

Alexander the Great

Great leader or madman?

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Abstract

This interdisciplinary thesis researches Alexander the Great and how he became one of the most successful conquerors of the ancient world. To answer this question a historical study using ancient sources describing Alexander's life and success was conducted. These sources provided information regarding the context he lived in and what circumstances and attributes made him the successful conqueror he was known as through history. Additionally, this literature was used to analyse his behaviour to determine if this success may be because of certain personality traits. Some sources describe characteristics which bear a close resemblance to psychopathy, which is why psychological research was conducted based on the information these ancient sources had provided. This recorded behaviour was set against the Psychopathy checklist to determine if Alexander could have been described as an individual who possessed psychopathic traits.

To integrate these disciplinary results, the interdisciplinary methods *extension* and *organization*, which are provided by Repko, were used. The integration resulted in a new extended definition of 'behaviour' that encompasses both the disciplines' factors which have contributed to Alexander's success. Furthermore, the interactions between these factors have been established and organised to create a *more comprehensive understanding*, which answers the question as to why Alexander's was such a successful conqueror.

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Introduction

**He spoke
and led the way
and the rest of them
came on after him
with unearthly clamour
(II. 12.251–2)**

· *Arrian, a Greek historian, about Alexander the Great, in 330 BC (Cartledge, 2005).*

One of the most famous, or rather, infamous, leaders of the Ancient Hellenistic Civilization is the Macedonian Alexander the Great, who ruled over an empire stretching from his homeland to certain parts of modern India. When he inherited his father's position as ruler of the Greek world east of the Adriatic Sea at the age of twenty, he continued to build the empire that was left to him. And after six short years, he managed to also establish himself as the conqueror of the once mighty Persian Empire (Cartledge, 2005). He was arguably one of the most successful conquerors of the Ancient World which many historians attribute to his intellect and his talent concerning war waging.

Historians have endlessly studied this man to unravel the mystery of his immense success in his military endeavours (Cartledge, 2005; Gabriel, 2015; Green, 2013). As one of the greatest military geniuses of the Ancient world, one can only wonder about the factors which lead to the immense empire he created. Conquerors that have had this kind of enormous success are extremely rare, therefore it is important to not only analyse the changes he brought about, but also study what made this man special compared to conquerors who were less successful. For that reason, the research question in this paper will be:

What made Alexander the Great one of the most successful conquerors in history?

To provide a complete answer to our research question an interdisciplinary approach is necessary. Considering behaviour, especially Alexander's behaviour, is a complex construct which is influenced by various internal and external factors, mostly psychological and historical/environmental factors.

Up until now, research concerning Alexander the great has always concentrated around the historical context which may give an explanation to his behaviour, but is quite one sided. By only analysing his behaviour for a historical perspective, the internal factors, which quite possibly also have contributed to his success, have been neglected. Although biographers of Alexander have tried to analyse his behaviour by using a psychological perspective, these sources (Gabriel, 2015; Green, 2013) are not written by psychologists. Thus, there is a need for a psychological perspective on Alexander's behaviour, seeing as his psyche drives his behaviour in the first place. Moreover, ancient sources describing Alexander show typical behaviours, especially behaviours which are consistent with the personality disorder psychopathy. Using a psychological perspective will give more insight in these behaviours and if Alexander indeed possessed psychological traits.

So, not only is there a need for a psychological approach in research concerning Alexander, this information also needs to be integrated within the cultural context of Ancient Greece. By creating this deeper and broader understanding of the world he lived, by assessing his environment and his psyche, it will be possible to explain how Alexander was able to have such an immensely successful military career. The integration of these different factors and disciplines will create an innovative answer which can shed a new light on this complex subject. Consequently, the aim of this study is to give a more complete and substantiated picture of Alexander's behaviour and his success.

To achieve this complete picture of Alexander's success, this interdisciplinary study will follow the method of Repko (2012). Firstly, the two disciplinary approaches and their insights will be discussed in two different chapters. The first chapter will be from the historical point of view and will answer the following question;

How was Alexander able to become one of the most successful conquerors of antiquity and what part played his behaviour in accomplishing his goals according to ancient sources?

The second chapter contains the psychological perspective on Alexander's behaviour, which will be discussed with the help of the following question;

To what extent does Alexander's recorded behaviour show psychopathic traits?

And lastly, in the third chapter a common ground needs to be created between these different disciplinary insights and answers. This is done by using Repko's integration technique/ method called *extension* and *organisation*. The integration of these insights will result in a more comprehensive understanding of what factors influenced Alexander's behaviour and will paint a full picture as to what made Alexander so successful.

To summarise, where history fails to paint a full picture of such a unique person, using only context and description of the effects of his behaviour, neuropsychology will be able to broaden the understanding by adding a new dimension to the explanation of his behaviour. A deeper understanding of Alexander as a human being will enable more insight in what made him such a successful leader.

Historical approach¹

One cannot deny that the life of Alexander the Great (356BC-323BC), one of the world's most successful and renowned conquerors, was anything short of incredible. This chapter will concentrate on ancient sources on Alexander so it will be possible to relate his success and behaviour to the context of his time period. The central question that will be answered in this chapter will therefore be:

“How was Alexander able to become one of the most successful conquerors of antiquity and what part played his behaviour in accomplishing his goals according to ancient sources?”

This chapter will focus on Alexander's youth, later years and the behaviour he displayed. This information will help us to determine what factors contributed to Alexander's immense success. Critique on his behaviour coming from ancient authors will also be analysed to shed some light on the views these writers and eye witnesses whose accounts they used harboured concerning Alexander's personality and his success. The analysis of these critiques will enable us to determine if Alexander's behaviour was something that fit the time period and the context he lived in or if it was considered abnormal. This section of the research thesis will use the available ancient sources that are specifically written about Alexander and those that mention him. The “Lives” by Plutarch and Arrian's “Anabasis of Alexander”, written around the first century, are therefore of central importance to this chapter. These sources were written a few centuries after Alexander passed away. They are, however, the only ancient documents left that

¹ For the historical approach, the annotation method used is the one recommended and explained in the research guide of the department of history and art history of UU. This method was chosen because the APA method applied to the rest of this research thesis is not precise enough for this historical paper.

have made use of eye witness accounts that are now lost. Arrian's work is based on eye witness accounts from Kallisthenes, a cousin of Aristotle, Onesikritos, Nearchos, Aristobolus, and most importantly one of Alexander's generals that later ruled Egypt, Ptolemaeus Soter I.² The authors of the aforementioned sources were Greek men that lived under Roman imperial rule. Their writings are therefore biased because they lived in a time period where the first Roman Emperors came into power and introduced a new set of values that were very different from the Roman Republican and Classical Greek values.³ Because they lived in a time period where these emperors and their new governments were viewed as divine, they were not as free as classical Greek writers to critique rulers with absolute power because these rulers tended to deify themselves.⁴ This also means that they did not share the Classical and Hellenistic Greek values⁵, Alexander was subjected to, that were still present when he ruled. Critique concerning his behaviour is an aspect of these ancient sources that will have to be taken with a grain of salt since it is not possible to read the eye witness accounts that these ancient sources have used and the authors of the available sources lived in a different context and time period. Besides the use of these Ancient sources, modern scientific sources will be used as well to aid in determining how Alexander's life played out. These modern sources will be used because they are significantly less biased since they have been written while taking into account objectivity as is expected from scientific sources that are being produced in modern historical sciences.

Because this part of the research thesis is relatively short, not every detail of Alexander's life will be discussed. Therefore, a few aspects of his personality were chosen. These include accounts and events on which our research will focus on. Examples are his military genius, his upbringing and the analyses of his characters the aforementioned ancient sources provide us

² Joseph Roisman, 'Ptolemy and His Rivals in His History of Alexander', *The Classical Quarterly* 34 (1984) 2, 373-385, aldaar 372.

³ E.I. Johnson, 'How the Greeks and Romans Regarded History', *Greece & Rome* 3 (1933) 7, 38-43, aldaar 43.

⁴ Larry Kreitzer, 'Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor', *The Biblical Archaeologist* 53 (1990) 4, 210-217, aldaar 210.

⁵ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, (Princeton 1983) 176.

with. These instances were chosen because they make it possible to determine Alexander's character and the reasons why he became a successful military strategist.

Alexander's early life

Plutarch, a Greek writer who described the lives of both great Roman and great Greek men in history, also wrote a chapter on Alexander the Great. Plutarch lived around 46 AD to 120 AD, approximately four centuries after Alexander died. Plutarch spends a substantial part of his chapter on Alexander discussing the earlier years of the Macedonian conqueror. The first aspect he describes are the legends concerning Alexander's birth and rumoured divine ancestry. According to legend, Alexander's mother Olympias, a daughter of the king of Epirus, dreamed that her womb was struck by a bolt of lightning on the evening of the consummation of her marriage to Alexander's father, Philip II. His father then had a dream in which he secured his wife's womb with a lion's image.⁶ Plutarch's explanations for these dreams were that either Olympias was pregnant before she married Philip or that Zeus would have been the father of Alexander. Another legend Plutarch describes states that because of Philip II's neglecting attitude regarding his wife, that she would be accompanied by a serpent lying by her side. Philip II therefore would have believed that Olympias would have been the partner of a superior being.⁷ Ancient sources differ in their opinion, but some said that Alexander's mother told him repeatedly about his supposed divine parentage.⁸ Macedonian coins manufactured during Alexander's reign illustrate this legend, insinuating that he believed or at least valued these

⁶ Plut. Alex. 2.2.

⁷ Plut. Alex 2.4.

⁸ Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia* (Hoboken 2010) 188.

legends enough to implement them in such a way.⁹ These rumours are not to be taken literally since they make use of religious mythology.

These legends surrounding Alexander's supposed divine parentage are not out of the ordinary in the time period of Ancient Greece and Macedonia. There are multiple instances to be found in history where a king, a prince or any member of the ruling noble family claim divine parentage or ancestors.¹⁰ Because of the freedom of the Greek and Macedonian polytheistic religion, it was not difficult to do so. Greek and Macedonian religion was not as set as most monotheistic religions so there was enough room for noble families to make such claims. Even though the use of mythology to elucidate a noble family's claim to power is fitting for the time period, it did have an impact on the way Alexander viewed himself and the way he was treated. This can be seen when studying coins from the Alexandrian period and even Alexander's helmet was decorated with snake imagery.¹¹ For example, his mother believed he was descendent from Achilles and Alexander appropriated Persian customs that implied a higher standing than his peers.

Alexander's adolescence was typical considering his social status and the time period in which he was alive. He was raised by his mother and a few nurses and when he turned thirteen, his father searched for a tutor and found one in Aristotle. He was taught in Aristotle's 'boarding school' for Macedonian noble children, where he found a few of his closest friends and future generals in Ptolemy, Hephaistion and Cassander.¹² Under Aristotle's tutelage, they were taught about medicine, philosophy, morals, religion, logic and art. Supposedly, Aristotle gifted

⁹ Margarete Bieber, 'The Portraits of Alexander the Great', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 93 (1949) 5, 373-427, aldaar 379.

¹⁰ Molly Francke, 'The Socio-Economic Interpretation of Mythology', *Folklore* 54 (1943) 4, 369-377, aldaar 375-377.

¹¹ Bieber, 'The Portraits of Alexander the Great', 391.

¹² Robin Lane Fox, *The Search for Alexander* (Boston 1980) 65, 66.

Alexander a copy of the Illiad because he had grown so fond of the popular epic.¹³ Later in life, Alexander would try to model himself after the hero of the Illiad, Achilles.

His life took a turn after his father returned from a military campaign against the Athenians. Philip II married the niece of one of his commanders. This put Alexander's status as heir to the Macedonian throne in jeopardy since a child from this new marriage between his father and his new wife would be a fully-Macedonian heir.¹⁴ Plutarch describes the event in the follow excerpt:

At the wedding of Cleopatra, whom Philip fell in love with and married, she being much too young for him, her uncle Attalus in his drink desired the Macedonians would implore the gods to give them a lawful successor to the kingdom by his niece. This so irritated Alexander, that throwing one of the cups at his head, "You villain," said he, "what, am I then, a bastard?" Then Philip, taking Attalus's part, rose up and would have run his son through; but by good fortune for them both, either his over-hasty rage, or the wine he had drunk, made his foot slip, so that he fell down on the floor. At which Alexander reproachfully insulted over him: "See there," said he, "the man who makes preparations to pass out of Europe into Asia, overturned in passing from one seat to another."¹⁵

While this is probably not how this event played out exactly, considering Plutarch wrote his book centuries after Alexander's life, it does describe the climate in which Alexander had to live. He was at odds with his father because he had the idea that he would be disowned if he were to produce an heir with his new Macedonian wife. Later it becomes evident that that would not be the case and that Alexander's assumption would turn out to be wrong. However, this

¹³ Mary Renault, *The Nature of Alexander the Great*, (London 2001) 45–47.

¹⁴ Nick Mccarty, *Alexander the Great*, (Melbourne 2004) 27.

¹⁵ Plutarch, Mary Carolyn Waldrep and T.N.R. Rogers (ed.), *Greek and Roman Lives*, (2005 Mineola) 138.

does illustrate the relationship Alexander had with his father in the last years that Philip II was alive. As mentioned in the quoted excerpt, Alexander's father wanted to run his son through. This illustrates the difficult relationship Alexander had with his father.

It also paints a picture of Alexander's character and how he perceived this imagined slight. He thought he was viewed by his father as a bastard so he and his mother decided to flee Macedonia.¹⁶ After six months he returned and his father allegedly explained to him that he never intended to disown him.¹⁷ A few years later, Philip II was assassinated and some ancient sources claim that Alexander played a part in this.¹⁸ After his father's murder Alexander was proclaimed king on the spot by the Macedonian army and nobility. He started his reign by immediately eliminating rivals to his throne, including his own cousins, stepbrother, his half-sisters and their families.¹⁹ When news reached the rest of Macedonia and the conquered provinces, a few states revolted. Instead of using diplomacy as Alexander's advisors recommended, he decided to start a military campaign. When he reached the rebelling states with an army of 3000 men, they promptly surrendered and Alexander pardoned them.²⁰

Alexander's military genius

The most important factor concerning Alexander's success was his military prowess. When Alexander inherited his father's throne, he started expanding the Macedonian empire by launching a vast military campaign. An important part of analysing Alexander's accomplishments as a conqueror is figuring out what role his behaviour played in his military success.

¹⁶ Roisman and Worthington (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, 180.

¹⁷ Plut. Alex. 9.1.

¹⁸ E. Badian, 'The Death of Philip II' *Classical Association of Canada* 17 (1963) 4, 244-250, aldaar 245.

¹⁹ Roisman and Worthington (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, 190.

²⁰ McCarty, *Alexander the Great*, 31

Before Alexander's time, during the Peloponnesian wars from 431 BC until 401 BC, there was a shift in the manner Greek and Macedonian civilizations waged wars. Greek ethics concerning warfare focused primarily on defending their city-states as they were not interested in conquering the world by force, but rather by colonising and trading.²¹ This is evidenced by the war tactics the Greeks used. They used the Phalanx strategy which made them nigh unbeatable as evidenced by the Persian wars, where they beat the foreign invaders that greatly outnumbered them.²² During the Peloponnesian wars this ethic changed drastically. Because the Spartans and the Athenians used a similar tactic in war, the nature of the defensive way they fought had to change. Therefore, war took the form of a rough sport. The scope, scale and frequency of destruction increased immensely. Armies grew, wars lasted longer, carnage increased and cities were destroyed while their populaces were enslaved. When Alexander rose to power, the Greek and Macedonian armies were transformed in such a way they became forces capable of damage that were only rarely seen previously.²³

While Alexander used the superior Phalanx tactic that was common for Greek and Macedonian armies, he used this tactic in an aggressive manner rather than as a defensive force. As was common for Greek and Macedonian armies, Alexander was more often than not outnumbered and still managed to win all of his battles until his army committed mutiny in India.²⁴ His victories can be attributed to the aforementioned Phalanx technique, his magnificent cavalry tactics and the fierce loyalty of his troops that only faltered during one battle.²⁵ He was

²¹ Mary E. White, 'Greek Colonization', *The Journal of Economic History* 21 (1961) 4, 443-454, aldaar 448.

²² Frederick W. Smith, 'The Fighting Unit: An essay in Structural Military', *L'Antiquité Classique* 59 (1990), 149-165, aldaar 152.

²³ Peter Krentz, 'Fighting by the Rules: The Invention of the Hoplite Agôn', *Hesperia: The Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens* 71 (2002) 1, 23-39, aldaar 25.

²⁴ Paul J. Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings: Space, Territory, and Ideology in Seleucid Empire* (Cambridge 2014) 34.

²⁵ Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings: Space, Territory, and Ideology in Seleucid Empire*, 34.

able to secure this loyalty by fighting every battle himself on the battlefield amongst his soldiers by leading his cavalry.²⁶ Another factor that made Alexander a successful military leader was his ability to use enemy tactics to his advantage. For example, he was able to neutralize elephants used by Indian armies, a tactic that was never seen before by Greek or Macedonian military. He did this by ordering his soldiers to let the elephants run through their ranks after they made a path clear for it, so they were able to attack the elephant's handlers on their vulnerable backs since they were unable to quickly turn around.

The behaviour Alexander exhibited when it came to waging war was something all ancient sources and most historians today agree on.²⁷ He was lucky enough that he was able to use his talents because of the opportunities awarded to him since he was the son of a successful Macedonian conqueror. His intelligence and standing made it possible to achieve a great deal of accomplishments primarily on the battlefield. The new way that wars were fought put him in a position where he could use his intelligence and tactics. These shifts made it possible for him to flourish.

Ancient critiques on Alexander's behaviour

One of the most important sources concerning Alexander the Great and his life is the "Anabasis of Alexander" by the author Arrian. This author wrote seven books on Alexander the Great in the first and second centuries AD. He is generally considered the most reliable source on the life of Alexander because he used eye witness accounts from people such as Ptolemaeus Soter I, one of Alexander's most high ranking generals, as his sources for the Anabasis of Alexander.²⁸ He wrote mostly on Alexander's military campaigns, but in the last book he

²⁶ Brooke Allen, 'Alexander the Great: Or the Terrible?', *The Hudson Review* 58 (2005) 2, 220-230, aldaar 223-224.

²⁷ Glenn R. Bugh (ed.), *Cambridge companion to the Hellenistic World*, (Cambridge 2007) 10-11.

²⁸ Arrian, E.J. Chinnock (transl.), *The Anabasis of Alexander* (London 2014) PDF e-book, Arrian's preface, 25.

describes Alexander's character. This last book is most relevant to our research because the focus lies on his behaviour, his achievements and how those fit in the context of the time period in which he lived. An analysis on his behaviour is valuable because it will enable us to determine if Alexander's behaviour was fitting for the time period in which he lived and if this contributed to his immense success as a military strategist.

In his last book on Alexander, Arrian writes about his death and also includes a few pages concerning Alexander's character. He tells us the following:

According to the statement of Aristobulus, he lived thirty-two years, and had reached the eighth month of his thirty-third year. He had reigned twelve years and these eight months. He was very handsome in person, and much devoted to exertion, very active in mind, very heroic in courage, very tenacious of honour, exceedingly fond of incurring danger, and strictly observant of his duty to the gods. In regard to the pleasures of the body, he had perfect self-control; and of those of the mind, praise was the only one of which he was insatiable. He was very clever in recognising what was necessary to be done, even when it was still a matter unnoticed by others; and very successful in conjecturing from the observation of facts what was likely to occur. In marshalling, arming, and ruling an army, he was exceedingly skillful; and very renowned for rousing the courage of his soldiers, filling them with hopes of success, and dispelling their fear in the midst of danger by his own freedom from fear. Therefore even what he had to do in secret he did with the greatest boldness. He was also very clever in getting the start of his enemies, and snatching from them their advantages by secretly forestalling them, before any one even feared what was about to happen. He was likewise very steadfast in keeping the agreements and settlements which he made, as well as very secure from being entrapped by deceivers. Finally, he was very sparing in the expenditure of money

for the gratification of his own pleasures; but he was exceedingly bountiful in spending it for the benefit of his associates.”²⁹

In this direct quote from the *Anabasis of Alexander*, Arrian describes Alexander’s character as exceptional. In the eyes of the author, he could clearly do no wrong. He defines Alexander as a clever hero who had control over every aspect of himself with a courageous nature and that he was someone who possessed integrity. This is a strong contrast with some eyewitness accounts discussed earlier. However, Arrian only writes about Alexander’s success and barely touches on elements such as his interactions with other people on a social level. For example, Arrian claims that Alexander was secure from being entrapped by deceivers even though the attempt on his life was foiled because of a mistake the would-be assassins had made.³⁰ Alexander and the mistakes he might have made are excused by Arrian and he gives external reasons that explain his wrongful behaviour. Arrian’s books are not critical at all concerning Alexander’s behaviour. Even when he described behaviour that would have been frowned upon in the Macedonian and Greek civilisations³¹, he does not condemn him for it, but rather blames factors that were outside of Alexander’s control. In the following excerpt Arrian describes Alexander’s mistakes and attributes those to factors Alexander had no control over:

“That Alexander should have committed errors in his conduct from quickness of temper or from wrath, and that he should have been induced to comport himself like the Persian monarchs to an immoderate degree, I do not think remarkable if we fairly consider both his youth and his uninterrupted career of good fortune; likewise that kings have no associates in pleasure who aim at their best interests, but that they will always have

²⁹ Arrian, *The Anabasis of Alexander*, book 7, chapter 28, 654.

³⁰ Richard A. Gabriel, *Madness of Alexander the Great: And the Myth of the Military Genius* (Barnsley 2015) 110.

³¹ Allen, ‘Alexander the Great: Or the Terrible?’, 227.

associates urging them to do wrong. However, I am certain that Alexander was the only one of the ancient kings who, from nobility of character, repented of the errors which he had committed. The majority of men, even if they have become conscious that they have committed an error, make the mistake of thinking that they can conceal their sin by defending their error as if it had been a just action. But it seems to me that the only cure for sin is for the sinner to confess it, and to be visibly repentant in regard to it. Thus the suffering will not appear altogether intolerable to those who have undergone unpleasant treatment, if the person who inflicted it confesses that he has acted dishonourably; and this good hope for the future is left to the man himself, that he will never again commit a similar sin, if he is seen to be vexed at his former errors. I do not think that even his tracing his origin to a god was a great error on Alexander's part, if it was not perhaps merely a device to induce his subjects to show him reverence.”³²

In this excerpt from Arrian's book on Alexander's life, it is clear that he was viewed as an extraordinary person. Arrian, however, is unable to recognize and describe when Alexander might have made mistakes concerning his behaviour or that his character was not perfect. He attributes the mistakes and errors in behaviour as problems that came from outside influences. For example, he ascribes his angry outbursts and assumption of Persian customs that his subordinates did not agree on to his youth and good fortune. He even praises Alexander because he repented his wrongdoings and attributes some of his behaviour as a well thought out strategy to garner support and obedience from his peers and subjects. For example, he describes Alexander's tendency to deify himself as a strategic device to rule over his subjects in a shrewd manner. These accounts of Alexander's character show that Arrian is able to twist these

³² Arrian, *The Anabasis of Alexander*, book 7, chapter 28, 655.

wrongdoings and describe them as either a clever tactic or excusable since he “is seen to be vexed at his former errors”.

Arrian goes well out of his way to define Alexanders as mistakes and flaws that lie beyond his control. This can be attributed to the fact that Arrian lived in the Roman Empire in the first century. He lived in the time of the first Emperors who began to deify themselves and that practice was seen as normal.³³

Conclusion

After analysing the ancient sources that are unanimously positive about Alexander, it is important to try to find objectivity within these writings. Because of Alexanders immense successes, the logical result is that the authors of these books believed that Alexander was a great military leader without concentrating too much on his behaviour in a more social context. The most reliable sources were written in the first and second centuries AD and as the saying goes: history is written by the victor. Conclusions can be drawn, however, when analysing the manner in which the authors interpreted the life of the Macedonian.

Returning to the question mentioned in the introduction which can now be answered:

“How was Alexander able to become one of the most successful conquerors of antiquity and what part played his behaviour in accomplishing his goals according to ancient sources?”

The selected ancient sources describe Alexander as a successful conqueror and military strategist and attribute this mostly to his intelligence and the opportunities awarded to him by being born in a noble family and having a father who was a successful conqueror in his own right. The Greek and Macedonian culture of war also played an important role in his success,

³³ Kreitzer, ‘Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor’, 210.

since this enabled him to benefit from a more aggressive strategy which was not customary before.

The ancient sources on Alexander describe him as an ingenious war hero who was almost infallible. He was able to win almost every battle he fought and secure the loyalty of his troops. Even when he made mistakes or showed behaviour that would be frowned upon, the sources blame external factors and praise the Macedonian conqueror because they believed he repented his wrongdoings.

He was both worshipped and demanded to be worshipped. While this is fairly normal of rulers in the Hellenistic age that enjoyed absolute power,³⁴ this is being described as peculiar behaviour by eyewitness accounts, even if the consulted ancient sources do not condemn this behaviour. As discussed, his own mother believed he was a deity and throughout his life there are more examples of Alexander being seen as a god or deifying himself. Even though Alexander was a genius when it came to military endeavours, he succumbed to alcoholism later in life which means that his life ended rather prematurely. This quick sudden descent is most likely due to the way he was treated, wanted to be treated and the monstrosities that war brought.

³⁴ Thomas R. Martin, *Ancient Greece* (New Haven 2013) 276.

Psychological approach

These days, psychologists and other healthcare workers use the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; *DSM-5*; American Psychological Association, 2013) to assess mental health within individuals (Regier, Kuhl, & Kupfer 2013). This classification and diagnostic tool contains over more than 150 mental disorders (McCarron, 2013).

Even though the Ancient Greeks did not have such a precise manual, it did not stop them from researching ‘madness’ (Akiskal & Akiskal, 2007). Aristotle was, besides being Alexander’s mentor, also a very influential philosopher and scientist. Some of his ideas and principles mark the beginning of psychology (and other scientific areas) as we know it today. His conception of the temperaments of personality can be seen as a proto-personality research, which is seen as the basis of assessing mental health. The temperaments, according to Aristotle, refer to different human personalities. He distinguished four different personality types; the melancholic, hyperthymic, cyclothymic and choleric type. The melancholic personality type has feelings of self-blaming, is sensitive to criticism, insomnia and loss of appetite. This classification is nowadays seen as the first attempt to diagnose clinical depression (Akiskal & Akiskal, 2007). It indicates that Aristotle and other philosophers made attempts to recognize and assess typical patterns of behaviour.

It was actually the Greek biographer and philosopher, Plutarch (1919), who described Alexander’s personality by using the choleric personality type. People that fit within this personality type, can be recognized by their goal-oriented, sceptical and critical traits, which were seen as intellectual virtues by the Ancient Greeks. On the other hand, choleric possessed the ‘darkest nature’ of the four temperaments which is expressed through dissatisfaction, complaining and being more prone to anger and violence (Akiskal & Akisal, 2007). This description of personality and behaviour clearly bears a resemblance with a personality disorder which is currently known as psychopathy.

Psychopathy is defined as a personality disorder characterized by deficits in behaviour and personality (Thompson, Ramos & Willett, 2014). Some researchers see this condition as extreme variants of normal personality traits (Miller, Lynam, Widiger & Leukefeld, 2001). The DSM-5 classifies a personality disorder as a longstanding pattern of inner experience and behaviour that differs remarkably from the expectations of the individual's culture. A personality disorder is also inflexible and pervasive, has an onset in adolescence or early adulthood, is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment. The disorder shows itself on a cognitive, affective and neurophysiological level and in interpersonal functioning and impulse control (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). It can be recognised in behaviour by distinct lack of guilt, remorse and empathy. Additionally, psychopaths are categorised as being superficially charming, egocentric, grandiose and manipulative (Glenn, Kruzban & Raine, 2011; Hare, 2003).

Because of the similarity between the choleric temperament and psychopathy, this chapter will first aim to research Alexander's recorded behaviour and secondly, will examine if he shows signs of psychopathic behaviour and/or traits. Therefore, the main question this chapter will attempt to answer is:

To what extent does Alexander's recorded behaviour show evidence of psychopathic traits?

To analyse the ancient sources containing information about Alexander's personality and behaviour, the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (*PCL-R*; Hare, 2003), is used (see Appendix A). The *PCL-R* is a reliable instrument which has been referred to as the 'gold standard' for measuring psychopathy (Kiehl & Hoffman, 2011).

The checklist contains 20 statements each discussing a psychopathic trait. These statements can be rated (from 0 = no match to 2 = definite match) based on the exhibited

behaviour of the subject, which will result in an end score that will clarify to what extent the subject indeed has psychopathic traits. The maximum score is 40 points, with subjects with a score of or above 30 considered a psychopath (Boduszek & Debowska, 2015; Hare, 2003). It is important to keep in mind that although an individual with a score below 30 is not officially considered a psychopath, they can still have psychopathic tendencies.

To use the PCL-R to its full capacity, researchers recommend to divide the 20 items into four facets. Facet 1 focuses on interpersonal items of psychopathy, such as superficial charm and grandiose sense of self-worth and facet 2 is based on affective statements, such as lack of remorse and emotional shallowness. Facet 3 represents the lifestyle elements, such as impulsivity and lack of realistic, long-term goals and lastly, facet 4 contains the antisocial items, such as poor behavioural control and criminal versatility (Bishopp & Hare, 2008; Leon-Mayer Folino, Neumann & Hare, 2015; Moskros, Neumann, Stadtland, Osterheider, Nedopil & Hare, 2011; Neumann, Hare & Pardini, 2014; Zwets, Hornsveld, Neumann, Muris & van Marle, 2015).

Since all argumentations within this chapter are based on ancient sources, it is not possible to do a thorough study of Alexander's personality and behaviour, seeing as these sources are mostly fragments of his life. However, some of these fragments show outstanding key features of his personality which can be used to give a more in depth analysis about Alexander's psyche. Therefore, all four facets will be discussed and a substantiated estimated score will be given in regards of his behaviour.

Facet 1: Interpersonal characteristics

This facet focuses on interpersonal characteristics, including superficial charm, grandiose sense of self-worth, pathological lying and conning/manipulative behaviour.

According to Plutarch and Arrian, both biographers of famous men in the Ancient Greece period, Alexander was a charming, persuasive and handsome man, way beyond his age (Arrian, 1884; Plutarch, 1919). He often spoke to his officers the night before battles and was able to inspire them. And even when his armies became bigger and more diverse he was able to keep their loyalty by fighting side-by-side with them, which not all conquerors did (Morkot, 1996).

This charm also had a flip side, Alexander had a great sense of self-worth and could be rather arrogant (Plutarch, 1919). This can be derived from the way he demanded to be greeted by his peers. They had to use a custom called *proskynesis* that was only used for superiors. In this custom individuals had to kneel for Alexander (Arrian, 1884). He also disregarded another custom, which encouraged emperors to dress plainly, instead he wore colourful and bejewelled clothes (Arrian, 1884). Moreover, Alexander did not tolerate criticism. When Macedonian officers and friends critiqued his manners and his military plans, he even went as far to have them murdered. In one instance he even murdered one of his generals, Parmenio, because he compared Alexander with his father (Gabriel, 2015).

Although there are no specific examples of manipulative behaviour and pathological lying on Alexander's part, the above mentioned behaviours that indicate narcissistic manners and his concern about his reputation. It is not hard to imagine that he, when his reputation was threatened, would have protected it by lying and conning, although this has yet to be proven.

Based on the above, Alexander was very engaging and showed feelings of superiority. These characteristics show signs of charm and grandiose sense of self-worth, which means he scores two points for both these items. Seeing as there are no apparent instances of Alexander

showing manipulative behaviour and/or pathological lying, it is not possible to score him on these two items. Thus, Alexander scored four points within the first facet.

Facet 2: Affective characteristics

The second facet of the PCL-R contains affective characteristics, including lack of remorse and/or guilt, emotional shallowness, callousness/lack of empathy and failure to accept responsibility for own actions.

Although Alexander is said to have friends, these did not come natural to him (Green, 2013). In one instance Alexander even tried to bribe some Macedonians into a friendship (Green, 2013). This indicate that Alexander had troubles creating friendships on an emotional level, which is common among individuals with psychopathic traits. Psychopaths' relationships are generally more shallow and of lesser quality (Ermer, Kahn, Salovey, & Kiehl, 2012). According to Jonason & Schmitt (2012) men who show a high level of psychopathy choose friends based on who can provide them with opportunities for personal protection and sexual partners, instead of an emotional connection. In Alexander's case this was obvious given that most of his friends were also his generals. These problems with making emotional connected friendships show Alexander's emotionally shallowness.

Continuously, Alexander can be seen as a callous and goal-orientated man. After his father Philip died, he claimed his spot to the throne by immediately eliminating his rivals by having them killed, including his cousin, half-brothers, step-sisters and their entire families (Gabriel, 2015; Plutarch, 1919) Even though he did not kill them himself, it shows his lack of empathy and his usage of instrumental violence. Instrumental violence refers to violence that is used to achieve an external goal (Walsh, Swogger & Kosson, 2009), in this case the throne. It has been shown that individuals who score high on psychopathy seek to maximize their personal gain with little regard to others and their needs and comforts (Foulkes, Seara-Cardoso,

Newmann, Rogers, & Viding, 2014). Individuals who score high on psychopathy, when participating in morality dilemmas, are more likely to sacrifice persons for the greater good than individuals with low psychopathy (Pletti, Lotto, Buodo & Sarlo, 2017). The hypothesis is that their emotional response to harmful acts is weak or even absent. Without the emotional response informing them on the rightness of their actions, psychopaths would produce deviating/altered choices of action (Glenn & Raine, 2009; Tassy, Deruelle, Mancini, Leistedt & Wicker, 2013). Notably these moral transgressions are exactly the type of characteristics that make psychopaths successful in their career or life achievements (Hall & Benning, 2006; Kahane, Everett, Earp, Farias & Savulescu, 2015).

Other actions of Alexander do not imply feelings of guilt or empathy as well. In the course of his ruling he had thousands of persons killed, with a majority being innocent victims, mostly women and children (Gabriel, 2015). One of the most drastic examples is when Alexander ordered to have 18,000 Greek mercenaries killed without reason, even after they surrendered and offered to join Alexander's army (Gabriel, 2015).

To conclude, Alexander shows a clear lack of remorse and/or guilt, callousness and emotional shallowness. This can be derived from his lack of concern for the suffering and pain of others, his cold, inconsiderate and goal-orientated behaviour and his limited depth of feelings, which also gave him the inability to create meaningful relationships. Considering that these three items are very pronounced in his behaviour, he scores two points for each item. There are no accounts of Alexander showing signs of the fourth item within this facet, failing to accept responsibility for own actions. Therefore, there will be no score given for this item, which means he scored six points in total for this facet.

Facet 3: Lifestyle items

The third facet is characterised by lifestyle items, including need of stimulation/proneness to boredom, parasitic lifestyle, lack of realistic/long-term goals, impulsivity and irresponsibility.

Although, Alexander had a tendency to be callous and calculated, he also had an impulsive side to him, which has been branded as ‘instinctiveness’ and ‘fearlessness’ by his biographers (Arrian, 1884; Plutarch, 1991). This impulsiveness showed itself mostly through violence, specifically reactive aggression, which among other things resulted in the massacres mentioned in the second facet. Reactive aggression is described as impulsive and emotion-drive acts in response to threat or provocation (Meloy, 1997). Interestingly the two types of aggression, reactive and instrumental aggression (which was mentioned with the first facet), aren’t mutually exclusive. Psychopaths can engage in both types of aggression (Flight & Forth, 2007; Hare, 2003; Reidy, Zeichner, Miller, & Martinez, 2007), which is also the case with Alexander.

On multiple accounts Alexander was praised for his risk-taking and his fondness of danger (Arrian, 1884; Plutarch, 1991), which both are characteristics of psychopathy (Hare, 2003). Psychopaths are known for their lack of fear for negative consequences (Glenn, Kruzban & Raine, 2011; Hare, 2003), which can result in impulsiveness, but this impulsiveness does always pay itself off in the long-term. In one instance Alexander offered a ceasefire to a city state, the Thebans, but when they publicly rejected his offer, he got enraged. He spontaneously decided to kill the thousands of Thebans and destroy their city, which was strategically irresponsible. By demonising the city, Alexander weakened the security his father had built and almost lost his empire to Sparta because of it (Green, 2013).

Interestingly, some sources claim that Alexander was homosexual and in love with one of his friends, Hephaestion (Green, 2013) Even though the Greek did not frown upon casual sexual relationships between men, it was deemed immoral to have a long lasting relationship

(Gabriel, 2015). Despite this, they did not go through the trouble to hide their long standing relationship, which was irresponsible seeing as this quite possibly damaged Alexander's reputation. When Hephaestion died Alexander was so distraught that he went on a forty day rampage, attacking village after village and killing everyone in his way (Gabriel, 2015). This side of Alexander, the irresponsible and explosive side, also shows his lack of behavioural control, which is an item of the fourth facet.

To sum up, some of Alexander's behaviours were done without considering consequences and lacked planning, therefore he can be scored two points for impulsiveness. He also showed signs of irresponsibility with his attack on Theban, although this does not always fit his behaviour considering his goal-oriented trait which was discussed in the second facet. Because of that, he only scores one point on this item. The same goes for the item of need of stimulation, although there are instances which show his risk-taking which might indicate a proneness to boredom, he was not mainly driven by the need for new stimulation. So it only fits partially and will give him one point on the item. Considering the last two items, parasitic lifestyle and lack of realistic/long-term goals, there are no specific instances which point to these items belonging to Alexander, so these will be given no points. In total, Alexander scored four points within the third facet, two for impulsiveness and one for irresponsibility and one point for the need for stimulation.

Facet 4: Anti-social items

The fourth facet contains the anti-social items, such as poor behaviour control, early behavioural problems, juvenile delinquency, revocation of conditional release and criminal versatility.

As seen before, Alexander had a habit of using reactive violence. Not only did he kill an entire city in a fit of rage, he also killed multiple friends in drunken rage because they said

something about his father, which rubbed him the wrong way (Gabriel, 2015). A more dramatic example is when he ordered to have another entire village demolished and massacred just because their very existence somehow set him off (Gabriel, 2015). These examples show his inability to control his negative feelings which resulted in inappropriate expressions of anger.

His poor behavioural control can also be derived from his of alcohol abuse. Although he started drinking to impress his peers, he eventually lost control (Arrian, 1884; Green, 2013; Plutarch, 1919). Drinking in this Greek era was very common, especially during gatherings of men in which they discussed day to day events (Gabriel, 2015). When Alexander was drunk, he became even more sensitive to critique and as stated before, this led to explosive violence and anger on his part. Sources say that he eventually, unable to get rid of this addiction, died from alcohol poisoning (Arrian, 1884; Green, 2013; Plutarch, 1919).

It is impossible to say anything about the items: juvenile delinquency, revocation of conditional release and criminal versatility. This is because the entire legal system we know today, and on which these items are based on, was not present in Ancient Greece. Furthermore, there are no records of possible abnormal behaviour in his youth (Green, 2013), which makes it impossible to say anything about early behavioural problems. Therefore, there are no scores given for these items. Only his poor behavioural control can be scored, which considering his reactive aggression and misuse of alcohol scores him two points. So in total Alexander scored two points in total for the fourth facet.

Having compared Alexander's behaviour with the four facets of the PCL-R, he scored an estimated of sixteen points out the forty points in total. Taking in mind that it was not possible to score his behaviour for each of the items, it is not unlikely that he could have scored higher if the information was available. But all in all, with the help of the PCL-R it can be concluded that Alexander indeed possessed psychopathic traits.

Evolutionary explanation & conclusion

From an evolutionary point of view psychopathy can be seen as a mutation that maximizes one's chances of survival. Some researches see psychopathy as an adaptation rather than a side effect of someone's upbringing and social development (Glenn, Kurzban & Raine, 2011; Glenn & Raine, 2009; Barr & Quinsy, 2004; Crawford & Salmon, 2002). They theorise that the emotional, behavioural and cognitive characteristics of psychopathy are a result of evolution because they offer the individuals an advantage in certain circumstances, and by taking advantage of others, they are able to gain status and resources more easily. Hence psychopaths have more chance to survive (Glenn & Raine, 2009). When psychopathic individuals are less burdened with the emotional consequences of guilt, remorse and empathy, combined with aggression, this can take on literal forms of survival (Oliver, Neufeld, Dziobek & Mitchell, 2016). For Alexander this meant that he was able to get more status, success and ultimately a better chance at survival by eliminating all his competitors for the throne, killing his enemies and massacring thousands and thousands of people.

The possible dysfunction of the brain areas that are important for social emotions therefore can be seen as evolutionary adaptations which helps the individual to survive in a brutal world (Motzkin, Newman, Kiehl, & Koenings, 2011). One might even say that psychopathy is an enhanced version of the general social brain (Yildirim & Derksen, 2015), which may be the answer to how Alexander became such a successful conqueror.

In conclusion, when comparing Alexander's behaviour to the PCL-R, it showed an estimated score of sixteen points. Although this score does not correspond with the psychopathic disorder, it does show that Alexander did show signs of psychopathic traits. These traits include grandiose self-worth, lack of guilt, remorse and empathy, instrumental and reactive aggression, impulsiveness and poor behavioural control. It must be noted that it is impossible to give a definite score seeing as it is based on ancient sources which only show a small portion of his

behaviour. However, based on the fragments that were available to analyse, it shows that Alexander possessed traits that may have given him an evolutionary advantage; His goal-orientated mind made him strive for more power and status without regards for the needs of others. This was further enhanced by his use of aggression and his lack of empathy, remorse and guilt, which made him act without being confronted by the emotional consequences. So, these psychopathic traits increased Alexander's chances for survival and therefore possibly be the reason why he was such a great conqueror.

Common ground & integration

The successful Macedonian was a unique and complex figure in ancient history and it is important to show and combine multiple explanations concerning his behaviour and his achievements. The last two chapters have shed a light on different explanations of Alexander's behaviour, which is at the core of his success. In short, the historical approach showed Alexander's behaviour and how this could be explain in the context of his era and his upbringing and the psychological approach showed that his psychopathic traits may be the explanation.

To get to an integrated conclusion, or as Repko would say: *a more comprehensive understanding*, the insights of the different disciplines will shortly be repeated. Then the similarities, differences and conflicts between these insights will be explained and be resolved by creating a *common ground*. Consequently, the newly found common ground will be used to create a *more comprehensive understanding*, which will answer the main research question of this thesis: What made Alexander the Great one of the most successful conquerors in history?

Disciplinary insights

The historical approach showed that an important development that lead up to Alexander's military success was a monumental shift that happened concerning the way wars were fought in the Hellenistic time period. Classical Greek civilization waged their wars in a very defensive manner. After the Peloponnesian war this defensive strategy changed drastically. Especially when Macedonia started to conquer Greece, they started to apply strategies that were destructive and aggressive. This shift made it possible for Alexander to form intelligent strategies that were able to conquer large parts of the Mediterranean world and the Near East. Another important factor that made Alexander a successful military strategist was his ability to ensure the loyalty of his soldiers. He was able to achieve this by fighting alongside his troops during every battle.

Apart from his superior strategies, Alexander also had a clear ambitious drive to excel at his military exploits because of the strained relationship he had with his father. Because he believed he would lose his inheritance to a child from Philip II and his new Macedonian wife, he was convinced his father no longer acknowledged him as his son. This belief was fuelled by his mother's ideas concerning his supposed divine parentage. She led him to believe he would become a greater man than his father. These factors instilled a drive in Alexander to surpass his successful father. He also deified himself since he believed he was more than a mortal man due to his mother's tales of his parentage. He did this by taking over Persian customs that were used to create a clear divide between him and his peers.

Alexander's behaviour and character has been studied using the Psychopathy Checklist - Revise. Although it was impossible to compare his behaviour against all items on the diagnostic tool, it did show that Alexander possessed some psychopathic traits that may explain how he become so successful. One characteristic that indicated psychopathy is his charm, which he used to inspire his generals and soldiers to excel at the battlefield. Another trait was his grandiose sense of self-worth, which made him arrogant and intolerant of criticism, which resulted into a lot of deaths when he did get criticised. His lack of empathy, remorse and guilt made him act aggressively without feeling the emotional consequences of his bloodbaths. Combined his goal-orientated mind it made him strive for more power and status without regard for the needs of others, which ultimately made him a successful conqueror.

Creating common ground

There is a need for *common ground* between the two disciplines and their insights to understand what made Alexander such a successful conqueror. Even though the theories of the two disciplines do not conflict, they still have to be redefined and integrated. For that to happen, it is important to firstly take differences, conflicts and similarities between the disciplinary insights into account.

The *common ground* between the historical and psychological insights will be created by using methods created by Repko (2012), namely *extension* and *organisation*.

Extension in an interdisciplinary sense refers to increasing the scope of the subject which we are talking about (Newell, 2007). In this case taking the disciplinary assumptions about behaviour, moreover Alexander's behaviour, and extending the historical and the psychological theories about his behaviour by combining them. By extending the historical and psychological theories about behaviour, the new all-encompassing extended theory includes and combine the different causal factors which are named in the two disciplinary chapters. This new extended theory about behaviour is the common ground.

Additionally, the technique of *organisation* is used. This method clarifies how certain phenomena interact and maps the causal relationships (Newell, 2007). To be more exact, *organisation* will identify the latent commonalities in the meaning of the different concepts used in history and psychology. After identification of these concepts, they will be redefined and then organizes to bring out the relationship between them. In this thesis *organisation* will show how cultural/environmental factors influenced Alexander's personal factors and vice versa, which ultimately influences his behaviour.

Behaviour

The most important concept that needs a *common ground* is 'behaviour'. Considering this thesis mainly focuses on Alexander's behaviour, it is important to include a definition of behaviour and how this term is being used here.

Historians take an interest in the individuals, events and the development of the human civilization (Repko, 2012). They are especially interested in how a historical period, in this case the Hellenistic era, originated and developed from individual decisions and societal forces. One might say that they are interested in the 'behaviour' of a time period. The individuals within this era, in this case Alexander, are approached with the same assumptions.

Psychologists only take an interest in human behaviour, they see it as a reflection of cognitive constructs, genetic predisposition and individual developments and differences (Repko, 2012). In short, they believe that the nature of human behaviour is influenced by psychosociological and environmental factors.

As seen above, these two disciplines do not interfere with each other on the term, rather, they highlight different parts of behaviour. Both disciplines believe that Alexander's behaviour is originated in the sum of its parts, and the interaction between these parts. The parts that make up Alexander's recorded behaviour are the external factors mentioned in the historical chapter and the internal factors named in the psychological chapter. Following this, the new extended definition of behaviour is the combination and interaction between the external factors and the interpersonal factors that influenced the way people, in this case Alexander, behave.

External and internal behavioural factors

Now that the new definition of behaviour is established, it is important to map out specifically how these internal and external factors interact with each other, influence behaviour and ultimately explains Alexander's success. Four different interactions between an external and internal factor will be discussed, seeing as these are the reasons that made Alexander so successful.

One of Alexander's key behavioural features was one of his psychopathic traits, namely his grandiose sense of self-worth. In the historical approach this sense of superiority was explained by his supposed divinity, which was encouraged by his own mother. Although it is not possible to see if this indeed was the cause of his psychopathic traits or if he already possessed the trait, the interaction of these factors gave him an inflated idea of his own abilities and as a result this greatly improved his self-esteem. As a result of his self-assuredness, he was able to use the confidence he needed to launch and excel in his military campaign. Seeing as both disciplines use different definitions of this type of behaviour there is a need to create a redefined definition which captures both disciplinary explanations. Therefore this phenomena is addressed as an inflated self-esteem.

Another important reason for Alexander's military success was his near invincibility on the battlefield. He only lost one skirmish at the end of his career when his soldiers mutinied, seeing that they felt that he had become an inadequate leader. Despite that, all his other military victories can be attributed to his use of superior strategy and his lack of empathy, guilt and remorse. Instead of using the defensive phalanx tactic the Classical Greek and Macedonian civilisations applied, he was able to use a more aggressive approach to this military strategy. Consequently, wars lasted longer, destruction caused by battles increased and more cities were destroyed. The carnage following these wars became even worse, thousands of innocent men, women and children were killed. This ruthlessness was made possible by his lacking in

empathy, remorse and guilt. Due to such a personality trait, he was able to act without being confronted the emotional consequences of these carnages he inflicted, which made him even more invincible as a military strategist. This interaction between this psychopathic trait and his superior strategy will be named 'near invincibility in battle'.

A third important factor that contributed to Alexander's military success was his ability to ensure the loyalty of his soldiers. Due to the fact that his army consisted of both Macedonian and foreign troops from the lands that he conquered, it was important to instil a feeling of loyalty among his soldiers. Alexander was able to ensure their adherence using his charming personality and his ability and decision to fight every battle alongside his men. By fighting alongside his troops, they felt that Alexander was part of them and vice versa. After all, if a commander fights with his troops it shows confidence that the battle will be won. Thereby, his ability to use his charm when giving speeches before every battle made his able to dispel any doubts clouding his soldiers' minds. These two techniques as to why his soldiers were loyal strengthen each other, they made it possible for Alexander to create a massive army with strong morale. Therefore, to address the combination of these two methods the phrase 'ensuring loyal soldiers' will be used.

Lastly, Alexander possessed an almost unstoppable drive to excel at military strategy. The reason he became so ambitious can be attributed to both a psychological and a circumstantial component. One of Alexander's psychopathic traits was his goal-oriented mind. This meant that he was ambitious and would stop at nothing to reach his goals as efficient as possible, without regards for the discomfort of others. Another aspect that attributed to his drive was his wish to surpass his father due to his complicated relationship with him. The interaction of the results of this difficult relationship and his goal-oriented mind became the immensely ambitious drive he had to excel at all his military endeavours. This interaction of internal and external factor will be addressed as 'ambitious drive'.

More comprehensive understanding

The new extended definition of (Alexander’s) behaviour encompasses the internal and external factors, which interactions have been established by the integration technique *organisation*. The four interactions that are the core of Alexander’s behaviour show the *more comprehensive understanding* of what made him so successful. To accurately illustrate the *more comprehensive understanding*, a diagram was created to explain the findings of this interdisciplinary research:

Figure 1: Diagram of the internal (blue) and external (red) factors which contributed to Alexander's success



It is important to keep in mind that there are interactions between the aforementioned factors, but also between the new defined explanations of his success. For example, his near invincibility in battle most likely added to his inflated self-esteem, aided his ambitious drive and helped with securing the loyalty of his soldiers. Thus, all these different interactions made Alexander even more successful as a conqueror.

Alexander's military success can be more adequately explained using these new found explanations. These newly redefined and all-encompassing insights enable an analysis much clearer than was possible before. The combination of psychological and historical research was able to establish a *more comprehensive understanding* of Alexander the Great and his military success.

Reflection & conclusion

When researching and writing this thesis on the success of Alexander the Great, a few challenges were faced. These challenges consisted mostly of creating and establishing the interaction between the historical and psychological disciplines. Since these sciences do not interfere with each other it was not needed to resolve conflicts between these two, but it was unclear where these two are connected. As described in the *common ground* section two integration techniques were used to ultimately find this connection and resulted in the *more comprehensive understanding* of Alexander's military success.

Another big challenge which was encountered were the selection and usage of the sources on which the research is based. These sources were written 400 years after Alexander passed away so their accuracy was not optimal for historical research concerning his behaviour. Historians focus on the authenticity of how a person, event or even a period is interpreted by evaluating the primary and secondary sources in terms of truthfulness. They believe that 'truth is one, not perspectival' (Novick, 1998). This is an endeavour that is difficult to pursue considering the fact the ancient sources were not objective. These ancient authors lived in a time where objectivity was not an important goal to strive for when writing historical accounts. This leads to historical sources that are not objective. Therefore, these ancient sources should not be read as actual objective accounts of historical events but rather as descriptions of events written from a specific viewpoint. It is important to strive for objectivity and it is very difficult to find that within sources like these. So, to overcome these obstacles with the sources was difficult, but it was manageable by being very critical of these sources and the information they provided us with.

Moreover, these ancient sources were also a challenge for the psychological research. Psychologists' believe is that someone's psychological construct and their interrelationships can be derived through observation and discussion (Repko, 2012). Seeing as it was not possible to

observe Alexander or converse with him, the ancient sources used were the closest possible accounts that could serve as a substitute. However, as explained, the information within these ancient sources was fragmented and biased. This made it impossible to do a complete assessment of Alexander's behaviour. The score of Alexander's behaviour on the PCL-R therefore is an substantiated estimate.

Even though these disciplines gave a full picture of the reasons behind Alexander's success, the thesis could have benefitted from using another scientific discipline like Cultural Anthropology. That way it would have been possible to get deeper into Alexander's behaviour and how this was influenced by the assimilation of Hellenistic customs, meaning the customs coming from Alexander's Macedonian-Greek world and the lands he conquered. This extra information may give a new dimension as to why Alexander behaved the way he behaved.

In conclusion, although there were some obstacles in combining and integrating the information of the two disciplines, this interdisciplinary research is able to answer its main question. The main question was; What made Alexander the Great one of the most successful conquerors in history?

This interdisciplinary research showed that his success can be attributed to four main reasons, namely his inflated self-esteem, his near invincibility in the battle, his ability to ensure his soldier's loyalty, and his ambitious drive. These main reasons resulted from the combination and interaction of the psychological (internal) and historical (external) factors. Moreover, the interaction between these four reasons further enhanced Alexander's ability to excel as a military strategist and ultimately made him one of the most successful conquerors in history.

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Appendix A

Table 1. PCL-R items classified according to facets (Hare, 2003), with Alexander’s score added in (– means not enough information to analyse).

Facet 1: Interpersonal	<i>Score</i>	Facet 3: Lifestyle	<i>Score</i>
Glibness/ Superficial charm	2	Need of stimulation/ Prone to boredom	1
Grandiose sense of self worth	2	Parasitic lifestyle	-
Pathological lying	-	Lack of realistic, long-term goals	0
Conning/ Manipulative	-	Impulsivity	2
		Irresponsibility	1
Facet 2: Affective		Facet 4: Anti-social	
Lack of remorse or guilt	2	Poor behavioural control	2
Emotionally shallow	2	Early Behavioural problems	-
Callous/ Lack of empathy	2	Juvenile delinquency	-
Failure to accept responsibility for own action	0	Revocation of conditional release	-
		Criminal versatility	-
Items that did not saturate any factor			
Promiscuous sexual behaviour	-		
Short-term marital relationships	-		