

Examination of the
fictitious character
bart simpson using
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Section I: Presentation of Traits This essay is based on the fictitious character Bart Simpson from the series the Simpsons. Bart is the 10 year old son of Homer and Marge Simpson. He is the eldest of three children; he has two younger sisters Lisa and Maggie. Bart possesses many personality traits; however, this paper will analyse the trait of aggressiveness.

This paper will firstly provide two behavioural examples that support Bart's trait and then analyse this from Jung's Neo-Freudian, Eysenck's Biological, and Bandura's Social-Cognitive theoretical perspectives. Finally, an overall analysis will be provided in regards to Bart's trait of aggressiveness, this will be achieved by drawing on all of the information from each of the different perspectives. Eysenck proposed 32 different traits which contribute to forming the two major personality dimensions (Burger, 2004).

Aggressiveness is located on the extraverted dimension which sits closer to the unstable/neurotic end of the continuum.

This essay will be focusing on the aggressiveness displayed by Bart.

Aggression can be described as a need to overcome opposition forcefully; to fight; to belittle; blame; accuse; to be sadistic; to revenge an injury; to attack, or kill another; and to oppose forcefully or punish another (Murry, 1938; cited in Burger, 2004; Murry, 1939; cited in Mayer, 1996). Two behavioural examples, from different episodes, will be used to show that this trait is a salient in Bart's personality. Firstly, in the episode " Bart the General", Bart strangles Nelson Martins friend because he stole Lisa's cup cakes. Secondly, in the episode " There is No Disgrace Like Home", Bart first removes the safety padding from the patented aggression therapy mallet and then hits the psychologist with the metal bar.

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These two examples help show the salience of the trait of aggressiveness in the personality of Bart Simpson. Section II: Theory and Application •Section a: Neo-Freudian This section is based on Jung's analytic psychology. The areas that will be outlined are the collective unconscious, primordial images, and the main focus will be on the well-adjusted person and the archetype shadow as these provide a sound basis to the analysis of Bart's personality trait from a Neo-Freudian prospective. Jung claimed that we all have a part of our mind called the collective unconscious (Burger, 2004; Weiten, 2002). Thoughts and images are contained in the collective unconscious; these are difficult to bring into awareness (Burger, 2004; Weiten, 2002). According to Jung, unconscious psychic characteristics are inherited from our ancestors (Burger, 2004; Weiten, 2002).

In addition, primordial images are contained in the collective unconscious which gives newborns an ability to react in a certain manner to an infinite amount of images that maybe encounter throughout the life (Burger, 2004). Archetypes are the term Jung ascribed to these images. Collectively they consist of both good and evil (Burger, 2004). The shadow is amongst some of these archetypes Jung described as important (Burger, 2004).

The shadow is the archetype which “ contains the unconscious part of the self that is essentially negative, or the dark side of the self” (burger, 2004, p. 109). Consequently, if the shadow has a strong ability to express itself in the collective unconscious, the evil thought, which manifests in the form of the shadow, may be outwardly projected (Burger, 2004). According to Jung, an important part of becoming a well-adjusted person is to have the ability to integrate the good and evil parts into a self-wholeness (Burger, 2004).
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Jung's theory would suggest that the prevalence of Bart's aggressiveness is due to him not being a well-adjusted person. This is a result of Bart's archetype the shadow not being correctly incorporated into him as a whole. Consequently, Bart continually finds himself projecting his evil thoughts on to others in the form of aggressive behaviour. In summary, Jung's analytic psychology relating to the archetype shadow and the effects it can have on the well-adjusted person offers a good account of Bart's aggressive behavioural trait from this theoretical perspective.

Bart's shadow is particularly apparent in displaying its evil self in both of the scenarios outlined in the introduction. Jung would suggest that Bart is not a well-adjusted person. Jung's theory assists in establishing that the aggressive trait, which manifests itself in the form of the shadow, is a salient trait belonging to Bart. •Section b: Biological This section will discuss Eysenck's biological theory of personality. The focus will be on the combination of traits which together form supertraits and the biological differences between extroverts and introverts.

Eysenck has developed a strategy which divides the fundamentals of personality into a hierarchically arranged structure (Burger, 2004). The bottom level of this structure is the specific response level consisting of specific behaviours (Burger, 2004). The next level of the structure is the habitual response level (Burger, 2004). At this level a response is considered habitual when it occurs on a regular basis such as a few times a week (Burger, 2004). If this habitual response continues to occur consistently across time Eysenck would classify this as a trait belonging to the individual (Burger, 2004).

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This trait is located on the third level of the model (Burger, 2004). In addition, Eysenck proposed that a combination of these third level traits contribute to the supertraits of extraverted, introverted, and various levels of each in the form of stable and unstable/neurotic (Burger, 2004). For example a person displaying salient aggressive traits would be located closer to the unstable/neurotic extrovert. In addition, when explaining the differences between extroverts and introverts Eysenck was a proponent of the biological explanation. Eysenck (1967) proposed that introverts have a higher level of activity in particular areas of the brain as opposed to extravert (Larsen & Buss, 2002; Buss, 1995). Basically, Eysenck theorised that low levels of arousal, due to the blocking of certain nervous stimulation, results in the need for higher levels of stimulation (Larsen & Buss, 2002; Buss, 1995).

In contrast, the need for lower levels of stimulation is caused by an abnormally reduced flow of certain nervous stimulations (Larsen & Buss, 2002; Buss, 1995). These levels of nervous stimulation were labelled as the resting arousal level (Larsen & Buss, 2002; Buss, 1995). Eysenck concluded that extroverts have a low arousal level, therefore, requiring greater stimulation while introverts have a high arousal level, which in contrast requires less stimulation (Larsen & Buss, 2002; Buss, 1995). These arousal levels are known as a baseline level (Larsen & Buss, 2002; Buss, 1995). In addition, Eysenck stated that there is an optimal level of arousal required for different tasks (Larsen & Buss, 2002; Buss, 1995). In this view introverts and extroverts require different levels of stimulation to carryout tasks as they have different baseline levels When applying this theory to Bart's

aggressiveness it is evident that he fits into Eysenck's classification of extroverted/unstable.

This can be clearly shown when examining the saliency of his aggressive behaviours. According to Eysenck behaviours which are salient are habitual; therefore, they contribute to forming a trait which again contributes to the type of supertrait an individual displays (Burger, 2004). In addition, further application of Eysenck's theory shows Bart has a lower baseline arousal level, therefore, is an extravert. This is clearly shown by his consistent need for high levels of stimulation in the form of aggression. In summary, Eysenck's biological theory contributes to explaining Bart's behaviour in relation to his aggressive behaviour outlined in this paper.

However, further analyses of Bart's additional traits could display more conclusively in which area of Eysenck's continuum Bart is situated. •Section c: Social-Cognitive The final theoretical perspective that will be discussed is Bandura's social-cognitive theory focusing on the four step model of observational learning. Bandura's social-cognitive theory asserts that human beings are not just passive recipients of the stimuli that they are continuously exposed to in their environment (Burger, 2004). Bandura argues that there are internal and external determinants of behaviour (Burger, 2004). However, Bandura further argues that neither internal, external nor a simple combination can alone determine behaviour (Burger, 2004).

In order to account for this phenomenon Bandura coined the concept reciprocal determinism (Burger, 2004). Reciprocal determinism has multiple

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levels at which various interactions occur when determining behaviour. For example, “ external determinants, such as rewards and punishments, and internal determinants, such as beliefs, thoughts, and expectations, are part of a system of interacting influences that affect not only behaviour but the various parts of the system as well” (Burger, 2004, p. 88).

Therefore, it is this interaction between these various levels which in turn contribute to determining behaviour. According to Burger (2004) the concept of vicarious or observational learning could be seen as social-cognitive theories’ most important contribution to understanding human behaviour. Bandura claims that in order for vicarious/observational learning to transpire four interrelated processes need to occur (Burger, 2004). Firstly, the observer must attend to the model’s significant feature of the behaviour (Burger, 2004). In the case of Bart’s trait of aggressiveness, he continually observes and attends to aggressive behaviour. For example, Homer is constantly physically punishing Bart for his actions, also in the school yard the aggressive behaviour of Nelson Martin is constantly observed and attended to.

Secondly, the observer must remember the information about the model’s behaviour (Burger, 2004). The most common form of physical punishment Bart receives from Homer is being strangled. Bart clearly remembers the aggressive behaviours he observes. This can be seen in the outlined example of him strangling Nelson Martin’s friend. Thirdly, the observer must enact the behaviour they have seen (Burger, 2004). Through examination of the two outlined examples of Bart’s aggressiveness it can be conclusively

claimed that he has enacted aggressive behaviours similar to the ones he observed.

Finally, the process requires that the observer expects that the act will be rewarded and not punished (Burger, 2004). Distorted communication may occur when parents physically punish children. Children can interpret the physical punishment as justification for bigger and stronger people being able to do as they want (Gershoff; 2002 cited in Burger, 2004). Bart continually observes Homer being rewarded for aggressive acts; in this sense Homer's role as the head of the family is constantly reinforced.

In addition, when observing Nelson Martin's repeated aggressive acts in the school play ground Bart can see the rewards for acting aggressively, such as respect from the other children. These two examples of rewarded aggression add substance to the conclusion that Bart has the perception that aggression will lead to rewards not punishment. Bart's behaviour clearly displays all of the four necessary interrelated processes that Bandura claims are necessary for vicarious/observational learning to occur. Section III: Synthesis This paper has discussed and analysed Bart's behavioural trait of aggressiveness from the perspectives of Jung's Neo-Freudian, Eysenck's Biological, and Bandura's Social-Cognitive theories. Application of these theories to Bart's aggressiveness has enabled an insightful view into which theories best explain his aggressiveness. Jung's analytic psychology relating to the archetype shadow and the effects it can have on the well-adjusted person offers a good account of Bart's aggressiveness from this theoretical perspective.

However, I feel that Jung's account of the shadow and its interaction on the well-adjusted person alone does not sufficiently explain Bart's behavioural trait as Jung's evil shadow does not take into consideration any other factors which may interact when developing the trait of aggressiveness. In applying Eysenck's biological theory it was shown that Bart fell into the category of an unstable/neurotic extrovert. This was achieved by using Eysenck's criteria of a lower baseline arousal level which consequently results in the individual being an extrovert. In addition, Eysenck places aggression on a continuum located closer to the unstable/neurotic extrovert. Bart's trait of aggressiveness allowed the conclusion to be drawn that this is where he would be located. Even though Eysenck's theory did allow partial explanation of Bart's aggressive trait, it is difficult to make further conclusions about the effectiveness of the theory in explaining Bart's personality trait.

The reasons for this is that Eysenck's model of supertraits is a continuum, therefore, in order to draw conclusive information concerning an individual more traits are required. However, in consideration of the scope of this assignment Eysenck's theory did contribute to understanding Bart's behavioural trait. I felt, Bandura's observational learning in his social-cognitive theory best contributed to understanding Bart's behavioural trait. The concept that behaviours are learnt through observation gives a thorough account of Bart's aggressiveness. It was clearly shown in the analysis that Bandura's four necessary stages of observational learning were carried out by Bart. In summary all of three theories gave different insight into Bart's behavioural trait.

However, due to the scope of the assignment this essay only allowed the analysis of one behavioural trait. If several traits were allowed to be analysed more conclusive information in regards to Bart could have been drawn when applying Jung's and Eysenck's theories. Consequently, Bandura's observational learning was found to be most applicable to this essay.

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