

□ **Social Class & Schizophrenia:**

This is related to stressful life events as social class can be directly related to stress.

- For many years we have known that the highest rates of schizophrenia are found in central city areas inhabited by people in the lowest socio-economic classes.
- Hollingshead & Redlich (1958) studied social class and mental illness in Connecticut. The rate of schizophrenia was found to be twice as high in the lowest social classes as in the next lowest social class. These findings have been confirmed cross culturally.
- Some people therefore believe that being in a low social class may cause schizophrenia- this is known as the **sociogenic hypothesis**.
- Can you think of any reasons why this might be?

- One of the major problems with this theory is that we cannot determine whether social status causes schizophrenia or whether schizophrenia causes people to drift into the lower social strata. (Social selection hypothesis)

- One way of resolving this problem is to study the social mobility of schizophrenia people. Goldberg & Morrison (1963) studied the fathers of schizophrenic patients on the basis that if they are from lower social classes it would seem that class precedes schizophrenia. If they were not it would be evidence for the social selection hypothesis. They found that male schizophrenia patients had less prestigious occupations than their fathers. However, it should be noted that not all research elicits these results and whilst social class is taken to be a stressor involved in schizophrenia, the exact way in which the stresses exert their effect remains unknown.

- **The Family & Expressed Emotion:**

- The study cited earlier by Mednick & Schulsinger (1968) indicated that family environment could be a factor involved in schizophrenia.

- Early research gave us overwhelming evidence to suggest that the relationships between a mother and her son were crucial in the development of pathological symptoms. The term schizophrenogenic mother was coined for the cold, dominant, conflict-inducing parent. These mothers were characterized as rejecting, overprotective, rigid, moralistic about sex and fearful of intimacy.

- Whilst there is no conclusive evidence for this theory it can be concluded that more recent findings suggest that faulty communications could be at fault. However, it is very difficult to state that this could be a single precipitating cause as genes are also implicated!

- Other research has focused upon Expressed Emotion – Brown (1959) first identified the potential role of the family in relapse in a follow up study of