

Weird behaviour, creativity linked

Sept. 6, 2005

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People called “weird” by their peers may have a leg up in life, at least in one respect.

Researchers have found that a quirky or socially awkward approach to life, often considered a hindrance, may be a key to becoming a great artist, composer or inventor. The researchers studied people with “schizotypal” personalities—who act oddly, but aren’t mentally ill—and found they’re more creative than either normal or fully schizophrenic people. To access their creativity, these people rely heavily on the right sides of their brains.

The work, by psychologists Brad Folley and Sohee Park of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., was published online last week by the journal *Schizophrenia Research*.

Psychologists believe a number of creative luminaries had schizotypal personalities, including Vincent Van Gogh, Albert Einstein, Emily Dickinson and Isaac Newton.

“The idea that schizotypes have enhanced creativity has been out there for a long time,” but no one has studied how their brains work, Folley said. He and Park conducted two tests to compare the creative thinking processes of schizotypes, schizophrenics and “normal” people.

In the first test, participants were shown pictures of various household objects and asked to make up new functions for them. Schizotypes were found to be most creative in suggesting new uses. Schizophrenics and average subjects performed similarly to one another.

Schizophrenia has also often been linked to creativity, but many schizophrenics have disorganized thoughts “almost to the point where they can’t really be creative because they cannot get all of their thoughts coherent enough to do that,” Folley said.

“Schizotypes, on the other hand, are free from the severe, debilitating symptoms surrounding schizophrenia and also have an enhanced creative