

Task 1: Paraphrasing a section (Conclusion) / 470 words

Conformity is a social process that is not simply good or bad. Its value depends on the circumstances in which it occurs. At times, going against the majority can reflect a refusal to compromise personal principles. Willis (1963) referred to this as anticonformity, where an individual “attempts to remain independent as a matter of principle”. But nonconformity can also be positive. When someone introduces new ideas rather than agreeing with others, this may lead to better solutions or ideas due to people not wanting to “go along with the crowd” (Maslach et al., 1985). Disagreement can therefore be disruptive but it can also spark progress.

On the other hand, many psychologists argue that conformity plays a positive role in everyday life. Zimbardo and Leippe (1991) described that it ‘lubricates the machinery of social interaction [and] enables us to structure our social behaviour and predict the reactions of others’, maintaining order and stability. But the word conformity often carries a negative association especially in Western cultures that place strong emphasis on independence and individualism. According to a value judgement by Asch (1952), most people view conformity as a negative thing so it is “implicitly assumed that independence is ‘good’ and conformity is ‘bad’.” However, without a certain level of shared behaviour and agreement, social life would be unharmonious.

Another reason conformity can be helpful is that it compensates for the limits of individual knowledge. Everyone has their own personal perspectives and are often biased. Relying on others can provide access to insight we would not otherwise have. Conformity can

also prevent necessary challenges. When people remain silent in the face of harmful practices (like racism), a lack of protest may be interpreted as agreement. Meaning that conformity can unintentionally support destructive norms (Krebs & Blackman, 1988). Meanwhile, Milgram's obedience studies demonstrated that the presence of two defiant peers significantly reduced obedience rates among naive participants, highlighting the “liberating effects of group pressure”.

The cultural context strongly shapes how conformity is judged. In individualistic cultures, people often see conformity as a threat to personal freedom. There is discomfort at the idea of being influenced against one's will. However in collectivist cultures, conformity is valued because it promotes harmony and cohesion. It is even seen as “a moral imperative” to conform (Fiske et al., 1998). This then signals that conformity is not a weakness but an important part of functioning as a member of a community.

In summary, conformity is complex and fluid, unable to be reduced to ‘good’ or ‘bad’. It allows society to run smoothly, helps individuals access useful information and can even support resistance against harmful authority. At the same time, it can suppress individuality or allow prejudice to persist. Overall depending on the culture, the situation, and the type of behaviour. It has potential for both positive and negative consequences.

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Task 2 / 431 words

Why We Cheat / 138 words

The article explores why cheating is widespread, not only in high-stakes domains but also in everyday activities like online chess, Wordle or golf. The author notes that “life is a constant struggle between seeking selfish opportunities and maintaining a desirable self-image as moral.” People rationalise small dishonest acts as harmless, convincing themselves they are still good. Research on coin flips, math quizzes and reporting tasks shows that participants often cheat “just fudging it a little” to gain benefits without violating their self-image. The article also warns that “those who get angry at moral transgressors... may be trying to compensate for some perceived moral inadequacy,” suggesting moral outrage can mask personal guilt. Overall, cheating is presented as an ordinary feature of human psychology. It is made possible by self-deception, motivated reasoning and the desire to balance self-interest with a moral identity.

Workplace Friendships / 142 words

This article explores workplace friendships as both beneficial and risky. They are described as “a non-exclusive, spontaneous relationship founded on shared interest, aligned values, mutual trust, commitment and enjoyment.” Such connections foster psychological safety, job satisfaction and creativity, with Gallup research finding that employees with close friends at work reported “fewer workplace accidents” due to mutual care. Friendships can also create problems, including “rumours, sexual harassment, nepotism and favouritism,” which undermine

fairness and commitment. The authors distinguish between friendships which are socially driven, and networking which is more instrumental. They note the tension when friends become bosses, as promotions can alter dynamics and trust. The article concludes that friendships at work should be encouraged but only with clear boundaries and inclusive practices.

Gender: How Stubborn Are Stereotypes? / 153 words

This article reviews fifty years of research on gender stereotypes, asking whether they have truly changed. Early studies showed women were viewed as “gentle and passive” and men as “decisive and dominant,” these are patterns that persist globally. These stereotypes remain powerful, with women who display competence facing a “backlash for not adhering to the expectations of communality and niceness.” It is also observed that continuing stereotypes alongside beliefs such as the belief that “males would have to give something up to allow women to become more equal views of equality” led to less support for action and more hostile sexism. The ‘Nordic’ paradox illustrates how even gender-equal countries can show high rates of violence against women. The authors stress that stereotypes “stubbornly refuse to change with the times,” arguing that cultural change alongside laws and policies is essential. Hutchings concluded that dismantling prescriptive stereotypes is critical to achieving true gender equality worldwide.

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Rothgerber, H. (2023, October 11). *Why we cheat*. The Psychologist. British Psychological Society. <https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/why-we-cheat>

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Task 3

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Are broken links allowed? I can't find some of these articles as they're broken or no longer exist but I tried to supplement where I could

AI Declaration

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