Extraneous variables - Other health issues disturbing sleep - reduction of sleep in old age. Sleep disorders such as apnoea or medical illnesses. Also explain why SWS sleep is lower, easily disturbed resulting in less growth hormone release. **Van Cauter** suggested this could explain symptoms within old age such as lack of energy, reduced alertness and bone density. Why older people sleep less but offer **practical** treatments such as relaxation techniques and melatonin treatments.

- **Practical applications** - understanding sleep patterns can lead to techniques in babies to prevent cot death.

- **Individual differences** - Cannot generalise sleep patterns to age. University of florida studies found consistency within one individual, yet differences of people within the same age.