Explaining That “A-ha!” Moment: Chinese Scientist Wins Psychological Award for Excellence

Release Date:
Thursday, November 29, 2012 8:08 am EST

Terms:
All Corporate News

Dateline City:
BEIJING

Research Explores Link Between Morality and Creativity in Driving Innovation.

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., today announced that Dr. Chang Liu, professor of psychology at Nanjing Normal University, has won the first annual Wiley-IPCAS prize for excellence in Chinese psychological science. The prize, valued at $5000, is awarded by Wiley in partnership with the Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (IPCAS), China’s national psychology research institute.

“For years I have sought to understand the psychological and biological mechanisms behind human creativity,” said Dr. Liu. “The destiny of a nation depends on using creativity as a driver of innovation. My team is exploring the relationship between creativity and morality and we suggest people with higher moral standards are also more creative.”

As part of this research the team began to explore that sudden innovative moment when a discovery is made, the “A-ha!” moment. To explore this moment, the study, published in Acta Psychologica Sinica, used ancient Chinese riddles and analysed brain patterns during the “A-ha!” moment as the riddles were solved.

“We explored the biological mechanics behind a sudden moment of realisation and for the first time we are discounting the influence of memory. Instead we found that insight is dominated by the right hemisphere, which can be represented by neural activity,” said Dr. Liu.

Dr. Liu will receive his award at the 15th National Academic Congress of Psychology, which runs from 30 November to 2 December at the University of Guangzhou. The prize is awarded to the best article written by Chinese or China-based researchers publishing in Psych Journal or Acta Psychologica Sinica each year. Psych Journal is China’s first international psychology journal and is published by Wiley in partnership with IPCAS.

“At IPCAS it is our mission to strive to understand the essence of the human mind by exploring the biological base and the environmental influence of mind and behaviour, and we are proud to recognise Dr. Liu's award-winning paper as a prime example of this focus,” said Xiaolan Fu, Director of IPCAS. “This is a very exciting time for psychology in China and this new annual award is an opportunity to showcase the very best of Chinese psychological research.”

“This award-winning study is an example of the ground-breaking psychological research taking place across China,” said Philip Carpenter, Vice President & Managing Director, Social Sciences and Humanities, Wiley. “We are proud to help celebrate this research and our partnership with IPCAS underlines our commitment to bringing Chinese research to an international readership.”

The award winning paper is published in Acta Psychologica Sinica. Media wishing to receive a copy should contact sciencenewsroom@wiley.com (Please note the paper is in Mandarin.)

About the Author
Dr. Chang Liu is a professor of psychology at the School of Psychology, Nanjing Normal University. Dr. Liu has won many accolades for his research and was awarded Special Government Allowances of the State Council since 2011. He is the vice president of Physiological Psychology Division of the Chinese Psychological Society, and has served as a member of the editorial board of Chinese Psychological Science and Advances in Psychological Science.

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