There are many possible explanations for why individuals commit sex offenses. However, no one theory is capable of explaining the true etiology of deviant sexual behavior for such a heterogeneous group of individuals. One of the most well known of these is Freud's Psychodynamic Theory. Freud was an Austrian psychoanalyst who is credited with initiating the work in the field of psychoanalysis with sexual deviancy.

Although his theories are no longer widely supported, they still hold some importance in the field. Freud viewed sexual deviancy as perversions. They were the consequence of childhood deprivation, developmental fixation, or regression back to any one of the four stages of development-- the oral, anal, phallic, and genital phases. Freud is credited as being the father of psychodynamic theories and explains the interaction of three elements of the human psyche-- the id, the ego, and the superego.

For Freud, he discusses three specific developmental fixations-- castration anxiety, penis envy, and the oedipal conflict. Castration anxiety, according to Freud, results from boys concluding that girls are actually boys whose fathers have had their genitals cut off. Penis envy, according to Freud, results from girls being jealous of boys because of boy's sexual genitalia. Finally, the oedipal conflict is a conflict that, according to Freud, where Freud claims that boys could develop this during the phallic stage. It is characterized by competition between the father and the son for their mother's affection.

According to Freud, these three elements of the human psyche interact to produce sexual offending, specifically the id, the ego, and the superego. According to Freud, the id is the pleasure principle. It's the basis of desire and the division of the psyche from which instinctual human drives originate. The ego is the reality principle. It is often described as the mediator between the id and the superego. Finally, the superego, according to Freud, is the conscience. It's responsible for decisions based on past experiences of rewards and punishments.

Related to the psychodynamic theories has been proposed as the family dysfunction model. This was suggested by Macleod and Saraga in 1987 where this was discussed as sexual problems are characterized by an ill, absent, or sexually frigid mother, who provides an unsatisfying marriage for her husband. Loneliness and the need for intimacy develop, and the husband turns to his children for the understanding he now seeks.

Biological theories have also been proposed to explain sexual offending. These revolve around several abnormal hormone levels. Biological theories have often been proposed to explain sexual offending. These biological theories focus on abnormal hormone levels. Specifically, androgen in males, which is controlled by the hypothalamus and the pituitary gland and carried to the testes, which control the level of hormones, such as testosterone, which are then released into the bloodstream.
The level of testosterone in the testes increases dramatically in males when they reach puberty. Sex drive also increases during this time. Relatedly, the interaction between aggression and testosterone. Aggression and sex appear to be mediated by the same neural substrates involved in predominantly midbrain structures while the same endocrines activate sex and aggression.

Studies have shown violent offenders have higher testosterone levels than nonviolent offenders. But research has also demonstrated a causal issue with testosterone. Specifically, testosterone is not the only hormone in reported [INAUDIBLE] behavior. Even if aggression is linked to testosterone levels, it is unclear whether testosterone actually produces aggressiveness or simply causes an increase in muscle mass and strength, allowing individuals to manifest their aggression more efficiently.

Overall, regarding biological theories, research is mixed at best. There is often conflicting studies on the link between sexual aggression and testosterone. There has been also an evolutionary biological perspective proposed by Thornhill and Palmer. These authors contend that males are driven to rape in order to reproduce. This perpetuates rape myths and has been strongly criticized for being unscientific and based upon anecdotal evidence.

Feminist theories have also emerged as explanations for sexual behavior. Feminist theories propose that sexual crime is just another example of men's oppression of women. It's systemic to a patriarchal society of conditioned male supremacy. According to feminists, rape was a tool to dominate and control women and has very little to do with sexual gratification.

Women are considered relatively powerless compared to men and therefore, subservient. Feminists view sex offenders as normal and rational because rape is seen to be a consequence of deep-rooted social traditions of male dominance and female exploitation. This is related to the fact that almost all sexual offenders are male. And a notable proportion of the male population have committed sexual offenses.

Furthermore, feminists also view rape as a cultural problem. Sexual violence is said to represent an extension of attitudes and practices surrounding male-female relations in a male-dominated culture. For example, sexually aggressive men have been socialized to feel little need for intimacy and a low capacity for empathy. Long-term prevention necessitates changing the societal conditions that generates sexual violence, such as the believe in rape myths and the sex role ideology favoring restricted roles toward women.

Attachment theories have also been proposed to explain sexual offending. These theories focus on the propensity to form emotional bonds. Essentially, these theories assume that humans have a natural propensity to form emotional bonds to others and models in infancy provide a framework for understanding attachment patterns in adulthood. Models of attachment explain the individual self-concept as positive or negative depending on the degree to which they deserve to be loved.
Attachment theories view adolescence as the most critical period of the development of sexuality and social confidence. Adolescence with adequate parenting should have acquired pro social behavior, including the development of proper inhibitions on aggression and sexual behavior.

Related to attachment theories is poor social skills and low self-confidence. Individuals who have poor emotional attachments are more likely to commit a sexual offense than those with strong emotional attachments to others. Specifically, men who sexually abuse children have poor social skills and little self-confidence and thus, have difficulty in forming intimate relationships with same-age peers. In particular, sex offenders appear to misperceive social cues and do not act appropriately as a result of these deficiencies in intimacy.

A preoccupied attachment style has also been proposed. According to Bartholomew in 1990, there are four categories of attachment styles. Secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing. Those with preoccupied attachments have poor self-esteem and low self-confidence, but do have a positive attitude toward others and often need their assistance to deal with personal matters.

Behavioral and cognitive behavioral theories have also been proposed to explain sexual offending behavior. These theories view sexual deviance as a disorder. Unlike psychodynamic theories, these behavioral and cognitive behavioral theories are based on the assumption that there is no single underlying problem of which the deviant sexual behavior is a symptom of. These theories focus on classical conditioning. Specifically, sexual indulgent behavior displays a pattern that is entrenched and perpetuated by intermittent positive rewards.

Wolf developed a three-part theory as to the etiology of deviant sexual behavior where he described first a disturbed developmental history followed by disinhibitors and then deviant sexual fantasies. These cognitive behavioral theories also heavily focused on cognitive distortions. Sexual offenders, like most individuals, are able to legitimize their behavior in the behavior of others through cognitive distortions. These cognitive distortions allow offenders to continue committing deviant sexual acts by averting blame from themselves and projecting it onto their victims or onto their environment.

Finally, the last theoretical perspective is psychosocial theories. According to these theories, sexual deviance is a learned response to particular conditions. Deviant sexual behavior is the outcome of inadequate socialization. According to psychosocial theories, there is often a misinterpretation of social cues. And this occurs in many sex offenders who lack proper relationship skills. Essentially, they have difficulty in interpreting the victim's actions as sexual in nature, and they misperceive societal intonations.

There has also been a discussion about violent pornography. Some feminist researchers claim that a link exists between violent pornography and sexual violence although there has been no systematic empirical evidence to validate these beliefs. Generally, violent pornography is not the origin of deviant sexual behavior, but it can promote a relapse in certain types of sex offenders.
Also according to psychosocial theories, there has been a discussion of a link between childhood victimization and adult predatory behavior. Although the cycle of abuse theory has several supporters, there are some inconsistencies though. Specifically, more abused females than males yet there's more males than female abusers. Furthermore, one third of sex offenders are not abused as children. Then finally, the majority of sexually abused children do not go on to abuse others as adults.

Here is an example of perhaps the best theory to explain sexual offending behavior. An integrated theoretical model that accounts for biological, developmental, environmental, and cultural influence. As well, it also acknowledges the role of individual vulnerabilities and situational factors. Specifically, there are preconditions of sex offending that integrate these various theories about why individuals begin to participate in sexually deviant behavior.

This integrative model addresses the motivation to offend and the rationalization of the behavior. It focuses on the inhibitions of the offenders or internal barriers, and now when these two behaviors are diminished distorted thoughts can lead to deviant actions.