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Why is face processing impaired in some individuals with Autistic Spectrum Disorder?

This study is being conducted as part of a PhD project at Macquarie University, Centre for Cognitive Science (MACCS). We are looking for at least 30 individuals between the ages of 8-13 years, with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder to be included in the project.

Face Processing in Autism Spectrum Disorder

Recognising familiar faces is an extremely valuable skill in social interaction. An increasing amount of research suggests that some individuals with autism exhibit abnormal face processing, whilst other autistic individuals appear to process and recognise faces normally. A greater understanding of the nature of face processing problems in autism may shed light on some of the social interaction and communication difficulties that characterise the disorder.

The aims of the study are to:

- ❖ Assess a range of face processing abilities in children on the Autistic Spectrum. These include realising that two different images of a face show the same person, becoming familiar with faces over a short period of time, and recognising faces based on various components of the face (eyes/mouth/hair etc).
- ❖ Provide an insight into whether the social interactions of children with autism may be impeded by any difficulties or abnormalities with face perception and recognition.

What does the study involve?

The child with autism will complete a series of interactive touch screen computer tasks. In addition, a non-verbal reasoning task and comprehension of language task will be administered. Testing will be conducted at the child's school at a convenient time. Four to five months after the first testing session, the parents, and any siblings who are willing, will complete a testing session.

- ❖ The parents will receive a written summary of their child's performance.
- ❖ The findings will be discussed with teachers and aides at the schools so that they may benefit from any implications,

To involve your child in the project, or to find out more information please contact:

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