

12. Sports and Entertainment

Objectives

- Analyze sport as a social phenomenon
- Analyze the ways in which sports and social institutions interact
- Identify and assess how entertainment influences our culture
- Evaluate the effects of the media on U.S. society

Vocabulary

desensitized edutainment entertainment mass media sport

Background

Sports and entertainment are high-interest areas in the American culture. Many students participate in sports and are avid watchers of sports on TV. They also are intense followers of entertainment and mass media. In this chapter, students analyze sports and entertainment from the sociological rather than the consumer point of view. The chapter raises serious questions about how mass media, sports and entertainment affect our society and culture.

Students first examine what sport is and why the element of play is so significant to sport. They see how sport has evolved over history and compare the functions of play and sport in different kinds of human societies.

The chapter then focuses on sport in the United States. Students consider three sociological views of how sport relates to society and culture: the reflection thesis, the reinforcement thesis, and the resistance thesis. Students then analyze specific social issues that relate to sport: athletes as role models, sports and social class, sports and the economy, sports and politics, women and sports, high school sports, and sports and the media. The high school sports section contains sociologists' perspectives in favor of and against high school sports, to encourage student analysis and debate.

The section ends with a summary of three main sociological perspectives on sport: functionalist, conflict, and interactionist. Each perspective stresses different aspects of how sports and society relate to each other. The summary should help students recognize the complexity and ambiguity of the relationships that exist between the world of sport and the "real world" of culture.

The second section of the chapter analyzes entertainment, especially the mass media. As with sport, the section begins with definitions and history. The section summarizes the functionalist, conflict, and interactionist perspectives on entertainment. Students then examine entertainment in the United States in terms of sociological issues: media ownership; media, advertising and the economy; violence in the media; and the Internet and social issues. The section ends with a general discussion of social concerns about possible negative effects of mass entertainment on society.

Further Resources

- Hüizinga, Johan. *Homo ludens: A study of the play element in culture*. Beacon Press, 1955.
- Prost, Antoine et al, Eds. *A History of Private Life: Riddles of Identity in Modern Times*. Belknap Press, 1991.

For Discussion

Review

1. What three sociological perspectives can be applied to both sports and entertainment?
2. What are some industries or businesses that benefit from sports?
3. According to functionalists, how do sports reinforce the social norms and values of a culture?
4. What do we mean by the term “mass media”?
2. Which thesis about the relationship of sport to society is closest to your view: the reflective thesis, the reinforcement thesis, or the resistance thesis? Support your answer with examples.
3. Do you think the sociologists’ perspectives on high school sports accurately reflect the place of sports in your school? Why or why not?
4. How do you think society would change if more women participated in sports? Give reasons for your answers.
5. How important do you think entertainment by means of mass media is to the formation of our society’s values and norms? Illustrate your answers with specific examples.

Critical Thinking

1. How is play different from sport? Support your answer with examples.

Activities

1. Sports and Games in History

Divide students into teams, and have each team research the history and development of a different popular sport. Then recombine teams by chronological eras and ask the new teams to prepare sports time lines. Combine the time lines to make a bulletin board or study center display.

2. Data Gathering on Sports and Entertainment

Have students take surveys, make timetables, and otherwise gather and present data on the amount of time people in your school or community spend in following sports and entertainment. Have students compare their results with similar national surveys, such as the graphs on pages 239–240.

3. Internet: Global Sports Reports

Assign teams of students to check the sports pages from online newspapers around the world. Ask students to compare the sports themselves as well as the relative prominence the sports are given.

4. Special Sources: Three-Way Debate on Violence

Organize a debate of this proposition: The increase of violence in sports and entertainment has led to an increase of violence in our society. Select three student debate teams. Assign two of the teams to take the “pro” and “con” sides in the debate. Challenge the debating sides to back up their arguments with facts, by having research results and statistics available one week before the debate. Ask the third team to check the research of the “pro” and “con” groups. Structure the debate itself so that the third team has the opportunity to ask challenging questions.

Name _____

12. Sports and Entertainment

As you read Chapter 12, write an answer to each question below.

1. How do sports in U.S. universities differ from university sports in other countries and cultures?

2. What are some important current issues about how sports and culture relate to each other?

3. What are the differences between the functionalist, conflict, and interactionist perspectives of sport?

4. What are the differences between the functionalist, conflict, and interactionist perspectives of entertainment?

5. How does the use of mass media affect both sports and entertainment in the U.S.?

Name _____

12. Sports and Entertainment

Find the best answer for each item. Then circle the correct answer.

1. What is a game, contest, or other pastime requiring skill and physical exercise?
 - a. play
 - b. sport
 - c. entertainment
 - d. edutainment
2. What word describes sports in which teams and individuals take part in scored contests against each other?
 - a. functional
 - b. self-mastery
 - c. noncompetitive
 - d. competitive
3. What word best describes the sports of hunting and fishing?
 - a. elitist
 - b. equestrian
 - c. predatory
 - d. indigenous
4. What word describes the organization of society according to relative economic, social, educational, or other classes?
 - a. institutionalization
 - b. stratification
 - c. development
 - d. socialization
5. What is the act of making or being made emotionally unresponsive?
 - a. desensitizing
 - b. advertising
 - c. socializing
 - d. compromising
6. What word is used for a media program that informs or teaches in an entertaining way?
 - a. entertainment
 - b. edutainment
 - c. mass media
 - d. electronic media
7. What is something that amuses, pleases, or diverts?
 - a. entertainment
 - b. edutainment
 - c. sports
 - d. mass media
8. What term refers to forms of communication that reach enormous numbers of people?
 - a. entertainment
 - b. edutainment
 - c. sports
 - d. mass media
9. Which sociological perspective holds that sports and entertainment go against the norms and values of a society?
 - a. functional
 - b. conflict
 - c. interactionist
 - d. economic
10. Which sociological perspective holds that sports and entertainment both change and are changed by the norms and values of a society?
 - a. functional
 - b. conflict
 - c. interactionist
 - d. economic

Name _____

12. Sports and Entertainment

Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. Of the following, the element that distinguishes sport from play is _____.
 - a. competitiveness
 - b. a commonly accepted set of rules
 - c. physical exercise
 - d. its voluntary nature
2. The first Olympian games were probably part of _____.
 - a. political elections
 - b. religious observances
 - c. the school year
 - d. wars
3. Sports became an advanced industry and an important social institution during the _____.
 - a. 18th century
 - b. 19th century
 - c. 20th century
 - d. 21st century
4. In Western cultures, there is much greater emphasis on _____ than in other cultures.

a. play	c. cooperation
b. team loyalty	d. competition
5. Advertising revenues, product sales, and taxes are three of the _____ issues that are related to sports.

a. political	c. economic
b. athletic	d. educational
6. Sociologists who look at sports from the conflict perspective think that sports _____.
 - a. reinforce the dominance of the ruling class
 - b. unite people and communities
 - c. promote healthy bodies and minds
 - d. encourage parent-child interactions
7. According to the functionalist perspective, sports _____.
 - a. increase the dominance of the ruling class
 - b. reinforce social norms and values
 - c. legitimize violence
 - d. put profits ahead of athletes' health
8. In the United States, almost all radio and television stations are _____.
 - a. under direct government control
 - b. owned by newspapers
 - c. commercial operations
 - d. losing listeners and viewers
9. Weekly attendance at movies reached its peak _____.
 - a. 50 or more years ago
 - b. about 25 years ago
 - c. in the late 1990s
 - d. in the 1930s
10. Results of research on violence in the media suggest that _____.
 - a. no correlation can be proved between the media and violence
 - b. children become aggressive after viewing violent acts
 - c. there is less violence now than ever
 - d. violence is usually shown as morally wrong

Essay Question

If you were a foreign visitor to the United States, what might you conclude from watching how we watch and play sports? Support your answer with examples.