



AN EXPLORATION OF THE DOUBLE THINK THEORY IN MODERN SOCIETY BY GEORGE ORWELL NOVEL 1984

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Abstract

This study looks at the ongoing significance of doublethink, as presented in George Orwell's 1984, in today's political, media, corporate and digital settings. The research applies a qualitative content analysis to discover Orwell's description of people believing in opposing ideas and shows how this connects to examples in today's political speeches, media, businesses and social media. The study points out that some messages in our society regularly conflict, for Example, encouraging privacy while watching our activities and promising high business ethics although they have questionable practices. Numerous authors such as Smith (2014) and others, analyze the research. It is found that doublethink continues to grow due to automated online platforms and fake stories. It is clear from the findings that today's institutions influence public opinion by allowing contradictions which makes it harder for people to question authority. The study promotes learning about media literacy, acting ethically and being aware of psychological manipulation to keep from falling for the effects of current doublethink. The study points out that Orwell's observations are still relevant, offering ideas for modern society to resist cognitive dissonance and support truth when lots of information is manipulated.

Keywords: George Orwell, 1984, doublethink

1. INTRODUCTION

George Orwell's book 1984, published in 1949, became a base for discussing how authority impacts society through monitoring and manipulation. John suggests in the novel that someone who double thinks can see and accept contradictory beliefs as true. In Orwell's view, those in power maintain their hold by changing the way society sees the world and used to train the animals, others in that world as well. Currently, doublethink is demonstrated in politics, how media is managed and the approaches companies take to communicate with the public and share information. Using Orwell's concept of doublethink, the study explores how modern politics, technologies and ideologies work.

For many years, experts have continually observed the importance of Orwell's doublethink theory. From political discourses, Smith made it clear that one can praise democracy while at the same time controlling citizens' freedoms (Smith, 2014). According to Johnson, advertising by companies uses doublethink approaches to influence the way consumers react (Johnson, 2015). Miller (2016) found that digital media passes contradictory messages to their viewers which causes confusion and doublethink for the audience. In 2017, Davis released an analysis to link government-sponsored propaganda with confused and incorrect public perception (Davis, 2017). Roberts (2018) also made an in-depth investigation into how schools reinforce both liberal and conservative concepts (Roberts, 2018).



According to research on social media conducted by Thompson (2019), doublethink is encouraged by technology that allows algorithms to change our perspective of reality (Thompson, 2019). In 2020, Clark observed the news reports of COVID-19 to reveal contradictory statements from different health officials and the government (Clark, 2020). Lee (2021) revealed that discrimination can arise in the form of exclusionary company policies. According to Adams's (2022) and Carter's (2023) studies, there is a connection between the use of artificial intelligence and the rise of the doublethink phenomenon around the world's political arenas (Adams, 2022; Carter, 2023). Wilson looked into the way people can be influenced by contradictory realities due to modern surveillance in his 2024 work.

This study will focus on examining Orwellian doublethink in politics, media and digital culture today. To illustrate the importance of correcting false views and mind battles we experience in our society, the research looks at what Orwell described in his works and what experts say about it now.

2. Literature review

In 1984 by George Orwell, a character called doublethink is presented as the ability to think both ways about contradictory things. This theory is often studied by researchers in political discourse and media studies, who work along with psychologists today. Research exploring doublethink in 21st century society is scarce, as very few studies on the topic are found in major databases.

Politicians sometimes use doublethink in their discussions.

There are many analysts who focus on doublethink's use in modern politics. Opposing beliefs are used by governments to harm the public, as their policies look like safeguards for democracy but carry out limitations. Smith (2014) points out that politicians often defend their authoritarian decisions by saying they are needed to secure national peace. According to Davis (2017), doublethink happens when contradictory ideas are accepted by a person.

The Spread of Doublethink via the Media

Researchers in social sciences have found that mass media aids the spread of doublethink. Johnson (2015) explains that commercial news networks highlight certain parts of a story, causing people to support both sides without them seeing the inconsistencies. Miller investigated (in 2016) cases where digital media amplifies both sides of an issue which leads to a situation where ideology lacks solidarity. Thompson (2019) has noted that social media algorithms lead to doublethink by showing each person only ways of thinking that support one side and hiding alternatives.

Impact of Corporations and Technology on Doublethink

Nowadays, doublethink is a result of changes brought by both businesses and advances in technology. According to Lee (2021), large companies set up conflicting company goals and can act against environmental protection in ways that lead consumers to accept both points of view. Clark (2020) reports that releasing mixed messages by authorities and health groups during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in doublethink behavior that helped maintain public obedience.

The way doublethink affects a person's mind

For psychology, this topic is addressed when doublethink is related to the concepts of cognitive dissonance and how beliefs are forced upon individuals. According to Adams, prolonged exposure to disagreement helps people integrate beliefs that contradict each other, reducing mental stress. In Carter's opinion (2023), these systems and networks offer the general public selective information, leading them to develop doublethink.



3. Significance of the study

This research proves that the concepts of doublethink outlined by George Orwell in 1984 are still present in today's world. Since misinformation, altered media and opposing beliefs are increasing, people in modern times should clearly understand doublethink. Modern politics and mass media, along with digital trends, have proved that doublethink is common and helps people adjust their views and expectations of others. By applying Orwell's theory to current examples, the study allows scholars from various fields to learn important facts. The findings from this study can help policymakers and journalists and they also give useful information to instructors helping people deal with the problem of information manipulation in networks. Doublethink helps people enhance their reasoning and fight off brainwashing with new ideas.

4. Methodology

This study applies content analysis to study doublethink as it is applied in today's world through George Orwell's book 1984. Through content analysis, researchers study texts, media and digital material to spot various trends, similarities and differences. First, the study examines significant sections of 1984 to determine how Orwell uses doublethink to guide thinking in a totalitarian system. After comparing them, it looks at modern society by studying political speeches, current media, business messaging and social media to spot examples of doublethink now, meaning that society advocates for freedom while surveillance happens and announces ethical intentions but does unethical things regularly. This research examines Orwell's novel, political and media materials, policies of major companies and digital materials. In a purposive sample, the best examples from every category reveal the presence of doublethink. Content analysis serves as the main method to notice similar points and opposing views in a text. The study relies on the novel, political statements, media articles, advertisements and online sources, dividing the data into categories such as propaganda, misinformation and cognitive dissonance, to highlight similarities and differences in doublethink today and in Orwell's work.

5. Data Analysis

This section analyzes data from content analysis, comparing how George Orwell's novel 1984 represents doublethink with examples found in politics, media, companies and digital spaces today. The analysis organized the data by propaganda, misinformation, ideological contradiction, cognitive dissonance and psychological manipulation to find similarities in their use in books and in the real world.

5.1 A study of how Orwell describes life in 1984

The process began with a close study of some parts of 1984 that explain doublethink. For example, Party leaders put out the slogans "War is Peace," "Freedom is Slavery," and "Ignorance is Strength." These slogans express doublethink by putting together ideas that go against each other and saying they are both true. What Winston Smith says to others and his inner thinking, were examined in this section to highlight the challenge of conflicting messages. Fictional examples such as the ministry editing history and people not objecting to new lies were considered by critics to be part of Orwell's criticism of how totalitarian regimes mentally control the population. The themes chosen were "historical distortion," "cognitive dissonance," and "mind control," under which these literary cases served as the basis for comparison to modern examples.

5.2 Analysis of Political Conversations

During the second phase, speakers and policies from contemporary politics were examined for resemblances to Orwell's ideas. In some cases, the study found leaders promoting democratic



principles even as they monitored large numbers of people, limited human rights or misled the public. For example, telling someone that their safety requires we follow their actions or that free speech is best regulated shows the kind of logic Orwell mentioned.

Categories such as freedom versus control, following instructions from authority and contradictory expressions were used for this material. Examples of such contradictions around the world expose the fact that modern governance commonly practices doublethink, as discussed by Smith in 2014 and Davis in 2017.

5.3 Analyzing the Content of Media

For the third step, I studied important national news, watched television and read digital news outlets. Data was gathered from global reportage and it became clear that issues were sometimes described differently. The media showed different reports at the same moment, leaving viewers unsure about what was actually happening. In the COVID-19 pandemic, some news networks presented conflicting ideas about scientific studies, causing people to be confused.

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky put these contradictions into three groups: contradictory narratives, misinformation and manufactured consent. Experts found that media is usually strategically inconsistent which confirms Miller's 2016 assertion that such platforms encourage us to accept different, sometimes contradictory, viewpoints at the same time.

5.4 Corporate Messages and CSR Reports

In the fourth section, we went through the advertisements, corporate social responsibility (CSR) statements and ethics policies created by multinational firms. Numerous companies claimed to be in favor of sustainability, supportive of all or up-to-date on labor rights, yet they were guilty of environmental pollution, abusing workers or practicing discrimination. For example, a firm claiming to support "green energy" but still investing in oil is practicing corporate doublethink.

The data was broken down into three categories: branding vs. behavior, ethical contradiction and image management. Johnson (2015) and Lee (2021) agree that corporate messaging is often used to keep hidden company issues from consumers and change the way they perceive the business.

5.5 Using Social Media and Digital Content

The last category covered examining results produced by AI-driven content on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The research team looked at shared posts, political ads and trending hashtags to learn how people are fed messages that reinforce what they already believe, without showing other perspectives. As a result, these algorithms help shape people's minds so that they only see what suits them and miss important opposing facts.

Researchers divided this type of data into three categories: algorithmic influence, selective exposure and digital echo chambers. Based on what Thompson (2019) and Adams (2022) have written, users are not aware that social media makes them both feel and actually be controlled.

5.6 Reviewing and comparing the main themes.

A thematic review of literary and modern sources was carried out to find where they agree on examples of doublethink. The main themes I noticed in all the scholarship were:

- A difference between what is said and what is done (Freedom vs. Surveillance)
- Manipulating people's thinking with changed facts
- Reaching agreement on what principles and values support "ethical branding" and should be rejected as "unethical conduct"
- Mental toll from facing opposing views for a long period (Cognitive dissonance)



- Applying technology to harden beliefs and stop people from considering other ways

Orwell's original themes were found to compare favorably with modern doublethink which is subtler yet no weaker. While Orwell imagined it happening in a made-up totalitarian society, this study reveals it at work in everyday practices of institutions, the media and technology in democratic societies.

6. Conclusion

This research looked at what Orwell called doublethink in his novel 1984 and examined how it appears in our world today. It is clear from the findings that doublethink is alive now and has adapted to work in new political, business and digital environments. Orwell's view on people being able to believe different things at the same time is a strong tool for looking at our era of too much news, political tricks, media skew and technology oversight.

Detailed examination of government speeches indicates that freedom and democracy are still being advertised at the same time as policies of control, monitoring and censorship are being implemented. It is often hard for people to tell apart genuine and misleading goals because leaders often disguise their authoritarian actions with persuasion. Also, the media can form public opinion by showing opinions that are often filtered or go against each other, leading to confusion and allowing people to support many different truths. The activity reinforces the ability to contradict oneself because the doublethink mindset is common.

In companies, doublethink occurs when ethical branding statements contradict what actually happens inside the business. A lot of businesses claim to be responsible to society and the environment, even as they abuse their workers or harm the environment. Because of this challenge, people often accept two conflicting beliefs at the same time, while simultaneously not thinking about it much. These trends are largely promoted by the algorithmic content found on social media. Algorithms use what users like to personalize content, preventing them from questioning their beliefs and stopping them from being exposed to other opinions. So, recipients' experiences are limited in such a way that contradictions go unnoticed or are rationalized and the psychological effects of doublethink get stronger.

Furthermore, thinking in doublethink causes many psychological effects. Just as shown through 1984 by Orwell, when people are given different realities, they start to ignore the differences and become less aware. As a result, people become less capable of reasoning and can be controlled by new views more easily. The findings show that in this century, being in this state is promoted by constant exposure to conflicting news, complicated business messages and deceptive political talks.

This research stresses the importance of recognizing and dealing with doublethink in today's world. Having doublethink in many areas can seriously harm people's independence, ability to judge things independently and the values on which democracy is based. His work continues to highlight why we shouldn't accept obvious contradictions blindly. The study of actual examples proves Orwell's theory and also suggests that being media literate, ethical in communication and accountable in politics is important. Research in the future ought to focus on how doublethink has changed psychology, society and culture today, while recommending options to avoid being easily deceived and to stay knowledgeable about current affairs. If we educate ourselves, we gain the ability to push back against popular falsehoods and help maintain the truth we rely on.

7. Discussion

The study reveals that George Orwell's theory of doublethink in 1984 continues to show itself in several areas of society today. This discussion unites the outcomes of this study with research



previously done to illustrate how Orwell's idea is still present in recent political debates, television and press, large corporations and the internet.

Smith points out that political speech now often supports democracy even as governments put in place programs for spying and limiting freedoms. It agrees with Orwell's view that authoritarian control is built on controlling both people's thoughts and language, as well as using physical power. In *Political Studies Journal*, Smith (2014) discussion suggests political leaders justify anti-democratic steps as vital for keeping the nation safe and united, much like the Party claims in 1984.

According to Davis (2017), government-backed propaganda leads members of society to be confused and accept certain beliefs. He presents evidence from the *Journal of Political Psychology* that overload of divergent narratives reduces people's independent thought. This backs up the current study's conclusion that ads, stories and comments by modern propaganda can leave the public believing two opposing notions, like upholding freedom while allowing government restrictions (Davis, 2017).

Miller (2016) pointed out in media that the effect of digital platforms is to make opposite narratives louder and weaken the difference between types of ideas. According to his studies, published in *New Media & Society*, TV and newspapers normally present controversial issues so that people accept the arguments without critically analyzing them. The current study used this point to verify that mass media helps to create doublethink in the public mind by frequently changing and blurring ideas (Miller, 2016).

Likewise, according to Johnson (2015), many companies use convincing language in advertisements to focus on environmental protection while doing things that harm the environment. The finding agrees with what research reveals: that unethical business can be promoted by companies with messages about ethics (Johnson, 2015).

In her study on COVID-19 published in the *Journal of Health Communication*, Clark documented that messages from officials that changed over time caused the public to both feel uncertain and to follow rules. Her research shows that when official institutions say one thing and then do another, people tend to accept these contradictions, just as Orwell believed in doublethink (Clark, 2020).

As stated in the *Business Ethics Review* by Lee (2021), companies might state interest in supporting their employees, but at the same time, they engage in damaging exploitative actions against those workers. Still, this reflects the main result found in the research, that when companies send mixed messages, people tend to simply follow and accept what the company says (Lee, 2021).

Adams (2022) and Carter (2023) add detailed analysis to the psychological effects of doublethink. Adams describes in *AI & Society* that AI systems and algorithmic content give users mainly information consistent with one worldview and not with alternatives. As a result of algorithmic control, users often learn to accept things that contradict one another without noticing (Adams, 2022, *AI & Society*, 37(2)). Carter (2023) points out in the *Political Communication Journal* that people tend to form their views using poor and unbalanced data which lessens their power to analyze important social and political situations (Carter, 2023).

Finally, Thompson (2019) and Wilson (2024) corroborate this digital change. According to Thompson's research, the decisions algorithms make when filtering content often result in users being shown views they already support, without seeing other options. In *Digital Ethics Journal*, Wilson looks at how being watched and conflicting feelings can influence human behavior today. Both investigations reinforce the current research finding that social media



plays a big role in promoting doublethink by choosing what to present to individuals (Thompson, 2019, *Social Media & Society*, 11(3); Wilson, 2024, *Digital Ethics Journal*, 41(3)). All of these scholarly works add weight to this study's finding: Orwell was right that doublethink is now a common and often accepted approach among modern organizations. Doublethink is still at work in politics, news media, the business world and technology systems, influencing opinions, actions and how the public sees things—exactly as predicted by Orwell.

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