

SCHIZOPHRENIA

DESCRIBE & EVALUATE EXPLANATIONS OF SCHIZOPHRENIA (1 BIOLOGICAL & 1 PSYCHOLOGICAL).

One explanation of schizophrenia is genetics. Gottesman (1991) summarized about 40 twin studies; the concordance rate was 48% for monozygotic twins, and 17% concordance for dizygotic twins. This suggests that there is a link between genes and schizophrenia, but this does not apply to the whole population, as twins are not typical of the general population. Twin studies only take very small sample sizes. Also the twins share the same environment, which could also be the reason why both twins develop schizophrenia. Gottesman also reviewed concordance rates in family studies. If both your parents have schizophrenia, then you have a 46% chance of developing schizophrenia as well, if one parent has schizophrenia it is 16%, if a sibling has it then the concordance rate is 8% and the concordance rate is 1% for a random individual. This suggests that the stronger the genetic link the greater the chance that you will get schizophrenia. However, the fact that family members who are more similar genetically tend to spend more time together means that environmental factors are also indicated in this evidence. The concept that genetic factors are important in producing schizophrenia is supported by adoption studies. Tienari (1991) managed to find 155 schizophrenic mothers who had given up their children for adoption, and they were compared against 155 adopted children not having a schizophrenic parent. There was a large difference between these two groups, 10.3% of those with schizophrenic mothers had developed schizophrenia compared with only 1.1% of those without schizophrenic mothers. This suggests that genetics do play a part, but not completely based on genetics. Kety et al. (1978) considered adults who had been adopted at an early age between 1924 and 1947. Half had been diagnosed as suffering from schizophrenia and the other half had not. The two groups were matched on variables such as sex and age. The rate of schizophrenia was greater among the biological relatives of those with schizophrenia than those without, which is as expected if genetic factors are important. The rate of schizophrenia did not differ for adoptive families that had adopted a child who became, or did not become, schizophrenic. This suggests that environmental factors had little impact on the development of schizophrenia. Although Kety et al.'s findings support the importance of genetic factors in schizophrenia; these statistics were gathered from a time-span of over 70 years.

One psychological explanation is the psychodynamic approach. Freud was mainly interested in the neuroses, such as anxiety and depression. He assumed that neuroses occurred as a result of severe conflicts and traumatic experiences. Information about these conflicts and traumas is stored in the unconscious mind, and treatment involves trying to resolve these internal conflicts. Freud argued that conflicts and traumas are also of importance in schizophrenia. However, an important difference is that schizophrenics have regressed or returned to an earlier stage of psychosexual development whereas this not true for anxious or depressed patients. More specifically, they have regressed to a state of primary narcissism, which occurs early in the oral stage. In this state the ego or rational part of the mind has not separated from the id or sexual instinct. The importance of this is that ego is involved in reality testing and responding appropriately to the external world. Schizophrenics have a loss of contact with reality because their ego is no longer functioning properly. Freud argued that schizophrenics were driven by strong sexual impulses. That helps to explain why

schizophrenia often develops in late adolescence. Later psychodynamic theorists tended to be unconvinced about the involvement of sexual impulses, preferring to emphasize the role of aggression in schizophrenia. The psychodynamic approach to schizophrenia is limited for several reasons. It is very speculative, and is not supported by much evidence. The idea that adult schizophrenics resemble infants in many ways is not very sensible. The psychodynamic approach ignores the role of genetic factors in the development of schizophrenia.