Portray Of Social Control Within 1984 And Brave New World

Both ‘1984’ and ‘Brave New World’ are set in a dystopian future, within societies which are controlled, monitored and perfected by their government. George Orwell’s ‘1984’ explores how the government has the ability to alter the past in order to control society and the people within. Whereas in ‘Brave New World’ by Aldous Huxley, control is achieved through programing humans at birth to follow the path set for them. Orwell and Huxley show their audience that through strict measures and punishment control can be achieved. As the characters of ‘Brave New World’ attempt to push through their conditioning and The Party defeats Winston in ‘1984’, it is shown in both novels how the mind can be controlled and defeated to make citizens act to a governments command.

Orwell and Huxley were both interested in psychology which was a relatively new science in the early 20th century, they both understood that dictators could gain control over individuals through their minds. Within ‘1984’, Orwell writes of how people are subjected to control through “tearing human minds to pieces and putting them together again in new shapes of your own choosing”. The cruelty within the government and their lack of care for citizen’s wellbeing is highlighted by the dynamic verb ‘tearing’ showing the carless ways in which The Party goes about developing a perfect society without thinking of the consequences it may have on those within. The plosive nouns “pieces and putting” further develops this point as it emphasises how the government can do as they wish to whoever they wish without any consequences. The government appear to play around with individuals and have complete control over them and their minds, this is highlighted by the present participle verb ‘choosing’ as they have complete choice over what happens to everyone.

Within ‘1984’ Winston is psychologically manipulated in the Ministry of Love. George Orwell himself quoted “We do not merely destroy enemies; we change them” which is exactly what is going on within the novel. The ability The Party has to alter the conscious state of a human being in order to make them obedient is clearly shown through Winston. At the beginning of the novel Winston rebels against The Party and states that he “hate[s] Big Brother”. However, after being forced through torturous methods employed by The Party he clearly states with passion that he “loved Big Brother”. The verb ‘loved’ and the antithesis of ‘love’ and ‘hate’ shows the complete switch the party activated in his mind, while also showcasing the extensive control they can have over a human being’s thoughts. Demonstrating that even the most rebellious and strongest minds such as Winston’s can be overtaken.

Big Brother represents the dictatorial government and its supremacy in society, which has total control of the citizens in ‘1984’. This is portrayed to Orwell’s audience right from Chapter 1. The opening image of the novel sets the foreboding tone that persists throughout as the protagonist Winston Smith is introduced. Within the novel lies become truth if it serves the purpose of the government 'the clocks were striking thirteen.” The cardinal number ‘thirteen’ struck on the clock portrays the ease the government have when changing the truth. Orwell’s message is that the truth can only exist if we defend it. However within ‘1984’ they allow authority to devalue truth and normalize the lie. As further developed within the novel when Winston is tortured into believing that ‘2+2=5’ because the state said so. The repetition of the

capitalised, declarative simple sentence “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU” refers to the government’s constant surveillance of citizens in a totalitarian society, where Big Brother is at the top of the totalitarian regime. Everyone is under surveillance by the authorities, and phrases like this are a reminder of that. Neologisms such as ‘tele-screens’ and ‘INSOG’ further represent the government’s ability to control citizens’ minds and furthermore ensure they do not question them, they accept what they are told and know better than to think twice. Referring to the tele-screen it is said “there was no way of shutting it off completely”. Citizens’ lack of ability to turn off the tele-screens is a representation of the fact that they are always being monitored and that there’s always someone watching who they can’t get rid of highlighted by the adverb ‘completely’. Orwell takes inspiration of this method of social control from the writings of eighteenth-century English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, who designed new structures for prisons that would allow the guards to watch prisoners while preventing the prisoners from seeing the guards. This also illustrates that the society within ‘1984’ is like a prison where no one is truly free and it is never known who’s watching you.

In ‘Brave New World’, citizens are exposed to conditioning from a young age, as the embryos of children are conditioned to fit their role in society before they are born. Which presents the total control the government has over an individual even before birth. Once born children are taught “ending is better than mending” “A gramme is better than a damn.”. Through these basic sayings and rhymes, Huxley portrays the simple society in which these people live. Huxley illustrates how through conditioning, control is achieved, as a thought can be planted in a human’s mind while making them believe it is their own. The latter rhyme signifies the maximisation of happiness and good feelings within Huxley’s utilitarian society. The neologism ‘gramme’ is referring to Huxley’s happy drug within the novel ‘soma’ which changes individual’s feelings of unhappiness into a state of unfeeling unconsciousness. It is believed that it is of the greatest good of individuals to take soma when unhappy to minimise negative emotions within society.

Within Huxley’s novel natural human reproduction is outdated, replaced with the highly-controlled development of human embryos in hatcheries and conditioning centres. This allows the government to dictate a person's social class, attractiveness, intelligence and various other qualities before they are even born. Their position in life is set before birth through their biology. The opening extract of ‘Brave New World’ is set in one of the embryo factories and clearly portrays the extent of social control within their society. The extensive number of citizens being formed in labs is highlighted by the quotation “racks upon racks of numbered test-tubes” the repetition of the noun ‘racks’ is used as imagery allowing readers to imagine the astonishing number of embryos being developed. This mass production of human beings being created from few ovaries destroys the possibility of any sense of individuality as all identities are pre-determined in order for society to run smoothly and for the government to have control. “The operation undergone voluntarily for the good of society” refers to the removal of women’s wombs. There is irony behind the adjective ‘voluntarily’ as it is known you get a “bonus amounting to six months’ salary” for undergoing the operation. The financial reward associated with this surgery is another way in which the government gain permission to modify humans’ bodies. It is also a way in which they trick citizens into believing they are in control and have a choice, however, by having such a large financial reward it would be hard to refuse. It is also likely that there would be pressure on women to have this operation as it is for ‘the good of society’ they trust the government to do what was best for them.

Huxley is likely to have drawn inspiration for this from contemporary developments in cell

biology at the time. In 1928, four years before the publication of 'Brave New World', German embryologist Hans Spemann and his student, Hilde Mangold performed the first somatic-cell nuclear transfer using amphibian embryos. This development in science was huge and had never been heard of before and therefore is likely to have been Huxley's inspiration when writing of the hatcheries within his novel.

'1984' is a political novel written in order to warn readers of the dangers of a totalitarian government. Orwell is likely to have taken inspiration from the horrific lengths in which totalitarian governments in Spain and Russia were willing to go to in order to increase their power. He wrote '1984' to alarm Western nations who were unsure about of how to approach the rise of communism. Within Chapter 1 on page 17 we are introduced to "The Two Minutes Hate". Which is another way that control is achieved in '1984'. It is likely to be a way in which they allow all citizens to release their anger so they do not direct it towards the party. Winston describes a women's mouth as "opening and shutting like that of a landed fish" this zoomorphic simile compares the woman to having animal characteristics, showing how the anger can dominate individuals and lead to unhuman like actions. He explains another woman as crying out "'Swine! Swine! Swine!' and suddenly she picked up a heavy Newspeak dictionary and flung it at the screen." This triple minor exclamatory sentence shows the outlet of anger that the Two Minutes Hate allows. There is also violence within these two minutes as the adjective 'heavy' and noun 'flung' suggest not only anger is being let out but citizens want to cause damage and harm to the screen and property. The way citizen's act within the two minutes of hate actually reinforces the successfulness of the totalitarian government as they are acting exactly as they wish. It is also another way in which the government achieve what they want without citizens realising what they are doing. Winston claimed the worst thing was "It was impossible to avoid joining in" the adjective 'impossible' supports my previous point as individuals can no longer make decisions by themselves as the government have a control over them, a control that is 'impossible' to shift. "a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge-hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current" the lexical set of verbs related to violence and anger emphasise the feelings of the group and the personification comparison of "people like an electric current" shows how quickly these feelings escalate throughout the group. Events like these allow the totalitarian government within '1984' to ensure their methods of controlling citizens are successful as those who do not participate in the Two Minutes Of Hate are thought of as suspicious and are taken away, sometimes never to be seen again.

In 'Brave New World' pleasure is the main device used for control. It is said "everybody's happy", the indefinite pronoun 'everybody' shows how the government assume that their society is perfect and all citizens to be happy. Citizens partake in consumerism, and are encouraged constantly to be buying the latest thing, with individuals who are not up to date considered "lowly" and "lesser beings". The alliteration of these adjectives will allow it to stick in the minds of citizens and result in them feeling pressured to have the latest products, therefore benefiting the government as they will make money out of them. This being the reason why they are programmed to feel the need to have the latest products, it is all for the benefit of the government. This could possibly be how they can afford to give women such large cash rewards when donating their ovaries. "If one's different, one's bound to be lonely." The third-person singular pronoun of 'one' shows this is referring to all citizens, pressuring them all to follow their ready-set paths from birth and not to differentiate from others. Within 'Brave New World' rather than eliminating the desire for sex as they do in '1984' through criminalisation, it instead has been devalued meaning it acts as a simple form of pleasure and passion. This is

clearly shown by men openly discussing the number of women they have “had” this auxiliary verb shows how relationships are no longer needed within society not even the relationship between mother and child. Woman also publicly wear contraceptives on their belts. This portrays how sex has become a part of everyday life and is not a taboo subject. It is believed in their society that through pleasure, people are more willing to conform.

Within ‘1984’ Newspeak is the official language of Oceania and its purpose is to prevent people from being able to think and express certain feelings, enhancing the control the Party has. It is expected that Newspeak will have replaced Oldspeak around year 2050. Syme works on developing Newspeak and directs the rhetorical question “Don’t you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought?” towards Winston, the fact it is a rhetorical question symbolises that everyone should know the aim of newspeak therefore he does not need an answer. Newspeak is the ultimate form of social control as they are making it impossible for citizens to go against The Party. The adjective ‘narrow’ shows how the government can erase the deeper meaning of language leaving only simple concepts, which in turn will make it impossible for citizens to rebel as they will not have the language to express it. The dramatic reduction of words within Oceania “Every year fewer and fewer words” is highlighted by the repetition of the adjective ‘fewer’, which further develops my point of how language is being reduced to reduce negative thoughts.

To Conclude, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell both have different beliefs regarding the most extreme and effective ways to gain social control. An example of how their ideas differentiate can be seen through Orwell writing of a harsh regime which leads to control whereas Huxley focuses more on how control can be achieved through freedom rather than oppression. Huxley seems to believe that programming citizens before birth and allowing them to live happily is the ultimate form of control, whereas Orwell leans more towards post-birth programming where they prevent citizens from thinking and believing certain things throughout life. Many believe that ‘1984’ is a dystopian novel about technology, however when read thoroughly it is clear to see the forms of technology are weak compared to the psychological methods The Party use. I believe The Party gains control through psychology and not technology. These methods teach citizens how to control their own minds, it is clear that if technology did not exist the party would find another way to control its citizens. To some extent, in today’s world it is encouraged to alter your own thoughts and beliefs as it is in ‘1984’. Through therapies such as psychotherapy and cognitive development that help change your thought patterns, they are often used to treat different psychological disorders. Both Orwell and Huxley’s novels achieve power through the same ideas, but their society’s run almost oppositely. Within ‘Brave New World’ the government keeps its citizens in a state of blissful ignorance, as they try not to draw attention to themselves. One way they achieve this is through the drug ‘soma’ which ensures citizens happiness while inducing them into a psychological state where they are not aware of what is going on. The Citizens in Huxley’s novel believe that taking soma is their own decision as they are largely unaware to the extent of control the government holds over them. However, this makes the government more successful and ensure citizens obedience as they do not believe they are being controlled. The encouragement to take soma can be seen in today’s society in people’s dependence on prescription drugs. Overall, Huxley and Orwell both hold their own beliefs of how a dystopian government would run. With Orwell’s novel focusing more or violent, obvious control and Huxley’s on subtle, unnoticeable features in society. Both are effective as the majority of citizens in both novels comply. The two protagonists being the main feature of both novels represents how people need to stand up for what they believe is right in order to avoid a future like those in ‘1984’ and ‘Brave New World’.