

Creativity and mental illness share genetic markers

The notion of the tortured artist is a stubborn meme. Creativity, it states, is fuelled by the demons that artists wrestle in their darkest hours. The idea is fanciful to many scientists. But a new study claims the link may be well-founded after all, and written into the twisted molecules of our DNA.

Scientists in Iceland report that genetic factors that raise the risk of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia are found more often in people in creative professions. Painters, musicians, writers and dancers were, on average, 25 percent more likely to carry the gene variants than professions the scientists judged to be less creative, among which were farmers, manual labourers and salespeople.

[Kari Stefansson](#), founder and CEO of deCODE, a genetics company based in Reykjavik, said the findings, described in the journal [Nature Neuroscience](#), point to a common biology for some mental disorders and creativity. “To be creative, you have to think differently,” he told the Guardian. “And when we are different, we have a tendency to be labelled strange, crazy and even insane.”

Stefansson believes that scores of genes increase the risk of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. These may alter the ways in which many people think, but in most people do nothing very harmful. But for 1% of the population, genetic factors, life experiences and other influences can culminate in problems, and a diagnosis of mental illness.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [New study claims to find genetic link between creativity and mental illness](#)