

Title of Project: Comparative studies of social and emotional development in children with high functioning autism and Asperger's Disorder	
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Outline of Research	Despite social impairments being central to both autism and Asperger's disorder, there has been surprisingly little comparative work on their social skills. Thus my students and I focus on the social responsiveness and social understanding of these children, their peer interactions, play and their early moral/conscience development. To date, we have collected data on two cohorts of children. The first cohort is aged between 6 – 10 years and the second cohort is aged between 4 – 7 years. The overarching aim in this program is to inform the debate about the diagnostic distinctions, or lack thereof, between Autistic Disorder and Asperger's disorder.
Findings to date	Our collective findings to date indicate that Autistic Disorder and Asperger's Disorder are not distinct diagnostic entities, but rather form part of an autism spectrum. We have found surprisingly few differences between these groups in relation to their social competence, including their peer interactions, social responsiveness, moral cognition and behaviour, and their ability to engage in pretend play.
Expected start and finish dates	Ongoing