Gottesman et al. 2000 ‘Disorders in offspring with two psychiatrically ill patients’

**Background:**

Previous research has found that if one parent has a mental disorder there is an increased likelihood of the child also having a mental disorder.

This study wanted to investigate if two parents having a mental disorder would further the risk of their child also having a disorder.

**Aim:**

- Examine how vulnerable children of two parents with mental illnesses are in terms of developing a mental illness themselves
- Specifically, the researchers were interested in vulnerability to any mental disorder of children of parents suffering schizophrenia and/or bipolar disorder

**Method:**

Records from the population of Denmark were gathered using the Civil Registration System. No consent was needed as the data gathered was from public domain and names were anonymous.

**Sample:**

- Drawn from population of 2.7 million Danish people born before 1997 who had identifiable mother and father
- Data was sampled in 2007, so minimum age of ppt was 10 years old
- From this population (of 2.7 million), a sample of 196 couples were selected who had a diagnosis of schizophrenia (and the 270 kids associated)
- Additionally, 83 couples with diagnosis of bipolar disorder (and 146 kids)
- In the sample chosen, both parents were considered to have mental illness
- For comparison, samples were only one parent had diagnosis of either schizophrenia or bipolar were drawn
- Rates of mental disorder drawn from remainder of population where neither parent had schizophrenia or bipolar disorder

**Design and procedure:**

- Cohort study as it involves looking at cohort of a population. Ie the population born between two dates
- Natural experiment (comparing two naturally occurring groups)
- IV = parents schizophrenia or bipolar disorder
- DV = diagnosis of mental illness
Topic 2: The Medical Model as an explanation for Mental Illness – key research

**Results:**

For schizophrenia and bipolar disorder the risk of mental illness was much greater for offspring of two parents with a diagnosis

**Figures for schizophrenia:**

- 27.3% of offspring with both parents having a diagnosis of schizophrenia had developed schizophrenia by age 52
- 67.5% developed mental illness of some sort

Those with one parent suffering:

- 7% diagnoses with schizophrenia
- 11% diagnosed with any mental illness

For those without any parent suffering = 1.12% for schizophrenia, 14.1% for any disorder

**Figures for bipolar:**

- 24.95% of offspring of two bipolar parents developing the disorder by age of 52
- 36% developing either bipolar or depression
- 44.2% a mental illness of some sort

Those with one bipolar parent

- 4.4% developed bipolar themselves and 9.2% for any MHD

**Conclusion**

- Having both parents with serious mental illness is associated with significantly increased risk of developing not only that mental illness but mental illnesses in general
- Having one parent with serious mental illness carries lower risk
- This provides useful info for genetic counselling which involves advising people of their own risks of developing illness or passing on genetic vulnerability to their children

**Exam question:** Explain what the key research by Gottesman et al. 2010 tells us about mental disorders [5]

2 marks – show understanding of the Gottesman study (Details of study)

3 marks – clearly explain what this tells us about mental illnesses (State finding and explain what that tells us about prevalence of mental illness – do this for Schizophrenia and then again for Bipolar).