

Mad Genius: Study Suggests Link Between Psychosis and Creativity

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History teems with examples of great artists acting in very peculiar ways. Were these artists simply mad or brilliant? According to new research reported in *Psychological Science*, maybe both. In order to examine the link between psychosis and creativity, psychiatrist Szabolcs Kéri of Semmelweis University in Hungary focused his research on *neuregulin 1*, a gene that normally plays a role in a variety of brain processes, including development and strengthening communication between neurons. However, a variant of this gene (or genotype) is associated with a greater risk of developing mental disorders, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. In this study, the researchers recruited volunteers who considered themselves to be very creative and accomplished. They underwent a battery of tests, including assessments for intelligence and creativity. The results show a clear link between *neuregulin 1* and creativity: Volunteers with the specific variant of this gene were more likely to have higher scores on the creativity assessment and also greater lifetime creative achievements than were volunteers with a different form of the gene. Kéri notes that this is the first study to show that a genetic variant associated with psychosis may have some beneficial functions.