Big Brother and Reality television.

1. the notion of Big Brother surveillance has captured our collective imagination
2. the fascination with Big Brother surveillance is evident in the film 1998 *The Truman Show*
3. Being watched carries advantages
4. it may be financial or 15 minutes of fame

**Why do viewers watch?**

1. Perhaps it is voyeuristic pleasures
2. Other shows such as *Candid Camera* pass off people’s bad handling of circumstances as entertainment
3. in the belief that some individuals watching might relish the embarrassment of others
4. It could be that watching the suffering of others reassures us that our lot is a bit better than theirs
5. or that we can be emphatic individuals in a cold, heartless world

**The Panopticon**

1. The term panopticon was invented by Jeremy Bentham in 18th century
2. in a series of writings on prison reform
3. In the panopticon, inmates are housed in a structure
4. in which their every movement can be continuously observed
5. Bentham thought that such an arrangement would induce prisoners to improve their behaviour

**Connection with Foucault**

1. Foucault uses the panopticon metaphor to mark a shift in the exercise of power
2. to a regime of disciplinary power where the individual exercises power over her or himself
3. It also highlights the role of surveillance in getting individuals to modify their behaviour
4. Foucault, sees the panopticon not just about surveillance but also about how it figures in other key elements of modernity
5. self-policing is a central issue for Foucault.
6. Reality TV shows want the exact opposite of self-monitoring

**TV and Panopticon**

1. Peggy Phelan has argued the Panopticon is a model for television
2. with the television producer as the guard and the individual television viewer as the prisoner who watches in a sequestered and observed solitude

**Reality Television**

1. connection between reality television and the metaphors of Big Brother and the panopticon - especially Foucault’s use of the metaphor
2. Reality television allows ordinary individuals to gaze at others
3. such surveillance is nothing to what is compared with the new technologies
4. Mark Poster calls this surveillance that is everywhere - the superpanopticon

**Foucault and surveillance**

1. Foucault includes other means of monitoring behaviour in addition to being watched
2. such as the records of delinquency of students, charts of patients etc.
3. these inform policies and practices aimed at the studied individuals
4. Hence it would appear that individuals are victims of disciplinary practices imposed on them
5. but it is far from clear that Foucault had a top down model of surveillance and power in mind
6. he contends that the disciplinary power at the heart of the panoptic scheme is an integral part of modern society

**Superpanopticon**

1. Mark Poster, however, highlights the goal of surveillance
2. which is the normalisation of the individual
3. With their personal information on record in various databases, individuals will monitor their own behaviour
4. individuals voluntarily participate in the process
5. Hence we are agents, choosing to participate

Interpretations

1. In contrast to the idea of Big Brother, a top down force that dominates and oppresses
2. Foucault’s discussion of panopticon opens up the possibility of agency
3. his analysis suggests that while disciplinary power makes possible the domain for various subject positions
4. it does not set the position of any individual in a deterministic way
5. Other interpretations of Foucault suggest that he denies the possibility of agency
6. Surveillance is but one part of the story in Foucault’s discussion of the panopticon
7. The connection between the metaphor of Big Brother and Foucault’s use of the panopticon suggested by some critics overlooks the relation between the ideas of the individual and power

References