It is clear from the assigned reading and documentary this week how integral cultural phenomena are to the day to day lives of individuals. Mills’ idea of social imagination demonstrated how the micro and macro aspects of society are intertwined and how understanding this relationship aids sociologists in their work. While Goffman, Marx, and Foucault all focus their work on different aspects of sociology, they all acknowledge that whatever they observe is occurring within the larger contexts of macro as well as microsociology.

The textbook reading describes how norms, values, beliefs, and conditioning create the scaffolding for the functions of society. Our capitalist is based on and perpetuates values of hard work and material consumerism. Capitalism having originated as a Western idea, it’s interesting to see how these values have spread into cultures across the world, including some with opposing beliefs. For example, the basic principles of Confucianism, which are integral to many East Asian cultures, are completely in conflict with the individualism highly prized in capitalist systems, especially in the US. Government, as well as economic systems, are shaped by cultural values and beliefs. This can be seen clearly demonstrated by the current political dialogue in America. The country is increasingly ideologically divided, with one side clearly arguing more on the basis of religious belief, despite the idea that America supposedly has a secularist government. In reality, government has always been shaped by beliefs, from when monarchs were considered to be connected to the divine, to the papal decrees making up the Doctrine of Discovery, allowing European governments to colonize indigenous peoples on the basis of Christianity. This initially religious sentiment resulted in mass imperialism which shaped the geopolitical landscape as we know it.

From the *Not Just a Game* documentary, it is very evident that pop culture also affects and is affected by norms and beliefs. In this example, Zirin et al. investigate the ways in which sports reflect and impact American culture in both positive and negative ways. I thought it was extremely fascinating to see how while sport can unfortunately perpetuate things like toxic masculinity and nationalism, they can also provide a platform for social progress. People of color like Jackie Robinson, Jesse Owens, and more contemporarily, Colin Kaepernick, are all examples of athletes who pioneered social justice and civil rights reform through their sports. I also enjoyed this film because, having grown up as a gymnast, I feel like sports played a big role in my own social conditioning. Gymnastics has a very strict culture which demands hard work and basically unquestioning obedience from an extremely young age. Athletes are punished for reporting injuries or complaining about absolutely anything, despite how physically demanding the sport is and how commonly injuries occur. Despite these drawbacks, my experience was also that gymnastics empowers young women to aspire to strength and does teach discipline which is positive to an extent. I can confidently say that I would not be the same person that I am, had I grown up in the environment of a different sport or without being heavily involved in athletics.