Clinical Psychology Research Projects 2025

N.B., Masters projects supervised by staff not in Psychology may require co-supervisors; PhD projects must have a Psychology staff member as a primary supervisor.

CEPSW Psychology Staff

Ryan Balzan (Associate Professor in Clinical Psychology)

My work has particularly focussed on the role that cognitive biases (i.e., problematic thinking styles) play in the development and maintenance of delusional beliefs in people with psychosis. I have also contributed to the development of novel psychological treatments, including the metacognitive training programme (MCT). MCT targets the cognitive biases thought to cause and maintain delusions, with the aim of reducing the severity of these symptoms. Recently, we've extended MCT to other diagnoses, such as eating disorders and depression.

Lisa Beatty (Associate Professor in Clinical Psychology)

My primary interest is psycho-oncology, defined as (1) the study of psychosocial responses to cancer, and (2) psychosocial factors that influences all stages of the disease process, from risk, detection, course, treatment, and outcomes. In particular, I have expertise in the development and evaluation of digital mental health interventions for cancer. Within these broad areas, I would welcome student ideas, or I have a number of specific research projects that would be appropriate, including:

- Exploring quantitative predictors of adherence / engagement with a self-directed online intervention for women with metastatic breast cancer (Finding My Way-Advanced);
- Co-designing and feasibility testing a digital micro-intervention for newly diagnosed cancer survivors (Finding My Way-Micro);
- Systematically reviewing the evidence base for brief / single-session psychosocial interventions in cancer populations.

Nathan Caruana (Senior Lecturer in Psychology)

My research is primarily focused on understanding neurodiverse social interactions (including work with autistic children and adults, and adults diagnosed with schizophrenia). I use a variety of research methods and technologies to investigate the perceptual and psychological factors that influence social outcomes in positive and negative ways. This includes both qualitative and quantitative methods, online and lab-based studies, and techniques such as eye tracking, virtual reality and social robotics. I also conduct research on the psychology of reading difficulties.

I have two projects that would be suitable for a Clinical PhD student commencing in 2025.

1. **Reading Difficulties and Avoidance, Self-concept and Emotional Health**. In this project, I am working with Professor Genevieve McArthur (Dyslexia SPELD Foundation & Australian Centre for Advanced Literacy, Australian Catholic University) to develop and validate new psychometric tools that will allow us to (1) better understand the relationship between reading difficulties and emotional health outcomes in children and

adults; and (2) support clinical practice by identifying intervention targets and tracking clinical gains – in both literacy and emotional health.

2. **Understanding and Mitigating Social Stigma in Autism.** In this project, I am working with Dr Diana Tan (Macquarie University) to examine how diagnostic labels shape people's social perceptions and behaviours during interactions with others believed to have a diagnosis of 'autism' . We also plan to investigate how social stigma can be mitigated through neurodiversity education interventions and may use virtual reality as a tool to measure stigma and deliver neurodiversity education.

Sarah Cohen-Woods (Professor in Psychology)

Not available for supervision in 2025 of new students that I haven't previously supervised

Laura Edney (Dr, Research Fellow)

I am a health economist with a background in psychology. I am interested in the application of health economics to mental health and wellbeing research to support evidence-informed policy and practice decisions for improved patient experience, population health and health system sustainability. While I am unavailable for primary supervision in 2025, I am happy to co-supervise projects in this area.

Natalie Goulter (Lecturer in Psychology)

My research program aims to advance the understanding, prediction, and prevention of externalising psychopathology (e.g., aggression, impulsivity) and callous-unemotional (CU) traits (i.e., shallow affect and empathy) in young people. Specifically, my research aims to: (a) elucidate early etiological profiles contributing to the emergence of externalising psychopathology and CU traits, including prenatal experiences, parenting behaviours, and emotional processing; (b) understand specific biological systems (focusing on neuroendocrine, inflammatory, and psychophysiological indices) related to the development and maintenance of externalising psychopathology and CU traits; (c) apply diverse methodologies (e.g., micro [intensive real-time] and macro [long-term panel] longitudinal methods) and analytic approaches (e.g., dynamic modeling, integrative data techniques) to better characterise the persistence of externalising psychopathology and CU traits; and (d) mobilise knowledge from this developmental work to inform and evaluate interventions targeting externalising psychopathology and CU traits. My availability for 2025 supervision is yet to be finalised, however I welcome student ideas / discussion.

Eva Kemps (Professor in Psychology)

My research activities focus on applications of cognitive experimental psychology in health behaviours, in particular eating. Two broad areas of ongoing research with opportunities for several post-graduate research projects include:

1. Psychology of human-plant interactions for Space habitation and addressing food insecurity and sustainability on Earth

Our lab has recently begun to investigate human-plant interactions, with a view to optimising the overall well-being of astronauts involved in Space missions. In this context, we focus on interactions between humans and plants both in terms of the astronauts

caring for them as well as eating them, to ascertain the psychological benefits derived from these interactions, including effects on cognition and mood within the constrained environment of Space.

This endeavour is part of an Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence in Plants for Space. The Centre, led from the University of Adelaide, aims to create on-demand, zero-waste, high efficiency plants and plant products to address grand challenges in sustainability for Space and on Earth. A multi-disciplinary team in plant, food, and sensory science; process and systems engineering; law and policy; and psychology will deliver transformative solutions for Space habitation and create enhanced plant-derived food and bioresources to capitalise upon emergent and rapidly expanding domestic and global markets.

Although the Centre has a strong focus on Space, the to-be-developed plant-based food products and their effects on human nutrition, performance and wellbeing will also have important implications for Earth in terms of addressing food insecurity and environmental sustainability.

Potential PhD projects could focus on:

1. Attitudes and perceptions towards Space habitation (i.e., living and working on other planetary bodies such as the Moon and Mars)
2. Attitudes and perceptions towards the production and consumption of plant-based food products (including genetically modified plants)
3. Evaluating the multi-sensory elements of plant-based food products (visual appeal, taste, smell and texture) to suit individual preferences and time-of-day needs
4. Psychological benefits of plant husbandry (growing, tending and caring for plants) including ascertaining the sensory features of plant aesthetics
5. Effects of consuming plant-based food products on cognitive performance and psychological well-being
6. Effects of Space exploration and/or habitation on astronauts' cognitive performance and psychological well-being

2. Subtly changing the food environment to promote healthier eating

There is an abundance of unhealthy food in the contemporary Western environment, contributing to poor eating habits and rising obesity rates. Emerging evidence, based on the principles of nudging, suggests that making subtle changes to the food environment could combat unhealthy eating and weight gain. The overarching aim of this research is to find the optimal way of presenting food to promote healthier eating. Outcomes have the potential to dramatically change the way in which food is presented to consumers in everyday settings, from how vending machines are stocked, to how service stations set out their food displays, and fast-food outlets, cafés and online food delivery applications construct their menus.

For guidance and inspiration, here are some references based on student research projects conducted in our lab over recent years:

- Calabro, R., Kemps, E., Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2024). Effects of traffic light labelling and increased healthy range on beverage choices from vending machines. Public Health Nutrition, 27, e113. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980024000843

- Calabro, R., Kemps, E., Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2023). Vending machine backgrounds: Nudging healthier beverage choices. Current Psychology. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04420-8
- Deek, M.R., Kemps, E., Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2022). The effect of a healthy food cue on choices from an online fast-food menu. Eating Behaviors, 45, 101362. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eatbeh.2022.101632
- Gleaves, J.M., Kemps, E., Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2024). I'll have what she's having (but not what they're having): The moderating role of group membership in the effect of social norms on food choice in an online environment. Appetite, 198, 107374. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2024.107374
- Gynell, I., Kemps, E., & Prichard, I. (2022). The effectiveness of implicit interventions in food menus to promote healthier eating behaviours: A systematic review. Appetite, 173, 105997. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2022.105997
- Gynell, I., Kemps, E., Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2022). The effect of item placement on snack food choices from physical and online menus. Appetite, 169, 105792. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2021.105792
- Kay, E., Kemps, E., Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2024). Effectiveness of visual nudges for encouraging healthier beverage choices from vending machines. Health Promotion Journal of Australia. https://doi.org/10.1002/hpja.856
- Kay, E., Kemps, E., Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2023). Instagram-based priming to nudge drink choices: Subtlety is not the answer. Appetite, 180, 106337. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2022.106337
- Kingham, A., Kemps, E., Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2023). The effect of spatial separation on food and drink choices from an online menu. Eating Behaviors. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eatbeh.2023.101816
- McKay, E., Kemps, E., Prichard, I., & Tiggemann, M. (2023). Small, regular or large? The effect of size options on online food choices. Food Quality and Preference, 105, 104768. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2022.10476

Daniel King (Associate Professor in Psychology)

I have a broad interest in the study of behavioural addictions in relation to digital technologies, including but not limited to video gaming and online gambling activities, social media use (Facebook, Instagram), and online purchasing/shopping behaviours. I am also interested in the cross-over/convergence of monetised gaming (e.g., microtransactions) and online gambling. My research has mainly adopted a clinical/social psychology perspective, including studies of the social, cognitive, and motivational determinants of excessive/repetitive behaviours, and investigations of the ways in which certain structural characteristics of these activities may relate to maladaptive behaviours.

Current projects:

- Systematic review and meta-analysis of the effectiveness of interventions for problematic internet use, including gaming, social media, and other activities.
- Survey-based studies: (1) Australian mental health practitioners' knowledge, attitudes toward, and experiences of problematic internet use, including problem gaming and gaming disorder; (2) Problem gaming and related mental health conditions among Australian young people, including adolescents and young adults.

Julie Mattiske (Senior Lecturer in Psychology)

For Masters projects, I am broadly interested in anxiety and health-related issues. I do not, however, have access to clinical samples. I would be happy to serve as the internal co-supervisor for quantitative projects.

Annabelle Neall (Lecturer in Psychology)

Not available for supervision in 2025

Reg Nixon (Professor in Psychology)

My primary interest is trauma including acute stress disorder (ASD), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and Complex PTSD. For 2025 I have projects that can be scaled to be appropriate for either a Masters thesis or a Clinical PhD. A project could be in the area of treatment research, e.g., steppedcare approaches to PTSD, or improving our understanding of the most effective components of therapy. I conduct a lot of research using Cognitive Processing Therapy, so reading up on this therapy would be helpful. Another area of work I do is in prevention. A project could leverage from a larger ongoing project focused on resilience training / mental health problem prevention [PTSD/depression] in first responders and wellbeing promotion in significant others/family members (Protecting Emergency Responders with Evidence-Based Interventions (PEREI).

Starting points for reading:
• Previous student Dr Larissa Roberts' thesis - 2023 An Evaluation of Stepped Care for the Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder https://theses.flinders.edu.au/
• Roberts & Nixon 2023 - Review of stepped-care approaches – doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2022.11.005
• Interesting design paper for treatment optimisation – Sripada et al. 2023 – doi: https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-023-07669-3
• Prevention of PTSD
    o PEREI study at www.flinders.edu.au/perei
    o See prior work by a colleague at: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-022292

Bridianne O'Dea (Professor in Child and Adolescent Mental Health)

My research focuses on using novel digital technologies for the prevention, early intervention and treatment of mental health problems, primarily depression, in young people (12 to 18 years). My research methods are primarily clinical trials but I also use survey design, co-design, and qualitative methods (interviews, thematic analysis) to examine the acceptability, feasibility and effectiveness of digital interventions for improving youth mental health. In 2025, I am available for supervision and can offer preassigned projects related to (i) examining how digital interventions can support the psychological needs of young people and their carers while they await mental health treatment (ii) secondary analysis of existing datasets on youth mental health collected throughout various clinical trials (iii) examining real-world data and its potential as realworld-evidence of the effectiveness of a new smartphone app for the treatment of depression in youth. I am also open to negotiating PhD projects in child and adolescent mental health, with a focus on brief digital interventions, digital phenotyping and AIenhanced clinical trials.

Jessica Paterson (Associate Professor in Clinical Psychology)

My primary interest is in the relationship between sleep, mental health, and psychopathology in children and adults. I also have an interest in the relationship between trauma and sleep – across the lifespan, as well as for anyone who routinely experiences both trauma exposure and sleep disturbance, e.g., emergency service workers. I welcome student ideas within these areas, but also have some specific projects that could be appropriate for either Masters or PhD candidates:

1. PhD or Masters: Assessing the feasibility and efficacy of an intervention integrating existing evidence-based traumatic stress *and* sleep interventions
2. PhD or Masters: What is the mechanistic role of sleep in trauma symptomology? How does sleep before and after treatment sessions impact the efficacy of trauma focused cognitive therapy?
3. PhD or Masters: Sleep, mental health and secondary traumatic stress in children of military families
4. Masters: The psychological, social and emotional impact of caring for someone with PTSD

Melanie Takarangi (Professor in Psychology)

Not available for supervision in 2025

Emma Thomas (Professor in Psychology)

Not available for supervision in 2025

Tracey Wade (Matthew Flinders Distinguished Professor in Psychology)

Not available for supervision in 2025

Michael Wenzel (Professor in Psychology)

My research currently focuses on responses to victimizations and wrongdoing in interpersonal or intergroup contexts. I am interested in victims' and wrongdoers' responses to wrongdoing in the form of confession, apology, forgiveness and self-forgiveness, punishment and self-punishment, etc., and the role of these responses in the restoration of justice perceptions, moral identities, and social relationships. I am interested in the dynamics between these victim and offender responses, the co-engagement of relationship partners about the wrongdoing, and their effects on self and relationship repair. I am further interested in processes of psychological defensiveness in response to one's failings or wrongdoing, and in perceptions of defensiveness in others. These projects will be well-suited to a PhD (Clinical Psychology) candidate.

Tim Windsor (Professor in Psychology)

My research interests are concerned with ageing well, and in particular engagement with life in older adulthood. I would be interested in supervising Masters projects concerned with relationships between psychosocial aspects of ageing and aspects of mental ill-being (e.g., depression and anxiety symptoms) and well-being (e.g., subjective well-being and

aspects of psychological well-being). Current topics of particular interest include positive solitude and self-regulatory energy as resources for coping with ageing-related losses, awareness of ageing-related change (both losses and gains) and self-compassion.

Stephanie Wong (Senior Research Fellow in Psychology)

My research focuses on the cognitive and behavioural symptoms of dementia and related conditions. I am interested in understanding the neurobiological mechanisms that drive these symptoms, improving the way we assess these symptoms in clinical practice, and developing effective interventions. My research methods typically involve a combination of behavioural tasks (e.g., reinforcement learning), standardised questionnaires and neuropsychological tests, clinical interviews and focus groups. These projects would be suitable for either Masters or PhD students.

Current projects include:

- Cognitive impairment and financial capability. Financial mismanagement and exploitation are common in individuals with cognitive impairment. This project aims to improve the way we assess changes in financial management and risk for exploitation, investigate the cognitive skills required to undertake everyday financial tasks (e.g., budgeting, paying bills, decision-making), and to develop targeted interventions to support difficulties in performing these tasks.
- Spatial navigation assessment for diagnosis of dementia. Current clinical tests for Alzheimer's disease are not sensitive enough to detect brain changes that begin 10-20 years before memory symptoms appear. We have developed novel tests of spatial navigation (how we navigate our surroundings) that are highly sensitive to these early brain changes. This project will involve cognitive assessments of older adults and people with dementia and validation of these new assessments, and may include structural neuroimaging analysis.

I am also happy to discuss other project ideas relating to memory, executive function and social cognition in ageing and dementia.

Lydia Woodyatt (Professor in Psychology)

My research is in social psychology and uses mixed methodologies. In 2025-2026, I will have projects available focusing on youth loneliness. Loneliness impacts on the physical and mental health of young people (Lim et al., 2019), with the impact of loneliness on health compared to heavy smoking and excessive alcohol consumption (Flegal et al., 2013; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015; Kung et al., 2021). Loneliness impacts an estimated 3/5 youth (Ending Loneliness Together, 2023; McHale et al., 2023), with young adults now being the loneliest age group in South Australia (Uniting Communities, 2024). Yet, internationally there is very little research on youth loneliness (Yang et al., 2022). There are several possible research projects available connected to multiple current projects including, for example: (1) the development of a new scale of youth loneliness, (2) examining the impact of social expectation and norms on the experience of loneliness, or (3) examining how social media impacts on loneliness and social connection, (4) whether . Students will be co-supervised by Dr. Ben Lohmeyer.

Robyn Young (Professor in Psychology)

Not available for supervision in 2025

CMPH & CNHS Staff

Dr Emma Kemp (Senior Research Fellow, College of Medicine & Public Health)

I am a Senior Research Fellow with a background in psychology, working in psycho-oncology and cancer survivorship. This means my work focuses on improving psychological and quality of life outcomes for people who have been affected by cancer. In particular I specialise in people's experience of information and support resources, experiences of the health care system, and how these can be changed to improve outcomes.

I have a particular interest in disparities of access and care that may be experienced by certain population groups including people living regionally/rurally and those living with socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances. My interest in improving outcomes for these groups includes evaluating and leveraging potential moderators and mediators for these disparities including social support, health literacy, and self-efficacy.

My research uses a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches. I have worked across both the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work and the College of Medicine and Public Health; currently I am with College of Medicine and Public Health but supervise psychology students with co-supervision from within Psychology.

Dr Gorica Micic and A/Prof Nicole Lovato (Adelaide Institute for Sleep Health: A Flinders Centre of Research Excellence, College of Medicine & Public Health)

Masters students only.
We are interested in the basic and clinical aspects of sleep, insomnia, circadian rhythms, mental health and their interplay. Particularly the development of new, innovative therapeutic interventions and models of care for the management of chronic insomnia, circadian disruption and associated mental ill-health. The broad scope for potential projects are listed below. Each project has the potential to accommodate the interests of the student, so please discuss your ideas with us.

- We co-ordinate a research-focussed, public sleep health treatment service aimed to translate the combination of the latest research and technology into evidence-based clinical practice. Central to the agenda is the delivery of the non-drug and first-line treatment for insomnia, namely Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Insomnia. Patient progress through the program is standardised to best-practices and data collected to inform ongoing research. Datasets contain self-reported and objective (e.g., Polysomnography results and wearable technologies) sleep and circadian rhythm data that are collected at baseline, post-treatment, 3- and 6-month follow-up. These data can accommodate various interests and research projects which we are happy to discuss.
- We are conducting a large-scale implementation trial on the management of insomnia in Primary Care. Insomnia is the most common sleep disorder and impairs the lives of 10-30% of the Australian, but <1% of sufferers can access the best evidence-based care being Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBTi). General practitioners, at the forefront of health service delivery, are ideally placed to manage insomnia but lack clear clinical guidelines, resources, specialist sleep training, support and tools. This project

addresses the insomnia treatment gap in Primary Care management by implementing and evaluating a new evidenced-based model of care to promote feasible, evidence-based, cost-effective care pathways to reduce the health burden of insomnia for patients and the community. This project can accommodate a range of projects that we are happy to discuss with you.

- We have several additional datasets including our insomnia clinical service, an Australia-wide sleep health survey, consumer sleep tracking devices that have collected sleep data in the home-environment, and a survey of help-seeking behaviours in those experiencing sleeping difficulties. Broadly, these datasets include demographic information, sleep outcomes, psychological and physiological health, quality of life, treatment response, and environmental factors (noise, light). If there is a particular area of sleep you are interested in, or a question you might have, please reach out to us.

Ivanka Prichard (Associate Professor in Health & Exercise Psychology, College of Nursing & Health Sciences)

My current research interests lie in the area of health psychology and body image, with a focus on the impact of social media on physical activity, food consumption, and body image.

Two broad areas of ongoing research with opportunities for a post-graduate research project include:

- Social media & body image: Social media use is linked to a myriad of mental health concerns, including increased depression, body dissatisfaction and disordered eating symptomatology, and decreased self-esteem. This line of research aims to examine components of social media to determine the impact of different forms of social media (i.e. different platforms, different content) on body image.
- Body image and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD): Chronic conditions such as IBD pose a number of threats to individual body image, body functionality, and wellbeing. This area of research focuses on the co-design of interventions for individuals with IBD to improve body image and wellbeing.