Explanations for sleep walking

- A parasomnia common in childhood affecting 20% of children and less than 3% of adults.
- Occurs most commonly in NREM sleep and SWS. If occurs in REM- known as REM behaviour disorder.
- It is not conscious yet may engage in activities such as dressing themselves, preparing food and even sex and murder in some cases.
- No memory of episodes or awoken during can feel confused.
- Show array of delta waves typical of SWS and beta waves of the awake brain- related to arousal.
- Propose occurs when person in SWS is woken, but arousal of brain is incomplete.

- **Nature and genetic link** - Broughton has shown it’s ten times more likely if a relative has history. Common in ID twins.
- **Environment and nurture** - stress, alcohol, sleep deprivation and drugs linked.
- **More SWS sleep** - Children more than adults. System inhibiting motor ability is not fully developed in children. Study examined motor excitability and found sleep walkers had immature neural circuits.
- **Other medical disorders** - fever, asthma, seizures and psychiatric disorders link. But cause or effect of underlying issue unknown.
- **Diathesis stress model** - genetic vulnerability may be underlying cause yet environmental factors trigger this vulnerability. Link between twins and close family members supporting this.
- **Lecendreux** - 50% concordance in identical twins compared to 10-15% in non identical highlighting nature but as concordance wasn’t 100% role of nurture and environmental factors. Argued that high rate among identical twins may be due to psychological factors with similar treatment and behaving same in upbringing.
- **Drugs and alcohol association** - may be explained by how they reduce REM so more time is spent in SWS/NREM sleep as consequence. Increases likelihood of sleep walking as most vulnerable in those stages. How environment association rather than nature.
- **Reductionism** - Explanations surrounding genes or environmental factors alone as fail to explain complex nature of how genes and environment interact.
- **Determinism** - Assume no free will over sleep walking as controlling environmental factors may have a mitigating role on reducing SW for those with genetic vulnerabilities.
- **Real world application** - Cited as defence for murder as its important to establish what control an individual has over it. *Jules Lowe* attacked and killed elderly father, but acquitted as has tendency to sleep walk. Some may voluntarily expose to risk factors and others wont.