by them.

3. Connections Beyond Caregivers: Attachment Experiences Throughout the Lifespan

Background: Attachment theory provides an established and well understood model for how individuals develop emotional regulation capacity around their identity and their relationships to others. This thesis project seeks to move forward from attachment to primary caregivers and consider the positive impact that friendships, relationships, and pets in adult life can have on attachment. Findings will contribute to understanding of supportive social relationships can impact life trajectory, and hold implications for neutralising the negative health effects of loneliness.

Dr. Robin Laycock:

1. How fast is a smile? Perception of facial expression movements in the autism spectrum

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is defined by difficulties with social-communication and repetitive behaviours. An important aspect of social processing is the ability to detect and recognise emotions as displayed by facial expressions. Mis-reading subtle non-verbal social cues from faces may lead to cascading difficulties with interpreting social situations. It will also likely lead to increased anxiety about being in such social situations. Hence, rate of visual information processing is a critical requirement for successfully navigating social interaction. Indeed, visual impairments have been widely reported in ASD. Most studies of face emotion processing in ASD have utilised static photographs of actors posing as 'happy', 'sad', 'angry' etc. Only a few have used more ecologically valid that depict the dynamic movements involved in real emotional expressions. This project will use dynamic displays of emotion (ie short videos) presented at varying speeds in order to experimentally test whether speed of emotion processing is a critical factor in emotion recognition difficulties in the broader autism spectrum.

2. Pseudoneglect and face processing in the autism spectrum

In neurotypical adults from the general population attention is biased towards the left visual field, a phenomenon called 'pseudoneglect' (a term borrowed from the neurological condition – 'neglect' that is sometimes found in stroke patients). In Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) however, this pseudoneglect is reported to be reduced (i.e., reduced leftward attentional bias). The neuroanatomical basis for pseudoneglect is understood to be an asymmetry in the activation of left and right hemispheres, and in ASD it may be the case that such individuals show reduced right hemisphere activation. Interestingly, the right hemisphere is preferentially involved with more global aspects of perception and also face emotion processing, both of which are impaired in ASD. This project will examine whether performance in a global face processing task is differentially affected by left and right visual field presentation in individuals on the autism spectrum

3. Using visual processing assessment to understand the neural and cognitive effects of brain injury

Brain injuries due to traffic accidents and falls are expected to be the 7th and 17th major cause of death, respectively, by 2030. Only severe cases of head injury receive close medical investigation, and many are assessed only by rudimentary behavioural observation or the subject's self-reporting. This is of concern given that there is currently limited understanding of how the brain is affected by head trauma that occurs in contact sports such as AFL football. Hence there is an urgent need to be able to rapidly and accurately assess the effects of head impact on the brain. One promising

approach to quickly and non-invasively examine brain function is through assessment of visual processing.This project will examine visual processing (including a combination of eye-tracking and/or behavioural testing of visual processing speed and attention) in people with and without history of brain injury. Increasingly, neurocognitive testing is being utilised by professional athletes, though refinement of the best measures to accurately identify those with a concussion is needed. In addition, this research can help to uncover the neural and cognitive mechanisms associated with concussion.

4. Other projects ideas - Studies on emotion, perception, attention, cognition in anxiety and neurodevelopmental disorders
Starting Reference
Laycock R, Crewther SG, Chouinard PA. Blink and you'll miss it: A core role for fast and dynamic visual processing in social impairments in autism spectrum disorder. (In Press). *Current Developmental Disorders Reports.*

Other references
Uljarevic, M., & Hamilton, A. (2013). Recognition of emotions in autism: a formal meta-analysis. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, *43*(7), 1517-1526
Laycock, R., Wood, K., Wright, A., Crewther, S.G., Goodale, M.A. (In Press). Saccade latency provides evidence for reduced face inversion effects with higher autism traits. *Frontiers Human Neuroscience*. doi: 10.3389/fnhum.2019.00470.
Shilton, A.L., **Laycock, R.,** Crewther, S.G. (2019). Different effects of trait and state anxiety on global-local visual processing following acute stress. *Cognition, Brain, Behavior*. *23*(3):155-170. doi:10.24193/cbb.2019.23.09
Cross AJ, Goharpey N, **Laycock R,** Crewther SG. (2019). Anxiety as a Common Biomarker for Children with Additional Educational Needs. *Frontiers in Psychology*. *10*, 1420. doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01420.
Laycock. R., Cutajar, L. & Crewther. S.G. (2019). High schizotypy traits associated with atypical processing of negative emotions with low spatial frequencies. *Schizophrenia Research*. *210*, 294-295. doi:10.1016/j.schres.2018.12.035
Laycock. R., Cutajar, L. & Crewther. S.G. (2019). Subclinical high schizotypy traits are associated with slower change detection. *Acta Psychologica*, *195*, 80-86.
Peel, H., Sherman, J., Sperandio, I., **Laycock, R.,** Chouinard, P. (2019). Perceptual size discrimination requires awareness and late visual areas: a continuous flash suppression and interocular transfer study. *67*, 77-85. *Consciousness and Cognition.* doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2018.11.012

Dr Jasmine B MacDonald:
1. The impact of patient aggression on experiences of burnout amongst Australian aged care workers.
In this project, an existing predominantly quantitative data set of Australian aged care workers from an online questionnaire will be used to assess whether the experience of three types of patient aggression (psychological, physical, sexual) are predictive of elevated levels of burnout. The research questions are: (1) accounting for demographics and length of service, do the three types of patient aggression and family aggression predict burnout? (2) is the relationship between patient aggression and burnout mediated by family aggression and moderated by length of service? Qualitative data will provide insights into the protective aspects of this work and individual experiences.
2. Does elevated experiences of burnout, secondary traumatic stress, and compassion satisfaction in Australian language interpreters impact their intention to stay in the industry?
In this project, an existing predominantly quantitative data set of Australian language interpreters who work with refugees and asylum seekers (from an online questionnaire) will be used to assess whether: (1) elevated levels of compassion fatigue (burnout and secondary traumatic stress) are associated with an increased intention to leave the industry; and (2) compassion satisfaction is a

mediating factor in the relationship between compassion fatigue and intension to leave the industry. Qualitative data will provide insights into the protective aspects of this work and individual experiences.

3. How do experiences of trauma exposure impact the world assumptions and psychological distress levels of TV news journalists?

In this project, an existing predominantly quantitative data set of international TV news journalists from an online questionnaire will be used to assess whether: (1) elevated levels of trauma exposure (personal and work-related) are associated with more negative cognitions about the world and other people; and (2) journalists who experience more negative cognitions report greater symptoms of psychological distress (PTSD, depression, anxiety, and stress). Qualitative data will provide insights into the protective aspects of this work and individual experiences.

4. How do experiences of trauma exposure impact the substance use behaviours of TV news journalists?

In this project, an existing predominantly quantitative data set of international TV news journalists from an online questionnaire will be used to assess whether: (1) elevated levels of trauma exposure (personal and work-related) are associated with increased substance use risk; and (2) coping style is a mediating factor in the relationship between trauma exposure and substance use risk. Qualitative data will provide insights into the protective aspects of this work and individual experiences.

5. How do online undergraduate psychology students engage with their course content, teaching staff, and their peers.

In this project, existing qualitative data from in-depth interviews and focus groups with undergraduate psychology students will be used to explore patterns of study behaviour and engagement, using thematic analysis. Areas for exploration include: use of online discussion forums/boards, how students decide how much time to dedicate to study, when and how they study, what competes for their time, and multitasking behaviours while studying.

Dr. Robyn Moffitt:

1. Can self-compassion reduce the strength of the association between shame and psychopathology?

This project will investigate the relationships between shame, self-compassion and psychopathology (depression, anxiety and stress). Specifically, the study will explore the link between context-specific perceptions of shame (both internal and external shame) and psychopathology, and whether self-compassion can moderate this relationship (i.e., whether self-compassion can reduce the strength of this association).

Starter references:
- Cândea, D. M., & Szentágotai-Tătar, A. (2018). The impact of self-compassion on shame-proneness in social anxiety. *Mindfulness, 9*, 1816-1824. doi: https://10.1007/s12671-018-0924-1
- Johnson, E. A., & O'Brien, K. A. (2013). Self-compassion soothes the savage ego-threat system: Effects on negative affect, shame, rumination, and depressive symptoms. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 32(9)*, 939-963. doi: https://10.1521/jscp.2013.32.9.939
- Sedighimornani, N., Rimes, K. A., & Verplanken, B. (2019). Exploring the relationships between mindfulness, self-compassion, and shame. *Sage Open, 9*, 1-9. doi: https://10.1177/2158244019866294

2. Does negative affectivity mediate the relationship between self-compassion and unhealthy eating behaviour?

This project will investigate the relationships between negative affectivity (depression and anxiety), self-compassion and unhealthy eating behaviour (i.e., emotional eating). Specifically, the study will explore the link between self-compassion and emotional eating, and whether negative affectivity mediates this relationship (i.e., whether self-compassion reduces the likelihood of emotional eating by assisting with the regulation of negative affectivity).

Starter references:

- Biber, D. D. & Ellis, R. (2019). The effect of self-compassion on the self-regulation of health behaviours: A systematic review. *Journal of Health Psychology, 24(14)*, 2060-2071. doi: 10.1177/1359105317713361
- Frayn, M., Livshits, S., & Knäuper, B. (2018). Emotional eating and weight regulation: A qualitative study of compensatory behaviours and concerns. *Journal of Eating Disorders, 6(23)*, 1-10. doi: 10.1186/s40337-018-0210-6
- Turk, F., & Waller, G. (2020). Is self-compassion relevant to the pathology and treatment of eating and body image concerns? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review, 79*, 1-19. doi: /10.1016/j.cpr.2020.101856

Dr. Lauren Saling:

1. Are procrastinators more exploratory than non-procrastinators?

Background: Procrastination is typically conceptualised as maladaptive and self-defeating. However, procrastinators may not merely delay tasks but may actually complete tasks in a qualitatively different way to non-procrastinators, that is, while procrastinator explore the environment, non-procrastinators just exploit it. In this study, we will investigate whether procrastinators are more exploratory than non-procrastinators and whether this approach promotes creative task outcomes. (The study can be completed online if Covid-19 associated restrictions persist in 2021.)

2. How is compliance with social distancing rules affected by people's understanding of their normative force? What are the implications for social policy?

Background: There is substantial variation in rates of compliance with social distancing measures instituted to curb the spread of Covid-19. This variation may be accounted for by whether people are motivated to comply for moral, prudential or social reasons. In this study, we will investigate whether compliance varies as a function of motivation. The impact of individual differences (demographic features, personality, etc) on compliance will also be investigated (The study can be completed online if Covid-19 associated restrictions persist in 2021.)