

THE  TIMES**Boy, 10, published by Royal Society**

Linus Hovmöller Zou helped his father discover the atomic arrangement of several types of complicated crystals
Susannah Ireland for The Times

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A ten-year-old boy has become the youngest named author of a scientific paper published by the Royal Society after helping to discover the atomic arrangement of several types of complicated crystals.

Linus Hovmöller Zou helped his father, Sven, to crack a problem that he had been wrestling with for eight years to earn co-author status on a paper in the journal *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A*.

Professor Hovmöller, of Stockholm University, said that he discovered his son was bright enough to tackle the crystal challenge when he lost to him at Su Doku. In a weekend-long brainstorming session studying layers of different patterns on the dining room table, Linus helped his father and mother, Xioadong Zou, also a professor, to identify the structure of four types of approximants, types of “quasicrystals” which until recently had not been thought to exist.

“I had the same data for a long time but by myself I could not get it,” said Professor Hovmöller.

“Linus was there without the burden of knowing too much – he has a fresh undestroyed brain. Not keeping too many things in his head at the same time, as I would do, helps a lot.

“Usually I would read bedtime stories to him but then he said one night, why don’t we do Su Doku? And it turned out he was smarter than me. The next day when I was working I thought I would just ask Linus to sit next to me and we worked really long days and managed to solve four of the remaining six structures.”

Linus said that helping his father was a lot harder than his school homework, that only took half an hour per week. “My dad just came to me and wanted me to help him so I did,” he said.

Nicola Kane, a spokeswoman for the Royal Society, said: “The paper was submitted to an editorial board and peer-reviewed by scientists working in that field.”

While reluctant to say that Linus was the youngest named author in the Royal Society’s 352-year history, she added: “Ten years old is very young to be published in a scientific journal and particularly for such a difficult subject.”

The discovery of quasicrystal approximants [earned a Nobel Prize for Daniel Shechtman last year](#). Could the latest breakthrough in their structure bring a similar honour for the Hovmöller Zou family?

There is a strong precedent – the youngest Nobel Prize recipient was 25-year-old William Lawrence Bragg who earned the award for physics in 1915 by collaborating with his father, Sir William Henry Bragg “for services in the analysis of crystal structure by means of X-rays”.

Professor Hovmöller refused to be drawn on their chances, although he did name his son after the double Nobel Laureate Linus Pauling. “That’s not something that is supposed to be discussed by scientists,” he said.

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