SUPERVISOR/S: Aleea Devitt

PROJECT TITLE: Exploring the interactions between memory and future thinking

FIELD: Cognitive Psychology

DIVISION/SCHOOL: ALPSS - School of Psychology

PROJECT LOCATION: Hamilton

PROJECT ABSTRACT:
How many times a day do you catch yourself thinking back on fond memories? Or becoming excited at the thought of an upcoming event? We’re often thinking about the past and the future throughout our day. Recent research shows that memory and future thinking interact. We draw on memories of the past to imagine novel future events, but in turn, imagining the future can change what we remember. The purpose of this research is to determine how thinking about positive and negative future events can change what we remember about the past. This project will involve designing and testing an experiment in which people imagine future events then remember past events. We predict that imagining positive future events will bias subsequent memory to be more positive overall. This research will also examine the content of imagined future events. To do so, we will implement natural language processing to code and statistically analyse descriptions of future events. We predict that future events with more content describing episodic (who, what, when, where) information will be more likely to interact with memory. Summer students will gain knowledge of the scientific process, and first-hand experience with designing an experimental study, collecting, and analysing behavioural data.

STUDENT SKILLS:
- Motivated and responsible
- An eye for detail
- Background in statistics and quantitative research methods
- Proficient with Excel and SPSS (or other statistical programme)
- Background in cognitive psychology desirable

PROJECT TASKS:
- Generating experimental materials and stimuli
- Programming and testing a psychological experiment
- Gathering data to validate experimental stimuli
- Gathering pilot data
- Helping to code, analyse, and interpret data
- Reading scientific literature critically

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:
- Student’s Research Poster (as per clause 6 of the Scholarship regulations)
- Creation and statistical validation of experimental stimuli
- Pilot data of full experiment
- Written summary of results