The neural basis of Magical Ideation:
A multimodal imaging study in twin subjects

ABSTRACT:

Background
Sub-threshold psychotic symptoms are quite commonly present in general population. Among these, Magical Ideation (MI) has been proved to be a valid predictor of psychosis. However, the genetic and environmental influences on the interplay between MI and personality have not fully been explored.

Aims
To explore the genetic and environmental bases of the interplay between magical ideation and personality in a twin sample.

Method
A total of 534 adult twins from the population-based Italian Twin Register were assessed for MI using the MI Scale (MIS) and for personality with the temperament and character inventory (TCI). A Multivariate Cholesky model was applied with Mx statistical program.

Results
The best-fitting model showed that additive genetic and unshared environmental factors explain approximately the same proportion of variance in MI, whereas a less strong genetic influence on personality traits emerged. Relevant correlations between MI and specific personality traits (novelty seeking, cooperativeness, self-directedness, self-transcendence) were found, suggesting shared influences for MI and these traits. Both genetic and environmental factors explained these correlations, with genetic factors playing a predominant role.

Conclusions
Moderate-to-substantial genetic effects on MI and personality were found. Shared genetic and environmental effects underlie the phenotypic correlation between MI (psychosis-proneness) and personality traits, i.e. self-directedness (negative association) and self-transcendence (positive association), potentially representing predictive markers of psychosis liability related to schizotypy and personality.

Keywords
Schizotypy, GxE interaction, Personality, Self-directedness, Self-transcendence
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**Researcher’s Contacts:**
Paolo Brambilla, Ph.D. M.D.
Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of Milan, Milan, Italy
Adjunct Associate Professor of Psychiatry, UT Houston Medical School, TX, USA
Psychiatric Clinic, Fondazione IRCCS Ca’ Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico, Milan, Italy
[https://www.policlinico.mi.it/reparti/61/psychiatria](https://www.policlinico.mi.it/reparti/61/psychiatria)

Chair, Neuroimaging Section of the European Psychiatric Association
CoEditor-in-Chief, Journal of Affective Disorders
Associate Editor, Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging
Address:
Dipartimento di Neuroscienze e Salute Mentale
U.O.C. Psichiatria (Pad. Alfieri)
Fondazione IRCCS Ca’ Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico
Via Francesco Sforza 35 – 20122 Milano

Tel.: +39 02-5503.27.17 // 02-503.20.312
Mobile: +39 335-717.91.99
Secretariat: +39 02-5503.59.82
Fax +39 02-5503.59.52

Profiles: ResearchGate, Academia, GoogleScholar, FrontiersIn, LinkedIn
Skype/Twitter: paolobram1
ScopusID: 7005216807
Orcid ID: orcid.org/0000-0002-4021-8456
ResearcherID: B-4184-2010