

Sports and Entertainment

In this chapter, you will learn about:

- sport as a social phenomenon
- how sports and social institutions interact
- how entertainment influences the culture
- effects of the media on U.S. society

In the summer of 2000, Texas suffered an ongoing drought and severe water shortage resulting in a \$600 million loss to farmers and ranchers. On the evening news, trucks were shown carrying water to the blighted region. One might assume that the water was meant for failing crops. Instead, it was being trucked in to water the local high school football field!

Such an example, as well as the extent of sports coverage in newspapers and television, demonstrates the role sports play in Western culture. Are other cultures equally focused on sports? How does the culture influence sports, and how do sports influence the culture?

People once entertained themselves by playing board games or reading books. Today the choice of entertainment is staggering. How has this change affected society? This chapter will examine the roles of sports and entertainment in our lives.

Sports and Society

People often think of sport as simply a diversion—a form of recreation apart from their “real” lives. Sociologists see sport as a sociocultural phenomenon with both positive and negative implications.

What Is Sport?

Sport is a game, contest, or other pastime requiring skill and physical exercise. Sociologists defining sport begin with the concept of play. Animals, children, and adults all naturally engage in play. People play football or soccer. They play against an opponent in tennis and against the course in golf.

Play has been said to serve a number of functions:

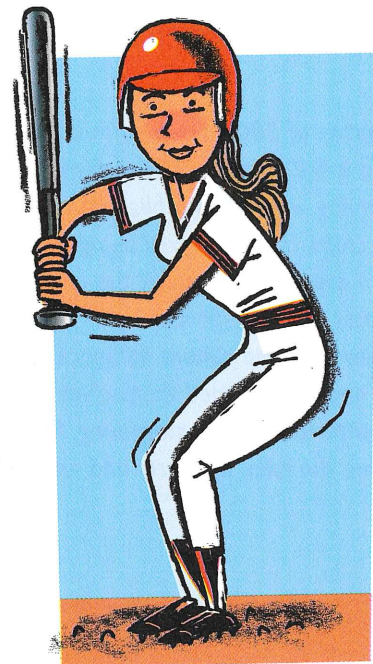
- * Discharge of excess energy.
- * Safe outlet for harmful impulses.
- * Wish-fulfillment.
- * Training for other functions in life.
- * Satisfaction of an innate urge to dominate.

These ideas assume that play is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. In 1938, sociologist Johan Huizinga defined play differently. He suggested that play is “a voluntary activity or occupation executed within fixed limits of time and place according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is ‘different’ from ‘ordinary life.’”

Notice that Huizinga claims **three** conditions are necessary for play:

1. It is voluntary.
2. It occurs at certain times and in certain places.
3. Participants freely accept the rules and expect to enjoy it for itself and for the feelings they get from it.

Huizinga believed that play was a necessary element in sport. When games are compulsory, such as those in which students are expected to engage in school, at least one of these three conditions is missing—the freedom to participate or not. The contempt some students feel for sport may be due to the loss of the play element during school.



Thinking About Sport

There are many approaches to describing what makes an activity a sport. Games of chance and games such as chess, though they can be competitions, do not require

physical activity. They are usually not included.

As the chart below shows, sports have been defined by type, as contests, and according to motives.

What is Sport?	
Ways of Defining Sport	Types and Examples
Types of Sport	<p>Competitive: track, football.</p> <p>Noncompetitive: recreational swimming, running.</p> <p>Predatory: hunting, fishing.</p>
Sport as Contest	<p>Direct Competition: two individuals or teams engage each other physically (baseball, soccer, basketball).</p> <p>Indirect Competition: participants take turns at the same skill (diving, bowling).</p> <p>Competition against a Standard: figure skating, gymnastics.</p>
Motives in Sport (may be competitive or noncompetitive—individual sports may fall in different categories)	<p>Evidence of Personal or Team Skill and Superiority: basketball, diving, auto racing.</p> <p>Combat/Personal Contact: boxing, wrestling, fencing.</p> <p>Conquest of Nature: mountaineering, cycling, golf.</p> <p>Physical High/Mastery of Self: skiing, mountain climbing.</p> <p>Expression of Ideas/Feelings: gymnastics, eurythmics, dance (dance was a recognized sport in early cultures).</p>

FoxTrot

by Bill Amend



▲
Conquest of Nature?

Did You Know?



History of Sport

The first sports may have been playful exhibits of physical skills related to survival activities such as fishing or hunting.

2697 B.C.: Chinese emperor Huang-ti is said to have invented a form of soccer played with a leather ball stuffed with cork and hair.

c. 1500 B.C.: The ancient Minoans engaged in a gymnastic type of “bull dancing” in which athletes leapt over bulls. It probably was part of a religious ceremony.

750 B.C.: The ancient Greek poet Homer wrote that Odysseus, hero of the *Odyssey*, participated in foot racing, archery, discus throwing, chariot racing, and wrestling.

776 B.C.: The first Olympic Games may have had a religious origin. Competitors ran around a track decorated with the signs of the zodiac. This mimicked the movement of the sun and moon across the heavens.

1st Century A.D.: Roman athletes joined together in guilds that were supported by the state. They had training facilities, trainers, and veterinarians for their horses.

Physical fitness was important to Roman citizens. Both men and women worked with weights and did gymnastics; the women displayed their skills in intricate dancing and movement with small balls.

Middle Ages: Some sports, such as early rugby, were “played” by thousands of people at a time and with few rules. People often took the opportunity during these games to take revenge on others. Such group “games” are played in some developing countries today.

Sport Around the World

Relationships can be seen between the type of culture in a country and the popularity and development of specific sports. For example:

* In baseball, although it is the team that wins or loses, each player remains in a particular position and has a specific role to play. In Japan, baseball mirrors

state values of order and harmony. Emphasis is placed on team loyalty and cooperation.

* Soccer is the most popular sport in the world. The “pregame” show at a soccer match among the Zulus in South Africa includes incantations and ritual incisions done on the players by traditional religious healers.

In the 1200s, the French had a game similar to hockey. In the 1400s, tennis became popular in England. Track and field competitions were held in 1510. Mary, Queen of Scots, popularized the game of golf during her reign.

19th Century: The organization and institutionalization of many sports increased.

- * The first modern track and field meet was held in England in 1825.
- * One of the earliest intercollegiate competitions was a boat race in England in 1829.
- * Baseball was first commonly played in the United States in 1845 and professionally in 1869.
- * Football, a cross between rugby and soccer, was first played between Princeton and Rutgers universities in 1869. College football dominated the sport for many years before professional football became popular.

- * Basketball was invented in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1891.
- * In 1896, the ancient Olympian Games were revived as the Olympic Games. Achievements were recorded with tape measures, stop watches, and photographs.

20th Century: In industrial countries, sport became a multimillion-dollar industry and an established social institution.

International competition resulted in recognized rules, formal sports organizations, and specialization of players.

Technological improvements in equipment and training resulted in many physical records being broken and in games becoming increasingly complex.

- * Emphasis on competition is much greater in Western cultures than in Eastern and indigenous cultures, where personal *development* has a higher cultural value than personal *achievement*.
- * In some cultures, such as the Q'ero in Peru, competition has a spiritual component. It becomes the winner's responsibility to teach the opponent how he or she did it.

In developing countries today, there is low participation in highly competitive sports because of differences in values and resources as well as cultural patterns. As industrialization occurs, a society tends to move away from traditional sports and folk-games and adopt modern sports.

Sport in the United States

Sport is a social institution in that it has values and generates distinctive modes of social interaction. Sports both reflect the values and social stratification of the larger society and influence other social institutions, such as the economy and politics.

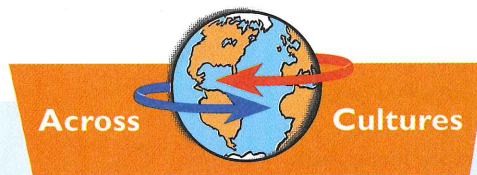
Sports and Cultural Values

Among sociological views of how sport relates to society and culture are these **three**.

1. Reflection Thesis: Sport *reflects* the values and social stratification of the larger society. Sports are said to “prepare one for life.” In the United States,

that is a life of competition, thought of as essential for personal achievement. The emphasis on competition and “winning” in U.S. sports *reflects* the role of competition in the economic rise of the country and the desire for power and control over nature.

EXAMPLE: Many high school athletic coaches embody a “work ethic” and promote the values of hard work, sacrifice, and discipline necessary to achieve mastery, domination, control, and eventual victory. The coach values power and control over both the team and opponents. Players become socialized into this way of thinking, reinforcing lessons about what adult behavior



University Sports

In the United States, collegiate sport is a big business. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) projected revenues of over \$350 million for 2000–2001, with 78 percent of that coming from television. Coaches at large universities often earn more than the university president.

By contrast, sports at universities in Great Britain, Australia, Germany, Japan, and many other countries are organized by clubs. Each university club sends a representative to a governing council where

competitions with other universities or community teams are arranged. Universities have no athletic departments and no full-time athletic directors. Some other differences include:

- * Games are not televised.
- * Spectators pay no admission fees.
- * Athletes do not see participation as a step toward playing professional sports.
- * Competition is available at several different levels of ability.
- * Players do not receive athletic scholarships to school.
- * Coaches are often volunteers.

entails. As in the world after school, there can be tension between these values and the values of cooperation and fair play.

2. Reinforcement Thesis: Sport *reinforces* the values and social stratification of society. The sports analogies we use in common speech are indicators of the degree to which we use sport to support our values.

EXAMPLES: Employers emphasize teamwork. Consultants coach employees. People write winning proposals, reach a goal, or come up with a successful game plan. Someone scores when he or she reaches a personal goal. (Interestingly, we rarely use that word to describe the accomplishment of a group's goal.)

School sports *reinforce* the value of competition for young people. Sociologists have studied the way in which too much emphasis on competition can cause students to lose sight of such values as personal growth, freedom, creativity, love, reason, and justice. Can you think of times when the values of fair play and sportsmanship were sacrificed for the sake of "winning"?

3. Resistance Thesis: Sport *resists* the values and social stratification of society. This conflict view emphasizes the ways in which sports participants are at odds with the norms of society.

EXAMPLES: The ongoing arguments between athletes and their employers are not just about how rich an athlete can get. They also express discontent with a power structure that does not put

the athlete at the very top. Sport has also provided an arena for the protest of gender and race inequality. As athletes were able to break these barriers, they assisted a growing movement in society to reject discriminatory norms.

Sociologist William A. Sadler warns that "we should not make the mistake of equating meeting a challenge with competition." Sadler points out that many sports can challenge participants to improve their abilities and skills and provide healthful exercise and change from the workaday world without an excessive emphasis on competition and winning.

Athletes as Role Models

According to Gallup polls taken in the late 1990s, only one athlete, Michael Jordan, was among the top ten most admired people. These polls reflected the views of adults. If you were to poll your classmates, would athletes appear near the top of their list?



Should athletes be held accountable as role models? Society honors athletes for their athletic skill, not for their honorable behavior. But it's not "just sports." When athletes are involved in drugs, gambling, or violence, or when they exhibit racist behavior, parents are advised to discuss such behavior openly with their children and to reinforce social norms that condemn it. Such advice comes from educators and other leaders who recognize the influence of heroes on the moral development of children.

Sports and Social Class

In the original Olympian Games, participation in some sports was related to wealth and status. Equestrian sports required that participants be wealthy enough to keep horses. Athletes from families with wealth had the time to train and access to training facilities. Poorer people were limited by their ability to find sponsors and access to training facilities. The same is true today.

EXAMPLES:

- * Sports such as polo and yachting are considered "elite," engaged in and watched by people with wealth and high status.
- * Class distinctions are maintained among spectators, with the wealthy or powerful watching from skyboxes or courtside seats.
- * The cost of attending both collegiate and professional games has risen sharply. Taxpayers who subsidize the building of sports arenas often cannot afford to attend events at those facilities.
- * Major colleges and universities generate huge amounts of revenue from sports,

but athletes are prevented by NCAA rules from benefiting monetarily from playing. Conflict theorists suggest that this is slave labor.

- * The perception that sports provide opportunities to the disadvantaged with sufficient skill is misleading. For example, according to NCAA data, only .03 percent of male and .02 percent of female high school basketball players become professionals. Less than 1 percent of high school football players eventually play pro ball.
- * Although more than half of the players in Division I collegiate basketball are African American, only one percent of the schools has a black athletic director and only 17.6 percent have black coaches. Professional team ownership exhibits the same imbalance.

Sport and the Economy

In the United States alone, sports were a \$50 billion annual industry by the late 1980s. Professional athletes have become business men and women. They have ownership in clothing lines and sporting equipment. Product endorsements of everything from cereals to automobiles earn them millions. Michael Jordan earned \$45 million in endorsements in 1998 (his salary was \$34 million). Professional golfer Tiger Woods earned \$28 million in endorsements that same year.

In 1989, the U.S. sporting goods industry did over \$40 billion in business. Corporations and small businesses sponsor teams, stadiums, and the Olympics.

Clothing and equipment tied to professional teams and athletes are big sellers. In addition, there is a huge underground economy in gambling on sporting events.

Business people commission surveys to pinpoint the type and brands of food and beverages consumed while watching sporting events on television. Correlations of product to type of sporting event produce data that help marketers decide how to promote products and which sporting events to sponsor.

Industries and businesses that benefit from sports include:

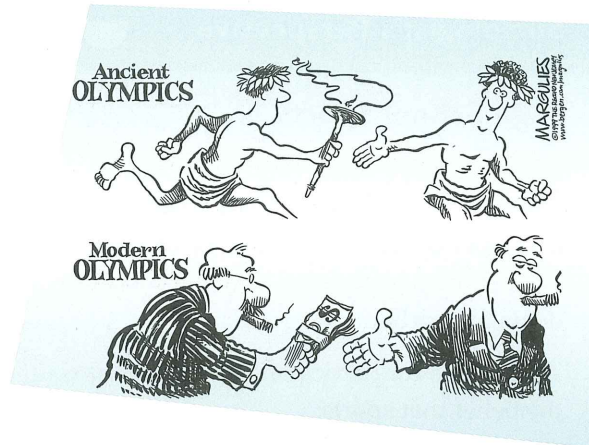
- * Tourism: airlines, hotels, restaurants.
- * Construction: sports facilities.
- * Sporting-goods.
- * Health clubs.
- * Souvenirs and collectibles.
- * Food concessions.
- * Advertising.
- * Entertainment.
- * Promotion.
- * Publishing.

Professionals specializing in sports include:

- * Lawyers.
- * Business managers.
- * Agents.
- * Sports physicians.
- * Sports psychologists.
- * Media personalities.

Often, when very large amounts of money are involved, some are tempted to violate norms. At the Olympics, fair play and sportsmanship are held up as ideals. However, the economic and social benefits

to a city hosting an Olympics led to corruption in the late 20th century. It became almost common practice for officials of contending locales to bribe members of the Olympic Organizing Committee in an attempt to have the games awarded to their city or country.



Sports and Politics

Local and state governments have become involved in the business of sport because of the economic advantages big sports can bring to their area. Sometimes cities subsidize sports facilities in an attempt to attract teams. They may also offer such enticements as lowered taxes. As with other government activity, heated debate often accompanies such efforts. The people of the Phoenix metropolitan area paid \$355 million for a baseball stadium and \$130 million for the team's admission into major league baseball. Many people felt this money could have been used in better ways to benefit the area. In addition, the city condemned property to build a parking lot for the stadium,

and this seemed unfair to those whose property was taken as well as to others who did not support the city's actions.

Politicians like to be associated with events that draw large crowds. You have probably noticed that presidents, governors,

and mayors are often photographed at sporting events and may phone winners during prime-time post-game television shows. Appearing to be a "good sport" may help enhance a political candidate's image.

Sociologist's Perspective



High School Sports

In his book *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies*, sociologist Jay J. Coakley lists a number of arguments in favor of and against the participation of high school students in sports.

Arguments **for** participation are based on the belief that sports:

- * Involve students in school activities and increase interest in academic activities.
- * Build responsibility, orient students toward achievement, and promote teamwork skills needed for participation in adult society.
- * Encourage physical fitness and interest in physical activity in all students in the school.
- * Generate spirit and unity that give substance to the school.
- * Promote parental, alumni, and community support for all school programs.
- * Give students opportunities to develop and display skills in activities valued by society.

Arguments **against** participation claim that sports:

- * Distract students from academic activities.
- * Encourage a focus on physical prowess rather than on other mental and human qualities.
- * Focus on "macho" values no longer appropriate in society.
- * Force most students into the role of spectator.
- * Cause too many serious injuries and developmental problems for participants.
- * Create a superficial spirit based on competition rather than educational goals.
- * Deprive educational programs of resources, facilities, staff, and community support.
- * Apply inappropriate pressure to student athletes.

Did You Know?



Women and the Olympics

When the Olympic Games were reestablished in 1896, women did not participate. Twelve women were permitted to compete in 1904—in golf and tennis. Female participation has increased ever since, but for over 30 years, Pierre de Coubertin, the first president of the modern Olympics, expressed the following views:

1901—“The role of women [is] to applaud the male victor as a means of reward.”

1902—Women’s sport “could well be contrary to the Laws of Nature.”

1908—Women’s tobogganing is “the most unaesthetic sight human eyes could contemplate.”

1912—“The Olympic Games should be reserved for men.”

1924—“Women should be expelled from the games.”

1934—“Contact with female athletes would be bad for [male athletes].”

1935—“At the Olympic Games [women’s] primary role should be, as in ancient tournaments, to crown the [male] victors with laurels.”



Women and Sports

Although women in many cultures are known to have participated in sports throughout history, social customs during the 19th and the early 20th centuries

excluded women from mainstream sports. Reasons given stemmed from cultural concerns that athletics were “unseemly for the fairer sex” or would damage women’s ability to bear children.

Among the reasons given for continued underrepresentation of women in sports are these **three**:

1. Lingering prejudices and stereotypes.
2. Lack of qualified women to coach and administer athletic programs.
3. Failure of women to apply for leadership positions.

Some also cite a lack of female role models and the responsibilities of childbearing as elements in society that discourage women from participating in sports.

But several factors have increased the participation of women in sports in recent years:

- * The women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s.
- * Increased societal emphasis on health and physical fitness.
- * Legislation that mandates equal funding for women's and men's programs at publicly funded schools.
- * Increasing numbers of female role models in sport. The success of women's soccer and softball at the international level has done much to promote participation in local teams in the United States.

Despite the popularity of some women's sports, inequalities still exist:

- * Boys and girls are offered different play experiences at an early age.
- * Girls receive less encouragement from parents to participate in sports.
- * A 1998 report found that athletic departments spend only one-third or less of their budgets on women's teams.

- * Fewer sports and athletic scholarships are available to women.
- * Females are allotted fewer hours to practice in sports facilities and are given shorter playing seasons than males.
- * Professional female athletes receive lower pay and less prize money than males in the same sports.
- * There is much less media coverage of women's sports than men's sports.

Violence in Sports

Sociologists point out that while sport can provide an outlet for aggressive tendencies, it can also serve to undermine social norms that seek to control aggression. Actions that are deviant in normal society are accepted and even encouraged in many sports.

EXAMPLES: Ramming your 300-pound body into another person and knocking him to the ground, rendering someone unconscious, or driving your car at 195 miles per hour are all illegal. In sports, they are not only legal, but admirable. They are within the rules of the sport.

Society is concerned, however, when violence in sport is excessive. In a 19th-century case, a player was accused of manslaughter in the death of another player. The British judge instructed the jury that no rules or practices of a game can make legal something that is otherwise illegal.

Are we losing sight of this principle? Recently, some cases of blatant violence have not been prosecuted or have been dismissed. And observers note that violent behavior is on the rise among spectators, even among parents at their children's sporting events. What do you think?

Sports and the Media

Television has brought about changes that make sports more “salable”:

- * Baseball, once played mainly in the afternoon, is now played largely at night to attract a larger television audience.
- * In basketball, the 3-point basket and the 20-second rule have been added to speed up the game.
- * In football, the number of time-outs has been increased to allow for commercials.

- * End-of-season tournaments run for several weeks to attract weekend viewers.
- * In 1994, the Olympic Games were rescheduled so that they fell during “sweeps” month (when viewer surveys are taken to determine advertising rates).

On a positive note, the availability of sports on television and cable has increased public awareness of teams from different countries and of unfamiliar sports.

Sociological Perspectives on Sport	
Functionalist Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sports reinforce the social norms and values of the culture. * Young people learn the consequences of obeying or breaking rules. * Participation encourages moral judgments. * Hierarchies within sports reinforce hierarchies within the larger society. * Participation promotes healthy development of the body and mind. * Sports provide an outlet for relieving tension in a socially acceptable way for both participants and spectators. * Sports unite communities and provide opportunities to interact with other nations.
Conflict Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * An individual's contribution to “winning” determines his or her status. * Groups with control over sporting activities benefit at the expense of players and spectators. * Sports discriminate against minorities and women. * The health of athletes is secondary to profit. * Sports reflect patterns of inequality in society. Some are so expensive to participate in or to watch that they exclude all but the wealthy. * Because those in control determine the reigning values and rules, sports reinforce the dominance of one class over another. * Sports legitimize violence. * Sports divert attention from issues in the “real” world.
Interactionist Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Sports contribute to teamwork and friendships. * Sports encourage parent-child interaction and involvement. * Sports help define relationships and role performance. * Sport is a social world with meaningful symbols. * Sports encourage unity among people in a particular geographical or social environment.

Entertainment and Society

Entertainment is defined as something that amuses, pleases, or diverts. It encompasses a wide variety of activities and experiences, from playing a game to reading a book, from attending a play to listening to music.

Some popular forms of entertainment—such as movies, television, music, and printed materials—are also forms of mass communication, commonly known as **mass media**. Each form of entertainment interacts significantly with society.

During early human history, people probably entertained one another by telling stories around the campfire. Today, entertainment includes, but isn't limited to:

- * Games—bingo, card games, board games, arcade games, electronic games.
- * Music—from opera to rap.
- * Live performances—theater, dance, pantomime.
- * Outdoor recreation—hiking, fishing, sailing, hunting, bird watching.
- * Participation in and watching sports.
- * Celebrations, festivals, circuses.
- * Reading.
- * Radio.
- * Motion pictures.
- * Television.
- * Recreational use of the computer.
- * Amusement parks.

Historical Background

Other than sports, the entertainment forms that most influence society are those grouped as media—forms of mass communication. Communication began with the development of speech and language. Writing developed around 2400 B.C., but the printing press was not invented until A.D. 1450.

In the 1830s, newspapers were first published. These contained local, national, and foreign news as well as human-interest stories. In the early 1900s, radios and motion pictures were introduced, and by the 1920s the number of radios owned by private citizens had jumped from 60,000 to 10 million. The first movie with sound was released in 1927. The 1940s saw the invention of the television, and in the 1950s the computer revolution began.

Who Controls the Airwaves?

Radio and television are not the same the world over. In some countries, they are completely controlled by the government. In others, some stations are government stations and others are financed by private investments or the public. In Great Britain and Canada, for example, government stations were begun in an effort to prevent commercialization from influencing programming.

In contrast, in the United States almost all radio and television stations are commercial enterprises. Advertising supports most of

the programs that appear on TV. Public television and National Public Radio, however, are supported by donations from private individuals, corporations, and foundations.

Trends

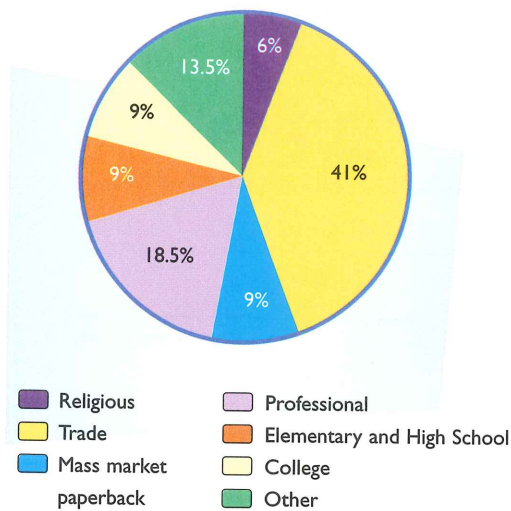
The concept of “daily news” did not exist before the era of rapid mass communication. Today, newspapers and the news of the day on radio and TV are sometimes called **edutainment**. This term reflects their dual functions of educating and entertaining.

The distinction has further blurred with the introduction of talk shows on radio and television, newsmagazines, tabloid newspapers and TV, “reality” programming, and docudramas. U.S. tastes in entertainment change over time.

With each new invention—motion pictures, television, computers—doomsayers insist that books and other print materials will become extinct. Their worries have not been borne out.

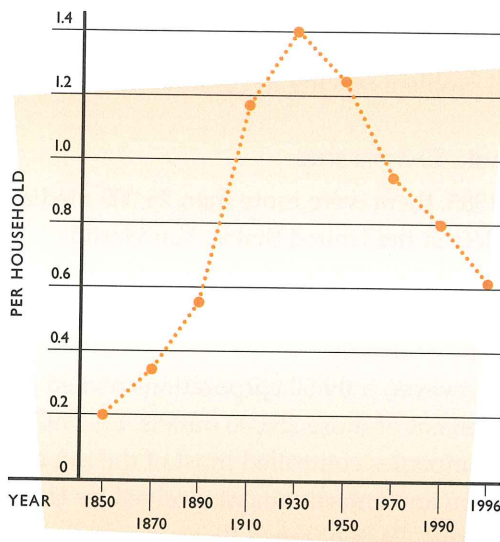
- * In 1995, more than 2 billion books were sold in the United States. Consumers spent over \$25 billion on them. The chart at upper right shows approximately how those books break down.
- * The number of U.S. magazines rose from about 1,000 during the Civil War to 10,000 in the 1990s. More than 500 new magazines were started in 1996 alone. Twenty percent of those dealt with sports.

Book Sales



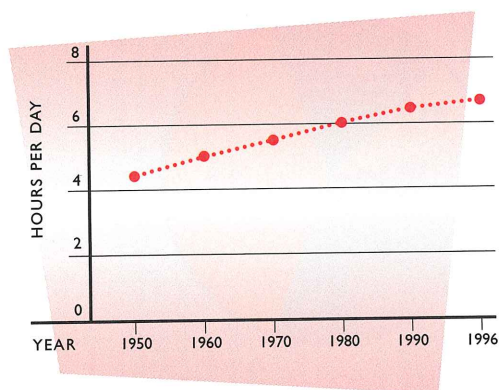
Source: Veronis Suhler Media Merchant Bank

Daily Newspaper Subscriptions



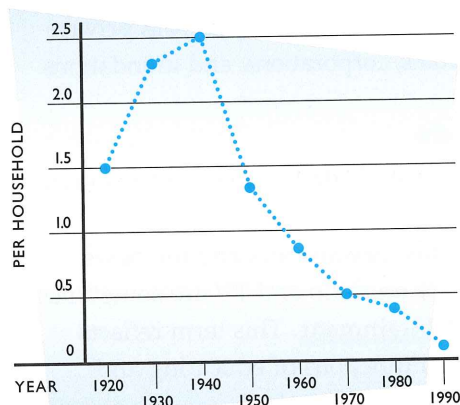
Source: DeFleur/Dennis, *Understanding Mass Communication*.

TV Viewing Habits



Source: DeFleur/Dennis, *Understanding Mass Communication*.

Weekly Attendance at the Movies



Source: DeFleur/Dennis, *Understanding Mass Communication*.

The Media in the United States

Everybody's talking about the effects of the media on U.S. society. Questions are being asked about media ownership, media and the economy, and media and politics. Researchers are also involved in investigating how the media influence socialization and problem solving in communities.

Media Ownership

In 1983, there were more than 25,000 media outlets in the United States. You would think that would be more than enough to provide diverse viewpoints and a balanced picture of society.

However, only 50 corporations owned 80 percent of those 25,000 outlets. By 1997, 10 companies controlled most of the information and entertainment received by U.S. residents. Each of those 10 companies owns stock in one or more of the others.

Antitrust and monopoly laws have been successful in preventing monopolies on news and broadcast journalism in local markets. But nationwide, they have failed to prevent monopolistic control of the media. Huge international conglomerates own the major TV stations, satellites, newspaper and book publishing companies, movie studios, and Internet access providers. Should you be worried about the free flow of ideas in society?

Ben Bagdikian, media critic and former Dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley, thinks you should. In 1983, he wrote *The Media Monopoly* to call attention to the consolidation of media ownership and the effects of advertising on programming. This classic book is now in its fifth edition.

In a 1999 interview, Bagdikian said there was no diversity of viewpoints in programming. "We have commercial broadcasting which is so uniform in content, that if you

brought in someone from Outer Mongolia and said we're gonna show you all four networks, or we're gonna show you cable, tell us the difference between them, I think they would be hard put to do it." He said that in an effort to make money on news programs, the media offer "that horrid word and horrid idea, *infotainment*, which is supposed to be information that's entertaining, but it's neither good information nor good entertainment." Would you agree with Bagdikian?

Media, Advertising, and the Economy

Movies, radio, television, newspapers, and magazines have one thing in common that makes them desirable to investors: the income from advertising. According to *Advertising Age*, in 1997 advertisers spent over \$175 billion on media ads. Product familiarity and subsequent sales of goods and services make that expenditure worthwhile to the advertisers. Whole businesses have grown from their needs.

Sociological Perspectives on Mass Media	
Functionalist Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The media coordinate, correlate, and disseminate information and ideas valuable to the culture. * The media serve as powerful agents of socialization, communicating cultural norms and values. * The media rapidly communicate information internationally. * The media provide opportunities for relaxation and entertainment. * The media help reduce stress and thus reduce social conflict.
Conflict Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The media maintain the status quo and express the values of the ruling class. * The media view of violence legitimizes law and order and makes dissenters appear as criminals. * The media develop consumers for capitalist goods. * The media disseminate information that benefits corporations and those who own and control the media. * Some forms of the media are available only to an elite class. * The media encourage passivity and reinforce stereotypes.
Interactionist Perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The media familiarize people with societal symbols, create symbols, and communicate values worldwide. * The media provide access to the ideas and agendas of politicians and others in power. * The media promote commercial products through advertising.



Violence in the Media

For many years, researchers have conducted studies on the effects of media violence on children. Media representatives insist that children view media violence in the same way they view fairy tales. They say the children know it isn't real. Others argue, if the media don't influence people, why do so many businesses advertise in those media?

Some causes of concern include:

- * Music lyrics that advocate violence against police and portray women as objects of violence.
- * Movies that show violent, bloody scenes, sometimes graphically reenacting actual crimes.
- * Violent video games that employ the same strategies the army uses to break down a soldier's aversion to shoot. One officer said, "Pilots train on flight simulators, drivers on driving simulators, and now we have our children on murder simulators."
- * Perpetrators of violence on TV shows who go unpunished. This happens in

73 percent of all violent scenes. Only 5 percent of children's programs show long-term consequences of violence.

- * Children's cartoons, which contain an average of 32 violent acts per hour.

If the media are agents of socialization, what are they teaching children? Some of the research findings indicate that:

- * By the time children leave elementary school, they have seen 8,000 killings and 100,000 other violent acts portrayed on television. By the age of 18, the typical U.S. child will have witnessed 40,000 killings and 200,000 acts of violence on television.
- * Children not only become **desensitized** to violence (meaning they learn to react to it unemotionally), but also are more likely to act aggressively after viewing violent acts.
- * Adults are not immune to desensitization. Researchers in one study had to train their research assistants to identify acts of aggression, such as hitting and kicking another person. The assistants didn't recognize that such acts were aggressive!

Many companies do nothing but compile demographic data for others to use in making their advertising decisions. Advertising influences the media in many ways.

- * In new magazines appearing during 1996, advertising took up more than one-fourth of the pages.
- * Commercials make up a third of many hour-long television shows.
- * Many web sites make money only through advertisers.
- * Televised sporting events are planned to allow commercials.
- * Politicians wait to give speeches until the times most citizens are viewing TV.
- * The content of radio and television programming is influenced by what advertisers will or will not accept.

The Media and Politics

Imagine toothless George Washington or skinny Abraham Lincoln in one of today's televised campaign debates. Would either man win election? To what extent does a candidate's media presence—his or her appearance or the ability to project personality and charisma to a camera—influence voters?

The immediacy of media coverage gives us instant access to political candidates. This should make voter choices more informed than they were in the past. And yet, today's political activities are carefully staged theatrical events. Most of what people see or hear consists of "sound bites" designed to fit media formats. Political ads are designed to respond to what polls suggest voters want to hear.

Before candidates begin debating, commentators tell the audience what to expect from each candidate. Then, rather than allowing the candidates to speak for themselves, media commentators are quick to "interpret" what each candidate said or did not say. Often, we see more of the interpreters than we do of the candidates. The distinction between politics and the media has blurred.

Social Concerns

Theoreticians have other concerns about the influence of the media on society, including these **five** points:

1. The change in focus from the written word to images reduces the depth of thought needed to process information.

Even early radio dramas, they say, required people to listen actively, making sense of the words they heard and creating mental pictures to accompany them. Television and movies that contain preconstructed images require much less processing. Will we become a nation of less mentally agile people as a result? What do you think?

2. Americans are bombarded with trivia and "sound bites." People are neither invited nor given the time to think deeply about issues. Said one media critic, "The content of much of our public discourse has become dangerous nonsense." Does it seem to you that people believe they are informed when they actually have very little information?



"Welcome to 'All About the Media,' where members of the media discuss the role of media in media coverage of the media."

3. We are forming an image of our society—both its problems and its strengths—based on what those who select media content choose to show us.

If the media focus is one-sided, will we understand our reality?

4. TV news is not really designed to inform us. TV news begins with "bad news" in its lead stories, hooking viewers to receive the "good news"—the wonderful life the sponsor's products can provide.

5. Media-produced excitement is excessive. Fast-paced television, electronic games, and movies filled with special effects have increased people's need for stimulation and may make "real life" seem tame by comparison.

The rise in TV "reality" programming that shows disasters or dangerous situations, the increasing popularity of extreme sports, and movies that focus so much on special effects that characters become secondary—all have provoked similar concerns.

In 1932, Aldous Huxley wrote a novel entitled *Brave New World* in which a government enslaved people by "inflicting" pleasure on them. Have Huxley's satirical warnings come close to describing our sport- and entertainment-influenced society? Some questions are:

- * How much do media and entertainment contribute to our pleasure, and what are the side effects of them?
- * In what ways does our society's focus on competition diminish needed cooperation?

- * Does violence in sports and the media cause or reinforce violence in society; does it reflect the violence that already exists; or does it provide a safe outlet for violent tendencies?
- * Does the demand for more and better special effects in movies diminish the importance of human characters?
- * Are Americans really more interested in violence and mayhem than in the positive aspects of life, as the media's focus suggests?
- * Are people's interests and ideas shaped by the media?
- * To what extent does the availability of media in the home reduce people's participation in civic, volunteer, and other social activities?

These are just a few questions people must answer to analyze the effect of sports and entertainment on their lives and on society in general.

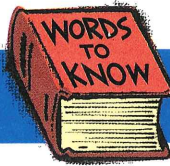
Chapter 12 Wrap-up

SPORTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Sports and entertainment are social institutions with far-ranging influence on and interactions with society and culture. They reflect the values and norms of society, but they may exaggerate the importance of some values over others in ways that are harmful.

Sport begins with the concept of play, but in modern society it has developed into big business, both in schools and in the professional arena. Sport reflects the values and structure of society, it reinforces them, and it can resist some of them. Because we make heroes of athletes, their conduct outside the playing field becomes an issue for society. Social issues that surround sport include its undue influence on young people; unequal access to its opportunities and its recreational benefits; concerns about the amount of money society spends on it and the corruption of individuals that can accompany such spending; its relation to violence in society; and how the media have changed it.

Among forms of entertainment are reading, music, motion pictures, radio, and television. At one time, these activities had unique content and were recognizably different. Today, the mass media provide a very substantial amount of the entertainment our society enjoys. The media influence both the economy and politics in the United States and the world at large. Issues include who controls media content; whether the media seriously distort society's image of reality; and whether the media promote violence.



desensitized—made emotionally unresponsive. *p.* 242

edutainment—something that educates as it entertains. *p.* 239

entertainment—something that amuses, pleases, or diverts. *p.* 238

mass media—forms of mass communication, such as newspapers, television, and radio. *p.* 238

sport—game, contest, or other pastime requiring skill and physical exercise. *p.* 226