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Outline and evaluate the genetic explanation of schizophrenia(16)

Schizophrenia is a universal illness when contact with reality is impaired and involves positive symptoms such as delusions and negative symptoms such as avolition. The genetic explanation of schizophrenia claims it is caused by candidate genes which means the genes people have inherited cause the disorder – it refers to polygenic genes which suggests more than one gene can cause the disorder or the idea each person has a different gene that triggers schizophrenia which is called aetiologically heterogenous.

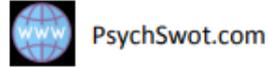
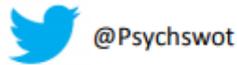
The theory relies on family studies to demonstrate schizophrenia is a genetic illness by proposing the idea if relatives have the disorder you are likely to inherit it depending on closeness, Kendler claimed first degree relatives are 18 times more likely to develop schizophrenia which is in support of the genetic theory. This is supported by Gottesman who claimed the general population has a 1% chance of developing schizophrenia yet grandchildren of a schizophrenic has 5% chance and monozygotic twins have a 48% chance. This indicates the closer the relative the greater the risk of developing schizophrenia. This links to twin studies as Gottesman found a 48% concordance rate showing it may be genetic yet the other 52% must have another explanation suggesting genetics is not the sole cause of schizophrenia decreasing the validity of the theory.

Despite this, the theory is credited by the Quadruplets case study who involved 4 identical twin girls who all went on to develop schizophrenia which is great support in showing the disorder is genetic however they went on to develop it at different times with different symptoms. This suggests it may have been a coincidence as it was not 100% exact and could have been influenced by nature rather than nurture due to the different times of development. Additionally, the quadruplet study is considered weak support for the genetic theory of schizophrenia as it was conducted in 1963 therefore lacks temporal validity as healthcare and diagnosis may have been invalid at that time therefore is not a good representation of 2018 and cannot be applied to modern day.

Furthermore, the theory also proposes adoption studies in explaining schizophrenia and is a great way to disentangle nature from nurture. Heston (1966) followed children born and separated to schizophrenic mothers and found 17% went on to develop schizophrenia. This supports schizophrenia is genetic as when the mother was not present the children still inherited her disorder, however the statistic is rather low which questions the other 83% who did not develop schizophrenia which disproves genetics is responsible for the cause of schizophrenia. Adoption studies claim to separate nature from nurture yet this is challenged as the adopting parents are stated to be similar to the biological parents by looking for the same child as them whether it be based on looks or temperament this still intertwines nature and nurture which makes it hard to disentangle a genetic explanation decreasing the validity of the theory itself.

The genetic theory is considered biologically deterministic meaning it neglects free will with the belief individuals have no control in developing the disorder as it is due to genetics. This is a beneficial approach as it does not place the blame on the individual for having schizophrenia which contrasts the psychological theories that would propose the idea schizophrenia is caused from irrational beliefs. However, a deterministic approach is criticised for going against the law as that states we should take responsibility of our own actions yet a deterministic view disobeys the law which can be seen as morally wrong so free will would be a more appropriate explanation of schizophrenia.

The support of the genetic theory lacks consistency in concordance rates as they range from 58% to 11% this shows research is inconsistent and is not a strong support for the theory. The concordance



rates are also low in some cases meaning schizophrenia is not genetic as well as the concordance studies being outdated provides weak support as they lack temporal validity as technology and methods have improved so studies are not representative of 2018.

Additionally, it is considered reductionist as it reduces a complex disorder such as schizophrenia down to one explanation such as genetics. This therefore neglects powerful causes such as psychological theories that have proven to have an impact yet this is not considered. I recommend the theory takes an interactionist approach of all explanations therefore will increase validity.

The theory is considered idiographic as it relies on case studies from Heston etc this is beneficial as case studies have great ecological validity that can be applied to daily life however it is hard to replicate as extraneous variables are not controlled so the assumption cannot be made that schizophrenia is genetic. The approach is extremely objective as it relies on scientific aspects that can be falsified which is an example of a nomothetic approach which is better than psychological theories who believe schizophrenia is based on irrational thoughts and is subjective due to inferences being made.