



### Invitation to Research Study at Peking University

- ✧ A cross-cultural study of the stress coping in parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

#### Dear Parent/guardian,

The Department of Psychological and Cognitive Psychology at Peking university is inviting you (parents of child(ren) with Autism Spectrum Disorder) to participate a research study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Please read the following information before you make a decision on whether or not to participate in our study. If you have any questions or need further information please feel free to contact us at [bella.chan@ubc.ca](mailto:bella.chan@ubc.ca) .

#### ✧ Purpose Statement

It has been demonstrated in previous studies that mothers of children with Autism experience post-traumatic growth, a positive response that may result from the numerous difficulties associated with raising a child with a disability. The purpose of this research study is to evaluate and compare post traumatic growth experienced by families of children with ASD in mainland China, to families of children with ASD in Vancouver, Canada. The dimensions to be evaluated and compared are: the socio-demographic characteristics of the family; the quality of services available to the family; the parenting style; and the level of family involvement.

#### ✧ Review of Literature

The prevalence and awareness of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) is on the raise globally, yet research tends to be focused primarily in North America and Europe. More research is needed regarding ASD in other parts of the world. In a recent comprehensive review and meta-analysis of prevalence estimates for ASD in children under the age of 18 in various parts of Asia, Wan and colleagues (2013) reported a pooled mean prevalence of 1 per 780. Although this estimate is substantially less than the rate of 1 in 68 found in North America, the vast population of China entails that millions of children are affected by the disability. The same meta study also found a large variability of prevalence, ranging from .18 to 42.64 per 1000. Other studies in China reported similar prevalence rates, ranging from 1.18 to 1.53 per 1000 children (Sun et al., 2013; and Beijing Disabled Persons' Federation and Municipal Health Bureau, 2006). Furthermore, the rates of autism in China are increasing each year as more people become aware of the condition, and it is gaining importance in research communities.

Since family dynamics are an essential part of a child's development and potential to cope with autism, there is a need to explore Chinese family dynamics in comparison to North American family dynamics. Research has shown that parents and caregivers of children with autism face a tremendous amount of stress in many aspects of their daily lives (Gaspar de Alba and Bodfish, 2011; Ludlow et al., 2012; Pottie and Ingram, 2008). The inevitable hardship of rearing a child with autism has consistently demonstrated a number of negative impacts on mothers, including parental stress (Dabrowska and Pisula, 2010); a lower quality of life (Kheir et al., 2012); coping and adaption difficulties (Hastings et al., 2005); and a variety of psychological symptoms such as depression (Davis and Carter, 2008), and anxiety and pessimism (Hastings and Brown, 2002). Cultural differences regarding family obligations and public opinions have also shown to be a barrier to Chinese families raising children with ASD. (Holroyd, 2003)

*Research on Post-traumatic Growth:*

Parents and caretakers of individuals with ASD are categorized as experiencing a life changing crisis (Weiss et al., 2013). Calhoun and Tedeschi also distinguish traumatic events from everyday stressors, which are commonly experienced by everyone, as they do not have the highly distressing and psychologically damaging property as a traumatic event.

While rearing a child with autism can result in heightened psychological distress and mental health problems, these adverse catalysts have appeared to co-occur with positive outcomes (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2001). Some studies have reported promising positive health outcomes from parents rearing children with Autism (Zhang et al, 2015; Phelps et al 2009;). This positive transformation has been identified as post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; ). Post-traumatic growth, as defined by Calhoun and Tedeschi, refers to significant positive psychological experiences that come about as a result of the struggle with a highly difficult life crisis. These positive psychological experiences of parents and caretakers include the development of new insights about their life, growth in personal strength and the ability to resolve problems that arises with their child's disability, and a focus on positive contributions of their child and their own lives and well-being. Individuals experiencing post-traumatic growth are not experiencing a short-term coping mechanism induced response; nor is the growth an illusion. Post-traumatic growth is a veridical transformative experience. The five domains of post-traumatic growth proposed by Calhoun and Tedeschi are: an increased appreciation for life in general; meaningful relationships with others; a greater sense of personal strength; recognition of new possibilities in one's life; and spiritual development (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

It is important for families in Mainland China to identify factors that facilitate PTG in order to promote a healthier lifestyle and perspective for the family as a whole. Understanding the circumstances from which post-traumatic growth transpires can provoke insight into the design and implementation of an effective intervention. Furthermore, bringing one's awareness to the idea of post-traumatic growth encourages and provides caregivers an optimistic perspective to deal with their challenges.

✧ **Methodology**

*Participants:*

Participants will be recruited through various centers and hospitals providing services for children with autism in Beijing, and through service agencies in Vancouver. Requirements for recruitment: parents have to have at least one biological child with a formal diagnosis of autism according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) diagnostic criteria. Parents or grandparents who would be the primary caretaker of the child will be the respondent. Information delivery will be delivered electronically. All questionnaires will be completed online.

If you wish to proceed and participate in this study, please follow the link or scanner code below to access the study consent and the surveys required to be filled out.

<https://sojump.com/jq/14811110.aspx>



Thank you for your valuable time and interest.

✧ **Signature of Researchers:**

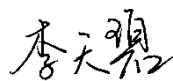
陈小雯 Bella Chan, M.Ed., BCBA  
Student researcher at Peking University

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Bella Chan', written over a horizontal line.

易莉 YiLi, Ph.D  
Professor at Peking University

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'YiLi', written in a cursive style.

李天碧 Li TianBi, Ph.D Candidate  
Doctorate student at Peking University

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Li TianBi', written in a cursive style.