

Title: Executive Functions and Pretend Play in Young Children with and without Autism	
Institution	La Trobe University
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Outline of Research	The goal is to investigate how children with High-Functioning Autism (aged 4-7) differ from typically developing children in the way they apply basic skills of executive function necessary for purposeful goal-directed problem-solving behaviour and to extend our understanding of different domains of executive function. Executive functioning difficulties are commonly found in children with autism. For this project, we are using a range of simple picture card tasks and theory of mind tasks to examine underlying aspects of executive function. The study is conducted at the Child Development Unit at La Trobe University and involves two testing sessions of approximately an hour each that are videotaped. The results of the developmental assessment undertaken as part of this study will be made available to you.
Findings to date	In the initial phase of the study with typically developing preschoolers, a pattern of significant age effects have been found in hot (affective) and cool (purely cognitive) complex decision-making and inhibition tasks. We wish to extend the research to children with High-Functioning Autism to further our understanding of the development of different brain areas involved in hot and cool executive functions.
Expected start and finish dates	Ongoing