

2014

2nd Annual Chair Stakeholder Report

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The Chair in ASD Treatment & Care Research 2014 Newsletter Summary

I am happy to report on the second year of the accomplishments related to the Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research. We have continued to focus on research areas related to mental health of those with ASD, including studying the effectiveness of existing community interventions, identifying and developing treatments, and working with individuals with ASD, their families, and service providers in the research process. We've begun to publish papers reflecting the knowledge that is being generated through the Chair support, and have been supporting research and clinical training.

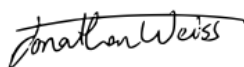
Over the last year, the Chair collaborated on many projects related to mental health and ASD, with multiple community stakeholders. Collaborations include the Toronto Catholic District School Board (to evaluate their unique and comprehensive ASD school support program); Special Olympics Ontario (to examine how youth with ASD are involved in sports and how this relates to their well-being); the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance (to develop a national survey of service needs); the Spectrum of Hope Autism Foundation (to provide a unique cognitive behavioural emotion regulation therapy to children with ASD); Autism Ontario and Integrated Autism Consulting (to evaluate their Transition to Life curriculum to help young adults with ASD transition into successful employment); and Conestoga College (to evaluate a mindfulness training for students at the College with ASD). We look forward to updating you as we make continued progress on these ongoing projects.

In 2014, we published a number of articles based on work funded by the Chair, continued to communicate and disseminate ASD and mental health research to academic and non-academic audiences, and have been helping to treat mental health problems in youth with ASD. Our ASD Mental Health Blog posted 18 lay summaries of research studies, 3

videos, 8 editorials, and 13 news articles, all focused on ASD and mental health, and has expanded its reach through social networking. We have employed undergraduate and graduate students as authors for the blog, increasing their learning and experiences with knowledge transfer. Dr. Weiss was an author on 10 new peer reviewed publications, 1 book chapter, 14 poster/paper presentations at scientific conferences, and provided 16 lectures/workshops on ASD and mental health to community organizations. Two postdoctoral fellows and 12 graduate students were supported by the Chair through research and travel funding.

As always, the Chair in ASD Treatment and Care Research would like to thank the many partners who show such strong support for the program and the stakeholder groups who are involved in our ongoing efforts to conduct meaningful and impactful health-related research. We look forward to updating you at an upcoming Stakeholder Advisory Day about the progress. As always, at the heart of this program of research are Canadians with ASD and their families.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jonathan Weiss, Ph.D., C. Psych.

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York University
Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders
Treatment and Care Research

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The Chair in ASD Treatment and Care Research 2014 Annual Report

The Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research is dedicated to studying ways to improve the mental health and well-being of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families in Canada. It is a unique research position that aims to work with various stakeholder groups including people with ASD, their families, services providers, and governmental bodies, to:

- Translate research to inform stakeholders about mental health and ASD;
- Study ways of addressing mental health problems in people with ASD;
- Provide support to the next generation of Canadian ASD researchers and clinicians

The Chair is funded by the **Canadian Institutes of Health Research** in partnership with **Autism Speaks Canada**, the **Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance**, **Health Canada**, **NeuroDevNet** and the **Sinneave Family Foundation**. Additional funds come from the **Spectrum of Hope Autism Foundation** and support from **York University** and **ORION's O3 Collaboration**.

Dr. Jonathan Weiss, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at York University, was awarded the Chair position in November 2012. He has since held two Stakeholder Advisory Meetings, the most recent one being in November 2014. The primary objective of this meeting was to inform the community of stakeholders about past, ongoing and new research projects, and to develop an understanding of how to further work with the community to foster impactful research. Through group discussions, stakeholders provided the following recommendations:

- Explore needs and service use in adults, research intervention programs, and examine the impact of sport and active lifestyles for people with ASD.
- Encourage partnerships among agencies to improve integration of services, connect with rural and smaller communities, and promote and develop Canada-wide collaborations
- Continue to increase accessibility of information, and expand beyond Toronto and Ontario audiences

You can read more about the meeting on the [ASD Mental Health Blog](#). We intend to hold our third Stakeholder Advisory Day in the Spring of 2016. Until then, we wanted to provide an update on what the Chair has been doing over the past year.

Here is a summary of the research, stakeholder engagement, knowledge mobilization, and teaching and training the Chair has been involved with from January through December 2014.



Research Collaborations in 2014

Project Updates

Toronto Catholic District School Board - The Program to Assist Social Thinking

The Program to Assist Social Thinking (PAST) is a strengths-based socio-emotional intervention currently offered to students with ASD in the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). Developed and implemented more than seven years ago by a team of educators with expertise in the area of ASD, PAST is currently provided in five TCDSB schools. PAST has received positive support from educators, families, and students. Through our community-engaged research partnership with TCDSB educators, we are evaluating PAST to study its potential to improve the socio-emotional well being of students with ASD in elementary school. Over the last year we have worked collaboratively to develop a research design that was piloted in Spring 2014. We are currently continuing with data collection at a number of schools, using qualitative and quantitative methods.

Special Olympics Ontario - Sport Participation in Youth with Intellectual Disabilities

Youth with intellectual disabilities struggle to access typical recreational activities, and are less likely than typically developing peers to get involved in community sports or be physically active. In 2013, the Chair partnered with Special Olympics Ontario to identify factors that lead to involvement and retention in sport for youth with intellectual disabilities, by having Special Olympics athletes and their caregivers complete an online survey. Approximately one third of these young athletes had a diagnosis of an ASD. In 2014, we travelled to different parts of Ontario, and interviewed 58 of these athletes to understand how they feel about themselves, about others, and about doing different types of activities. We are now following up with all families who completed the online survey to see who is involved in sport and are looking at who has continued to participate. In addition to looking at sport participation, this study will enable us to examine predictors of emotional well-being and health in youth with ASD and intellectual disabilities.

Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance - National Service Needs Assessment of Individuals with ASD

The Canadian National ASD Alliance (CASDA) worked with the Chair to develop a survey that they could use to better understand the service needs of Canadians with ASD. In Spring 2014, the National Autism Needs Assessment Survey was launched, and more than 5300 respondents from across the country provided input on service usage, service needs and barriers to access for individuals with ASD. The information collected was from professionals and caregivers of individuals with ASD, as well as self-advocating adults. In August 2014, CASDA submitted the National Needs Assessment Survey report to the Public Health Agency of Canada, identifying the range of services needed to provide adequate support, and the steps that need to be taken in order to improve the lives of Canadians affected by ASD. To view this report, visit the CASDA website at www.asdalliance.org.

Autism Ontario and Integrated Autism Consulting - Transition to Life Program

The Transition to Life Program was developed by Autism Ontario and Integrated Autism Consulting to help address the needs of young adults with Asperger Syndrome, and provide support as they transition from secondary school into adult life. In 2013, the two organizations approached the Chair for assistance in designing an evaluation framework for the 12-week pilot/demonstration course that began in the summer of that year. Autism Ontario and Integrated Autism Consulting have since received funding from the Ministry of Economic Development to expand this program. Transition to Life is currently available in Barrie, Kingston and Ottawa for adults between the ages of 18 and 28 with Asperger Syndrome. The aim is to further develop the program and make it available to young adults all across Ontario. For more information about Transition to Life, visit the Integrated Autism Consulting website at www.integratedautismconsulting.com or the Autism Ontario website at www.autismontario.com/adults.

Spectrum of Hope Autism Foundation - Secret Agent Society: Operation Regulation – An Emotion Regulation Intervention for Youth with ASD

Youth with ASD often experience emotional difficulties, like anxiety, depression, or anger, which can be related to difficulties with regulating their emotions when faced with stressful situations. The Secret Agent Society: Operation Regulation (SAS:OR) program, developed by Dr. Renae Beaumont, is a cognitive behavioural program to help youth with ASD cope with their emotions and handle day-to-day stressors by teaching tools and strategies. Children learn these strategies through numerous spy-themed activities like an emotion-focused computer game, cue cards, session games, and parent and teacher handouts. As of January 2015, 23 children have successfully completed the program, which is projected to increase to 40 children by the end of 2015. SAS:OR has also operated as a training opportunity for 10 graduate students who are learning to provide therapy to children with ASD. These students have worked and continue to work as the program therapists under the supervision of Drs. Weiss, Thomson, Burnham Riosa, and PhD candidate, Ms. Wincentak. We completed our feasibility trial showing that SAS:OR is a clinically useful program to deliver, and look forward to assessing its effectiveness when our randomized trial is completed.

New Collaborations

NeuroDevNet - MYmind: Mindfulness Training for Adolescents with ASD

Previous research has shown that mindfulness not only helps to improve attention and focus, but can also be effective in reducing stress, increasing control over negative feelings, and improving quality of life. This new research project will be examining the efficacy of MYmind: a mindfulness-training program designed for adolescents between the ages of 14 and 21 with ASD, and their parents. Originally developed and tested by Dr. Susan Bogels in the Netherlands, this program aims to have families experience the benefits of mindfulness meditation and cognitive therapy techniques while learning to relate to one another in a new way. MYmind is a nine-week group intervention program where adolescents and parents learn breathing meditation techniques, mindfulness exercises and yoga. The initiative also provides training to four graduate students, who are learning how to provide mindfulness therapy to adolescents with ASD; building the capacity of trained professionals for the future. Pilot groups for this program began in January 2015, and plans for a second group to begin in January 2016 are currently underway. We will also be holding a training for community clinicians in the summer of 2015.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health - Magnus Cards by Magnusmode Ltd.©

In collaboration with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), the Chair developed content for a number of health-related Magnus Cards, which will be freely available to the public in 2015. Magnus Cards by [Magnusmode](#) are designed to empower and promote independence in individuals with developmental disabilities through the use of training cards that cover fundamental life skills. Each set of cards offers simple step-by-step instructions to work through real-life situations, so they can be learned and easily mastered. Dr. Weiss and his team have worked to develop four sets of cards that aim to teach individuals with developmental disabilities different kinds of activities they can engage in to improve their moods, how to cope with feelings of anxiety and sadness, and how to relax when feeling stressed. The cards designed by CAMH focus on navigating health-related needs, like going to the family doctor or to the emergency department.



Knowledge mobilization

The Chair's mandate includes making research on mental health accessible. This can happen in many ways: through publications in peer reviewed journals that are openly accessible, through presentations at scientific and lay conferences, and through online posts about research topics.

Publications

In 2014, Dr. Weiss co-authored 10 peer-reviewed publications, and one published book chapter. There are also a number of manuscripts currently in press and under review that will come out in 2015, based on the research that has occurred in 2014. The following are brief summaries of the articles published in the past year:

Weiss, J. A., Thomson, K., & Chan, L. (2014). A systematic literature review of emotion regulation measurement in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder. *Autism Research*, 7(6), 629-648.

Emotion regulation (ER) difficulties are a potential common factor underlying the presentation of multiple emotional and behavioral problems in individuals with ASD. To provide an overview of how ER has been studied in individuals with ASD, we conducted a systematic review of the past 20 years of ER research in the ASD population, using established keywords from the most comprehensive ER literature review of the typically developing population to date. The findings of the current review provide the field with an in-depth analysis of various ER measures and how each measure taps into an ER framework. This article is freely available for download through [YorkSpace](#).

McPhie, M. L., Weiss, J. A., & Wekerle, C. (2014). Psychological distress as a mediator of the relationship between childhood maltreatment and sleep quality in adolescence: Results from the Maltreatment and Adolescent Pathways (MAP) Longitudinal Study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 38(12), 2044-2052.

In recent years, researchers have begun to examine the link between negative health-related behaviours and history of childhood maltreatment. The current study considers the relationship between history of childhood maltreatment and sleep disturbances in adolescence. Youth reported on lifetime maltreatment experiences, psychological distress, and sleep disturbances, in addition to the other measures administered as part of the larger MAP study protocol. More severe childhood maltreatment was related to increased sleep disturbances during adolescence, and psychological distress was a significant mediator of the childhood maltreatment-adolescent sleep disturbance association.

Weiss, J. A. (2014). Transdiagnostic case conceptualization of emotional problems in youth with ASD: An emotion regulation approach. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 21(4), 331-350.

A number of authors have designed cognitive-behavioural interventions to address transdiagnostic factors related to multiple emotional problems, although none have applied this focus to youth with ASD. The current review article describes how a transdiagnostic emotion regulation framework may inform cognitive-behavioural interventions for youth with ASD, which until now have focused almost exclusively on anxiety. This article is freely available for download through [YorkSpace](#).

Lake, J. K., Weiss, J. A., Dergal, J., & Lunsky, Y. (2014). Child, parent, and service predictors of psychotropic polypharmacy among adolescents and adults with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology*, 24(9), 486-493.

This study examined the child, parent, and service factors associated with polypharmacy in adolescents and young adults with ASD. Information regarding service use patterns and medication use among individuals with ASD, as well as additional demographic information was collected from 363 parents. Results of this study indicated that adolescents and young adults with ASD are a highly medicated population with multiple factors associated with psychotropic polypharmacy including the patient's psychiatric comorbidity, history of hurting others, therapy use, and parent burden.

Weiss, J. A., Wingsong, A., & Lunsky, Y. (2014). Defining crisis in families of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Autism: International Journal of Research and Practice*, 18, 985-995.

Understanding crisis in the family is important to mental health practice since it can serve as a guide in delivering service to at-risk families. This study investigated the subjective experience of crisis in 155 mothers of children diagnosed with ASD. Thematic analysis revealed that crisis is characterized by factors influencing four major areas: demands, internal capabilities, external resources, and subjective appraisal. This article is freely available for download through [YorkSpace](#).

Vogan, V., Lake, J. K., Weiss, J. A., Robinson, S., Tint, A., & Lunsky, Y. (2014). Factors associated with caregiver burden among parents of individuals with ASD: Differences across the spectrum. *Family Relations*, 63(4), 554-567.

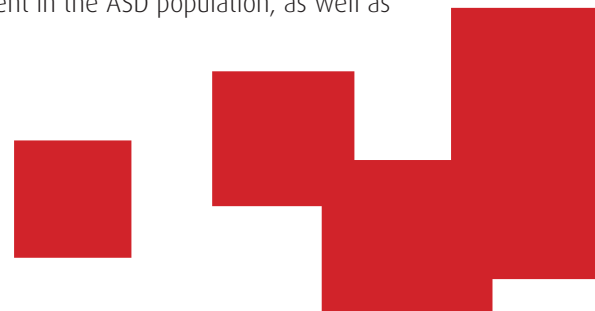
As health services and supports become increasingly difficult for adolescents and adults with ASD to access, these individuals rely on their families for support, often resulting in caregiver burden among parents. This study investigated factors associated with burden in parents of adolescents and young adults with ASD to understand how these factors differ across varying levels of intellectual functioning. Of the 297 parents sampled, ASD severity, externalizing behaviours, medical comorbidity, and parent age predicted burden in parents of adolescents and young adults with ASD and an intellectual disability (ID), while inability to pay for services predicted burden in parents of individuals with ASD and no ID.

Lavoie-Brown, S., Viecili, M. A., & Weiss, J. A. (2014). Sexual knowledge and victimization in adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44(9), 2185-2196.

There is a significant gap in understanding the risk of sexual victimization in individuals with ASD and the variables that contribute to risk such as age appropriate sexual interest, limited sexual knowledge and experiences, and social deficits. In this study 95 adults with ASD and 117 adults without ASD completed questionnaires regarding sexual knowledge sources, actual knowledge, perceived knowledge, and sexual victimization. It was found that individuals with ASD obtained less of their sexual knowledge from social sources, more sexual knowledge from non-social sources, had less perceived and actual knowledge, and experienced more sexual victimization than individuals without ASD. This article is freely available for download through [YorkSpace](#).

Schroeder, J., Cappadocia, M. C., Bebko, J., Pepler, D., & Weiss, J. A. (2014). Shedding light on a pervasive problem: A review of research on bullying experiences among children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44(7), 1520-1534.

Autism spectrum disorder is characterized by difficulties with social interaction, communication, and the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships, placing individuals with ASD at an increased risk of bullying victimization, compared to typically developing peers. This paper reviews the literature that has emerged over the past decade regarding prevalence of bullying involvement in the ASD population, as well as associated psychosocial factors.



Paquette-Smith, M., Weiss, J. A., & Lunsky, Y. (2014). History of suicide attempts in adults with Asperger Syndrome. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention*, 35(4), 273-277.

This study examines the issue of suicidality in adults with Asperger Syndrome (AS). Fifty adults with AS from across Ontario completed an online survey. Over 35% of individuals with AS reported that they had attempted suicide in the past. Individuals who attempted suicide were more likely to have a history of depression and self-reported more severe autism symptomatology. The suicide attempt rate in this sample is much higher than the 4.6% lifetime prevalence seen in the general population. These findings highlight a need for more specialized services to help prevent future attempts and to support this vulnerable group.

Bebko, J., Schroeder, J., & Weiss, J. A. (2014). The McGurk effect in children with Autism and Asperger Syndrome. *Autism Research*, 7(1), 50-59.

Samples of children with ASD and with Down syndrome, as well as a typically developing sample were presented with an experimental technique called the 'McGurk effect', where certain types of audio information is paired with visual information. Children with Autism demonstrated showed a lower rate of the McGurk effect compared with the Asperger Syndrome, Down Syndrome and the typically developing groups. These results suggest that children with Autism may have unique intermodal speech perception difficulties linked to their representations of speech sounds. This article is freely available for download through [YorkSpace](#).



Conference Presentations and Posters

The Chair's research collaboration resulted in 13 poster presentations and one paper presentation at peer reviewed, scientific conferences across North America in the last year. Presentations were on a variety of topics such as emotion regulation in individuals with ASD, electronics use in youth and young adults with ASD, sexual knowledge and victimization in adults with ASD, and the evaluation of interventions for individuals with ASD. These posters were presented at the following conferences, many which were led by trainees:

- 4th Health & Wellbeing in Children, Youth, and Adults with Developmental Disabilities Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia
- The joint 20th Biennial Meeting of the International Society for Developmental Neuroscience and 5th Annual NeuroDevNet Brain Development Conference, Montreal, Quebec
- National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (NADD) 31st International Congress & Exhibit Show, Miami, Florida
- 40th Annual Conference for the Association for Applied Behavior Analysis International, Chicago, Illinois
- Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities (OADD) – Research Special Interest Group (RSIG) Conference, Kingston, Ontario
- Woodview Stages of Autism: Adolescent and Beyond Conference, Hamilton, Ontario
- 47th Annual Gatlinburg Conference on Research and Theory in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Chicago, Illinois
- International Meeting for Autism Research (IMFAR) 2014, Atlanta, Georgia



Presentations/Workshops to Non Academic Audiences

Over the past year, Dr. Weiss gave 16 talks about mental health and ASD to individuals with ASD, clinicians, educators, family and caregivers of individuals with ASD, and policy makers in different branches of government. Here is a selection of some of those talks:

Supporting Mental Health in Individuals with ASD: Moving Beyond Anxiety

Presented at The First Canada-Israel Autism Research Symposium on Autism (Jerusalem, Israel). Dr. Weiss participated in a Canadian exchange where we shared our research with counterparts in Israel and with advocates. Dr. Weiss presented on the need to focus on the variables that lead to thriving in youth with ASD.

Addressing Bullying in Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Research and Strategies

Presented at the Monarch House (Vancouver, British Columbia). Dr. Weiss provided a workshop to people with ASD, family members, and staff at Monarch House about mental health treatments for youth with ASD and on ways to address bullying.

Supporting Youth with ASD Through Positive Youth Development

Presented at the Psychology Symposium at University of Warwick (Coventry, United Kingdom). Dr. Weiss presented to the Psychology department at the University of Warwick about involvement in Special Olympics and thriving in youth with ASD.

Health and Health Service Use in Transition Age Youth with Developmental Disabilities

Presented at the H-CARDD Town Hall Webinar (Toronto, ON). Along with Dr. Barry Isaacs from Surrey Place Centre and the H-CARDD team led by Dr. Yona Lunskey, Dr. Weiss presented on the health service use of 18-24 year olds Ontarians with ASD and with intellectual disabilities without ASD. You can access a video of the town hall by visiting the Projects page of the [H-CARDD website](#).

The ASD Mental Health Blog

The ASD Mental Health Blog was launched in January 2013 to inform families, service providers, and individuals with ASD about research surrounding ASD and mental health. The blog also offers editorials and news segments on relevant topics and issues, interviews with leading ASD researchers from across Canada, and upcoming research projects from Dr. Weiss' team and collaborators. At the end of 2014, we had 125 subscribers and over 8000 unique page views. As well, our Twitter account was up to 210 tweets and 265 followers, which has continued to dramatically increase. To subscribe to the ASD Mental Health Blog, visit www.asdmentalhealth.blog.yorku.ca. You can also receive updates on blog activity by following us on Twitter ([@ASDMentalHealth](https://twitter.com/ASDMentalHealth)) and liking us on Facebook ([ASD Mental Health Blog](https://www.facebook.com/ASDMentalHealthBlog)). You can also follow Dr. Weiss on his personal Twitter account ([@DrJonathanWeiss](https://twitter.com/DrJonathanWeiss)).

Here's an update on each of the different sections:

Research Summaries:

Each month, the ASD Mental Health Blog shares numerous ResearchSnapshots, which are clear language summaries. The template and format were developed by ResearchImpact and have been adopted by Dr. Weiss for summarizing research on ASD and mental health that would be of interest and/or most helpful to stakeholders. These articles are based on peer-reviewed published research studies and provide a two-page summary, covering 5 key areas: what the research is about, what the researchers did, the main findings, how the reader can use this information, and the take-home message. Each summary also provides a brief biography about the researchers and citation for the original article.

In 2014, we posted 18 research summaries, which can be downloaded and shared freely by visiting the Research Summaries page on the blog. In total, the Blog features 34 research summaries with more being added monthly.

In the News:

These posts outline and link to news items that feature the work of the Chair, as well as topics and upcoming events that may interest the many different members of the ASD community. For example, this past year we posted about the cross-Canada tour of Michael McCreary, Aspie Comic, the Community Networks of Specialized Care webcast featuring the APEX research interest group, which aired on November 14, and the Virtual Town Hall hosted by H-CARDD on December 11, 2014.

Upcoming Conferences

To encourage knowledge mobilization and the sharing of research findings, the ASD Mental Health Blog provides updates about upcoming research conferences taking place in Canada and the United States. Each conference listed has a link to the conference website, where stakeholders can receive more information, register or submit abstracts.

Videos:

In 2014, we posted 3 videos, which included an animated short developed by StoryCorps® about a twelve-year-old boy with Asperger Syndrome interviewing his mom, as well as two videos featuring the Hon. Mike Lake (MP, Edmonton – Mill Woods – Beaumont).

Editorials:

We've also produced a number of editorials that evaluate and discuss research findings, pertinent issues, and resources related to ASD and mental health. In 2014, we posted 8 editorials.

YorkSpace

In 2014, the Chair upheld the commitment to improving the accessibility of information through the use of open access repositories. In accordance with the [CIHR Open Access Policy](#), 17 research studies produced by the Chair are currently available to view and download through the York University open access repository, [YorkSpace](#). From February to September of 2014, these research studies were viewed 440 times, and were downloaded 1115 times. In 2015, the Chair intends to have Open Access permissions for a larger number of articles, and to continue to increase the number of research studies available through YorkSpace.



Teaching and training

Part of the Chair's mandate is to support the next generation of ASD researchers. In 2014, the Chair continued to fund two postdoctoral fellows and a number of graduate students:

- **Dr. Kendra Thomson** (PhD, BCBA-D, University of Manitoba) previously conducted research evaluating a self-instructional manual for teaching direct-care staff how to conduct discrete-trials teaching in an early intervention program for children with ASD. In 2014, she worked under the supervision of Dr. Weiss, examining the effectiveness of Secret Agent Society: Operation Regulation intervention, an emotion regulation intervention designed to improve the emotional understanding and social skills of children with ASD. Dr. Thomson has since completed her post-doctoral fellowship, and has begun working as an Assistant Professor in the Centre for Applied Disability Studies at Brock University.
- **Dr. Priscilla Burnham Riosa's** (PhD, BCBA-D, University of Guelph) research interests are in understanding the impact of ASD on the individual, the family, and other social contexts. During her postdoctoral fellowship, she and Dr. Weiss are collaborating with educators from the Toronto Catholic District School Board to examine the Program to Assist Social Thinking (PAST), a school-based intervention designed to support students with ASD. Dr. Burnham Riosa also recently began exploring therapeutic alliance in the Secret Agent Society: Operation Regulation intervention, and the impact this may have on program outcomes.
- **Victoria Ting's** (MA Candidate, York University) current research is focused on emotion regulation in individuals with ASD, specifically looking at the effect of parental emotion awareness and coaching on children's emotion regulation skills and physiological arousal. Her research is funded by the Chair, and through a Canada Graduate Scholarship for Health Research and the Lillian-Wright Maternal-Child Health Scholarship.
- **Andrea Maughan** (MA Candidate, York University; MSc, University of Massachusetts Boston) entered the Clinical-Developmental Psychology graduate program at York University in September 2014 under the supervision of Dr. Weiss. Her research is funded by the Chair and an Ontario Graduate Scholarship. She is interested in how families best adapt to and support children with developmental disabilities and the impact of family involvement in mental health interventions for children with ASD.

The Chair additionally funded a number of graduate students with research stipends and travel funding to present research at scientific conferences, including: Jennifer MacMullin, Ami Tint, Michelle Viecili, Suzanne Robinson, Stephanie Fung, Katherine Wincentak, Odette Weiss, and Melissa Rourke.

In addition to the existing members of the research team, a new lab coordinator, three additional research assistants, and a social media correspondent began working with Chair in the last year:

- **Carly Albaum** began working as Lab Coordinator for Dr. Weiss in May 2014. She recently received her BA in the Specialized Honours Psychology Program at York University, completing her undergraduate thesis under the supervision of Dr. Weiss. Carly intends to pursue graduate training in Clinical-Developmental Psychology.
- **Andrew Goodwin** has been a Research Assistant for Dr. Weiss since August 2014, working in the Secret Agent Society: Operation Regulation research team. Since working under the Chair, he has gained valuable experience in conducting ASD research, and has had the opportunity to develop skills related to working with children with ASD. Andrew plans to attend graduate school in the fall of 2015 in Clinical Psychology.
- **Rachel Grant** has been working as the Project Coordinator for the MYmind project since October 2014. She recently graduated from McMaster University with an MSc in Global Health where she focused on global disease and spent time developing a mental health based initiative in Sierra Leone. Rachel is interested in pursuing a career in mental health and would like to continue her studies examining health in a cross-cultural context.
- **Emily Guertin** began working as a Research Assistant on the PAST project in October 2014. She obtained a BSc in Psychology from McMaster University and is currently working as an ABA therapist for a young man with autism. She is pursuing graduate studies in the field of ASD at Brock University.
- **Jordan Cleland** has been the Social Media Correspondent for the Chair since September 2014. She is currently working on her Master's of Social Work at the University of Toronto. She hopes to continue research and work with individuals with disabilities.



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DISORDERS ALLIANCE SPECTRE AUTISTIQUE

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