

Genetics at the borders of mental illness

The following is an excerpt.

A growing body of evidence suggests that this divide is both unhelpful and misleading because some of the best evidence that diagnoses do not represent distinct disorders comes not from social criticism but from medical genetics. Observers may note that this is a deliciously uncomfortable situation for both parties. The hardline biological psychiatrists have had diagnoses undermined by exactly the techniques they use to support them and the social constructionists may have to accept that the best evidence for their “humane” conclusions are biological studies which they reject as supposedly “alienating”.

This new realisation rests on evidence that genetic factors initially associated with, for example, schizophrenia have now been recognised as equally important in raising the risk for several other problems including epilepsy, attention deficit disorder, autism and learning disability. The risky genetic factors in question stem from both bad luck in the ancestral lottery – that is, inheriting specific versions of genes from your parents – and spontaneous alterations in the layout of the information on the DNA strands that most commonly appear during conception.

View the original article here: [Vaughan Bell: news from the borders of mental illness](#)