

Baudrillard and social media

Baudrillard

1. **Baudrillard** – French intellectual post-modern critic
2. Extreme proponent of modernity
3. Our world is no longer real but a simulation of the real

Hyperreality

1. The signs, images and **models that circulate**, according to Baudrillard, have become detached from the actual things they are about.
2. Our society has replaced all reality with symbols and signs
3. The world is composed of **simulations of reality**

Reality

1. Baudrillard would argue that we **have lost touch** with reality
2. Instead we are **hooked into a simulation** of reality which is especially poignant for social media
3. The **new reality supplants** the real thing

Simulacra

1. **Simulacra** is where the copies of things that have **become so detached** from the original
2. Or where the **original didn't exist** in the first place

Phases of representation

1. Baudrillard talks about phases of representation
2. **Phase 1:** Where the image is a **good** reflection of reality
3. **Phase 2:** The images **masks a profound** reality
 - Perversion of reality. An untrue copy
4. **Phase 3:** The image masks the **absence of** a profound reality
 - The image pretends to represent a faithful copy but does not represent anything close to the original.
5. **Phase 4:** The **image is disconnected** from reality – this is order of simulation rather than reality

Collapse of boundaries

1. The saturation of signs leads **to the collapse of all boundaries** between meaning, and the media
2. Between what is **real and what is not real**

Facebook and hyperreality

1. **Baudrillard** suggested that individuals don't communicate directly with one another, but interact **with a hyperreal space**
2. We are **overwhelmed by the symbols** of our communication
3. And **we lose control** over the interpretations of those symbols

Social selves

1. There are **streams of updates** and information which entertain, fascinate and overwhelm us on social media. They become our reality and lose **move to the last phase** where there is any connection with reality

Shared spaces

1. Something like Facebook enables communication but also creates **problems for managing online identities**
2. This is a result of the **complex interconnections** of the participations and expansion into more of our personal lives, So the number of images and representations of ourselves, we begin to lose control over

Digital simulations

1. Instead of **virtual reality** we have **real virtually**, reality is perceived **through symbols** which are mediated
2. Bell – argues that instead of the symbols replacing the real, that there is **convergence of the real and virtual**
3. Culture is virtual (**mediated by symbols**) but also **real** – it is our reality and our experience

Social media

1. When this first became part of our lives it was easy to distinguish between our actual, real world persona and the online one. Now we are at social media saturation
2. Do you Instagram your lives – is the image more important than the real.

Interactions

1. The way that people act towards us in the real world is influenced and determined by their interactions with our simulacrum in the virtual world.
2. Do we put forward a particular version of our self and lives?

The Artefact After the Fact

1. Increasingly, it seems that recording our experiences on our phones is becoming more important than actually being there and experiencing things in real life.
2. The real world, it seems, is preceded by thinking about how can we project this through social media channels.
3. People are increasingly separated from their own experience.

Live experiences

1. The live experience is mediated through our screens – we are one step removed from our experiences.

Instagram and Twitter

1. Technological innovation has led to a world where we can interact with people that we would most likely never meet if left to chance.
2. Instagram and Twitter are less restricted to adding established friends than is Facebook.
3. Instagram incites a mentally constructed image of a person based on their photo cache. The representations on a phone screen can become our reality

Space and time

1. Our relations of space and time are radically reconfigured in relation to simulacra in social media.
2. Castells – suggested there was growing tension between globalization and individualization but our global highways seem saturated with personal stories and voices.
3. Thus, some argue that it is less about simulacra than about the convergence or co-existence of the real and the virtual.

Onscreen lives

1. Sherry Turkle suggested that people consist on screen, of just symbols interacting with other symbols.
2. She suggested that the online world does allow us to play at constructing our personalities.
3. Freedom from online constraints were argued to enable us to become particularly fluid

Identity

1. Rather than a unified individual with a stable inner core and physically located body, the online selves are incoherent, multiply located and always shifting.

The Internet

1. Everything on the internet is an image on a screen referring to another image on a screen and so on – i.e. simulacra.

Celebrities

1. Celebrities are the ultimate media creation and embody the notion of simulacra. They are manufactured using a range of different media and appear as themselves in chat shows, social media, adverts etc. Making an interchangeable array of simulations which rarely refer to any reality outside of themselves.

Criticisms of Baudrillard

1. So instead of losing control, some would argue that we still know reality - And that maybe they exist in a symbiotic relationship
2. We also know whether we are real or online – so some argue that we have awareness and therefore the simulacra lose their potency.