

# **SOCIAL SERVICE RESEARCH NETWORK (SSRN)**

## **“Building a Conducive Ecosystem for Research in the Social Service Sector: From Findings to Solutions”**

**Monday, 31 March 2014**  
**Auditorium, Level 1**  
**Civil Service College**

# Social Service Research & Translation opportunities & challenges

**Associate Professor Marcus Chiu**

Department of Social Work  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
National University of Singapore



# Social Service Research & Translation

## opportunities & challenges

A/Prof Marcus Y.L. Chiu

Social Work Department, FASS, NUS

# General Functions of Research

## Exploration

- Charting into areas not yet known
- Adding to local knowledge pool

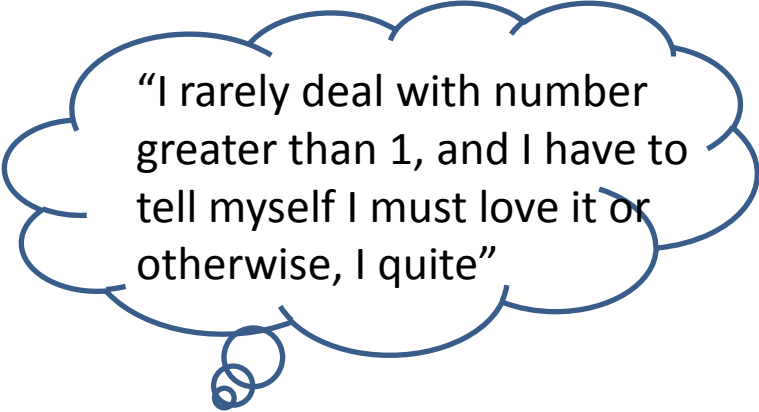
## Description

- Comprehensive portrait
- Dynamic process

## Explanation

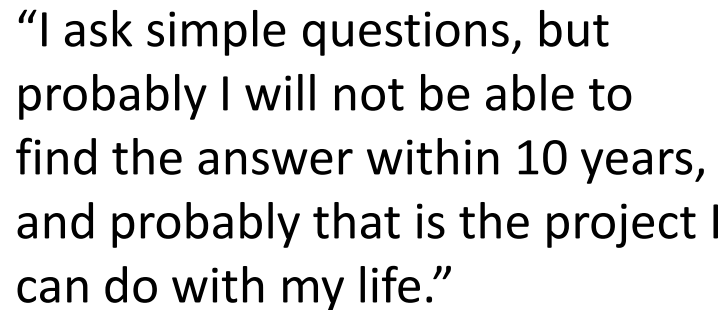
- Causality
- Patterns of relations
- Theorizing

# Apart from Admirations...



"I rarely deal with number greater than 1, and I have to tell myself I must love it or otherwise, I quite"

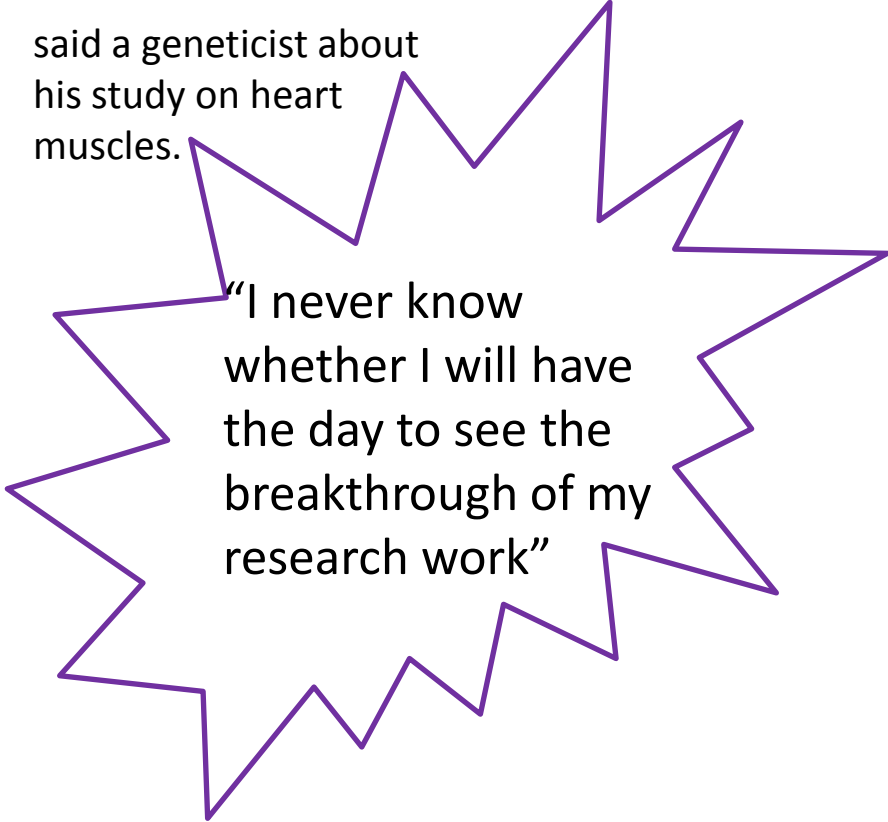
said a mathematician about his research.



"I ask simple questions, but probably I will not be able to find the answer within 10 years, and probably that is the project I can do with my life."

A philosopher who is determined to find out what makes a Chinese Chinese.

said a geneticist about his study on heart muscles.

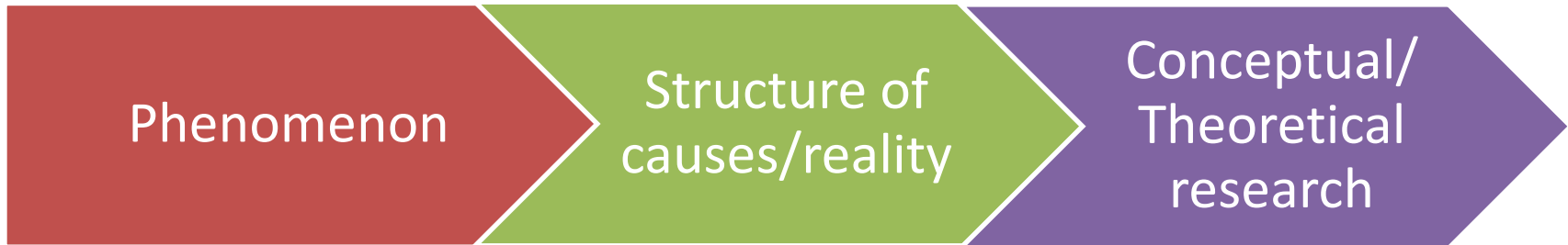


"I never know whether I will have the day to see the breakthrough of my research work"

# Uniqueness of Social Service Research

- Involvement of human subject (direct relevancy to mankind and fellow citizens)
- Complex human conditions beyond laboratory manipulation
- Real and immediate
  - About whether people's needs are met
  - About changes and improvement
  - About relief or removal of human suffering
- Connected with services delivery (old and new) and model, program evaluation, and policy practice.

# Examples of Level of Research



- Many people with suspected mental illness do not go for health or social care.
- Most people concerns mental illness rather than mental wellness
- Stigma is still strong and deterrent
- Anticipated/ perceived helpfulness of help
- Primary health care unable to identify
- What is mental wellness composed of?
- What is the relation between emotional health and wellness.
- How to measure MW?
- Is early identification and treatment helpful?
- How stigma forms and reinforced?
- What intervention strategy is effective and not?
- Is mental health part of (primary) health care?

- Choice of Method
- observation
  - qualitative
  - quantitative
  - Review & meta-analysis
  - collaborative

- Translations & Implication
- Practice knowledge
  - Service planning & delivery
  - Policy practice



- Value Base
- National
  - Communal
  - Familial
  - Group/ethnic
  - personal



- Piloting
- Experimentation
- Social Innovations
- efficiency
  - efficacy
  - effectiveness



# Translation – a process of making understand

- Facilitating dialogue between research findings and policy initiatives
- Developing strategies/ models out of evidence/findings
- Developing contextual measurement tools and methods
- Evaluating program efficacy
- Enhancing human relations
- Promoting social integration and equal opportunities for Ethnic minority/ Disadvantaged groups/ vulnerable family groups

# Challenges



# Challenges (3B +1R)

- Building a research-friendly infra-structure
  - Quality Data Banks
    - Limited local data pool (Singapore collection)
    - Specific longitudinal databank (e.g. Twin registry and genetics databank)
    - Social Science Research Archive
    - Census and population-based data pool like household surveys
    - Client information system (CIS) of service agencies
  - Platform for efficient dissemination and update
  - Supportive research policies

- Building a Research Culture/ mentality
  - Instrumental mentality
  - Externality of research in social services (should be an integral part of the services)
  - Self-censored organizational culture
  - Fear of.. unfavourable findings
- Building friendly Research support
  - Research hardware and software
  - Technical support
  - Research training
  - Home/work demarcation?
- Researcher Network