

Harry Potter and the Functions of Popular Culture

Dustin Kidd

“For Sociology really to be a science of things, the generality of phenomena must be taken as the criterion of their normality.” (Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* 104)

Heavy metal music has been described as a threat to “our” children and rap is touted as a threat to "our" society (Binder). Music videos provide a framework that justifies rape and other forms of sexual violence (Jhally). The reproduction of artwork in mass-produced books has destroyed the special "aura" of art (Benjamin), and finally, Horkheimer and Adorno have asserted that television has made cultural consumers passive (28). Sociological analyses have produced a lengthy list of critiques of popular culture such that we must wonder why we bother with popular culture at all. What could be more pathological than a social element that threatens a society and its members while also reducing the good life to a commodity and reducing persons to consumers?

Works Cited

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical
Reproduction." *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt, Trans. Harry Zohn.
New York: Schocken Books, 1968. 172-193. Print.

Binder, Amy. "Constructing Racial Rhetoric: Media Depictions of Harm in
Rap and Heavy Metal." *American Sociological Review* 58 (1993): 753-
67. ProQuest Research Library. Web. 25 Jun. 2007.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." *Power
and Ideology in Education*. Eds. Jerome Karabel and A. H. Halsey.
New York: Oxford UP, 1977. 487-511. Print.

Durkheim, Emile. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. Ed. George Simpson, Trans.
John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. New York: Free Press, 1951.
Print.

_____. *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Ed. Steven Lukes, Trans. W. D.
Halls. New York: Free Press, 1982. Print.

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New
York: Herder and Herder, 1992. Print.

Jhally, Sut. "Dreamworlds 2". Media Education Foundation, 1995. DVD