

## 12 newly-funded research projects on S'pore society

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Social scientists' understanding of how Singaporean children develop in their early years will get a boost with a new \$8.5 million national study that will begin soon.

About 5,000 families with children aged six and younger will be surveyed next year and in 2020 by National University of Singapore (NUS) professor Jean Yeung.

She will look at how factors such as early childcare, pre-school attendance, the use of technology and family stress can shape child development and family resilience.

The project is one of a dozen to be funded by the Social Science Research Council, which announced the full list yesterday.

The council was set up in January last year to promote social science and humanities research. Its 12 chosen studies range from racial biases in children to coping strategies in low-income families.

The council will call for a second round of proposals from May 8 to July 28. It will also accept proposals that look at how new digital technologies affect society.

The grant is part of a \$350 million Ministry of Education (MOE) drive to boost social science research.

Of that amount, MOE has set aside \$50 million until 2020 for research grants.

The council's deputy chairman Chan Heng Chee said: "Social sciences in Singapore has traditionally not been given the same emphasis as the hard sciences, but it is getting it now."

Prof Yeung's early childhood development study will also carry out smaller projects, such as a study of the cultural habits of mixed-race children. It is one of three large-scale ones that will receive between \$1 million and \$10 million of funding over three to five years.

The other two projects are about productivity and transboundary haze.

The remaining nine fall under a lower tier of funding: between \$100,000 and \$1 million for up to three years.

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