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Consuming sporting Orientals: Reading Asian American sport celebrities

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CONSUMING SPORTING ORIENTALS:
READING ASIAN AMERICAN SPORT CELEBRITIES

by

Sang Uk Joo

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy
degree in Health and Sport Studies in the
Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

December 2015

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Susan Birrell

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Graduate College
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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ABSTRACT

This research assesses cultural meanings attributed to Asian American sport celebrities, focusing specifically on former professional tennis player Michael Chang and professional golfer Michelle Wie. This work will examine how they are represented in mainstream American media and how their images have been used in various advertising campaigns. A key assumption of this research is that cultural stakeholders are involved in their particular media representations. Given that Asian American athletes have occupied peripheral positions in American sport, media and their invisibility in advertising campaigns, the recent commodification of Asian American athletic bodies is worth examining in greater detail.

Drawing on Susan Birrell and Mary McDonald's (1999, 2000) "reading sport" methodology, I critically read their representations in mainstream media and television commercials to explore the complexity and particularity of the articulation of power lines surrounding these Asian American sport celebrities. The "reading sport" methodology emphasizes the particularity of power relations and interdependence of lines of power. Accordingly, I situate his or her representations in the different contexts that each athlete had to encounter. Chang's representation is situated within the conservative climate of post-Reagan America, and Wie's representation is situated within the context neoliberal racism and postfeminism.

This study provides a broad understanding of the media representations of Asian American athletes and their different ideological functions in different contexts. Given that there have been a serious lack of studies regarding Asian American athletes, this

study seeks to extend the existing body of knowledge about Asian American athletes and their multiple representations.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

It is hardly surprising to see Asian American athletes in American sports and watch them in mainstream media. Given that one of the stereotypes about Asian Americans is their athletic inferiority to other races, they have been grossly underrepresented in sport media. However, their presence in American sports and media seems to reflect the inclusiveness of American sports as well as tolerance for Asian Americans. More specifically, their representations appear to celebrate their racial differences and the cultural diversity of American sports and American society. However, this study critically examines the ways in which they are represented in mainstream media and various advertising campaigns, and also illustrates how their representations are consistent with dominant ideologies at particular moments and places.

This study uses reading sport methodology, which allows us to find cultural meanings that circulate within mediated accounts and narratives of particular sport celebrities and incidents, both personal and professional, in which they are involved. Informed by the reading sport methodology, I examine how power relations are produced around their mediated accounts and narratives in America since the 1980s.

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CHAPTER 1: INVENTING THE ASIAN AMERICAN SPORT CELEBRITY

Research Goals

On February 4, 2012, New York Knicks' backup point guard Jeremy Lin led the Knicks to a 99-92 victory over the New Jersey Nets. Lin scored a career-high 25 points and added seven assists and five rebounds, outscoring his All-Star teammates Carmelo Anthony and Amar'e Stoudemire, as well as Nets' All-Star point guard Deron Williams. What made his effort all the more remarkable was that Lin, who had been signed to the Knicks as a backup point guard, had never before scored more than 13 points in a single game. After being cut from the Golden State Warriors and Houston Rockets that previous December, Lin suddenly emerged as the Knicks' savior. His surprise performance was the beginning of an upcoming sensation that the media dubbed "Linsanity." Lin followed his surprise performance over the Nets by leading the Knicks to six consecutive victories, and the emergence of Linsanity breathed new life into the previously stagnant Knicks' 2011-2012 season.

To the media, Lin was not only an outstanding player, but also one of a handful of Asian American players in the NBA. A research of NBA players revealed that Lin was only the fourth Asian American to ever play in the NBA, with predecessors Wat Misaka (American born Japanese American), Raymond Townsend (American born Filipino American), and Rex Walters (American born Japanese American) as his predecessors. However, Lin's breakout success in the 2011-2012 season and his impact off the court set him apart from previous Asian American NBA players.

Seemingly overnight, Lin was hailed as a sports celebrity. Mainstream American media outlets (e.g. *USA Today*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New York Times* etc.)

dubbed Lin a “super star,” “basketball star,” “celebrity,” and “bona fide star” (Amick, 2013; Beck, 2012; Maese, 2012). Simultaneously, instead of recounting the careers of previous Asian American NBA players, the media recalled Asian American tennis star Michael Chang. In an *ESPN* article entitled “Chang’s Rise Helped Pave Way for Lin,” the magazine compared Chang and Lin and emphasized their individual successes as racial minorities in sports that were largely dominated by whites in tennis and black in basketball (Wong, 2012). The *ESPN* piece highlighted the unprecedented stardom these two Asian American athletes had achieved. Additionally, the article also identified Chang and Lin as “full-blooded” Asian American sporting stars, and distinguished them from other bi-racial or multi-racial professional male athletes with Asian ancestry, such as Tiger Woods, Hines Ward, and Apolo Anton Ohno.

This research will examine Asian Americans as both professional athletes and sporting celebrities. This research stems from an interest in the sudden rise of Asian American athletes’ crossover appeal both as athletes and as celebrities, and how we understand their cultural meanings in contemporary American society. Linsanity is not an unprecedented phenomenon. In American sport, Asian American athletes have garnered their fair share of attention, and the media has been instrumental in creating and shaping their celebrity status. Specifically, I argue that the articulation of racial identity of Asian Americans and capitalism in major American sports has been occurring since the 1990s. The examination of ethnicity and celebrity with sport is not new, as a number of scholars have examined the economic, cultural, and political implication of European, African, and Latino American athletes as sporting celebrities (Andrews, 1996; Andrews & Cole, 2000; Andrews & Jackson, 2001; Andrews & Mower, 2012; Cole & Denny;

1994; Cole, 1996; Jamieson, 2000; Kusz, 2007; Leonard & King, 2011; McDonald, 1996; McDonald & Andrews, 2001). However, the presence of racially-commodified Asian American athletes and their ideological appropriations have been overlooked.

The purpose of this study is to assess the cultural meanings attributed to selected Asian American sport celebrities and offer counter narratives to tropes of American diversity and inclusiveness commonly found in these athletes' stories. I mainly focus on former American professional tennis player Michael Chang (from 1988 to 2003) and American professional golfer Michelle Wie. This study is informed by critical cultural studies, and I critically read those Asian American sporting celebrities as cultural texts. In particular, through reading media narratives that highlight key events in their personal and professional lives, I interrogate the ideologies of class, race, and gender.

Dominant narratives of Asian American athletes appear to celebrate their racial differences and the cultural diversity and inclusiveness of American sports and American society. However, given that particular sporting events function as cultural texts for understanding specific articulation of power lines (Birrell & McDonald, 2000; McDonald & Birrell, 1999), it is naïve to accept the mediated narratives without question. In order to explore the complexity and particularity of the articulation of power lines, this reading of Asian American celebrities mainly investigates how power lines are articulated at particular historical moments and places.

I question how Chang and Wie are represented in American mainstream media and how their images have been used in advertising campaigns. A key assumption of this research is that cultural stakeholders are investigated in their particular media representations. This research is grounded in the following broad questions: How are the

racial identities and meanings of these athletes constructed in media narratives? How are these narratives constructed along the power lines of class, race, and gender? Whose interests are served by these specific media narratives? Conversely, whose interests are harmed by these narratives? Through addressing these broad questions, I assess the cultural meanings of the media narratives and offer viable counter narratives. Given that Asian American athletes' have occupied peripheral positions in American sport, media and their invisibility in advertising campaigns, the recent commodification of Asian American athletic bodies is worth examining in detail. I believe that the mediated images of Chang and Wie are unique sites for understanding specific articulations of power at particular historical moments and places.

There are important reasons why I focused on Chang and Wie in this research. First, the majority of the media alleges that Chang is the first Asian American sporting celebrity. After reviewing multiple accounts from multiple newspapers and other forms of media, I realized that Chang is regarded as the first Asian American sporting celebrity. There have been Asian American athletes (e.g. Sammy Lee and Tommy Kono) who not only broke color barriers but also drew media attention. However, these Asian American athletes were not represented in advertising campaigns. In sum, the images of Asian American athletes were not commercialized until Chang's images were utilized in various advertisements. Thus, media representations of Chang as an Asian American sporting celebrity are worth a critical examination and analysis. Another reason is that the endorsement power of Chang and Wie were much stronger than other Asian American athletes. Their endorsement potential ranked with other prominent sport celebrities. It is important to note that their strong endorsement power does not only mean that they

enjoyed high endorsement incomes, but that they also enjoyed influential power when compared to different racial groups as an endorser of a product.

Reading Sport

I employ Susan Birrell and Mary McDonald's (1999, 2000) "reading sport" methodology in my cultural analysis. This methodology finds cultural meanings that are circulated within mediated accounts and narratives of particular sport celebrities and incidents, both personal and professional, in which they are involved. Birrell and McDonald (1999, 2000) argue that such incidents and celebrities can be read as cultural texts for understanding particular articulations of power relations within our larger social world. Particularity of power relations and interdependence of lines of power are key ideas in the reading sport methodology. This methodology emphasizes the need to avoid generalizing power relations, as power operates differently in different places and times (Birrell & McDonald, 2000; McDonald & Birrell, 1999). Therefore, this reading project is informed by the principle that "at this historical moment, in this particular place, these discourses on race, sexuality, age, ability, and nationality are produced around this particular incident" (McDonald & Birrell, 1999, p. 284).

Informed by the reading sport methodology, I read Chang and Wie as cultural texts to examine how power relations are produced around their mediated accounts and narratives within a particular historical context of a presumably colorblind and multicultural America since the 1980s. I particularly emphasize the power lines of class, race, gender, and nationality in their stories. This research consists of two different types of analysis. The first analysis focuses on various accounts from newspapers and other forms of media. The second analysis focuses on advertising campaigns. The two

different types of analysis of newspaper and advertising campaigns reflect Chang and Wie's crossover appeal as athletes and celebrities. The power of Asian Americans as consumers has grown and ethnic marketing has strategically targeted Asian American consumers (Davila, 2012). In this situation, the casting of Chang and Wie in various advertising campaigns has not only commercialized the athletes, but also created palatable and marketable images of Asian American sport celebrities. Therefore, my analysis primarily concentrates on mainstream media, including *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*, and corporations' advertising campaigns, including those of Bristol-Myers Squibb, Eveready, Kia Motors, McDonald's, and Reebok.

Understanding the Nature of Celebrity

Celebrities are omnipresent in today's media. As the significance and presence of media is growing in our lives, celebrities' influence on our lives has also become profound in an entirely new way. Celebrities' growing visibility through media outlets and their cultural pervasiveness in our daily lives is unprecedented (Redmond & Holmes, 2007; Rein, Kotler, & Stoller, 1997; Turner, 2004; Van Krieken, 2012), resulting in a number of scholars who have acknowledged this omnipresence of celebrities in society. In *Stardom and Celebrity* (2007), Sean Redmond and Su Holmes point out "the contemporary, ubiquitous, multi-textual, trans-global and 'everywhere' nature" of celebrities (p. 2). Irving Rein, Philip Kotler, and Martin Stoller, in *High Visibility* (1997), also claim that our life is "celebrity-saturated" (p. x).

Scholars have been interested in what constitutes celebrity, how to understand celebrity phenomenon and how it affects our everyday lives. Above all, how to define

celebrity has been at the center of the debate surrounding the celebrity phenomenon. Daniel Boorstin, in *The Image: Or what happened to the American Dream* (1962), defines a celebrity as “a person who is known for his well-knownness” (p. 57). Boorstin (1962) also claims that a celebrity is a “human pseudo-event” (p. 57) which has been “fabricated on purpose to satisfy our exaggerated expectations of human greatness” (p. 58). A key assumption of this understanding of celebrity is that a celebrity is not a substantiality. Boorstin (1962) attacks the illusory character of contemporary American culture, and accuses mass media of influencing the fundamental inauthenticity of American culture (Van Krieken, 2012; Turner, 2004). In particular, he claims that mass media continuously produces illusory events, which he calls pseudo-events, and these events are used to manipulate public opinion and construct everyday consciousness.

Boorstin’s (1962) understanding of a celebrity originated from an elite critique and traditionalist bias against popular culture (Gabler, 1998; Turner, 2004). Graeme Turner (2004) claims that Boorstin “regard[s] celebrity as the epitome of all that is trivial, superficial, meretricious and deplorable about contemporary popular culture” (p. 23). Boorstin (1962) compares a celebrity with a hero in a moralistic and dismissive understanding popular culture and its production of celebrities. Boorstin (1962) claims that “[T]he hero was distinguished by his achievement; the celebrity by his image or trademark. The hero created himself; the celebrity is created by the media. The hero was a big man; the celebrity is a big name” (p. 61). According to this comparison, while a hero was distinguished by authentic fame and greatness, a contemporary celebrity is distinguished by synthetic media images (Van Krieken, 2012). In other words, a celebrity is a mere product of public relations.

However, along with the increasing number of celebrities and their increasing importance in our life, Boorstin's understanding of celebrity cannot provide a comprehensive explanation of the celebrity phenomenon in contemporary society. Scholars have focused on developing alternative understandings of celebrity. In particular, scholars from cultural and media studies have played a key role in developing these alternative understandings (Turner, 2004, 2010). Turner, in "Approaching Celebrity Studies" (2010), claims that "the heartland of celebrity studies remains within media and cultural studies where academics already interested in popular culture and representation have readily applied themselves to the discussion of particular celebrities as texts" (p. 12). Turner (2010) also suggests that scholars need to see a celebrity as a genre of media discourse and as a site "for the analysis of cultural shifts around gender, race or nationality" (p. 13). Turner, in *Understanding Celebrity* (2004), more broadly explains academic approaches of cultural and media studies as follows:

[T]he academic literature, particularly from within cultural and media studies, has tended to focus on celebrity as the product of a number of cultural and economic processes. These include the commodification of the individual celebrity through promotion, publicity and advertising; the implication of celebrities in the processes through which cultural identity is negotiated and formed; and most importantly, the representational processes employed by the media in their treatment of prominent individuals. The sum of these processes constitutes a celebrity industry, and it is important that cultural studies' accounts of celebrity deal with its production as a fundamental structural component of how the media operates at the moment (p. 4).

Following the cultural turn in the 1970s, scholars began to conduct critical research on the celebrity phenomenon (Andrews & Jackson, 2001; Redmond & Holmes, 2007; Whannel, 2002). Richard Dyer is one of the early scholars who applied a critical approach to the celebrity phenomenon, emphasizing celebrities' cultural meanings. In *Stars* (1979) and *Heavenly Bodies* (1986), Dyer sees film stars as cultural texts, and contextualizes these cultural texts within particular ideological contexts. Martin Barker

(2003) points out *Stars*' (1979) seminal influence on the critical study of celebrity as follows:

Dyer did provoke new questions. Famously, he invited examination of the role of stars within representation. What is the meaning of the 'character' that stars display? How does the endless talk surrounding stars relate to their on-screen personae? What kinds of pleasure, dream or compensation for life do stars offer their audiences? In short, what is their ideological function? (p. 6).

Heavenly Bodies (1986) offers three case studies of Marilyn Monroe, Paul Robeson, and Judy Garland. In this work, Dyer (1986) emphasizes how the female, black, and homosexual personae become film stars within particular ideological conditions, and how particular cultural meanings are articulated in these conditions. For example, Monroe's persona is situated within the sexual ideologies of the 1950s. Given that Monroe embodied what heterosexual women's sexuality should be, reading her persona enables us to know what normative values are in white, heterosexual, and male dominated society. Turner (2004) also claims that Dyer's reading of Monroe is "not only a story of the professional cultivation of her persona as a star, but also of the discursive and ideological context within which that persona could develop" (p. 7).

Following Dyer's works (1979, 1986), scholars (Gamson, 1994; Marshall, 1997; Rojek, 2009; Schwichtenberg, 1993; Smith, 1998) have applied a critical approach to the celebrity phenomenon, emphasizing celebrity as a site for understanding specific power relations in various contexts. These scholars expanded their scope of interests to include other types of celebrities as well. In particular, as mass media technology advanced, the celebrity phenomenon has been more complicated and ambiguous. For example, Joshua Gamson's *Claims to Fame* (1994) sees an entertainment celebrity as a textual phenomenon, and examines the meanings of entertainment in images and texts. To

Gamson, entertainment is the most dominant and industrialized realm to generate contemporary celebrity phenomenon.

A distinguishable contribution of Gamson's *Claims to Fame* (1994) is that Gamson primarily focuses not only on the entertainment celebrity phenomenon, but also on key rhetorical components of that phenomenon, such as texts, producers, and audiences. In particular, Gamson (1994) points out contemporary scholarly works' failure to understand "relationships between discourse, production, and audiences" (p. 6), and claims that the celebrity phenomenon provides scholars with a "striking and challenging case study in the production and reception of culture" (p.5). Gamson (1994) also argues that a celebrity is an "artificial production" (p. 16), but that celebrity-making has been a central business enterprise since the middle of the 20th century.

David Marshall, in *Celebrity and Power* (1997), also sees a celebrity as a site for understanding a specific form of cultural power, and investigate celebrities' cultural and political potency. In particular, Marshall (1997) is interested in "how the celebrity structures meaning, crystallizes ideological positions, and works to provide a sense and coherence to a culture" (p. x). To explore the meanings of celebrities in American culture, Marshall (1997) conducts three case studies of Tom Cruise in film, Oprah Winfrey in television, and New Kids on the Block in music. More specifically, along with outlining the institutional structures of film, television, and popular music, Marshall (1997) emphasizes how these different entertainment industries have organized their productions of celebrities. Just as Gamson (1994) expands the scope of celebrity studies from film stars to broader entertainment celebrity phenomena, Marshall (1997)

emphasizes various forms of cultural products and their distinguishing features and argues that film is not the only form of mass media behind a celebrity phenomenon.

The advance of mass media has directly caused the mass production of celebrities, resulting in modern celebrity being a product of media representation (Turner, 2004).

The capacity of mass media representation to produce modern celebrities has been emphasized by a number of scholars (Marshall, 1997; Rojek, 2009; Turner, 2004). Chris Rojek's *Celebrity* (2009) regards the modern celebrity phenomenon as "a phenomenon of mass-circulation newspapers, TV, radio and film" (p. 16), we have come to live in 'celebrity society.' Although we may never have met a celebrity, we constantly encounter celebrities through media texts. Media outlets have the power to decide who should become a celebrity and how the celebrity's mediated identity should be constructed.

Sport Celebrity as a Site for Understanding Articulations of Power

Sport is one of the cultural realms producing and consuming various types of celebrities. However, some distinguishable features of sport make a sport celebrity different from other celebrities in film, television drama, and music. Andrews and Jackson (2002) point out the following three features of sport that distinguish a sport celebrity from other celebrities. First, sport is believed to be a meritocratic site. Presumably, in a meritocracy, deserving people become successful and their successes are attributable to individual skills and talents. Thus, a sport celebrity is regarded as a deserving figure of public attention and interest, and sport celebrityhood is reducible to individual qualities (Andrews & Jackson, 2002). Second, sport is a culturally valued practice that effectively draws huge public attention. Thus, manufacturing celebrityhood

in sport is more easily performed than in other cultural realms (Andrews & Jackson, 2002). Third, sport is composed of unpredictable contests of “real” individuals. Conversely, other cultural realms (e.g. film, television drama, and music video) are composed of fictive characters. Thus, a sport celebrity can have more powerful authority than other celebrities (Andrews & Jackson, 2002). These unique features of sport have made prominent sport figures attractive to marketers and advertisers, and various images of sport celebrities have become widely used in media for commercial purposes.

The discussions about how sport celebrity emerged have been long and complicated, and these discussions are still on-going. In the American sport context, scholars trace the emergence of American sport celebrity from the advent of the American sport hero in the early 20th century (Rader, 1983, 1984; Smart, 2005). Benjamin Rader (1983) in “Compensatory Sport Heroes: Ruth, Grange and Dempsey,” names America’s 1920s as the “Golden Age of American Sport” (p. 11), and identifies Babe Ruth in baseball, Red Grange in football, and Jack Dempsey in boxing as the initial American sport heroes. Sport journalists and sport promoters created the outstanding athletes’ new images as American sport heroes, and their manufactured images as sport heroes eventually overwhelmed their identities as athletes (Rader, 1983).

The early American sport heroes’ images were ideologically driven. Rader (1983) situates these images in the particular social and cultural context of American society in the 1920s, and regards the advent of sport heroes as a phenomenon of a compensation culture as follows:

The athletes as public heroes served a compensatory cultural function. They assisted the public in compensating for the passing of the traditional dream of success, the erosion of Victorian values and feeling of individual powerlessness. As the society became more complicated and systematized and as success had to

be won increasingly in bureaucracies, the need for heroes who leaped to fame and fortune outside the rules of the system seemed to grow (p 11).

Rader (1983) equates American sport heroes with compensatory stars like Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks who created “a complex set of images, fantasies and myths” (p. 11) for audiences composed of helpless individuals. In reviewing the created images of Ruth, Grange, and Dempsey, Rader (1983) recognizes how these images confirm the traditional American success story. For example, he illustrates Ruth’s rags to riches story and his renown as a successful baseball player, and refers to him as “living proof that the lone individual could still rise from mean, vulgar beginnings to fame and fortune” (p. 12). This mythological contextualization of particular images of sport heroes is one of the earliest scholarly efforts to understand the cultural meaning of American sport heroes.

Rader, in *In Its Own Image: How Television Has Transformed Sports* (1984), examines cultural implications of American sport heroes (e.g. Bobby Thomson, Joe DiMaggio, Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Connie Mack, and Phillip Wrigley) in the middle of the 20th century. In this analysis, Rader (1984) points out the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Second World War (1939-1945), and the Cold War as key historical events influencing features of contemporary American sport heroes. More specifically, he argues that national sport heroes from the 1930s to the 1950s “reflected a widespread quest for national unity” (p. 176) to overcome economic and political crises. In addition, these national sport heroes embodied dignity and grace, and reinforced the belief in the American dream (1984).

Since the middle of the 20th century, American society has witnessed American athletes’ weakening roles as heroes (Andrews & Jackson, 2002; Berg, 1998; Jackson &

Andrews, 2005; Rader, 1984; Smart, 2005; Whannel, 2002). Rader (1984) points out the demise of American athletes' roles as national sport heroes in the 1960s. He claims that they "no longer commanded universal reverence," (p. 176) citing particular American athletes' announcement of their opinions about key political incidents, such as the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and the Vietnam War, as examples of their changed roles. For example, former American professional boxer Muhammad Ali and former American professional tennis player Billie Jean King are key figures among the new types of heroes in American sport. Ali supported the civil rights movement, and protested against racism and the Vietnam War. King supported the feminist movement, and claimed equal opportunity for women in professional American sports.

One of the key discussions about American sport heroes has considered whether sport heroes still exist. For example, Rader (1984) argues that American athletes' roles as heroes have faded since the 1970s, as well as the "the virtual death of the sports hero of old and the emergence of athletes as mere celebrities" (p. 176). However, given that Andrews and Jackson (2002) famously referred to Babe Ruth as "the prototypical sport celebrity endorser" (p. 7) and Andrews (2001) and Cole (1996) describe Michael Jordan as a hero, the conclusion that American athletes' role as heroes has come to an end is controversial. In short, it is difficult to clearly distinguish between an American sport hero and an American sport celebrity.

Contemporary media blurs the distinction between these two entities, causing the inevitable combination of sport hero and sport celebrity (Berg, 1998). If an extraordinary athlete becomes a sport hero, it is not only because of the athlete's outstanding performances, but also because the athletes embody various social values. Berg (1998)

illustrates how the media creates sport heroes such as Nolan Ryan, Joe Montana, Michael Jordan, and Tiger Woods, and how these athletes' mediated images reflect dominant social values in contemporary American society. Moreover, he argues that an athlete's heroic status is mobilized in various advertisements as a tool for selling products and increasing brand awareness.

The elevation of American sport celebrity has been led by the advance of media technology and the commercialization of American sport (Andrews & Jackson, 2002; Jackson & Andrews, 2005; Smart, 2005; Rader, 1984; Whannel, 2002). Just as Andrews and Jackson (2002) state that we become familiar with sport celebrity "from the outpourings of the commercial media" (p. 1), a sport celebrity can be seen as a product of the strategic partnership of sport and media in consumer capitalism.

Sport studies scholars have been interested in media representations of sport celebrities and racially-commodified athletes for several years (Andrews, 1996, 2001, 2012; Andrews & Mower, 2012; Andrews & Jackson, 2002; Birrell & McDonald, 2000; Cole, 1996; Dyson, 1993; Jackson, 1998; Kusz, 2007; Leonard & King, 2011; McDonald, 1996; Smart, 2005; Whannel, 2002). Their scholarship has resulted in an examination of the ways in which racial minority athletes' mediated images and identities have been used for commercial purposes, and they also interrogate the cultural meanings of these athletes' images. They conclude that while the presence of racially-identified sport celebrities appears to celebrate racial differences that prove the U.S. to be a racially progressive society, in fact, these celebrities have been used to reproduce existing racial hierarchies (Andrews, 2012). In this regard, Asian American athletes' racially-commodified celebrity is a site where racism and capitalism are articulated. Accordingly,

I believe that Asian American athletes' endorsement power and their racially-coded celebrity should be read within the contemporary social and cultural context.

Asian Americans in American Sport and Racialized Celebrityhood

How much do Americans know about Asian American athletes? In a class room at the University of Iowa, there were more than 25 students taking a class of Race and Ethnicity in Sport. In the beginning of the class, I asked students to write down ten American male and female athletes. Lamentably, students spent more than twice as much time attempting to list female athletes than male athletes. But, given that most students listed ten female American athletes, this proved less problematic than the following issue. When I asked students to list ten Asian American athletes, the vast majority could not do so. More troublesome, although some of them were able to list ten, they were unable to distinguish between Asian athletes and Asian American athletes. For example, well-known Asian athletes (e.g. Yao Ming and Ichiro Suzuki) were on the list of the Asian American athletes. Another interesting finding was that most students, despite their lack of knowledge of Asian American athletes, listed Michael Chang, Michelle Kwan, Michelle Wie, and Jeremy Lin, who rose to athletic prominence beginning in the 1990s. In addition, most students had not watched Asian American athletes' games, and they only recognized these athletes primarily through media reports and commercials. These in-class activities suggest three significant issues about Asian American athletes in the American imaginary: (1) the invisibility of Asian American athletes in American sport, (2) the unprecedented media attention paid to Asian American athletes and increased awareness of them since the 1990s, and (3) the "perpetual foreigner" status of Asian American athletes.

There have been a number of notable Asian American athletes, and their history in national and international sport fields is unique and rich. However, the lack of recognition of Asian American athletes appears to prove the alleged rarity of Asian Americans in the American sport realm. Asian American athletes and their stories have been largely excluded from American sport discourse, and Asian American athletes in the 1990s have been mistakenly described as the first Asian American athletes playing in American sports (Joo, 2012). I argue that the presence of Asian American athletes in American sports had been overlooked until the 1990s.

The history of Asian American athletes is long and varied and encompasses a number of sports, and their sporting accomplishments and influence on American sports are significant enough to be discussed in various academic fields. In baseball, Japanese American leagues began on the West Coast of California more than 50 years before the New York Giants moved to San Francisco in 1958. Japanese American basketball player Wataru Misaka became the first non-Caucasian National Basketball Association (NBA) player, breaking the league's color line in 1947, the same year Jackie Robinson broke professional baseball's color line. In 1948, a Korean American diver became the first Asian American to win an Olympic gold medal for the U.S., and won another gold medal in 1952. Japanese American weightlifter Tommy Kono was also an Olympic gold medalist in 1952 and 1956. Additionally, Kono won the World Weightlifting Championship six times in a row from 1953 to 1959, as well three gold medals in the Pan American Games in 1955, 1959, and 1963. If this scope of East Asian American athletes (e.g. Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, and Taiwanese Americans) is expanded to South and Southeast Asian Americans (e.g. Indian Americans,

Filipino Americans, Vietnamese Americans), more Asian American athletes and their accomplishments in American and international sports can be identified and researched to add depth and variety to the existing scholarship.

The lack of recognition of Asian American athletes before the 1990s did not result from a rarity of Asian American athletes or from their unimpressive performances in American and international sports. I believe that the lack of recognition resulted from weak economic and ideological usefulness of Asian American athletes in American society. I also believe that the emergence of Asian American sporting figures and the increased attention they have received since 1990s have to be critically examined. As Ben Carrington (2010) points out, the invention of black athletes and the appropriation of their blackness were used to commodify American sports and reproduce white colonial desire. I believe that they also have been mobilized to commodify American sports, endorse certain products and brands, and perform certain ideological functions. In particular, the ideological functions have been differently performed in different places and times.

The results of the students' in-class activities show that Asian American athletes are not fully represented as American. Although mainstream American media has frequently reported on the accomplishments of Asian American athletes, they have not been fully accepted as "American" athletes. For example, after Asian American figure skater Michelle Kwan lost the gold medal to a Caucasian American figure skater Tara Lipinski at the 1998 Winter Olympics, MSNBC chose "American Beats out Kwan" for their headline. This infamous headline suggests a reluctance to fully accept Asian American athletes as "Americans" (Joo, 2012). As Philip Yang (2006) argues, Kwan was

represented as a foreign skater because of her skin color and physical appearance. This mistake regarding Kwan's nationality suggests the assumed link between Whiteness and American identity. The discrepancy between "Yellowness" and American identity has been pervasive in American society (Okimoto, 1994; Wu, 2002). While MSNBC apologized for the "basic headline error," (Sorensen, 1998) the discrepancy has often been reproduced through Orientalist representations of Asian American athletes.

In this research, I regard the selected Asian American athletes, Chang and Wie, and Lin, as Asian American sporting celebrities. Just as I briefly mentioned Chang and Lin's celebrity status in mainstream American media and their mediated images from television commercials (e.g. Reebok and SONY), Asian American athletes as sporting celebrities came to have endorsement power, and their images have been mediated to facilitate their capacity as product or brand endorsers.

Jeremy Lin and the Growth of Scholarly Attention to the Asian American Sport Subject

Sport studies is my academic background, and I have regularly attended the annual conferences of the North American Society for the Sociology of Sport (NASSS) and have been a consistent presenter since 2009. Attending the NASSS conference is a valuable experience for me because the conference has always provided me with strong opportunities for discussion and networking. However, as an Asian graduate student whose research interests are Asian-American sport experiences and their media representations, I have always been aware of the shortage of papers about Asian Americans in these conference programs. For example, there were three papers focusing on Asian Americans and sports in the 2010 NASSS conferences. In the 2011 NASSS

conference, only two papers dealt with issues concerning Asian Americans and sports. Given that scholarly efforts have largely been devoted to critical discussions on various issues relating to African Americans and sports, the lack of scholarly attention to Asian American issues in academia should be addressed (Franks, 2010; King, 2015; Lee, 2015). The situation is much the same in academic journals, such as the *Sociology of Sport Journal* and the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*.

However, the 2012 NASSS conference held in New Orleans, Louisiana in November was different from previous conferences. The number of Asian-descent scholars in attendance had increased, and more of their research tended to focus on Asian Americans in sport. For example, there were five papers about Asian American-related papers in the 2012 NASSS conference. I believe these changes can be explained by the media's increased attention to Jeremy Lin and the subsequent cultural phenomenon of "Linsanity." The outstanding basketball performance of Asian American point guard Lin drew increased media attention, and he remained at the center of media reports on the NBA throughout the 2011-2012 season. His story came to be well known not just to the American public, but also in Asia countries, particularly China and Taiwan.

The scholarly attention paid to the phenomenon of Lin was an unprecedented endeavor to explore the cultural significance of an Asian American sporting figure. I believe that it is worth examining and discussing the partiality of scholars to Lin. I discuss the ways in which scholarly works in sport studies and Asian American studies have been conducted and the academic discussion that has developed since the emergence of Linsanity in the U.S. media. More specifically, I examine the following questions: How has the phenomenon of Jeremy Lin promoted scholarly interest from the fields of

sport studies and Asian American studies? How have numerous scholarly works (e.g. conference papers and journal articles) about Lin's meteoric rise in the NBA influenced academic discussion surrounding the Asian American sport experience and Asian-American sporting figures?

My personal experiences will provide the starting point for explaining academic reactions to the Lin phenomenon as I was in the field of Sport Studies as a graduate student when the Linsanity phenomenon was at its height in February and March of 2012. Before this period, I had conducted research on numerous Asian American sporting celebrities. Additionally, my regular attendance at NASSS conferences and my continued interest in scholarship that combines sport studies with Asian American Studies has provided me with a particular interest in, and understanding of, academic reactions to the Lin phenomenon.

"Did you watch Jeremy Lin play? No? How could you not?" This was a brief, but significant, exchange I had in February of 2012 with a friend of mine who was very eager to discuss Jeremy Lin's performance several days prior. Because I had not heard about Jeremy Lin until then, I needed an explanation of who he was and how he played. My friend's explanation of Lin made me wonder why my Caucasian friend in Iowa was excited about an Asian-American professional basketball player for the New York Knicks. I wondered why he supposed that I had watched Lin play and why he thought I should be as excited as he was.

In truth, Lin's play did excite me. After I had watched Lin's past performance on *YouTube*, I continued to watch most of the New York Knicks' games until the end of March in 2012. Even though Lin missed the rest of the regular season because of knee

surgery, I remained interested in reading the media's Lin stories. However, the most exciting thing to me was the interest shown by the Sport Studies community in the Lin phenomenon, as well as Asian American Studies newfound interest in sport in various ways. First, NASSS created a special conference session in 2012 about Jeremy Lin, entitled "Sport in Taiwan - Linsanity and Other Issues." Given that papers addressing a common theme usually compose panel sessions at the conference (e.g. Challenging the Gender Binary in Sport, Teaching the Sociology of Sport, and Sport & Sporting Bodies on Film), a session devoted to papers about a particular sporting celebrity was notable. Second, scholarly works on Lin have been released in the fields of Sport Studies and Asian American Studies (see Chiang & Chen, 2013; Comb & Wasserstrom, 2013; Hsu, 2012; Kim, 2014; Leonard, 2015; Mok & Chih, 2015; Ng, 2012; Pan, 2012; Park, 2014; Su, 2014; Yep, 2012a; Yep, 2012b). Given that topics relating to Asian American issues in the fields of Sport studies and relating to sport in Asian American Studies field have not been regarded as serious research subjects, the unexpected academic attention to Lin also surprised me. In the following section, I explore implications of these academic reactions.

As the scholarly attention to Lin has increased, I have wondered about how and why an Asian-American athlete eventually became a significant academic subject. More specifically, I have wondered why scholars have eventually been interested in the Asian-American sporting celebrity and why they finally emphasized the importance of critical analysis of media representations of Asian American sporting figures. Without question, Lin's performance was outstanding and deserving of the media attention it received. However, to me, Michael Chang's victory at the French Open in 1989 and Michelle

Wie's performances in both women's and men's events in 2000s are as outstanding as Lin's play during the months of February and March in 2012. Further, media attention to Wie was as intensive as Lin, and the attention to Chang and Wie has been much longer maintained. Nevertheless, this raises the question: why have scholars in sport studies and Asian American studies not regarded Asian American sporting figures as serious academic subjects until the Lin phenomenon occurred? While I cannot completely answer all of these questions, I do believe that academic attention paid to Lin as compared to other Asian American athletes can be a good starting point to understand the scholarly partiality to Lin.

Scholars in the fields of sport studies and Asian American studies point out the cultural significance of Jeremy Lin as an Asian American sporting figure. As the review below indicates, they have their own legitimate grounds to justify the academic significance of Lin as follows: intensive and unprecedented media attention to Lin, an embodiment of model minority stereotypes in sports, a new model of Asian American masculinity, a disruption of colorblind belief, and flexible identities within the transnational context.

Some scholars identify the intensive media attention paid to Lin as an unprecedented media hype that has never before been paid to any other Asian American athletes (Combs & Wasserstrom, 2013; Pan, 2012; Park, 2014; Su, 2014; Yep, 2012a). More specifically, Michael Park (2014) refers to Linsanity as "an Asian American-inspired cultural frenzy," and argues that no Asian American player has ever captivated the American public in quite the same manner until the arrival of Lin and the onset of Linsanity (p. 2). Thus, he argues that, given the lack of interest in Asian Americans in

professional sports, media attention to Lin is noteworthy. Kathleen Yep (2012a) also pointed out how the media focused on Lin by identifying that *Time* magazine had named Lin one of the most influential people in the world in 2012.

Other scholars pay attention to Lin as the embodiment of model minority stereotypes in American sports (Kim, 2014; Leonard, 2015; Pan, 2012; Park, 2014; Su, 2014). The model minority myth was originally developed with the intention of manipulating Asian Americans' alleged intelligent and industrious images. These images have been used to create and shape Asian Americans into a palatable version of the American dream. Scholars point out that sports have been excluded from critical analysis of the ideological influences of the model minority, and they argue that Lin is an excellent starting point for such a critical analysis. For example, Arnold Pan (2012) argues that "the all-too-familiar narratives used to make sense of Asian Americans in the national imaginary were recycled" in order to make sense of Lin's performance. Similarly, Christine Kim (2015) refers to Lin as "a yellow body on the court," arguing that "he cultivates specifically Asian American identity off the court" (p. 312). Further, Chiaoning Su (2014) notes that the media used the values of persistence and hard work, core elements of the model minority myth, to construct media narratives regarding Lin's performance on the court.

Lin is understood by other scholars as a significant figure who can provide a new form of Asian American masculinity (Kim, 2014; Leonard, 2015; Pan, 2012; Park, 2014; Yep, 2012a). They argue that Lin causes academic discussion of the relationship between race, masculinity, and sports culture. For example, Kim (2014) identifies the subordinated masculinity of Asian American men, arguing that "Lin offers North

American public a new model of Asian American masculinity” (p. 310). Yep (2012a) also insists that Lin’s emergence raises questions regarding “the distortions of Asian American masculinities” (p. 135). Park, drawing on the idea of hegemonic masculinity, (2014) argues that Lin can provide opportunities not only to develop an alternative idea of Asian American masculinity, but also to examine how the subordinated masculinity of Asian American men is ideologically used to perpetuate the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity.

Other scholars expect to disrupt the alleged colorblind belief by the Lin phenomenon (Kim, 2014; Yep, 2012a; Yep, 2012b). In particular, they contextualize media representations of Lin by focusing on the alleged colorblind ideology of 21st century America. For example, Kim (2014, p. 313) points out that Linsanity occurred in a moment “when a North American right wing tries to claim that we no longer ‘see’ race” (p. 313). Yep (2012a) also argues that media accounts of Lin create “a public language around sport as post-racial” by declaring “Lin as ‘simply’ a basketball player and the NBA...as merely a basketball league, free of politics” (p. 134).

Finally, Lin’s flexible identities within transnational contexts have drawn significant attention from scholars (Comb & Wasserstrom, 2013; Hsu, 2012; Kim, 2014; Su, 2014). These scholars assert that Lin’s Asian American identity and its transcendence have the ability to cut across national boundaries. Matthew Combs and Jeffrey Wasserstrom (2013, p. 1261) refer to Lin as “a transnational figure,” and examine how Lin’s identities were differently created in the U.S., China, and Taiwan. More specifically, they argue that, while Lin’s story in the U.S. focused on issues regarding race, his story in China and Taiwan emphasized Lin’s Chinese and Taiwanese identities.

In addition to Lin's transnational transcendence, scholars have identified his popularity and marketability within the global context. Hua Hsu (2012) regards Lin as "the most famous Asian American on the planet," (p. 127) and Su (2014, p. 21) also presents him as a "star Asian-American NBA player Jeremy Lin" and "a global cultural icon."

As the above review of literature demonstrates, scholars have legitimate grounds to claim the academic significance of Lin. However, I believe that there were other significant Asian-American sporting figures who could have aroused earlier scholarly interests in the fields of sport studies and Asian American studies. For example, media attention to Asian American athletes began in earnest with Chang's triumph in the 1989 French Open. Since then, the American public has seen Asian American athletes, such as Olympic gold medalists Michelle Kwan and Kristi Yamaguchi in figure skating, Olympic gold medalist Amy Chow in gymnastics, LPGA Tour champions Christina Kim and Michelle Wie in golf, and a former number-one ranked pool player Jeanette Lee. In addition, Chang, Kwan, Chow, Wie, and Lee appeared in multiple television commercials and print media advertisements as endorsers.

Further, media representations of Asian American athletes could provide scholars with opportunities to critically examine the ideological implication of model minority stereotypes. While Asian American men's effeminized image has been pervasive in American sport culture, Chang's outstanding performance in tennis enabled the American public to think about Asian American masculinity in different ways because tennis has been internalized as a cultural site for the reproduction of white masculinity (Kusz, 2007). In addition, given that Wie's athletic excellence has been recognized since the middle of the 2000s when colorblind ideology and post-racial racism became ascendant

in American society (Wise, 2010), scholars could examine how media representations of Wie have been pertinent to colorblind and post-racial ideologies. Furthermore, their Asian American identities could be discussed to examine how an identity and citizenship can be flexibly redefined within the transnational context.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one, “Inventing the Asian American Sport Celebrity,” outlines the study’s research goals, methodology, and the cultural significance of celebrity. In addition, this chapter includes critical discussion of scholarly attention to the phenomenon of Jeremy Lin. In this discussion, I review the ways in which the scholarly discourse constructed around Lin to critically examine and address the disparity of scholarly attention paid to Wie and Lin.

Chapter two, “Understanding American Orientalism,” introduces Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism and provides a review of the literature on American Orientalism. Additionally, this chapter examines Orientalist racialization after the 1965 Immigration and National Act, and provides an understanding of how model minority discourse was created and how this discourse has been used to justify African Americans’ subordinate economic and political status to reinforce and maintain white power. This chapter also examines how the model minority discourse has been rearticulated within the different economic, political, and cultural situations in the post-civil rights era. This chapter is important in providing an understanding of the conservative appropriation of Asian American stereotypes within different contexts since the mid-1960s.

The following two chapters present the results of this study. In chapters three and four, drawing on reading sport methodology, I critically examine media representations

of Chang and Wie to assess the cultural meanings that are circulated within their mediated accounts and narratives. More specifically, in the chapter three, “The Emergence of the Asian-American Sporting Body: Michael Chang and Model Minority Discourse in the Post-Reagan Era,” I situate Chang’s mediated identity within the conservative climate of post-Reagan America. I explore how Chang’s model minority images and his Asian American family’s alleged traditional family values were used to make sense of not only the achievement of an Asian American tennis player in professional tennis, but also the success of an Asian American family in American society. Following the analysis of Chang through mainstream media, I expand the critical lens to television commercials of Nuprin, Reebok, and Energizer to examine how Asian American athlete’s images came to be marketable and consumable in the conservative context of post-Reagan America. In chapter four, “‘We’ Need Wie: Michelle Wie, Neoliberal Racism, and Postfeminism in 21st Century America,” I examine Wie’s mediated identity within the context of neoliberal racism and postfeminism. Given that racialization is a social process, I assert that media representations of Asian Americans are different and their cultural meanings and ideological functions are also different. Accordingly, I explore how Wie’s image as an Asian American female golfer who allegedly transcended racial and gender barriers is ideologically consistent with neoliberal racism and postfeminism. I also examine Wie’s images in television commercials of McDonald’s and Kia.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN ORIENTALISM

The Origin of American Orientalism

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism provides a theoretical lens to this project of reading Asian American sport celebrities. In *Orientalism* (1979), Said defines this concept as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (p. 2). Drawing on the Foucauldian notion of discourse, Said (1979) treats Orientalism as a discursive construction that is embodied in Western representations of the Occident. In this Orientalist discourse, Asians have been represented to satisfy the Western desire to subordinate colonial subjects.

The Occident is always positioned in a superior position to the Orient. While the West regards itself as developed, powerful, articulate, and superior, it considers the East to be undeveloped, weak, mysterious, and inferior (Kim & Chung, 2005). This dichotomous and hierarchical relationship between the Orient and the Occident is, according to Said (1979), "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (p. 5). This power relation between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority has been assumed and perpetuated for centuries as the essence of Orientalism (Said, 1979).

The Orient is a European invention, and European colonialists' experience of the Arabs and Islam played a key role in creating and diffusing Orientalism (Said, 1979). Based on the European colonialist experience, particularly that of British and French, the European knowledge of the Orient (e.g. language, history, and culture) accumulated overtime, and this accumulated knowledge of the Orient was used to dominate the Orient

(Said, 1979). In other words, the Orientalists reconstructed, reassembled, and crafted the Orient, and they used images and representations of people in the Middle East to create the Orient (Said, 1979). In this devising process of the Orient, the Orient itself was silent.

Although Said mainly traces the history of European relations with the Orient, his idea of European Orientalism has been broadened through academic discussion of the meaning of Orientals in America (Chong, 2012; Klein, 2003; Leong, 2005; Yoshihara, 2003; Yu, 2001). American Orientalism has many similarities with European Orientalism. For example, just as Said (1979) claims the dichotomous and hierarchical relationship between the Orient and the Occident, American Orientalism has justified the cultural domination of Asia and Asian America (Kim & Chung, 2005, Lee, 1999). In addition, various knowledge, images, and representations of the Oriental subject have been created and diffused by American Orientalists.

However, there are key differences between American Orientalism and European Orientalism. A key difference is the Oriental subject. Said (1979) states that “one could discuss Europe’s experience of the Near Orient, or of Islam, apart from its experience of the Far Orient” (1979, p. 17). In other words, Said (1979) believes that Arabs and Islam “stood for the Orient” (p. 17), and he eliminated various sections (e.g. China, Japan, Korea, etc.) of the Far East from his analytical range because these were outside European colonial experience. Thus, because of these different Oriental subjects, a review of American Orientalism is important for this reading project of Asian American sport celebrities. In the following section, I review how American Orientalism has been created and diffused in the American context, and also discuss how Orientalist

racialization of Asians and Asian Americans has been deployed in the context of the post-civil rights era.

The location of the Oriental subject was changed in American Orientalism. To Said, Orientalism is an imaginary geography, and an imaginary and geographic division between the Orient and the Occident is assumed. In other words, the geographic distance between Europe and its Asian colonies created differences between the Orient of the European imagination and the actual people living in Asia whom the Europeans never actually encountered (Chong, 2012). However, American Orientalism is constructed through actual encounters with Asians since the middle of the 19th century with the influx of cheap Chinese laborers and Asian immigrants through the Pacific (Yu, 2001). As Sylvia Chong (2012) points out, the concept of the “foreigner-within” is a unique feature of American Orientalism. The American encounter with the Orient in America, that is the presence of the Orient in America, became a crucial part of American Orientalism. In the ongoing process of constructing an American Orientalism, the concept of American Orientalism has been re-articulated within the America’s various cultural and economic context.

The first encounter between America and the Orient was through the influx of Chinese laborers beginning in the middle of the 19th century. Chinese laborers first came to California during the gold rush of 1848 to 1855. Economic hardship in their homeland, China, and America’s demand for their cheap labor led to a Chinese labor migration across the Pacific (Takaki, 1989). This cheap and industrious labor force was also mobilized in the transcontinental railroad construction on the Pacific Coast areas.

The Chinese laborers were not welcomed, and they were categorized as Orientals (Yu, 2001). As the number of Chinese increased and Chinese towns were formed, they came to be regarded as threats to white America (Lee, 1999; Yu, 2001). By 1870, approximately 63,000 Chinese were living in the United States, and 77% of them were living in California (Takaki, 1989). Chinese were no longer regarded as merely foreign workers who would stay temporarily in America. They were regarded as aliens with a foreign nature who were present in America (Lee, 1999). Lee (1999) distinguishes the foreign object and the alien object, and argues that the Chinese became alien objects, rather than merely foreign objects, as follows:

“Foreign” refers to that which is outside or distant, while “alien” describes things that are immediate and present yet have a foreign nature or allegiance...Only when the foreign is present does it become alien. The alien is always out of place, therefore disturbing and dangerous. The difference between the alien and the merely foreign is exemplified by the difference between the immigrant and the tourist (p. 3).

In the mid-19th and the early 20th century, industrialization and colonization led not only to global labor migration, but also to massive immigration into America (Yu, 2001). In this period, the number of Asian immigrants from China and Japan rapidly increased (Takaki, 1989; Yu, 2001). Along with the influx of Asians onto American soil, integration of the Asian aliens as American citizens became a huge political and social issue (Lowe, 1996). Just as Lowe (1996) argues that, since the middle of the 19th century, “the American citizen has been defined over against the Asian immigrant, legally, economically, and culturally” (p. 4), Asians and Asian Americans have been identified as unassimilable Others. Immigrant exclusion laws implemented to keep the Asian immigrants’ status as aliens and control their citizenship have contributed to the assumed unassimilability of Asian immigrants.

The first wave of Asian immigration occurred between the California gold rush of 1849 and the Immigration Act of 1924 (Takaki, 1989, 1994). Large-scale migration of Chinese and Japanese followed during this period. However, the Immigration Act of 1924 created a quota system that limited annual immigration from particular countries. This annual quota system severely restricted non-white immigrants, and prohibited Asian immigration in order to preserve American homogeneity (Lowe, 1996; Takaki, 1989, 1994). Four decades after the anti-immigrant legislation in 1924, the exclusion of Asian immigrants was ended by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, and the second wave of Asian immigration occurred (Park, 2005; Takaki, 1998). This Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 abolished the former national quota system, so that large-scale migration of Asians was resumed. Most post-1965 Asian immigrants came not only from China and Japan, but also from South Korea, the Philippines, South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. These new immigrant groups diversified already existing Asian-descent groups (Lowe, 1996).

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 also caused an unprecedented influx of Asian women immigrants. America's encounter with Oriental women first occurred with the influx of Chinese laborers and immigrants in mid-19th century (Shah; 1997; Takaki, 1989; Uchida, 1998). Most of the Chinese women first entering California were prostitutes. America's first encounter with these Chinese prostitutes was the starting point of Oriental women's stereotype as seductive and sinister women (Shah, 1997). Uchida (1998) argues that the influx of Chinese prostitutes was a product of the "capitalist interests, racial discrimination, and the immigration policy in the United States" (p. 163). Chinese cheap laborers were not allowed to bring their wives and

children to the United States because their family increased their labor costs. However, it was not only because of increasing cost that Chinese families were discouraged. It was also because American-born Asian babies holding citizenship were seen as potential threats to white America (Uchida, 1998). Thus, instead of wives, Chinese prostitutes were brought to the United States. Later, the influx of prostitutes from China and other Asian countries was prohibited by the Page Act of 1875, and the number of Asian women in America was much lower than the number of Asian men (Lee, 1999; Takaki, 1989).

In addition to Asian prostitutes, WWII war brides coming from Asia caused another direct encounter between America and Oriental women (Tien, 2000; Uchida, 1998). The War Brides Act of 1945 allowed American servicemen to bring their wives not only from European countries and but also from Asian countries, mostly China and Japan (Tien, 2000). In contrast to the earlier seductive and sinister images of Oriental prostitutes, the influx of Asian war brides created different images of Oriental women. According to Uchida (1998), images of Oriental women as submissive wives and perfect homemakers with male-pleasing attributes were created and diffused. However, Uchida (1998) argues that although these two images of Oriental women seem to be opposite, both represent the same image of woman existing for male pleasure in the private sphere as a wife and in the public sphere as a whore. By the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Asian women were more severely restricted by exclusion and immigrant laws than Asian men.

Orientalist Racialization after the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 changed the racial and ethnic composition of the United States (Lowe, 1996; Okihiro, 2014; Takaki, 1998). Under the

1965 Immigration Act, the influx of new Asian immigrants occurred, and the Asian immigrants have legally been transformed to American citizens. This liberalization of immigration law abolished exclusion immigration laws and prohibited racialized labor exploitation and disenfranchisement prohibited (Lowe, 1996). However, this integration of the differentiated Asian people has been a deceptive project used to construct an inclusive American national identity (Lowe, 1996). Lowe (1996) points out that this national project was making America “a simulacrum of inclusiveness” (p. 5).

Orientalism has been used to define the West through polarizing distinctive features of the East and the West. In Orientalist discourse, Western representations of the Orient produce not only objects of the “Orientalizing gaze” but also subjects (re)producing the “Orientalized” representations (Aoki, 1996). In other words, the West has been constituted through its creation of the East as different and Other.

The Oriental Other has played a crucial role in establishing national identities of modern America (Aoki, 1996; Goldberg, 2002). David Theo Goldberg (2002), describing race as “one of the central conceptual inventions of modernity” (p. 3), argues that racial classification is constitutive of the formation of the modern nation state. According to him, the modern state is a homogenizing state, and that makes inevitable the racializing practice of identifying Others. Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) also conceptualize race as a politically contested site, and argue that the nation state is the preeminent site of racial contestation. Describing racial formation as a “sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (p. 55), they examine how particular groups have been racially created and how their racial

identities and meanings have been changed in American society as a result of political struggle.

According to Omi and Winant (1994), race is a social construction, and racial classification, which determines racial categories, is a political and cultural process. For example, the racial category “Asian American” was created in the 1960s, and it has been used in the U.S. to designate pan-Asian racialized identity (Espiritu, 1992; Lopez and Espiritu, 1990). In the same period, along with the new formation of the Asian-American racial category, the term “model minority” was coined and has been used to characterize Asian American identities ever since.

Model Minority Discourse

By the 1960s, Asians and Asian Americans had been the targets of explicit white racism for over a century. In the mainstream media, their bodies had been represented as alien and threatening - the pollutant, the “coolie,” the “yellow peril,” and the “gook” (Lee, 1999; Ono & Pham, 2009). Given racial discrimination and these pre-existing negative stereotypes of Asian Americans as Asian and foreign, the recrafting of their image as a positive model minority group in the 1960s was remarkable. Since sociologist William Petersen’s (1966) praise for their embodiment of the “American Dream,” American mainstream media helped proliferate a racialized Asian-American identity based on model minority discourse (Takaki, 1989). No matter what their ethnic origins, Asian-descended Americans’ identities have been collectively mediated within model minority discourse.

Petersen’s 1966 article titled, “Success Story, Japanese-American Style,” in *The New York Times Magazine* was the first mainstream media article praising Asian-

Americans' supposed cultural characters and their achievements in American society as a racial minority group (Osajima, 2008). A key assumption of this discourse is that Asian cultural values of education and hard work are the key to Asian-Americans' economic success in American society. The stereotype has been used to denigrate other racial minority groups (e.g. African Americans and Latino Americans) and to disregard these groups' economic and political demands.

In Petersen's article, the Japanese-American group was represented as an exemplary minority group which other racial minority groups, especially African-Americans, should emulate in order to succeed in American society. Their success was compared with African-Americans' "failure" to become a good citizen group.

Like the Negroes, the Japanese have been the object of color prejudice...And, more than any other group, they have been seen as the agents of an overseas enemy...Generally this kind of treatment as we all know these days, creates what might be termed "problem minorities"...By any criterion of good citizenship that we choose, the Japanese Americans are better than any other group in our society, including native-born whites. They have established this remarkable record, moreover, by their own almost totally unaided effort (Petersen, 1966, p. 21-22).

This Asian American model minority identity appears to be complimentary. However, Rosalind Chou and Joe Feagin (2008) argue that model minority identity is "oppressive and damaging" (p. 139). They point out four ideological functions of the myth, as follows: insulting other people of color and accenting their inferiority, reinforcing racial othering and differentiating white people from people of color, creating stressful and unrealistic expectations on a personal level, and creating stressful and unrealistic expectations on a community level. According to these four functions, the model minority identity not only influences the Asian-American group itself, but also other racial groups, including whites.

A key assumption of model minority discourse is that Asian-Americans are superior to other racial minorities, particularly African-Americans. Asian Americans' model minority identity has been used to justify African Americans' subordinate economic status and to diminish their claim to economic and political demands through civil rights movements. Their poverty and their demands for an end to structural and institutional inequalities can then be regarded as "social problems," because Asian Americans have "proved" that racial minorities can succeed in the "land of opportunities" without asking for federal support or welfare programs. In this context, the construction of Asian Americans as a model minority was a solution to the "black problem," not by providing a structure for their opportunities but by blaming them for their lack of success.

Another key assumption of model minority discourse is that the Asian-Americans are the racial group most capable of assimilating to White American culture. Chou and Feagin (2008) understand the "hyphenated" Asian American model minority identity as a product of the dominant white group's "coping skills" to maintain "white norms and folkways" (p. 138). More specifically, Asian-Americans are not only an exemplary group, giving hope of success to racial minorities, but also an "honorary white" group which is "most capable of approximating whiteness" (Palumbo-Liu, 1999, p. 153).

Because Asian Americans' economic success through subsequent educational achievements has been emphasized, Asian-American model minority identity initially appears to be linked merely to ideologies of class and social mobility. However, Doobo Shim (1998) identifies the racial ideologies underlying the model minority myth by contending that we have to understand model minority discourse as a dominant ideological strategy for the maintenance of white power regardless of class. Shim (1998)

draws on Stuart Hall's (1981) idea of a "power bloc" to prevent the possible reduction of model minority discourse to a mere class issue. According to John Fiske (1994), a power bloc consists of "alliances of social interests formed strategically or tactically to advance the interests of those who form them. A 'bloc'... is a welding together of different components for a specific purpose and it must not be misconstrued as a 'block,' or solid object" (p. 10). Hall (1986) points out the "alliances between white ruling class interests and the interests of white workers against blacks" in South African politics as an example of a white power bloc. In a comparable way, Asian American identity has been racialized within the model minority discourse, and that model minority identity is a strategic product of the white power bloc forged in opposition to the newly emerging alliance of blacks in the 1960s.

The Oriental Family and Traditional Family Values in the Reagan and Bush Era

Asian-American model minority identity persisted through the post-civil rights era and into Reagan-era America. In these different economic, political, and cultural situations, economic success through educational achievement, and explanations of this success based on Asian cultural values, continued to be the "core elements of the original model thesis" (Osajima, 2008, p. 219). Additionally, Asian-American families and their cultural values became the center of rearticulated model minority discourse. Fox Butterfield (1986) attributed their academic and economic success to Confucian culture and family values, as follows:

The belief that people can always be improved by proper effort and instruction is a basic tenet of Confucianism. This philosophy, propounded by the Chinese sage in the fifth century B.C., in time became a dynamic force not only in China but also in Korea, Japan and Vietnam, sanctifying the family and glorifying education... The importance of the sanctity of the family and education are themes that recur in interviews with successful Asian-Americans (p. EDUC 18).

Political conservatives mobilized Asian-American families and their cultural values as a key means to justify the Reagan administration's conservative "revolution." Critical scholars (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Osajima, 2008; Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Takaki, 2008; Wu, 2002) have interrogated the conservative appropriation of model minority discourse. In particular, Keith Osajima (2008), comparing political implications of Asian-American model minority images between the 1960s and the 1980s, explains how Asian-American families' cultural values became the focal point of model minority discourse in the Reagan era:

Praise for the Asian American family is a consistent part of a broader conservative perspective that blames many of today's social problems on the deterioration of the family. President Reagan's attacks on abortion and school busing, and his support for school prayer and tuition tax credits have been made in the name of restoring strength to the family and community. That many of these policies constitute direct attacks on programs originally designated to benefit racial minorities speaks to the subtle manner in which the elevation of family is actually a code word to disguise underlying racial concern (p. 220).

To better understand the conservative appropriation of Asian-American families and their cultural values, we have to situate the rearticulation of model minority discourse within the economic and political context of the post-civil rights era. In the 1970s, following the failure of Keynesian economics, the U.S. economy encountered stagflation, which refers to an economic situation of high inflation and a high unemployment rate, slowing growth of the economy. Revitalization of the American economy became an urgent problem for the Reagan administration, which accepted a neoliberalist economic rationale which took the form of "deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision" (Harvey, 2007, p. 3). Neoliberal economics remained a powerful force until the end of the presidency policies of George H. W. Bush.

As a group, African Americans were the racial minority most vulnerable to the Reagan administration's neoliberal economic and political policies. While African Americans' economic and political hardships were arguably worsened by "Republican-controlled and directed socio-political policies" (Hartlep, 2013, p. 201), those hardships were "interpreted in terms of entrepreneurial virtues or personal failings" (Harvey, 2007, p. 65). Political conservatives blamed African-Americans' dependency on affirmative action programs and governmental subsidies (Takaki, 2008), pointing to alleged "traditional" American values as a key solution to the African Americans' economic hardships.

One way to understand the rearticulation of the model minority myth within the discourse of family values is to explore how racial identity played a key role in constructing dominant narrative of 1992 Los Angeles riots. Between April 29th and May 4th, more than 50 people died, and more than 2,000 people were injured in the riots (CNNLibrary, 2014). In addition, over 1000 buildings were damaged, and damage to property was estimated at over \$1 billion (CNNLibrary, 2014). Most people remember the 1992 Los Angeles riots in terms of relations between black and white because the riots ostensibly took place following the Rodney King incident. The video images of Rodney King being beaten by white police officers and the subsequent acquittal of those officers appeared as the main triggers of the riot.

However, this urban uprising can also be seen as a key social response to the Reagan and Bush administration's conservative and neoliberal policies (Fiske, 1994; Giroux, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994; Palumbo-Liu, 1999). Advocates of conservative and neoliberal policies blamed liberal social welfare policies, and asserted laissez-faire

doctrine (Omi & Winant, 1994). More specifically, they supported withdrawal of affirmative action and government social programs designed to relieve the economic and political disadvantages of minority groups. Henry Giroux (1994) also argues that “liberal and conservative discourses become complicitous with the underlying conditions that created the uprising” (p. 72). In spite of the influences of conservative and neoliberal policies on African Americans’ harsh economic conditions, their alleged lack of traditional American values was regarded as the key reason for their economic hardships and the root of the uprising. In his analysis of the 1992 Los Angeles riots, John Fiske (1994) paid particular attention to how former Vice President Dan Quayle’s speech on the uprising revealed a bigoted understanding of the Los Angeles uprising. The following is a partial excerpt from Quayle’s speech delivered at the Commonwealth Club of California on May 1992.

I believe the lawless social anarchy which we saw is directly related to the breakdown of family structure, personal responsibility and social order in too many areas of our society...And right now, the failure of our families is hurting America deeply. When families fail, society fails. The anarchy and lack of structure in our inner cities are testament to how quickly civilization falls apart when the family foundation cracks. Children need love and discipline. They need mothers and fathers. A welfare check is not a husband. The state is not a father. It is from parents that children learn how to behave in society; it is from parents above all that children come to understand values and themselves as men and women, mothers and fathers. And for those concerned about children growing up in poverty, we should know this: marriage is probably the best anti-poverty program of all. (Quayle, 1992).

According to Fiske (1994), Quayle regarded “the collapse of traditional family values” as the reason for African Americans’ economic hardships and the root of the uprising. In particular, under the guise of traditional family values, the heterosexual nuclear family with children and strict gendered roles as fathers and mothers were mobilized not only to shift the blame for the economic hardships of African Americans,

but also to reproduce and reinforce the dominant ideologies of class, race, gender, and sexuality (Fiske, 1994).

But, the 1992 Los Angeles riots were not merely a product of conflicts between black and white: A group of Asian Americans was also deeply involved. Given that the main targets of the riots were Korean Americans and their stores, we have to understand this event beyond the black and white binary paradigm of race. More specifically, an event involving an Asian American woman is instructive to understand the rearticulation of the model minority myth. Along with the Rodney King incident, the Latasha Harlins incident also provoked African Americans' rage. Harlins, a teenage African-American girl, was shot and killed by a middle-aged Korean-American female grocer Soon Ja Du because Du alleged Harlins stole a bottle of orange juice. This incident was recorded by a security camera, and the video of Harlins' struggle with Du and her death was made available to the public. Brenda Stevens (2013) describes the Latasha Harlins incident as follows:

15-year-old Latasha Harlins walked into the Empire Liquor Market located at 9172 South Figueroa Street in Compton, California. Within the course of five short minutes, she lay dying in front of the store's counter, bleeding from a single, close-range gunshot wound to the back of her head...The shop owner's wife, Soon Ja Du, sat crouched on top of the top of the counter, trying to see where Harlins had fallen. The middle-aged woman's face already was beginning to swell and discolor from the brief, but violent, struggle between the two that began when the storekeeper accused her young customer of trying to steal a \$1.79 bottle of orange juice. Two useless dollars meant to pay for the juice sat crumpled in the still girl's left hand (p. xv).

Harlins, along with King, became "a signifier of their oppression" (Fiske, 1994, p. 159). However, this Harlins incident was different. The people involved were women and people of color. No males and no whites were involved in this incident. In addition,

Du, who killed the African-American girl, was identified as a “mother, wife, and shopkeeper” (Stevens, 2013, p. xvi).

The incident provides more complicated perspectives on how Asian Americans were involved in the Los Angeles riots. This unusual violence of an Asian-American mother, wife, and shopkeeper against an African-American girl was strategically used to facilitate conservatives’ ideological backlash against economic and political demands of African Americans. Fiske’s (1994) analysis of presiding Judge Joyce Karlin’s sentencing logic showed how dominant ideologies closely linked to family values were reinforced through a “strategic alliance by which Korean store owners are allied with whites and promote white interests” (p. 161). In particular, Du’s fatal action against Harlins was justified as an action to protect her family. Judge Karlin sentenced Du with payment of Harlins’ funeral expenses, four hundred hours of community service, a five-hundred dollar fine, and five years of probation. Fiske (1994) argues that the logic of this “lightening sentence” without imprisonment is that “her act was motivated by family values and her maternal desire to protect her son” (p. 160). According to Fiske (1994), Judge Karlin’s sentencing logic is grounded in a “discourse of ‘family values’” (p. 160). In this discourse, the Asian-American female grocer Du is portrayed as “a good mother and a conscientious business owner” (p. 161).

Just as Asian-American model minority identity was created and used to diminish African Americans’ economic and political demands and maintain white privileges in the 1960s and 70s, the Asian-American model minority, which was rearticulated within the discourse of family values, was also mobilized to serve the interest of the white dominant groups in the Reagan and Bush era (Fiske, 1994; Palumbo-Liu, 1999). More specifically,

the status as model minority “allies them with whites” and “prove[s] that the cause of Black failure lies in African America and not in European America” (Fiske, 1994, p. 162). Fiske (1994) argues that Asian Americans were understood as “bootstrappers” and “keen to hitch their wagon to white Republicans” (p. 162).

American Multiculturalism

Now America prides itself as a multicultural nation. In contrast to the melting pot paradigm requiring immigrants from diverse backgrounds to shed their ancestral identities and to accept American core values, American multiculturalism values and promotes a diverse population with a diversified culture (Kivisto & Rundblad, 2000; Takaki, 2008). American multiculturalism emerged in the 1970s and spread widely in the 1980s, and is closely related to the new racial and ethnic relations that emerged in the 1960s (Chae, 2008; Goldberg, 2002; Kivisto & Rundblad, 2000; Melamed, 2006). Kivisto and Rundblad (2000) argue that the end of legalized racial segregation and discrimination and the reinstatement of mass immigration contributed to the America’s multicultural character. In that era, the civil rights movement challenged the American color line initially understood in terms of black and white divisions. Civil rights laws were introduced to prevent racial segregation and overt discrimination. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 increased African Americans’ educational and employment opportunities, and increased the number of middle class African Americans in the population (Kivisto & Rundblad, 2000). In addition, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 contributed to the increased number of African-American politicians elected to public office (Kivisto & Rundblad, 2000). However, despite the well-intentioned legal interventions, educational and economic disparity between blacks and whites still exists, and white privileges are still

prevalent in post-civil rights America (Ansell, 2000; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Feagin, 2010; Wise, 2010).

American multiculturalism appears to celebrate cultural diversity, yet American multiculturalism's "tendency to shift attention from racial contexts to cultural terrains" works to conceal pervasive structural and institutional inequalities (Chae, 2008, p. 2). In other words, in the multicultural paradigm, people tend to attribute social inequality to culturally different attributes of different cultural groups, rather than to existing structural inequities. In addition, multiculturalism's focus on cultural differences conceals or minimizes subordinate groups' political activism and history (Gunew, 1997). Regarding this tendency, Henry Giroux (1995) problematizes the multicultural dismissal of still remaining racial inequalities.

Two issues are often overlooked in current public discussions of multiculturalism. On one hand there are the systemic, economic, political, and social conditions that contribute to the domination of many subordinate groups. On the other hand, too little attention is paid to the sundry struggles subordinate groups undertake through the development of counternarratives that make them the subject rather than the object of history (p. 117).

A number of scholars acknowledge the continuing and still systemic racism in post-civil rights America. Joe Feagin (2010) suggests the "white racial frame" as a new paradigm to replace conventional social science approaches to explain America's current institutionalized racism. Feagin (2010) conceptualizes the white racial frame as the "broad, persisting, and dominant racial frame that has rationalized racial oppression and inequality and thus impacted all U.S. institutions" (p. ix). One of the main mechanisms preserving the white racial frame is the myth of American colorblindness. Feagin (2010) points out that colorblindness is a significant feature of the white racial frame occurring during and after the Civil Rights movement, as follows:

One change in the common version of the white frame was the removal of the idea of Jim Crow segregation as essential for white dominance and the adding of a linguistic veneer of “we are colorblind” rhetoric. In many ways, however, this new colorblind rhetoric has just papered over what are still blatantly racist views of Americans of color that have continued in most whites’ framing of this society (p. 97).

The rationale behind American society’s presumed colorblind character is that racism is no longer a barrier to socioeconomic success in post-civil rights America (Ansell, 2000; Feagin, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Wise, 2010). This notion implies that governmental policies should disregard race as a factor because individual success and failure are based on the content of individual character, rather than skin color (Ansell, 2000). In particular, this tendency to blame individuals for the social inequality that harms them is prevalent in conservative New Right racial discourse on the subject of affirmative action (Ansell, 2000).

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2014) points to “colorblind racism” as a dominant racial ideology in contemporary America. Bonilla-Silva (2014) argues that whites have developed powerful explanations to justify the racial inequality in post-civil rights America, and these explanations have emanated from the ideology of colorblindness. In particular, his comparison between Jim Crow racism and colorblind racism illuminates how colorblind ideology has been able to persist in the American racial order in nonracial ways:

Much as Jim Crow racism served as the glue for defending a brutal and overt system of racial oppression in the pre-civil rights era, color-blind racism serves today as the ideological armor for a covert and institutionalized system in the post-civil rights era. And the beauty of this new ideology is that it aids in the maintenance of white privilege without fanfare, without naming those who it subjects and those who it rewards (p. 3-4).

In discussing colorblind America, a number of scholars acknowledge that whites, especially those among the elite, have used other racial minorities (e.g. Latino and Asian

Americans) to maintain the existing racial order (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Feagin, 2010; Kim, 1999; Kivisto & Rundblad, 2000). Feagin (2010) refers to the representation of Asian Americans' as a "model minority" as a "significant addition to the contemporary white frame" (p. 115). In addition, he argues that influential whites in academia, the media, and the political arena have created an Asian-American image that serves the interests of whites in the American racial hierarchy. Bonilla-Silva (2014) similarly argues that favorable Asian Americans' representations have contributed to preserving American racial order in the presumably colorblind America. He argues that whites will "no longer work alone in preserving the racial order" (2014, p. 311), because Asian Americans, labeled as "honorary whites," will do "a lot of the dirty work of policing racial boundaries and disciplining those in the collective black" (2014, p. 311). Vijay Prashad (2000, pp. 6-7) also claims that Asian American identity has been "a solution for black America" as well as "a weapon in the war against black America." Prashad also argues that "white America can take its seat, comfortable in its liberal principles, surrounded by state-selected Asians" (2000, p. 6).

Claire Kim (1999) develops the concept of "racial triangulation" to go beyond the black and white paradigm that preceded post-1965 demographic changes. In this new triangular paradigm, Asian Americans are still positioned as superior to blacks, but they are regarded as foreign and unassimilable to the ruling white society (Kim, 1999). She argues that Asian Americans have been triangulated vis-à-vis blacks and whites to reinforce the assertion of colorblindness with the protection of white privilege. Culture is at the center of this racial triangulation. Kim (1999) insists that different racial positions in the racial triangle have now been "rearticulated in cultural terms" instead of "asserting

the intrinsic racial superiority of certain groups over others” (p. 117). For example, Asian Americans’ “cultural values of diligence, family solidarity, respect for education, and self-sufficiency” have been valorized relative to alleged pathological elements of black culture (Kim, 1999).

The use of Asian Americans in discourse of American colorblindness facilitates the ideological work of preserving racial order in post-civil rights America. Their involvement is rooted in the influx of immigrants and the unprecedented diversity in America as shaped by the Immigration and National Act of 1965. A key feature of this act is the abolishment of the national-origin quota system, which favored European immigrants. The overthrow of this quota system resulted in a great increase in the number of Asian immigrants, which created a “second wave” of Asian immigration (Park, 2005) following the previous import of railway and Hawaiian plantation workers from Asia in the late 19th and early 20th century.

American demographic change following the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 heralded the advent of a diverse American society. While the percentages of whites and blacks in the overall population has continuously decreased, the numbers of Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans have dramatically increased due to this liberal immigration policy (Kivisto & Rundblad, 2000). Takaki (2008) also argues that this expanding racial diversity has challenged the traditional master narrative of American history, which was grounded in the black and white paradigm.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, neoliberalism has emerged as the dominant global economic paradigm (Steger & Roy, 2010). Neoliberalism is generally regarded as an economic and political set of reforms advocating less government intervention and

more individual freedom in economic activities. However, neoliberalism is not restricted to economic and political relations. A number of scholars acknowledge its connection to ideological power relations (Duggan, 2003; Giroux, 2004; Harvey, 2007; Melamed, 2006; Omi & Winant, 1994). In the neoliberal era, free market logic influences many aspects of everyday life. Giroux (2004) understands neoliberalism as an ideology that is “buoyed by the spirit of a market fundamentalism” (p. xxii). Duggan (2003) also argues that neoliberalism “cannot be abstracted from race and gender relations, or other cultural aspects of the body politic” (p. 16).

Understanding these ideological practices requires knowledge of the key features of neoliberalism as an economic and political project. Political geographer David Harvey (2007) defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). The ascendancy of neoliberalism in the 1980s is closely linked to the economic crisis of the 1970s (Harvey, 2007). In response to Keynesian economic policies and welfarism, neoliberals privilege market relations, deregulation, privatization, and consumerism to overcome economic recession (Giroux, 2004). In other words, neoliberal economic and political policies promote free market capitalism, individual entrepreneurial freedom, and less government intervention.

Neoliberalism reproduces economic inequality, as upward distribution of capital and wealth is one of its key features (Harvey, 2007; Giroux, 2004). Harvey (2007) points out neoliberalism’s influence on economic inequality. He unveils the operation of neoliberalism as an economic and political project to remove the “economic threat to the

position of ruling elites and classes” (p. 15), and to restore the “power of economic elites” (p. 19). According to Giroux (2004), under neoliberal regimes, “social contract with its emphasis on enlarging the public good and expanding social provisions” (p. xv) is under attack. Neoliberal regimes dismantle the “historically guaranteed social provision provided by the welfare state” (Andrews & Silk, 2012, p. 7). Duggan (2003) also points out the “privatization of the costs of social reproduction” (p. 14) through the valorization of privatization and personal responsibility. That is, privatization of the social sector and, subsequently, the dismantling of social services for the poor cause economic inequalities. In general, this dismantling of the welfare state disproportionately affect the poor, people of color, and women.

Under neoliberal restructuring, American racial politics entered a new phase in the 1990s (Omi & Winant, 1994). According to Omi and Winant (1994), this new racial politics should be understood as “the emerging hegemony of the racial project of neoliberalism” (p. 147). This neoliberal racial project is an attempt to “rearticulate the neoconservative and new right racial projects” of the Reagan and Bush era in a centrist frame (Omi and Winant, 1994, p. 147). Omi and Winant (1994) explain the American racial project of the 1990s, as follows:

Both as political strategy and as cultural initiative, the neoliberal racial project is consolidating as the new form of racial hegemony in the 1990s. In its structural dimension it is designed to rearticulate the neoconservative and new right racial politics of the Reagan-Bush years in a more benign, mildly progressive politics of redistribution. . . In its signifying or representational dimension, the neoliberal project avoids (as far as possible) framing issues or identities racially (p. 148).

Giroux (2004) also points out neoliberalism’s effects on these new racial politics. Neoliberalism privatizes all aspects of society including racism (Giroux, 2004; Omi & Winant, 1994). Giroux (2004) conceptualizes this privatization of racial discourse as

neoliberal racism which, he argues, “can imagine public issues only as private concerns” (p. 58). In other words, neoliberal racism denies the concept of institutional racism and refuses collective and social efforts to remove racial inequalities because racism is relegated to individual prejudices or psychological dispositions rather than being understood as the result of institutional forces (Giroux, 2004). In this context, racial inequality is “largely defined as a function of personal choices” (Giroux, 2004, p. xviii), and individual freedom “becomes an exercise in self-development rather than social responsibility” (p. 62).

Culture facilitates the nexus of race and capitalism in neoliberal restructuring of economic institutions. In discussions of both Omi and Winant’s (1994) neoliberal racial project and Giroux’s (2004) neoliberal racism, the commonality of views is that cultural differences replace racial differences. In particular, multiculturalism not only prevents us from seeing and understanding our racial reality, but also attributes the difficulties people of color encounter to their cultural differences. Jodi Melamed (2006) points to the co-construction of neoliberalism and multiculturalism, and argues that the logic of multiculturalism “masks the centrality of race and racism to neoliberalism” (p. 1). According to her, American multiculturalism, which spread widely in the 1980s, has been deployed to justify neoliberal goals, and this deployment of American multiculturalism perpetuates racial hierarchies in American society. That is, American multiculturalism makes neoliberal regimes appear fair and obscures racial inequalities on which the neoliberal regimes depend (Melamed, 2006).

American multiculturalism is a predominant ideology of post-civil rights America. Although it may conceal the reality of racial relations and pernicious forms of racism,

most Whites and other Americans see current racial relations in America through the lens of American multiculturalism. The resulting common sense about race in America is reinforced through various cultural practices. In particular, corporate marketing campaigns perpetuate common-sense multiculturalism in post-civil rights America (Dávila, 2012; Kim & Chung, 2005), as that has been the case for groups of Asian descent in the U.S.

Marketing Difference

Arlene Dávila (2012) claims that ethnic marketing commercializes the cultures of racial and ethnic minority groups, and that dominant representations of these groups in multicultural advertising campaigns reproduce the social hierarchy and power relations in American society. Although she primarily focuses on Latino marketing, she also examines commercialization of the cultures of other minority groups. She argues that ethnic marketing reflects “fears and anxieties of mainstream U.S. society about its others,” and therefore reiterates the “demands for an idealized, good, all-American citizenship in their constructed commercial images and discourse” (2012, p. 218). Thus, she warns that, although images of racial minority groups have been pervasive, we should not equate increased visibility of racial and ethnic minorities in advertising campaigns with their political empowerment (Dávila, 2012).

Among American minorities, those of Asian-descent have appeared much more frequently in media and advertising than they did before the 1990s (Dávila, 2012; Kim & Chung, 2005). While Asian-descent persons had been invisible and marginalized on media and in advertising campaigns, the rapid increase of Asian immigrants throughout the 1980s and 1990s and their influence as potential consumers led to increased

representation of Asian-descent characters in various advertising campaigns (Dávila, 2012; Kim & Chung, 2005). However, this representation has often been biased and misleading. The Asian population is heterogeneous, and, thus, Asian-descent Americans are heterogeneous in terms of their cultures. However, they have been represented by their alleged cultural commonalities. To achieve a monolithic representation of this highly diverse population, marketers have used “family orientation, respect for elders and authority, hardworking disposition, high level of education” (Dávila, 2012, p. 228). In other words, Asian-descent people have been represented as an affluent and well-educated model minority group with entrepreneurial attitudes (Dávila, 2012).

Kim and Chung (2005) primarily focus on representations of Asian-descent people in multicultural advertising campaigns. They describe multiculturalism as a clever marketing strategy, and argue that artificial images of racial minorities celebrate the “general openness of ‘color-blind’ Americans to the rich cultural traditions of different racial groups” (p. 72). In particular, Kim and Chung examine how Asian-descent women’s images from various magazine advertisements draw upon racialized and gendered stereotypes of submissive and exotic Oriental women, and argue that the visual consumption of their bodies, under the guise of American multiculturalism, highlights the “supremacy and positionality of White men within the global order” (p. 73).

The emergence of racial minorities in mainstream media and advertising campaigns is no longer a new phenomenon in post-civil rights and multicultural America. While commodification of the minority groups’ culture appears to be a valorization of their different ways of life, the racial representations actually reinforce the alleged extinction of racism (Dávila, 2012; Giroux, 2004; Kim & Chung, 2005). Giroux (2004)

argues that the “spectacle of racial representations” relegates the “importance of race and enduring fact of racism...to the dustbin of history” (p. 56).

The growing media visibility of racial minority athletes encourages belief in the alleged collapse of the American color line. Giroux (2004) refers to former professional basketball player Michael Jordan and boxer George Foreman as African American celebrities whose images have enabled the public to believe in color-blind and multicultural America. More specifically, he claims that their images have been used to give “market legitimacy to everything from gas grills to high-end luxury cars to clothes” (2004, p. 56). McDonald (1996) also points out the increasing presence of African American athletes and their roles as corporate endorsers throughout the 1980s and 1990s. For example, she refers to Michael Jordan’s body as one of the most visible and celebrated black bodies in America, and argues that his representations have not only reinforced the myth of color-blind America, but have also justified the politically regressive climate of post-Reagan America.

In this post-Reagan era, Asian American athletes have been more frequently represented in media than ever before, and their images have been used to promote products and brands. Michael Chang, who is regarded as the first Asian American celebrity athlete, was portrayed as the future of American tennis even before he won the 1989 French Open. After his French Open victory, he had sponsorship deals with multiple brands (e.g. Reebok, Prince, P&G, Discover Card, Eveready, and Nissan). In addition, images of him were used in advertisements to promote various products. After Chang, the growing presence of Asian American athletes (e.g. Kristi Yamaguchi, Amy Chow, Michelle Kwan, Michelle Wie, and Jeremy Lin) in the media and advertising

campaigns has ceased to be an extraordinary phenomenon. The increased media attention to Asian American athletes and their visibility in multiple advertisements in the post-Reagan era were not coincidental. Given the ideological functions of the mediated images of Asian Americans in the allegedly colorblind and multicultural America, the cultural meanings attributed to Asian American sport celebrities is worth exploring.

CHAPTER 3: THE EMERGENCE OF THE ASIAN-AMERICAN SPORTING BODY:
MICHAEL CHANG AND MODEL MINORITY DISCOURSE IN THE POST-
REAGAN ERA

Michael Chang is a former professional American tennis player and an International Tennis Hall of Fame inductee. He is the youngest male player to win a Grand Slam tennis tournament, the French Open in 1989, at the age of seventeen. Chang's triumph in the 1989 French Open drew huge attention from the mainstream American media. Chang was hailed as the "next great American hope" who would succeed Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe and revive American tennis glory.

American male tennis was going through a crisis in the mid-to-late 1980s. With the end of Connors' and McEnroe's domination on the professional tennis tour, the quality and popularity of American men's tennis went into a decline. Connors' 1983 US Open title and McEnroe's 1984 US Open titles were their last victories on the Tennis Grand Slam circuit (the Australian Open, the French Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open). After McEnroe won both Wimbledon and the US Open in 1984, no American male player won any Grand Slam tournaments until Chang raised the French Open trophy over his head in 1989. Chang became one of America's promising young tennis players, along with Andre Agassi, Jay Berger, Jim Courier, and Pete Sampras. All four tennis pros received a surge of media attention and all were expected to succeed Connor and McEnroe (see Alfano, 1988; Jenkins, 1988; Shuster, 1989).

Chang, along with these other young players, was at the center of a media "guessing game" to discover the next great American tennis hope. Given the peripheral position of Asian American athletes in American sports, the visibility of Chang in the

mainstream media and television advertisements can be seen as a sign of progressive social change. Further, during his athletic career, he had sponsorship deals with Reebok apparel and shoe, Prince tennis racquet, Discover credit card, Eveready alkaline batteries, and Cathay Pacific Airlines. As an endorser of products or brands, he appeared in multiple commercials in television and magazines.

However, his Asian heritage resulted in racialized media narratives and advertising copy compared to those white players on the tour. His racial identity was at the center of the media scrutiny as they worked to find the next great American tennis hope. A *New York Times* article anticipated that “the responsibility for the end of the decline in American tennis” would be held “in the hands of a Hoboken-born son of Chinese parents” (Moran, 1987, p. B11). This article also pointed out that Chang’s “Oriental culture” is what made the Chinese American boy so promising. After Chang’s 1989 French Open win, the media focused more blatantly on his racial and ethnic differences. Another *New York Times* article covered Chang’s Taiwanese background, his parents’ immigration stories, and his bilingual family setting (Montgomery, 1989). For example, the following issues were discussed: how Chang had identified himself in the two different American and Taiwanese cultures; how Chang had felt about the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989; and his family’s immigration stories, including his maternal and paternal grandfathers’ journey from Taiwan to the United States.

Just as the mainstream media focused on Chang’s Asian heritage, commercials starring Chang were filled with Orientalist representations and tropes. In 1995, Reebok released a commercial titled “Wall of Chang.” This commercial begins with a scene of the Great Wall of China covered with clouds and mist in the heart of mountains rising one

above another. With ancient “Oriental” music playing in background, Chang’s voice is dubbed over action shots of him forcefully hitting tennis balls against the Great Wall. Chang states that, “This Wall covers a lot of ground. It goes on forever. Nothing gets passed. So every time I play, I try to be a wall. I am Michael Chang. This is my planet.” In this commercial, Chang’s American nationality is erased, and Orientalist representations shape Chang as a racialized other.

This chapter is about media representations of Chang in mainstream media and television advertisements. However, this study does not merely examine the blatant racism and Orientalist point of view in the media representation. The primary purposes of this chapter are to assess the cultural meanings of the mediated images of Chang within the conservative backlash climate of post-Reagan America and to offer counter narratives. Dominant media narratives of Chang appear to celebrate racial difference, cultural diversity, and the inclusiveness of American sport and American society. Focusing on narratives of mainstream printed media and television commercials, I critically read Chang as a cultural text to assess the cultural meanings attributed to him. In particular, I interrogate the ways in which the ideologies of class, race, gender, and nationality are articulated in the particular historical and cultural moment.

I contend that, to find the cultural meanings of Chang’s mediated identity in the post-Reagan era, we have to interrogate the ways his identity is articulated with class, race, gender, and nationality within the “model minority” discourse. This chapter first begins with the Orientalist stereotypes of Asian masculinity and their involvement in media narratives of Chang’s athletic performance. Second, I examine how the model minority discourse was embodied through the media representation of Chang’s Oriental

body, and I explore how his model minority identity, along with alleged traditional Asian-American family values, was used to make sense of the Oriental athletic body's success in the white-centered tennis field. Third, I examine Chang's images in various advertisements and explore how these images were easily consumable by mainstream audiences. In that section, I emphasize a series of 1990s advertisements starring Chang (e.g. Nuprin, Reebok, and Energizer).

“Is This the One?”: The Emergence of the Sporting Oriental on the Tennis Court

American media in the 1980s were desperate to find the next great American tennis hope. Promising young American tennis players drew huge media attention, and they were expected to revive American tennis. A *USA TODAY* article paid attention to young players, such as Agassi, Berger, Chang, Courier, and Sampras, as a group can bridge the “gap from the Jimmy Connors-John McEnroe era” (Shuster, 1989, p. 7C). This expectation was raised as these young players were getting tournament experiences and their rankings were getting evolving. Among them, Agassi was at the center of this media attention. He received more media coverage than other promising players. *New York Times* pointed to Agassi as “the latest American hope” who will make American tennis fans “forget about the grit and determination of Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe’s genius at the net” (Alfano, 1988a, p. D17). *Los Angeles Times* also referred to Agassi as “the leading player of the new wave” in the post Connors-McEnroe era (Dillan, 1988a, p. C15).

However, after winning the French Open in 1989, Chang displaced Agassi to occupy the position of the leading American hope. Chang's Grand Slam win preceded Agassi's first 1992 Wimbledon Grand Slam victory by three years. During this three-

year period, the media's expectation that Chang would be the American hope was at an all-time high. *Washington Post* reported that "Andre Agassi was last year's most popular 18-year-old, but 17-year-old Michael Chang has already supplanted him by winning the French Open" (Jenkins, 1989d, p. C8). In addition, one week after Chang's 1989 French Open win, a *New York Times* article focused on Johan Kriek's post-game interview about Chang, "Andre's having some problems, but this guy's got a head on his shoulders...If he keeps going like this he'll be fine. The thing on the tour, you can't let your head get big. If you start thinking you're too good, you're no good. From what I can see, Michael's keeping it together" (Montgomery, 1989, p. C1).

However, Chang's body was at the center of media suspicion about his eligibility to become the next American tennis hope. The media narrative emphasized Chang's relatively small body size and assumed his lack of power. The media had concerns about Chang's supposedly weak and fragile body. A *New York Times* article emphasized Chang's inadequacies as follows: "Chang is only 5 feet 8 inches tall and 135 pounds, and lacks the big serve and consistent power required to win on a fast surface like grass. He is at his best keeping the ball in play, trying to force mistakes" (Alfano, 1988b, p. B14). This media concern about Chang's body influenced the media narrative on his winning the French Open in 1989. When only one final match against Stefan Edberg of Sweden was left for Chang to conquer the French Open in 1989, a *Washington Post* article expressed skepticism about "whether he can make it through another match" (Jenkins, 1989c, p. B7). This article also anticipated that "it may be the most trying match of all" (Jenkins, 1989c, p. B7). However, this anticipation of Chang's struggle was not reasonable. Chang had already beaten top-seeded, world No. 1 player Ivan Lendl of

Czechoslovakia in the fourth round. While Lendl had already won three French Open titles, Edberg was first in the French Open final. Further, Chang had previously beaten Edberg in two sets (6-3, 6-2) in the 1989 Newsweek Champions Cup. Then, why did this article anticipate Chang's struggle? The rationale behind the anticipation is Chang's physically weak and fragile body. This article pointed out that both his legs were badly cramped after the match against Lendl. This article also cited his falling into a pained crouch, repeated muscle spasms in his legs, and treatment for exhaustion after his match against Andrei Chesnokov of the Soviet Union in semifinal.

This characterization of Chang reflects the Orientalist view of the Asian-descent male body. Asian American masculinity is socially constructed within Orientalist frames and subordinated with respect to white masculine supremacy (Eng, 2001; Shek, 2006). The assumption of Asian American masculinity is ingrained in the belief that the "West" is masculine, rational, and superior; by contrast, the "Orient" is feminine, irrational, and inferior (Eng, 2001; Said, 1979; Shek, 2006). That is, within the dominant views of Asian American masculinity and physicality, Asian American men have been understood as effeminate, emasculated, and unmanly, and they have been depicted as physically inferior and inept. This Orientalist view of the Asian American male body was embodied in Chang when he began receiving media attention as one of the most promising young American players. In particular, mainstream media was suspicious of the physically weak and inept Oriental athletic body's success on the tennis court where white masculine supremacy had been the norm. Then, how, despite his small and non-athletic body, did Chang win the Grand Slam tournament before other promising young American players? Media answered this question themselves by pointing out multiple

advantages Chang supposedly held: playing on a clay court, Chang's defensive playing style, and new racquet technology.

Media narratives pointed out that Chang probably benefitted from playing on a clay court. The French Open is the only Grand Slam tournament using clay courts. The Australian Open and the U.S. Open use hard courts, and the Wimbledon uses grass courts. In general, the clay court is known to slow down the ball in comparison with grass or hard courts, reducing the advantages of powerful serve-and-volley players. Accordingly, the features of clay courts were used to disparage Chang's win in the French Open. After Chang's fourth round win against number one ranked Ivan Lendl, a *Washington Post* article reported that "It is important to note that his victory over Lendl came on clay, which hides some deficiencies in Chang's game. He still lacks variety, hitting everything at the same brutal pace, or with heavy topspin, and his serve is average at best" (Jenkins, 1989a, p. D1). However, Chang already had showed his potential on hard courts, becoming the youngest player ever to win a U.S. Open match in 1987. Also, given Lendl's three French wins in 1984, 1986, and 1987, the supposition that Chang's French Open win was due to the clay court is unfounded. Nevertheless, this prejudiced media narrative was pervasive, even after Chang won the 1989 French Open. Two weeks after the French Open final, another *Washington Post* article reported that "few are sure that Chang's game is broad enough yet to compete on the slippery grass, not just the neutralizing clay of Roland Garros in Paris" (Jenkins, 1989b, p. E1). A *Los Angeles Times* article also disparaged Chang's winning of French Open by reporting that "Chang's victory over Edberg in the French Open final was on a clay court, but he has proven vulnerable on grass" (Bonk, 1989c, p. B1). In particular, this article focused on

Ion Tiriac's interview about Chang's alleged vulnerability on grass court, "He's got big trouble...It's difficult to compete against speed and power and all those things, and it doesn't matter how intelligent you are...On clay, it is a bicycle race...You have time to get to the ball. Grass is Formula One. Miss one ball and you lose a lap" (Bonk, 1989c, p. B1). The media identified Chang as a "clay court specialist," and this "reputation" remained throughout his career.

Along with the benefits of clay courts, the media pointed out that Chang's defensive playing style had enabled him to win the 1989 French Open. In contrast to offensive playing style, which is characterized by strong serve and volley, Chang's play was characterized as defensive style relying on baselining and passing shots. In addition, the media pointed out that strategic tactics of the defensive style were Chang's necessary choice to compensate for the physical limitation of his Asian body and its lack of power. A *New York Times* article reported that "Chang's methodical baseline game is ideally suited to the har-tru synthetic clay surface here, as he relied on consistency and a minimum of errors" (Alfano, 1989a, p. S2). In particular, this recognition of Chang's playing style was primarily manifested in the media narrative about his 1989 French Open's fourth round match against Lendl. *Washington Post* pointed out "retreating to a defensive position" and "looping moonballs to keep Lendl back" as key strategic tactics Chang used to defeat Lendl (Bonk, 1989a, p. E1). Chang's 1989 French Open final match was portrayed in a similar way. *Washington Post* predicted that "From a strategic standpoint, the final should be a compelling meeting of Edberg's serve and volley, and Chang's baselining" (Jenkins, 1989c, p. B7).

In addition to the features of the clay court and Chang's defensive playing style, media pointed out that Chang relied on racquet technology to compensate for his lack of power and to win a Grand Slam tournament. Two weeks after the 1989 French Open final, a *New York Times* article identified technology, opportunity, and preparation as "three primary reasons why youth is being served in tennis today" (Alfano, 1989b, p. S1). Illustrated with a picture of Chang raising the French Open trophy, this article assumes that various benefits of technology, opportunity, and preparation enabled Chang to raise the trophy. Among these reasons, the technology, more specifically, the advent of oversized heads and composition frames, is emphasized as a key reason for Chang's outstanding performance in the 1989 French Open. This article reported that "Beginning with the introduction of the Prince oversized racquet in 1976, followed by the advent of composition frames using space-age materials such as graphite and aluminum, young players are now able to compensate for a lack of size and strength with the power generated by these racquets" (Alfano, 1989b, p. S1). Following this explanation of the benefits of oversized, graphite composite racquets to young and immature players, the article represents the opinion of American tennis legend John McEnroe: "McEnroe questioned the audacity of Chang, wondering how a 17-year-old, who is 5 feet 8 inches and 135 pounds, could defeat Ivan Lendl and eventually Stefan Edberg. He figured that Chang should have crumbled like a stale cookie in the presence of two established stars" (Alfano, 1989b, p. S1). In the middle of the 1990s, many tennis racquet manufactures (e.g. Dunlop, Prince, Spalding, Weed, and Wilson) newly developed long-body racquets. This new racquet technology was also used to understand Chang's performance. A *New York Times* article reported that "Except for stretching himself on a rack, adding an extra

inch to improve his game was impossible until Prince supplied him with a 28-inch prototype racquet. At one inch longer than the standard, the Prince racquet has helped Chang's serve, reach, power and net coverage" (Sandomir, 1995, p. 13). Given constant media suspicion of Chang's body and its incomprehensible performance, racquet technology, along with the clay court and Chang's defensive playing style, can be seen as an ideological rationale perpetuating the Orientalist view of the Asian male body.

"Be Like Mike": Model Minority Discourse and Asian American Family Values

While the clay court, defensive playing style, and racquet technology are physical and material aspects of his success, elements of the model minority myth and traditional family values are involved in the cultural explanation of an Oriental body's success in tennis. The key features of the model minority myth and traditional family values as pointed out by media are intelligence, work ethic, and family cohesion and support.

Intelligence and subsequent academic success are key aspects of the model minority myth (Chou & Feagin, 2008). The alleged intelligence of Asian American populations has been used to understand their relatively higher rate of education compared to other racial minority groups, particularly African Americans. In particular, the idea that Asian Americans' educational and economic success are rooted in their inherent intelligence has been used to blame African Americans for their low rates of education and economic hardships rather than structural and institutional reasons (Chou & Feagin, 2008). Although this stereotypical idea of Asian American intelligence has been used in an educational context, this idea also provided a frame for understanding Chang's success in tennis. Given that Chang dropped out of high school in order to turn

professional, and he did not attend a college or university, this mobilization of Asian Americans' alleged intelligence is noteworthy.

Mainstream media focused on intelligence as a critical part of Chang's accomplishment. A *New York Times* article reported that "[Chang's] main strength is his fierce intelligence on the court, usually a step ahead of the competition" (Montgomery, 1989, p. C1). After Chang won the 1989 French Open semifinal, another *New York Times* article more bluntly reported the relationship between Chang's supposed intelligence and his outstanding performance. This article reported that "Chang's serves and ground strokes are not fierce, but he demonstrated again today that he relies on smarts" (Stout, 1989b, p. 47). A *USA TODAY*'s article also portrayed Chang's winning the 1989s French Open as an example showing that "tennis still has room for players who rely more on brains than brawn" (Schott, 1991, p. 3E). These articles assume that Chang's intelligence compensated for his less athletic body. In other words, media's emphasis on his alleged intelligence simply assumes his lack of athleticism. Given that African American athletes' athletic performances have been generally denigrated by their alleged natural athleticism, Chang's media narrative is opposite to the dominant media narrative on African American athletes. This stereotypical image of the Asian American athlete has remained and become even more pervasive in media representations of other Asian and Asian American athletes (Leonard, 2015; Mayeda, 1999).

A strong work ethic is a key feature of the model minority myth (Chou & Feagin, 2008). According to the model minority myth, Asian Americans are hardworking, entrepreneurial, and self-sufficient (Wu, 2002). Asian Americans have been understood as intelligent and hardworking, and their successful American dream story has become

evidence of a meritocratic American society (Osajima, 2008). Along with Asian Americans' alleged intelligence, mainstream media also used Asian Americans' work ethic to make sense of Chang's athletic success.

Chang took his career-high second rank in 1997. The media used his alleged work ethic to explain his consistent success after he had turned to pro. In particular, media representation on his winning the 1997 Legg Mason Tennis Class is noteworthy to examine media's valorization of the hard-working image. The *Washington Post* valorized "his all-American work ethic," and referred to him as a "consistent, methodical, deliberate, focused" figure (Frey, 1997, p. D11). Further, this article applauded his never-give-up spirit by stating "His greatest gift is that he never, ever gives up in a match" (Frey, 1997, p. D11). More specifically, this article pointed to a semifinal match at the 1997 Legg Mason Tennis Class as an example proving Chang's work ethic and never-give-up spirit, as follows:

Michael Chang is the antithesis of your average big-name player at the Legg Mason Tennis Class...He never tanks. Never. Not even for a set. Here's a perfect example: Last night at William H.G. FitzGerald Tennis Center, Chang was down 4-1 to Brett Steven in the second set of a semifinal match. He already had the first set in his pocket. He knew he was going to have to be back here in less than 24 hours for the final. So it wouldn't have come as much of a surprise if Chang just let the set go and saved his energy for the third. Not Chang. He held for 4-2, broke for 4-3, held for 4-4 and clawed his way to a tiebreaker, which he won, 7-4. Work done, day over. The thought of tanking the second set never even occurred to him (p. D11).

Chang was represented as a thoughtful and deliberate player, and this image of him distinguished him from more average players. A *New York Times* article also provided a similar frame for understanding Chang's success. This article juxtaposed Chang's image with a prominent American tennis pro, Andre Agassi whom Chang defeated in the 1996 U.S. Open semifinal. After the match, the media portrayed Chang's

win as a product of his work ethic. For example, this article reported that “Chang, whose frill-free work ethic is the antithesis of his opponent’s free-spirited hi-jinks, never even flinched as he wrote the event’s intended leading man, Agassi, right out of the action” (Finn, 1996, p. S1). In this article, while Agassi’s playing style was characterized by careless, unforced errors, Chang’s style was characterized by his careful, calm, and accurate serves and ground strokes. That is, media understood Chang’s ability to perform right with strong work ethic as a key element of his outstanding performance.

Along with intelligence and work ethic, traditional family values were used to make sense of Chang’s success. His success was viewed as not only an individual athlete’s success, but also the success of a son in an Asian-immigrant nuclear family. More specifically, Chang’s success on the tennis court and his subsequent economic achievement symbolized an Asian-American nuclear family’s achievement of the American Dream. Multiple articles focused on Chang parents’ immigrant stories and this Asian American family’s experiences in America (see Bonk, 1989b; Bonk, 1989d; Montgomery, 1989; Moran, 1987; Smith, 1998; Stout, 1989). For example, a *Los Angeles Times* article (Bonk, 1989d) focused on how Chang’s father Joe Chang and mother Betty Chang immigrated to the United States and how they met each other. According to this article, Joe Chang and Betty Chang met and married in 1966. Their first son, Carl Chang, was born in Hoboken, NJ in 1969, and their second son, Michael Chang, was born in 1972. In 1974, the Chang family moved to St. Paul in Minnesota because Joe took a job with 3M. This story of an immigrant family’s settlement has been at the center of Chang’s tennis success story ever since the media began paying attention to him.

This Asian-American nuclear family was understood as a firm base for Chang's athletic and economic successes, and this family's supposedly strong ties were emphasized by the media. After Chang defeated Lendl at the fourth round match in the 1989 French Open, a *Washington Post* article (Jenkins, 1989a) argued that Chang's tennis ability originated in his family and this family-oriented ability is his fundamental difference with other young prominent players. More specifically, this article reported that "If Chang differs, it may be because he has been brought up largely outside of the potentially smothering tennis circles, forgoing the standard protégé route of a tennis camp. His parents are research chemists who came to the U.S. from Taiwan. The family is extremely close, and loathe to let him leave home" (Jenkins, 1989a, p. D1). This family story was pervasive in Chang's media narrative throughout his sixteen-year career as a professional tennis player. For example, after Chang won his first match as a professional player in 1988, a *Los Angeles Times* article reported that "The Changs' family ties are more tightly strung than your average racket" (Dillman, 1988b, p. C3). This media equation of Chang's success with an immigrant family's achievement was noticeable even when Chang retired in 2003. A *New York Times* article on Chang's retirement referred to Chang's family as an "ultrawholesome Chang family" and stated that "this whole improbable tennis adventure has been a family deal" (Vecsey, 2003, p. D5).

Media regarded the Chang's family as a working group of people with common commitments to Michael's success in tennis. *Los Angeles Times* articles named the group of the family members as "Chang troika" (Dillman, 1988b, p. C3) and "Chang Gang" (Bonk, 1989b, p. B1) involved in dealing with all questions and issues. Similarly, a *New*

York Times article named the group “Team Chang” (Martinez, 1991, p. B9). Another *New York Times* article also, after Chang won the 1989 French Open, regarded the French Open and up-coming Wimbledon as “family affair[s]” (Stout, 1989a, p. D21). While reporting on the group of Chang’s family members, the media emphasized how they played important roles in supporting Chang. In particular, their sacrifice and striving for Chang’s success were emphasized. For example, a *New York Times* article reported that “It was late. Michael Chang had already lost and met with reporters, then had departed for the dressing room. But Team Chang - his father, mother and brother - was still huddled closely beneath the grandstands, as much to commiserate as to analyze” (Martinez, 1991, p. B9).

In this family narrative, the sacrifices of Chang’s parents and their conventional gendered roles were frequently valorized. Media focused on images of Joe Chang as a reliable breadwinner and a responsible head of the household, and Betty Chang as a devoted housewife and a caretaker to her children. A *Los Angeles Times* article reported that “In 1985, Joe refinanced the Changs’ house to cover the costs of travel and training. Betty arranged her household duties to free the weekends for her sons’ tennis matches. While Michael kept performing, kept advancing, he clearly felt that pressure of his family’s intense focus on his development” (Bonk, 1989d, p. O1). The media’s effort to link Chang’s success to his parents’ gendered roles was obvious.

On the one hand, the media emphasized a strong father-son relation centered on tennis with the father playing a role as his son’s long-time coach. A *Los Angeles Times* article reported that “his dad has been the primary influence on his game and his career - the major architect of an 11-year effort to develop and then market the product that is

Michael Chang” (Bonk, 1989d, p. O1). In a similar way, a *New York Times* article described his father as “a chemist who turned to coaching, then managed the family investments” (Vecsey, 2003, p. D5). A *New York Times* article pointed out the father’s coaching role as having a decisive effect on Chang’s most famous win at the 1989 French Open against number one ranked Ivan Lendl. This article reported that “His father, Joe, is his principal coach, and the two are reported to have had a long strategy session before the match with Lendl” (Stout, 1989a, p. D21). Although Chang was coached by renowned coaches, and he also had specialized coaches for different court surfaces, the media depicted Chang’s father as the most significant person for nurturing his athletic performance.

On the other hand, the media portrayed Chang’s mother, Betty Chang, as someone who balanced out Chang’s father and took care of things other than tennis. Pointing out that she traveled with Chang on tennis tours, the media depicted her as a caring and protective figure. A *New York Times* article pointed out significant support Chang received from his mom (Stout, 1989a). This article stated that “Michael’s mother, Betty, who travels with him, sets his schedule and comforts him when the pressure heats up” (p. D21). This article also specifically emphasized how she took care of her son, pointing to cooking as her primary maternal role. For example, this article reported difficulties Chang encountered during the intense tour schedule, including frequent changes in accommodations and irregular patterns of eating and sleeping. In this article, “some of Mom’s home cooking” (Stout, 1989a, p. D21) was regarded as a crucial determinant helping Chang overcome these difficulties. In a similar way, a *Washington Post* article

also reported that “Chang's mother cooks his meals on the road because if left to himself he will only eat junkburgers” (Jenkins, 1989d, p. C8).

The most dominant narratives constructed around Chang characterize him as an intelligent and hard working figure, who was inspired and supported by his family. In particular, Chang’s heterosexual and patriarchal nuclear family was explicitly or implicitly mobilized to explain a weak Oriental body’s success in tennis.

“Little, Yellow, Different, Better”: The Commodification of Michael Chang

In this section, I examine the mediated images of Michael Chang in television commercials. I mainly focus on the commercials broadcast in the 1990s for Nuprin pain reliever (1991), Reebok tennis shoes (1991), and Eveready alkaline batteries (1998). All three products display Chang as a tennis player. Given the lack of representations of Asian American professional athletes in American television advertising, the commercials are worth critical examination to discover how the Asian American stereotype was ideologically articulated in the conservative context of the time.

Released in 1991, a television commercial for Nuprin features Jimmy Connors and Chang. In those days, Chang’s appearance as a pitchman for the pain reliever caused controversy because Chang reminded many viewers of a well-known ad slogan from the recent past “Little, Yellow, Different, Better.” Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, from 1987 to 1990, had used this slogan to describe the unique shape and color of the Nuprin tablet and emphasize its efficacy. Nuprin’s rival products were Aspirin and Tylenol. The tablet size of Nuprin was smaller than those of Aspirin and Tylenol. While Aspirin and Tylenol tablets’ color was white, Nuprin’s was yellow. When Michael Chang subsequently became of spokesperson for Nuprin tablets, the slogan became linked to

Asian-American racial stereotypes. Many jokes about Asians and Asian Americans were spawned by the slogan. For example, Asian American actor and comedian Suzanne Whang, best known as the former host of the *House Hunters*, still uses the slogan on her official website (www.suzannewhang.com), and has referred to herself as “little, yellow, different, better.” In an interview with *Asiance Magazine*, she links this self-description to the Nuprin slogan: “There was a commercial a long time ago for a painkiller called Nuprin and their slogan was "Little. Yellow. Different. Better." And I thought, "Oh, that applies to me!" Little meaning petite, yellow meaning Asian, different meaning different from most of the people in Hollywood and better as my way of showing my self-confidence” (Jaymie, 2008). Another example can be found in an anonymous blogger’s comment on Slack LaLane blog site as follows: “I used to love that slogan, and I think youse all did too. I always thought Michael Chang should have been their pitchman, because, hey, doesn't that kinda describe him too?” (Cowboy, 2007).

The 1991 Nuprin commercial, which does not overtly use the slogan, is composed of conversation between Connors and Chang as follows:

Jimmy Connors: I hurt, but I will be back.
Michael Chang: I know.
Jimmy Connors: Count me out. You will make a mistake.
Michael Chang: I know, Mr. Connors.
Jimmy Connors: My doc says I have a proper body pain medicine in Nuprin
Michael Chang: My trainer, too.
Jimmy Connors: Got a Nuprin.
Michael Chang: Nupe it with Nuprin
Jimmy Connors: Strong stuff.
Michael Chang: Just take one.
Jimmy Connors: Even a young guy like you uses it.
Michael Chang: I nupe it.
Jimmy Connors: Party ain’t over, kid. Nupe it with Nuprin.

In the dominant reading of this commercial, tennis is a progressive and liberatory site and racial discrimination in tennis has become a thing of the past. A legendary white

player, Connors, is not dominant anymore. A young, non-white player, Chang, is taking a leading position in the white-centered tennis field. Chang's presence with Connors reinforces his position as the American tennis hope who will succeed Connors. In addition, this commercial was released after Chang's winning of the French Open when Chang was regarded as the most dominant, next American tennis hope.

However, this commercial can be read in different ways. It reproduces a disadvantaged and unprivileged white male figure in the conservative and backlash post-Reagan America. Further, Chang's obedient and submissive character embodies the stereotypical image of the Asian-American man as a model minority.

In the commercial, Connors is represented as a middle-aged and out-of-date tennis player. At the beginning of the ad, Connors reports his injury and promises his return to the tennis court in the near future. He also explicitly reminds the audience that his tennis career is not over. Thus, this commercial effectively uses Connors' obsolete player image to promote Nuprin pain reliever. At that time, his heyday as a professional tennis player was already over. Connors, born in 1952, was 39 years old, and his last grand slam championship had come in 1983 at the US Open. This out-of-date image of Connors is contrasted with Chang's image as a young and active player. While Chang is standing during their conversation, Connors is sitting on a chair the whole time. His inactive body raises doubts about his promise to return to the tennis court. In addition, while Chang politely calls Connors "Mr. Connors," Connors calls Chang "young guy" and "kid." One might see this as an example of how Connors redeems his white masculinity through infantilizing Chang. However, given that Chang had won the 1989 French Open and was a promising young player poised to become the next great

American tennis hope, Connors' names for Chang actually highlight his own timeworn body and the end of his career as a professional athlete.

This representation of Connors was ideologically driven in the 1990s to feature a reversal of the American racial order and the crisis of whiteness in post-civil rights America. Kusz (2007) argues that American sport media serves the "collective interests of whites" (Kusz, 2007, p. 3) to be seen as "victimized and disadvantaged social subject[s]" (Kusz, 2007, p. 2). In this commercial, for example, Connors' body is represented as old and reliant on a pain reliever to be able to play tennis. Just as Kusz (2007) examines media representations of disadvantaged and unprivileged white male athletes and the media's role in maintaining white hegemony, Connors' representation can also be seen as an example of the media's ideological participation in restoring white hegemony in American society in the 1990s.

Chang's presence with Connors makes this commercial's ideological ramifications more complicated. Chang is represented as a respectful and submissive Asian-American "kid." Connors takes the lead in this commercial, while Chang takes the secondary role as a conversation partner. While Connors leads the conversation by stating his physical conditions and confidently asserting his intent to return to the tennis court, Chang merely expresses agreement or briefly repeats what Connors has said. This acquiescent figure embodies the prototype of obedient and submissive images of Asian American stereotypes. In other words, this commercial uses a young and energetic image of Chang to emphasize Connors' obsolete white body, which relies on pain reliever. Chang's obedient and submissive image satisfied white audiences' collective desire to see a disadvantaged and unprivileged white figure without the sense of threat to white

privilege. However, although the references are not explicit, this commercial also contains subtle overtones of the possible threat of non-white challenges to the white racial order, not only in tennis but also in contemporary America.

An ad for Reebok tennis shoes Pump is another 1991 television commercial displaying Chang. The text of this commercial is composed of Chang's own direct address to the audience, as follows:

When you are 5' 9" and 140 pounds, you don't play power game. Use your head and your ground stroke. And, my secret weapon is speed. That's why I picked the Pump Reebok. When I am pumped up, I get support, protection, and a custom fit. So if you want to beat those Rock n' Roll tennis guys, Pump up and Air out.

In the dominant reading of this commercial, Chang is still the prominent young player leading American male tennis. Although his short and light body is regarded as far from the ideal body to play power game, this commercial appreciates his success in tennis. However, it reproduces suspicion of Chang's success on the tennis court, and attributes it to his defensive playing style (e.g. ground stroke and speed), his alleged intelligence (e.g. head), and new technology (e.g. Pump). It is assumed that Chang heavily relies on his ground stroke and speed to compensate for his inappropriate body. His supposedly weak and fragile body needs to be supported and protected by the new technology Pump of the Reebok. In addition, he is regarded as a smart player, effectively using various strategies. This assumption about Chang's playing style, his alleged intelligence, and his reliance on technology originated from the Orientalist view of Asian American men that reproduces white privilege and normativity.

Similarly to the 1991 television commercial for Nuprin pain reliever, in which Chang appears with Connors, this Reebok tennis shoes commercial also implies a white tennis player, Andre Agassi. In the last scene, Chang mentions a "Rock n' Roll tennis

guy” while he is holding a Reebok tennis shoe in his left hand and a Nike tennis shoe in his right hand. Then, when saying “Pump up and Air out,” Chang throws the Nike shoe away. Although he does not actually mention Agassi’s name, given Agassi’s flamboyant style (e.g. grunge clothing style and flowing long hair) and his role as an endorser of Reebok’s rival brand Nike, it is not difficult to infer that the Rock n’ Roll tennis guy is Agassi. This commercial therefore also obliquely creates a disadvantaged and unprivileged white male subject in post-Reagan America.

It is important to note that Agassi’s mediated identity in the early 1990s was as a Generation X slacker (Kusz, 2007). Generation X discourse was generated by American media culture in order to characterize the next generation of white American youth (Kusz, 2007). According to Kusz (2007), the Generation X discourse was instrumental in constructing the “conservative-inflected crisis narratives about the American family, the nation, the middle classes, and the economic and cultural position of white males in the early 1990s” (p. 20). This Generation X discourse mainly produced images of young white men in the early 1990s as “irresponsible, apathetic, and uncaring slackers” (p. 21). Within this discourse, Agassi’s mediated identity was constructed through his allegedly poor work ethic, laziness, and deficient will (Kusz, 2007). That is, in this commercial, the implicit engagement of Agassi’s Generation X slacker image not only reproduces the disadvantaged and unprivileged white male figure, but also reinforces Chang’s model minority image.

In 1994, a commercial for Eveready alkaline batteries portrays Chang. This commercial is composed of a single tennis match between Chang and a marketing icon Mr. Energizer. The Eveready Battery Company launched two marketing icons, the

Energizer Bunny and the Mr. Energizer, to promote the Energizer battery. These two well-known marketing icons became symbols of the Energizer battery's longevity. In multiple Energizer battery commercials, the Energizer Bunny, a pink bunny toy wearing sunglasses, repeatedly beats a drum bearing the Energizer logo, and this icon effectively promoted the Energizer battery's outlasting, "Keep Going" quality. This image of the everlasting battery is reinforced by another marketing icon, Mr. Energizer. Mr. Energizer is a muscular and animated battery character. In multiple commercials, he executes various sports, such as tennis, table tennis, and table football. Mr. Energizer is portrayed as a tireless male athlete with power and speed, and the physical capacity illustrates the Energizer battery's endurance quality.

This commercial mainly presents Mr. Energizer playing a single tennis match against Chang. This tennis match begins with Chang's serve. After successfully receiving the serve, Mr. Energizer perfectly returns all of Chang's incessantly returned strokes. No matter where the tennis balls land, Mr. Energizer tirelessly runs from corner to corner on the tennis court, and endlessly returning Chang's shots. After a while, Mr. Energizer jumps over the net, and asks, "What's the matter, Mr. Chang?" Exhausted Chang, lying flat on the tennis court, in turn asks Mr. Energizer, "Don't you ever give up?" Then Mr. Energizer lightly answers, "Nope." At this moment, the commercial presents the earned scores of Mr. Energizer and Chang as follows: 6-0, 6-2, 6-1, 6-2, 6-0, 6-1, 6-0, 6-0, 6-0. Finally, this commercial ends with the "Never Say Die" slogan.

This commercial for the Eveready Energizer battery demonstrates the ways in which Chang's hardworking and diligent images is mobilized for marketing purposes. In this commercial, Mr. Energizer defeats the former French Open champion, Chang.

Ostensibly, one can see Chang's defeat in this match as the failure of a small and fragile Oriental body in sport. However, given that American media emphasized Chang's defensive baseline play, based on his speed and accurate stroke, as a key determinant of Chang's success on the tennis court, Mr. Energizer might also be read as an embodiment of Chang's persona. In this commercial, Mr. Energizer relies on his speed and accurate ground strokes, and focuses on defensively returning balls rather than attempting to attack. Interestingly, although Mr. Energizer is a muscular mascot, he performs defensive baseline play, rather than performing offensive serve-and-volley style tennis. In other words, Mr. Energizer is represented as a "more-Chang-like" player.

This commercial is ideologically committed to reproducing Chang's hardworking and diligent persona. In particular, the final scenes with the "Never Say Die" slogan shows how the mobilization of Chang's persona is ideologically saturated. With the advent of Reaganism in the 1980s, competitive individualism and the individual's work ethic were celebrated. In this context, the slogan of "Never Say Die" and the "more-Chang-like" Mr. Energizer mascot can be read as a reproduction of the model minority myth in the conservative climate of post-Reagan America.

Conclusion

Media mobilization of the model minority myth and alleged Asian family traditions to make sense of an Asian American athlete's success in sport was not a coincidence. Chang's supposed realization of the model minority myth and the Chang family's fulfillment of traditional family values were inscribed with ideological meanings throughout the late 1980s and 1990s. According to McDonald and Andrews (2001), the post-Reagan and Bush era can be characterized by "the implementation of regressive

economic and cultural policies in which conservative values held sway in the USA” (p, 25). In particular, they point out the New Right’s reactionary agenda against liberal policies of the 1960s and 1970s, and more specifically, the New Right’s blame of the welfare program, affirmative action, and civil rights laws for the alleged moral and economic crisis in American society. Members of the New Right claimed conservative nuclear family values as solutions for social ills. More specifically, the advocates of the conservative New Right agenda emphasized traditional gender expectations, and regarded stay-at-home mothers and breadwinner fathers as solutions to welfare dependency, crime, and substance abuse (McDonald, 1996; McDonald & Andrews, 2001).

In this conservative post-Reagan and Bush era, media formulated a discursive notion of the crisis of whiteness. Within this crisis discourse, the alleged threats of American traditional values were implicitly regarded as threats to white normativity and supremacy (Kusz, 2007). According to Kusz (2007), American sport media during the 1990s frequently portrayed white male American athletes and sport stars, such as Marcus Jacoby and Andre Agassi, as disadvantaged and unprivileged figures in order to trump “a new colorblind post-civil rights racial order” (p. 5). In addition to the disadvantaged and unprivileged white male figures, “good” blacks, such as Michael Jordan and Tiger Woods, were also mobilized to celebrate the colorblind American society of the 1990s (Kusz, 2007). Just as media represented Michael Jordan’s affable persona as the “moral obverse of the masses of African Americans” (McDonald & Andrews, 2001, p. 26), African-American athletes’ personas and their prominent success stories were mobilized not only to prove the myth of the colorblind American society, but also to shift blame for the social inequalities to African Americans’ alleged pathology and deviance.

Chang's persona was no exception in this ideological mobilization of racial minorities. Chang's body was easily distinguished from White and Black bodies that dominated American sports. The images of Chang are juxtaposed with stereotypical Black images. In discussing cultural explanations of an Oriental body's success in tennis, I have pointed out intelligence and work ethic as key features used to prove Chang's qualification as the next American tennis hope. These stereotypical features were used to distinguish Asian Americans from African Americans. David Mayeda (1999), in his research about American media portrayals of Asian baseball players in Major League Baseball, also interrogates Asians' and Asian Americans' "less athletic but hard working and more intelligent" stereotypes (p. 208). The intelligent and diligent characters of Asian Americans have been ideologically used to affirm "more athletic but lazy and less intelligent" (Mayeda, 1999, p. 208) stereotypes of African Americans.

Increasing visibility of African American male athletes in American sports and American mainstream media since the 1980s has become influential in people's everyday understanding of the social world (McDonald, 1996). In contrast to the media's suspicion of an Oriental body's success in sport, the media has regarded a Black body's success in sport as a natural phenomenon. In the discourse of the Black male body's innate athleticism, people have denigrated African American athletes' hard work and dedication for their athletic accomplishments. By contrast, Chang's athletic accomplishment was regarded as a triumph of hard work and dedication. As one of the key features of the model minority myth, Asian Americans' alleged cultural valuation of hard work was embodied through Chang's mediated persona. Given that the Reagan and Bush administrations embraced neoliberal economics, which are concerned with removing

governmental restraints and promoting individual competition (Harvey, 2007), it is no wonder that Chang's persona as an individual who overcomes his physical and material limitations was valorized in the media of that conservative time. In contrast to the demonized and pathologized prototype of an African American who continuously demands state intervention and asks for welfare programs, Chang's persona satisfied the New Right's conservative desire to create a rugged individual persona to prove that the American Dream remained a possibility without state intervention even for minorities.

Along with emphasis on Chang's intelligent and hard-working persona, media's intense focus on his family is another example of how Chang's media representation is ideologically driven. Advocates of the New Right used the frame of a nuclear family headed by a heterosexual couple genetically related to their children as an ideological tool to individualize social and economic issues during the Reagan and Bush era (McDonald, 1996; McDonald & Andrews, 2001). Just as McDonald (1996) refers to the nuclear family as "the ultimate refuge of the traditional American values of hard work, discipline, and self-denial" (p. 359), the New Right blamed the alleged collapse of the normative form of the nuclear family for social and economic problems. In other words, within the conservative backlash climate of post-Reagan America, collapse of the normative form of the nuclear family was equated with a crisis of traditional American values that presumably caused or maintained particular groups' subordinate economic status. This pro-nuclear family agenda rendered invisible the rollback of progressive policies that had significantly advanced poor minority groups (McDonald, 1996; McDonald & Andrews, 2001). For example, the New Right mobilized nuclear family rhetoric to challenge the welfare, abortion, and gay rights. They also countered state and federal affirmative action

and civil rights laws. Within this nuclear family discourse, Chang's patriarchal, heterosexual family with children was ideologically useful to facilitate the traditional family values agenda. In particular, this Asian immigrant family's seeming devotion to family values and Chang's success story apparently proved the validity of the conservative revolution during the Reagan and Bush era.

CHAPTER 4: “WE” NEED WIE: MICHELLE WIE, NEOLIBERAL RACISM, AND POSTFEMINISM IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICA

Michelle Wie is an American professional golfer, well known for her accomplishments as an amateur golfer and as the youngest player to ever qualify for the LPGA Tour. She is also famous as the youngest female golfer to participate in the Professional Golfers’ Association (PGA) Tour, in 2004, when she was fourteen. Although she was not a professional at the time, she was given a sponsor’s exemption in the SONY Open PGA Tour. Her outstanding performance and repeated challenges to men’s tournaments drew huge attention from mainstream American media. She was hailed as the “future of women’s golf” for the LPGA Tour’s resurrection following a “dark period” in the aftermath of Nancy Lopez’s decline in the early 1980s.

During the 1970s, in the words of the popular press, the LPGA Tour had a “popularity problem.” The organization struggled with a lack of sponsors, television coverage, and prize money, and a dwindling number of tournaments (David, 2008). Former commissioners and executives concentrated their efforts on resurrecting the LPGA Tour. From the middle of the 1970s, signs of revival began to appear. In particular, what came to be characterized as “sex appeal marketing” boosted the popularity of the LPGA Tour. However, during the 1980s, the popularity problem remained. In addition, with the beginning of the 1990s, its image as a lesbian tour and the poor performance of American golfers presented obstacles to commercial success. Moreover, the influx and domination of Asian golfers threatened the tour’s appeal to both advertisers and consumers in the American market.

In this context, Tiger Woods' effect since the middle of the 1990s on the PGA Tour's popularity provided the LPGA Tour with a possible solution to their popularity problem. Mainstream media compared Wie to Woods even before she turned pro in 2005, expecting that Wie would bring the "Tiger Woods effect" to women's golf, particularly to the LPGA Tour, sponsors, and media. A *New York Times* article drew parallels between Wie's amateur career and Woods' as follows, "The Wie resume is already filled with firsts...The only thing missing is an appearance on the "Mike Douglas Show," as Tiger Woods did as a boy" (Arkush, 2003, p. 8). In 2004, after Wie exceeded everyone's expectations in competition with professional men's and women's players in the PGA Sony Open and in the LPGA Kraft Nabisco Championship respectively, a *USA Today* article stated that she had created "a mini Tiger Woods-like buzz" and had drawn "a Tigerish crowd" on both tours (Boeck, 2004, p. 1C).

In 2005, at the age of fifteen, Wie turned professional. When she made this move, the expectation that Wie could save the LPGA Tour reached a boiling point. Unprecedented sponsorship deals and huge media attention revealed these high expectations. In her rookie year, she became one of the top endorsement athletes in the world, with contracts from Nike and Sony, who paid her over \$10 million. In 2008, *CNNMoney.com* published a list of 'Top Ten Endorsement Superstars' based on estimated endorsement income for 2007 among American professional athletes. Among the ten American sport stars, Michelle Wie was the only woman. She was ranked fifth, with an income of \$19.5 million worth of endorsements. In 2009, *Forbes.com* published a list of 'The World's Top-Earning Golfers' based on estimated endorsement earnings for 2008 among members of the LPGA. Following Annika Sorenstam, Wie ranked as the

second top-earning female golfer with \$8 million. Although her sponsorship earnings have declined since then, she continues today to have endorsement deals with Nike, Kia Motors, Omega, McDonald's, Sime Darby and Zengyro. Further, it is worth noting that, one year after Wie turned Professional, *Time* magazine selected her as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. *Time* pointed out her dream to break gender barriers and her transnational endorsement power as two qualities that distinguish her from other female golfers.

This chapter is about media representations of Michelle Wie and her portrayals in various commercials. Her celebrity status and the rise of her endorsement power, even before she had proven herself through the LPGA Tour Championship win, sparked my interest in Wie's appeal as a celebrity as well as an athlete. How was she able to become one of the most marketable figures in sports even before she won an LPGA championship? How has she been able to attract more media attention and sponsor support than white European and American golfers? What does endorsement power mean to Americans in the current time period? Given the alleged rarity and invisibility of Asian American athletes in American sports, the unprecedented endorsement power of an Asian American women athlete is worth further investigation.

The primary purposes of this chapter are to assess the cultural meanings of the mediated images of Wie within the context of neoliberal racism and postfeminism and to offer counter narratives. In my second chapter, on Michael Chang, I examined how Chang's model minority images and Asian American family values were used by mainstream media and commercials, and how the images and family values ideologically reproduced the image of America as a colorblind and multicultural society within

conservative post-Reagan America. In this third chapter, I similarly examine Wie's media representations as a model minority and her Asian-immigrant family as an "ideal" heterosexual and patriarchal nuclear family. However, to understand specific articulations of power surrounding Wie's mediated images, one must understand the context of neoliberal racism and postfeminism in 21st century America.

Neoliberal racism is a new form of racism, constituted on both neoliberal and conservative understandings of race and racism (Giroux, 2004; Kusz, 2011). It assumes that racial discrimination against and inequalities among people of color are things of the past (Giroux, 2004; Kusz, 2011). Neoliberal racism asserts "culture as a marker of racial difference," and makes race "a private matter" (Giroux, 2004, p. 63). The logic of neoliberal racism regard racism as a collection of individual prejudices in an era where people of color are given equal opportunities to achieve the American dream in colorblind and meritocratic America. Similarly, postfeminism assumes that the second wave feminist movement eradicated sexism, and that gender inequality no longer exists in American society (Cole & Hribar, 1995; LaFrance, 1998; McDonald, 2000). Advocates of postfeminism take for granted the accomplishments of second wave feminism (McDonald, 2000). However, it is important to note that postfeminism emerged in the 1980s' conservative cultural context that valorized self-help and personal responsibility as a backlash against the 1960s' feminist movement (Faludi, 2006; LaFrance, 1998; McDonald, 2000). Thus, in the logic of postfeminism, blame for any continuing women's inequality or gender gaps is shifted to the shoulders of women themselves.

Both neoliberal racism and postfeminism dismiss the relevance of ongoing political and civil movements for racial and gender equality in contemporary American

society. Within this context, dominant media narratives of Wie appear to celebrate her accomplishments in transcending racial and gender barriers. Focusing on narratives produced by mainstream printed media and commercials, I critically read Wie as a cultural text to assess the cultural meanings attributed to her by the media.

First of all, to find the cultural meanings of Wie's mediated images in the context of neoliberal racism and postfeminism, I begin by examining how media narratives of Wie and her family embody model minority stereotypes within the context of neoliberal racism. Second, I examine how media narratives of Wie's challenge to the men's PGA Tour are ideologically consistent with postfeminist discourse. Third, I examine how Wie's images were deployed in various printed and television advertisements, and explore how these images were easily consumable in the 21st century America. Finally, I argue that Wie's mediated images have reinforced the neoconservative project which blames economic and social disparities on individuals and further blames the civil rights and women's movements of the 1960s and 1970s for undermining the value of individual initiatives and responsibility.

“Play a Round with Me”: The White LPGA and the Nonthreatening Oriental

Wie's mediated identity as the future of women's golf has played a role in the efforts of the LPGA Tour, sponsors, and media to enhance a lucrative women's sport league. She has been portrayed as a racial minority female golfer assimilable to white traditions in the LPGA Tour, and palatably consumable in the American market. Model minority discourse on Asian American women is embodied in Wie and her family's media portrayals. Thus, to understand the cultural meanings of Wie's mediated identity,

it is important to first understand how the LPGA Tour has developed as a lucrative women's league shaped by the white traditions of women's golf.

Founded in the 1950, the LPGA Tour is America's oldest women's professional sport league. Golf has historically been a predominantly white and upper-middle-class sport, and the LPGA Tour has likewise been a white and upper-middle-class centered site (Cahn, 1994). In other words, white American golfers with upper-middle-class backgrounds became the normative representatives of the LPGA Tour golfer.

These white and middle-class traditions have existed throughout LPGA history. In particular, these exclusive traditions have been reinforced in many forms and fashions in the LPGA Tour's efforts to gain popularity. In the 1970s, the LPGA Tour changed from a player-run organization to a modern business. The number of tournaments, prize money, and media attention dramatically increased. From 1970 to 1979, the number of tour events increased from 21 to 38, and the prize money grew tenfold, from \$440,000 to \$4.4 million (LPGA, 2015). Further, the LPGA Tour hired Ray Volpe, a former vice president of the National Hockey League (NHL), as the first commissioner (1975-1982). During his tenure, the purse of the LPGA Tour increased from \$1.5 million to \$6.4 million (Worldgolf, 2015).

Increased attention from media outlets and corporate sponsors enabled the LPGA Tour's transition to a modern business (Hudson, 2008). In this transition, sex appeal marketing played a significant role in drawing the attention of media and sponsors. Sex oriented images of women golfers were portrayed by media, and their heterosexual femininity was heavily promoted. Jan Stephenson and Nancy Lopez, named LPGA Rookies of the Year, in 1974 and 1978 respectively, were the two most popular players in

the second half of the 1970s and early 1980s, and they embodied the “new” images of the LPGA Tour.

However, their different racial and cultural backgrounds produced different dynamics in managing their images. For example, although Stephenson was an Australian golfer, her white identity enabled her to transcend her national identity in the American market. Her white, pin-up girl images promoted her as one of the earliest tabloid stars in women’s golf. On the other hand, the media manipulated images of Latina American golfer Lopez, in a very different way. Her popularity is rooted in her mediated racial identity as an honorary white, eligible to assimilate to white and heterosexual norms (Douglas & Jamieson, 2006). Katherine Jamieson (2000), in her media analysis of Lopez, argues that Lopez’s Mexican and working class heritages were diluted, and heterosexual and attractive images were “coopted to suit the needs of white, middle-class, heterosexual men and to a lesser extent, women” (p. 148). She goes on to explain, “The image of Lopez as a wholesome, attractive, heterosexual, elite golfer distinguished her from stereotypical images of Mexican women and promoted her as a credentialed middle-class American woman” (p. 148). That is, the LPGA Tour’s efforts to make a marketable and saleable women’s professional tour were grounded in its white, middle-class, and heterosexual norms.

After Volpe resigned as commissioner in 1982, the LPGA Tour again struggled to resuscitate its popularity. Throughout the 1980s, the expectations in terms of the number of tournaments, television coverage, sponsorship, and prize money did not meet reality (Hudson, 2008). With the beginning of the 1990s, the LPGA Tour attempted to put on a new face. The LPGA Tour hired new commissioner Charlie Mechem (1990-1995), a

former CEO of Taft Broadcasting, and the tenure of Mechem was “a period of growth and prosperity on the women’s tour” (Hudson, 2008, p. 81). Above all things, the most important change in the LPGA Tour during his reign was that it became a global tour. Many talented foreign golfers arrived on the scene, and they began to dominate the tour.

Swede Annika Sorenstam and Australian Karrie Webb were symbols of the LPGA Tour’s globalization in the 1990s. They were named LPGA Rookies of the Year in 1994 and 1996 respectively, and they dominated women’s golf throughout their careers. Sorenstam won 72 LPGA Tour titles, and Webb won 41 titles. Their winning records are third and tenth all-time records in the tour’s history. In addition, these two golfers monopolized the Player of the Year Award from 1997 to 2005.

However, the tour’s globalization has also been regarded as a threat to its white and American traditions. All golfers awarded the LPGA’s Player of the Year since 2006 to the present have been non-white international golfers (Mexican Lorena Ochoa, Taiwanese Yani Tseng, and Korean Inbee Park) except for one white American golfer, Stacy Lewis. Further, there has been no American winners of the LPGA’s Rookie of the Year Award from 2006 to the present. In particular, among those nine winners of the Rookie of the Year Award, eight were of Asian-descent or Asian golfers.

Asian golfers have come to be regarded as the biggest threats. Their influx and domination began with a Korean golfer, Se Ri Pak. In 1998, Pak won two major championships (McDonald’s LPGA Championship and U.S. Women’s Open), and was named Rookie of the Year. While her success was beneficial to the LPGA Tour’s global image, Pak’s identity does not fit into the assimilation model used to depict Lopez, Sorenstam, and Webb. Pak is not an American woman with a racial and ethnic minority

heritage like Lopez, nor is she a European or Australian, white, fluent-English-speaking golfer like Sorenstam or Webb. Kim, Walkosz, and Iverson's (2006) media analysis of Sorenstam, Webb, and Pak argues that the media used more negative characteristics when describing Pak, and American media's long history of racist portrayal of Asians influenced in the Pak's negative characteristics.

In the 2000s, Asian golfers' winnings were not understood as the work of individual foreign golfers' successes or as a one-time trend in the LPGA Tour. The increasing number of Asian golfers and their continuous dominance caused concerns about preserving the normative white images of the LPGA Tour golfers. The concern and discontent about Asian golfers' domination and their threat to the LPGA Tour continued to grow; their challenges and their successes began to be negatively understood. Stephenson's 2003 comments on Asian golfers in the interview with *Golf Magazine* reflects a negative perception of their dominance. She blamed Asian golfers for the decline of the LPGA Tour, and suggested a quota, solely on the basis of nationality, to prevent the outflow of American money to Asian golfers as:

Asians are killing our tour. Absolutely killing it...Our tour is predominantly international and the majority of them are Asian. They've taken it over...If I were commissioner, I would have a quota on international players and that would include a quota on Asian players. As it is, they're taking American money. American sponsors are picking up the bill. There should be a qualifying school for Americans and a qualifying school for international players. I'm Australian, an international player, but I say America has to come first. Sixty percent of the tour should be American, 40 percent international (Kessler, 2003, p. 122-123).

Although Stephenson's comments caused huge controversy, the LPGA Tour attempted to implement her suggested quotas by surreptitiously establishing a language policy. In 2008, *Golfweek* first reported this policy, according to which, non-English

speaking golfers had to be conversant in English by 2009 (Baldry, 2008). If they failed an English oral test, organized by the LPGA Tour, they faced suspension.

Interestingly, both the suggested quota system and the planned English suspension policy recall a quota system under the Immigration Act of 1924 to prohibit large-scale Asian immigration to the U.S. This Immigration Act was also enacted through the idea that large groups of Asian immigrants would be a threat to white homogeneity in American society (Takaki, 1989; Uchida, 1998). Given that the groups of Asian golfers and Asian immigrants were alike regarded as threats, it is important to note the American stereotype of Asians as a “yellow peril.”

Yellow peril and model minority discourse are two features of Asian or Asian American stereotypes in American society. Members of these groups used to be stigmatized as the ominous yellow peril until the model minority stereotype developed after the Immigration Act of 1965 was enacted. They were initially treated as an inassimilable racial and ethnic group grounded in dehumanized images of Chinese laborers in California in the middle and end of the 1800s and because of Japan’s participation in World War II, especially the attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. However, the image of the yellow peril has recently resurfaced because of Asian companies’ alleged threats to the economic stability of the U.S. (Mayeda, 1999; Palumbo-Liu, 1999; Shim, 1989). For example, when SONY purchased Columbia Pictures in 1989, American media reported this contract as an economic threat from a Japanese company. *Newsweek* released an article titled “Japan Invades Hollywood” in 1989. Kent Ono (2009), examining the reactionary responses Japanese corporation Nintendo encountered when

purchasing the Seattle Mariners in 1992, adopted the idea of ‘economic miscegenation’ to understand Americans’ fear of Japan’s alleged economic threat.

Within the climate of economic competition and demonization of Asian rivals, the specialized context of American women’s golf adopted a similarly threatening image of Asian golfers. An exception to this overtly negative stereotype is Wie’s characterization as a model minority.

In contrast to the depiction of many Asian golfers, media portrayed Wie as a model minority, not only assimilable to white traditions in the LPGA Tour but also successful and prosperous in American society. Wie’s immigrant nuclear family was at the center of the media’s model minority discourse. Her family was portrayed as an intact and disciplined Asian American family committed to hard work and education to ensure Wie’s success not only in women’s professional golf, but also in American society.

In early media representations, Wie was a promising young golfer in Hawaii. In 2002, twelve-year-old Wie became the youngest golfer to qualify for an LPGA Tour event by competing at the Takefuji Classic in Hawaii. Although she missed the cut in her first LPGA Tour debut, this seventh-grade girl’s appearance in the LPGA Tour event attracted attention from mainstream media. However, this early media attention was primarily devoted to Wie’s Asian American identity and her family’s Asian heritage. A *USA TODAY* article identified her as “the only child of Korean-American parents” (2002, Blauvelt, p. 10C). A *New York Times* article also identified her as the “only child of Korean parents” (2003, Anderson, p. A1). Since mainstream media began to report on Wie and her family, the images of her as an Asian American golfer and of her family as

Asian American immigrants have been pervasive in the media representations of Wie and her family.

Mainstream media's attention to Wie began in earnest in 2003 with her outstanding performance in women's amateur and professional golf events. That year, thirteen-year-old Wie became the youngest golfer to make the cut in an LPGA Tour event, the Kraft Nabisco Championship in California, and the youngest golfer to win an adult United States Golf Association (USGA) event, the U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links in Florida. The media regarded the emergence of Wie as a turning point in the popularity of women's golf. In her media narrative, a noticeable feature was the primary emphasis on her family and, particularly, their collective efforts to promote Wie's success on the golf course and in American society. In particular, the nuclear Asian-American family's considerable economic support for Wie's golf career and their emphasis on her academic education drew media attention.

Media pointed out the Wie family's collective effort as the key to Michelle Wie's outstanding performance on the golf course. For example, a *USA TODAY* article referred to them as a "tight-knit family," always traveling together, and specifically explained the dedicated roles of both father and mother, "Dad is media director in addition to carrying the bags. Mom carries food on the golf course, serves as hairstylist and has a strong voice in her daughter's golf attire" (Blauvelt, 2003, p. 1C). Another *New York Times* article portrayed their dedicated efforts, "Wie's mother, Bo a real estate agent in Honolulu, watched from the gallery while B. J. trudged along with his daughter's bag on his shoulder" (Anderson, 2003, p. A1). Similarly, a *New York Times* article pointed out

her parents' guidance, "Guiding Wie, an only child, are her parents, who accompany her to tournaments" (Brown, 2003, p. D2).

Media also emphasized how Wie's family allocated financial resources for their only daughter. For example, a *USA TODAY* article explained in detail how much money Wie's family annually spent on her golf career, "She broke through last year, at 12, to play in her first LPGA events, part of a high-profile schedule that cost her parents \$ 50,000. This year, with greater expectations, her family could spend about \$ 70,000. But there are no complaints" (Blauvelt, 2003, p. 1C). In the following year, another *USA TODAY* article specifically emphasized the financial resources invested in Wie's golf career, "family is spending \$ 70,000 a year so Michelle can travel to play golf for free" (Brennan, 2004, p. 8C). These articles specifically reported how much the family paid for airfare, meals, accommodation, and even vehicle rental for each tournament, spotlighting the economic burden the family bears for their daughter's success. Nevertheless, their economic investment was regarded as worthwhile to the Korean American family, "someday, golf almost certainly will bring her financial security. That's good news for her Korean-American parents" (Blauvelt, 2003, p. 1C).

The media regarded Wie not only as a young golf prodigy but also as a teenage school girl. Her family's educational values were constantly emphasized in mainstream media, which portrayed her as a "whiz kid" who capably maintains the balance of her double life on the golf course and in the classroom. *New York Times* articles referred to Wie as an "eighth-grade algebra student in her other life" (2003, Roberts, p. S1) and a "student in eighth grade in Honolulu" (2003, Brown, p. D2). The media also frequently reported her future plan to attend Stanford University following high school graduation

(see Anderson, 2003; Brown, 2003; Powell, 2007). Media sympathetically reported her college plans. For example, a *Los Angeles Times* article reported that “The good news is pretty soon, she’ll be headed to Stanford...College will provide balance and an escape for someone who’ll be consumed by golf once she turns 18” (Powell, 2007). Further, it is worth noting that the media repeatedly pointed out Wie’s father’s occupation, a University of Hawaii professor of transportation management (see Blauvelt, 2003; Brennan, 2004). Even after he resigned the position as professor, media’s attention to his former career has continued. The media’s focus on his professional status as a university professor enhances the image of the Asian American family as an academically high-achieving group in American society.

Media emphasis on the Wie family’s collective efforts and the value they place on education was not merely limited to the printed media. In 2005, a CNN television program, *Living Golf*, featured the Wie family’s cohesion and support for Wie, as well as its value on education (Sgindy, 2007). In this 30-minute-long television program, CNN sports anchor Don Riddell interviews Wie and other people surrounding Wie and her family. This program begins with a narrator saying that “Michelle Wie leads a double life” both as a teen golf phenomenon and as an ordinary school girl. The Wie family, particularly her parents, were portrayed as a key to Wie’s success in her double life: “Perhaps the main reasons Michelle’s feet are so well grounded are her Korean parents, father B.J. and mother Bo. They don’t talk on camera but they are ever-present keeping a watchful eye on their daughter. Michelle’s time both on and off the course is carefully managed.” Following this narration, an interview with a family friend, Lily Yao, confirms the media’s recognition of the role of the family in Wie’s success, “I think it’s

so delightful to really know that Wie family and see they help, love each other so much and they help each other and they moving toward one set of goal.”

In addition to the family cohesion and support, this television program emphasized the strong value of education. Riddell visits Wie’s high school, Punahou School in Honolulu, and meets and interviews Wie’s classmates, a physics teacher, and even the school principal. Each of their interviews contributes to the stereotype of the intellectual superiority of Asian Americans and their values on education. A physics teacher appreciated Wie as a “role model student” in physics class, and described her academic superiority as follows: “She is not afraid to ask questions, which is super important, especially in physics, that you ask questions even that is a difficult thing to do because how do you know to ask the right question and she seems to have this natural ability to pick apart a concept and to look for the details.” Some episodes relating to Wie and her family’s emphasis on education were also introduced in this program. For example, one of the Wie family friends, Russell Lo, said that “It’s her time management that really gets me. Once we were playing over here Ala Wai Country Club and right after that her dad told us we got something in the car for you. We walk over the car...and we look inside and Michelle’s already doing homework in the back seat.”

The media representations of Wie and her family are constituted through the language of model minority discourse which views Asian Americans as an academically inclined, hardworking, disciplined, and family oriented group of people. The particular way in which Wie and her family were racialized should be understood in the context of neoliberal racism. Central to neoliberal racism is the assumption that we are living in a colorblind and meritocratic American society (Giroux, 2004; Kusz, 2011). Advocates of

neoliberalism avoid talking about race explicitly because they believe in the extinction of institutional racism. In this belief, people of color have equal opportunities to succeed in contemporary America, and their demands for a more active role of the government to improve social and economic conditions are delegitimized. Kyle Kusz (2011) argues that the logics of neoliberal racism are reproduced through the “appealing ‘feel-good’ stories of American individuals of various racial and ethnic backgrounds,” and he also points out that their alleged “talents, will, hard work, and good choices” are used to prove the colorblind and meritocratic American society (p. 149). In these feel-good stories, race talk is evaded, and race is no longer a barrier to the racial minority groups’ achievement of the American dream.

The model minority stereotype enhances the ideas and values of neoliberal racism in 21st-century America. According to Jeong-eun Rhee’s (2013) study on the racial dimensions of the neoliberal racial project, neoliberalism is a racialized process that “reproduces and reshapes racial subjects” (p. 562). In particular, she argues that Asian American racial subjects within the neoliberal racial project are historically rooted in the model minority stereotypes, and Asian Americans’ racialized subjectivities are constituted not only to govern themselves but also to serve as an example to other racial minority groups. Thus, the success story of self-reliant, hardworking, and intelligent Wie and her family embodies an American dream story of a minority family in a racially progressive and meritocratic America. This success story disseminates and naturalizes the neoliberal racial imaginary.

“I’m Not Here to Prove Anything”: Wie’s Challenges to PGA Tour Events within Postfeminist Discourse

The media portrayed Michelle Wie as an Asian American golfer who transcended race barriers, and her success stories on the golf course and in American society seemed to support neoliberal understandings of racial discrimination and inequality in 21st-century America. However, this one-dimensional view of racial power relations does not fully explain the media’s constant attention to Wie, nor does it provide adequate understanding of the mediated images of Wie because it fails to acknowledge the intersectionality of race and gender. Thus, this study situates media representations of Wie within postfeminist discourse. More specifically, the following section focuses primarily on media narratives of her challenges to the men’s PGA Tour events, and examines how postfeminist discourse has been embodied in images of Wie as a liberated and empowered woman who transcended golf’s gender distinction. In so doing, I argue that Wie’s celebrity status is a product not only of neoliberal racism but also of postfeminism in 21st-century America.

LPGA golfers’ challenges to the PGA Tour became a “trend” in the first decade of 21st century America. In 2003, Annika Sorenstam competed in the Bank of America Colonial golf tournament and became the first female golfer in a PGA Tour since Babe Zaharias pioneered that gender challenge in 1945. In the same year, Suzy Whaley participated in the Greater Hartford Open, and became the third woman to ever compete in the PGA Tour event. Another LPGA Tour golfer Se Ri Pak also participated in a professional men’s event, the SBS Super Tournament, which was held in 2003 in South Korea.

The women golfers' challenges to men's events had attracted the media's attention. The media portrayed these challenges to men's tournaments as benefits from the emergences of second wave and liberal feminism. For example, a *New York Times* article reported that "[Sorenstam] represents an evolution in the aspiration of female athletes. No longer are some elite women content simply with an opportunity to compete, a freedom hard won in the gender struggles of three decades ago" (2003, Longman, p. D1). This article also reported that Title IX forbade discrimination based on gender, and claimed that Sorenstam "represents the distillation of those increased opportunities as women advance into the realm of the strongest, tallest and fastest athletes, who happen to be men" (2003, Longman, p. D1).

However, although the media portrayed women's challenge to the men's PGA Tour as an unprecedented accomplishment made possible by a gender-equal society, it is important to note that in fact sponsors' exemptions enabled these challenges for commercial purposes by only a few exceptional women golfers. In other words, without sponsors' exemptions, these women golfers would not be able to compete in men's tournaments. Nevertheless, media portrayed these challenges as evidence of gender equality in American society; thus, the media narratives of women's golfers' challenges reflected postfeminist discourse.

Postfeminism, which has been pervasive since the 1980s and 1990s, is a conservative backlash against second-wave feminism which was marked by radicalism and female empowerment (Butler, 2013; Faludi, 2006; McRobbie, 2009). Postfeminism refers to the increasing number of people who take for granted the accomplishments and goals of second-wave feminism (Cole & Hribar, 1995; McDonald, 2000). That is,

women golfers' challenges were represented as a progressive social phenomenon reflecting gender equality, and the media representations reinforce the people's belief that we are living in gender equal society.

Media representations of Wie's challenges need to be understood in this context of postfeminism. In 2004, Wie participated in the men's PGA Tour at the Sony Open Hawaii. Although she failed to make the cut, the media rushed to report her participation in the men's professional tour event. The media reinforced the feminist-driven image of Wie's challenge. In other words, a fourteen-year-old girl's presence at the men's event appeared to prove that we are living in a gender-equal society. For example, after the Sony Open PGA Tour in 2004, a *Washington Post* article suggested a change of perspective about female athletes, "Maybe what Michelle Wie and her eye-opening performance are telling everyone is that we have to rethink how we look at female athletes" (2004, Bowen, p. C12). Further, this article acknowledged that "women can compete with men at any game where physical strength and raw speed are not essential" (2004, Bowen, p. C12). In the end, this article ended with a hasty claim, "a new day for women is coming" (2004, Bowen, p. C12).

Wie's challenge was not a one-time event. While other female golfers have challenged once, Wie has participated in thirteen men's events. Between 2004 and 2007, Sony granted her consecutive sponsor invitations. In addition, other sponsors' exemptions enabled her to participate in multiple men's PGA Tour events (e.g. John Deere Classic in 2005 and 2006, 84 Lumber Classic in 2006, Reno-Tahoe Open in 2008). As Wie continued to compete in men's golf tournaments, the media's feminist-driven narrative was enhanced. For example, a *USA Today* article appreciated Wie's efforts to

overcome gender barriers, and named her a “daughter of Title IX” and the “face of a generation of young female athletes raised to believe it deserves a place in the male-dominated culture of sport.” A *New York Times* article also claimed that “Wie’s exemption is about hurdling barriers” (2004, Rhoden, p. D1). Just as Cahn (1994) described Billie Jean King’s winning at the “Battle of the Sexes” as the “ultimate victory against sexism in sport” (p, 251), Wie’s presence at the men’s event made her out to be King’s successor as the “new” advocate for gender equality.

The media representations of Wie’s multiple challenges to men’s events have reinforced postfeminist discourses. The media have celebrated Wie’s challenges, and have regarded her not only as an empowered and liberated female athlete, but also as a socially concerned woman realizing the goals of second-wave feminism. Although the opportunities to compete in men’s events were offered to only a few women, Wie’s challenges encourage people to take for granted the accomplishment of the goals of second-wave feminism. This belief overlooks historically continuing gender inequality and power differentials between men and women. Within this postfeminist context, women believe that they have achieved liberation, so they feel assured that the feminist movement is no longer required (Lafrance, 1998; McDonald, 2000).

However, postfeminism is not merely anti-feminism. It is ironic that postfeminism is constituted at the expense of feminist ideas (Faludi, 2006; Lafrance, 1998; McDonald, 2000). According to McDonald (2000), postfeminism is based on the depoliticization and incorporations of the ideas of second-wave feminism. In other words, activist feminists’ efforts to politicize gender oppression are restrained through the idea that women are always able to accomplish whatever they want if they are qualified.

A key difference between Wie and other golfers challenging men's events is that Wie's mediated image as an empowered and liberated women golfer has been used to promote corporate brands and products. Her empowered and liberated image enabled sponsors to create pro-women and women-friendly brands advocating gender justice to entice new consumer groups. Critical scholars (Cole & Hribar, 1995; LaFrance, 1998; McDonald, 2000) discuss important connections between postfeminist discourse, corporate sponsorships, and feminist market. Cheryl Cole and Amy Hribar (1995) point out "the displacement of potential antagonism between feminism and consumption" (p. 356) as a mark of postfeminism. In the following section, I critically examine how Wie's images were deployed in various television advertisements, and how these images were mobilized to entice consumers by corporations. Further, as postfeminism is aligned with the neoliberal agenda of self-help and individual responsibility (Butler, 2013; Cole & Hribar, 1995; LaFrance, 1998; McDonald, 2000), I explore how her Asian-American model minority image is engaged to promote a (white-dominated) postfeminist subjectivity.

"Hey Boys": The Commodification of Michelle Wie

Given the tradition of whiteness in women's professional golf, it is not surprising that a white and heterosexual golfer became a normative figure of the tour. This particular form of white and heterosexual womanhood was promoted for commercial success (Crosset, 1995). The corporate sponsors were supportive of images of the white and heterosexual golfers to make the LPGA Tour and their commodities marketable (Crosset, 1995). Various advertisements idealized this particular form of womanhood as

a norm. Not only have golfers who fit the norm been celebrated, but golfers who do not fit this mold have been othered through the manipulation of the ideal woman.

Asian and Asian American women have been represented through the following two stereotypes: the submissive and subservient Lotus Blossom (e.g. China Doll and Geisha Girl) and the devious and destructive Dragon Lady (e.g. prostitutes and devious madams) (Chung, 2005; Plymire, 1999; Uchida, 1998). A Sony Cybershot print advertisement is a typical example showing the mediated image of an Asian-American, female golfer is othered by the discourse of American Orientalism. In this printed advertisement, Wie is sitting in a yoga posture on a golf course. Several golf clubs are placed behind her. It is not difficult to recognize Wie as an embodiment of Buddha sitting on a lotus flower. The circular golf course mat on which she sits represents the bud, and the clubs behind her represent the petals of a lotus flower. Rachael Joo (2012) describes this advertisement as follows:

Beyond its mockery of the Buddhist religion, the image erases the national distinctiveness of Michelle Wie and strategically evokes Orientalism in an attempt to shape her into an icon that represents a generalized Asianness. Although athletic skills are hinted at through the golf motif, Wie is not wearing golf gear; rather, she is barefoot and dressed in yoga gear that looks like pajamas. This “oriental girl” image belittles Wie’s success at golf by placing the main focus on her race and sexuality rather than her athleticism (p. 152).

In this commercial, an American-born professional golfer’s American identity is erased, and Wie is hailed as an exotic Oriental girl satisfying male, white colonial desire. However, although Wie has been frequently represented following the American Orientalist frame, the two common stereotypes of Asian American women do not explain how her various images have been contextualized in the 21st century America. Thus, this section demonstrates how various television advertisements manipulated and deployed

her images within the context of neoliberal racism and postfeminism for commercial purpose.

Media and sponsors' attention to Wie entered upon a new phase in 2009. In this year, Wie won her first LPGA Tour at the Lorena Ochoa Invitational. This win enhanced her recognition not only as a professional golfer, but also as a sports celebrity. In the following year, Wie signed endorsement deals with Kia and McDonald's in February and March respectively. More importantly, after these two endorsement deals, television commercials featuring Wie were broadcast. The commercials enabled women's golf to take a significant step forward as a lucrative industry, and allowed Wie to become a new face of the business.

In this section, I mainly focus on three commercials in the 2010s for McDonald's (2010) and for the Kia compact car, Soul (2010 and 2012). All of these commercials portrayed Wie and her uncompromising athleticism. For example, they all feature Wie hitting off the tee with a driver club. Given that Asian and Asian American women have been marginalized in sports advertisements and stereotyped as non-athletic, Wie's images in these commercials are worth critical examination.

The first television commercial representing Wie was released by McDonald's in April 2010. This was also McDonald's first commercial featuring a women's professional golfer. It begins with Wie driving balls off the tee on a green golf course. She is portrayed as a woman golfer with the capacity for strong and long-distance drive shots. Her swing is so powerful that the hit balls go over the course and reach her friends in different places. The balls with the invitation message, "Meet @ our place mw," are delivered to her friends in a library, on the campus lawn, and in a college dormitory. All

of her friends gather and are sitting around a table and enjoying food and drinks in a McDonald's restaurant. After a moment, Wie appears and joins her friends. The commercial ends with a narration: "Celebrate the simple joy of friendship at your favorite place."

The dominant reading of this commercial celebrates Wie's athletic success and achievement, her first win of a LPGA Tour championship in particular as a college student. Her youthful success and achievement are celebrated by her college friends. She is not only a prominent golfer, but also a college student maintaining the balance of her double life on the golf course and in the classroom. I argue, however, that this commercial's celebratory narrative is constituted by the neoliberal understanding of race and racism, reproducing Asian Americans' racialized subjectivity on the basis of the model minority stereotype within neoliberal discourse. Further, Wie's image as an Asian American golfer and college student plays a significant role in constituting racialized subjectivities of other racial groups in purportedly multicultural, colorblind American society.

McDonald's celebratory commercial highlights Wie as an Asian American golfer, and portrays her success and achievement as a racial minority's accomplishment in a multicultural and colorblind society. For example, throughout the commercial, Wie wears a flower in her hair, and she changes her costume twice. Initially, she wears a golf shirt, hat, and shoes when she drives balls off the tee to her friends. When she later appears to her friends in a McDonald's restaurant, she is wearing a semi-formal blouse and jacket. In both cases, she wears a flower in her hair. This "Hawaiian-style" flower hair pin signifies her Asian and Pacific-Islander American identity. In an interview with

SportsBusiness Journal, John Lewicki, a McDonald's senior director of alliance marketing, clarified that Wie's Asian American identity was explicitly emphasized in this commercial: "We were looking for an Asian-American personality to appeal to that segment, and Michelle has strong appeal there and great crossover appeal" (Lefton, 2010).

Another noteworthy signifier is the group of Wie's friends. This racially diverse friend group implies a multicultural American society. Five friends are invited to the meal at McDonald's, and they include two Asian-descent men, one Asian-descent woman, one middle-eastern man, and one Caucasian woman. As Lewicki pointed out in his interview, this commercial was designed to have "crossover appeal" to other groups not only to target Asian Americans, but also to appeal to other racial groups (although the absence of African American friend is notable). Thus, the diverse group of friends can be seen as signifying a multicultural American society.

This commercial deploys the model minority stereotype celebrating the values of education and hard work to represent Wie and her friends. The setting of the advertisement is a college student community; when Wie's friends are invited to the McDonald's restaurant, they are enacting student roles: studying in a library, reading a book on the campus lawn, or doing laundry in college dormitory. As Wie was a student at Stanford University when this commercial was produced and released, it was not difficult for audiences to recognize Wie as a student. Accordingly, in this commercial, Wie's success on the golf course and in the classroom is celebrated by the presentation of an ideal neoliberal figure who has succeeded through hard work and the value of education in a multicultural and colorblind society. In addition, her image provides a

common-sense way for other racial groups to understand race and racism in 21st-century neoliberal America.

After her appearance in the McDonald's commercial, Wie appeared in two subsequent television commercials produced and broadcast by Kia Motors in 2010 and 2012. Unlike the 2010 McDonald's commercial, which primarily focuses on Wie's Asian American identity and Oriental stereotypes, these Kia Motors' commercials mainly emphasize her gender identity as a women golfer. They do not, however, completely disregard her racial characteristics. Like the McDonald's commercial, they pursue a colorblind approach. Each commercial, then, can be understood as an ideological site in which postfeminist discourse is reproduced under the neoliberal faith in self-help and personal responsibility.

The 2010 Kia Motors' commercial, entitled *The Arrival*, opens with a red Soul pulling into a posh country club parking lot, easily taking its place among the Mercedes and BMWs around it. Wie emerges from the vehicle, immediately drawing the attention of the white men who dominate both the club and the golf course. Presenting an air of confidence, strength and sexuality, Wie moves past the stunned men with a single, flirtatious, "Hey, boys." And then, she calls attention to her stature, beauty and physical strength with a powerful drive. This causes the white, male club members to stop their activities to stare and gape at Wie.

Just as the title, *The Arrival*, implies, this commercial encourages viewers to believe that a new day for women's equality has arrived. This commercial deploys recognizable signifiers such as privileged male characters and silver upscale vehicles in order to represent the male-dominant image of golf. In this commercial, Wie is the only

women character. The fact that the male characters are shocked after their encounter with Wie implies that women have not been allowed in the golf club up to this time. The silver-tone vehicles in the lot also signify the male dominance of golf as the exclusive club and golf course represent sites in which male privilege has historically been secured. On the other hand, other striking signifiers, such as Wie's bright-red vehicle, confident facial expression and tone of voice, and athletic capacity for strong and long-distance drives, are deployed to announce the arrival of new world devoid of gender inequality and barriers. That is, this commercial reinforces the postfeminist belief that the gender barrier has been broken and gender equality has been achieved.

In 2003, Kia Motors released its second commercial featuring Wie, entitled *Clay Pigeons*. This commercial opens with a view of the countryside. A white man is pulling the trigger of a clay trap machine to project clay targets. These targets are shot and broken in mid-flight. While viewers probably guess that the targets are shot and broken by a shotgun, this commercial turns to Wie who is taking out the targets by hitting them with accurate and long drive shots of golf balls. Three middle-aged, white men holding firearms are overwhelmed by her outstanding skill. And then, Wie jumps into her red Soul, and takes off and abandons them to the countryside. This commercial ends with multiracial female hip hop group Fannypack's song, *Hit It Again*.

Similarly to *The Arrival*, this commercial uses various signifiers to proclaim the victory of feminism and define gender inequality as an old-fashioned and obsolete social problem. For example, the male characters wearing old-fashioned clothes, a dark-colored out-of-date vehicle, and their astonished facial expression signify vestiges of male dominance not only in golf but also in American society at large. Counter to this, Wie's

red Soul and her confidence, as shown by her gestures and expression, along with her outstanding athletic performance all signify Wie's empowerment in a gender-equal society. Importantly, the lyrics of background music of this commercial reinforce its message: "Boy you think you hit it. Oh no you didn't. No way, no how. We're gonna show you now."

Along with mainstream media's representations, television commercials have also portrayed Wie as the beneficiary of second-wave feminism. Advertisers have deliberately created Wie's liberated and empowered image as one that transcends gender boundaries, and these images were mobilized to promote the image of Kia Motors' brand and products as supportive of gender justice. Kia Motors' use of Wie to commodify feminism reflects a crucial shift from activist feminism to popular feminism in 21st-century America. This popular feminism is characterized by wider circulation of feminist values in the various forms of popular culture, including magazines, music, film, and even advertisements (McRobbie, 2009). In the context of popular feminism, Kia Motors has featured a female celebrity athlete to position itself as an advocate of feminist values. This positioning is motivated by the commercial desire to promote a new market and to create new consumers.

The Kia Motors' commercials might seem to exemplify postfeminist discourse, but in fact, they celebrate the exceptional qualities that enable an individual female golfer to transcend not only gender but also racial and class barriers. These commercials are constituted through the language of neoliberalism, which promotes self-help and personal responsibility. In both commercials, Wie's racial identity is explicitly emphasized, as she is the only non-white character. Moreover, while the McDonald's commercial

deliberately emphasizes her Asian American identity, Kia Motors' commercials contrast a non-white golfer with numerous white characters. In a historically white and upper-middle-class sport, women's golf, white golfers with an upper-middle-class background have been the normative figures. Accordingly, Wie's presence and the attention she gathers at the golf course and club house and on the clay shooting field create the illusion of a non-white golfer's success and the approval of the normative culture.

Conclusion

Since the 1970s, the media have generally represented Asian Americans through the model minority stereotypes. Within model minority discourse, Asian Americans have been represented as a hardworking and politically passive racial minority group who believe in and realize the American dream. In effect, the model minority image of Asian Americans has been ideologically deployed to maintain the values and privilege of dominant groups (e.g. white, male, and upper/middle class), although the model minority image has signified different things in different contexts. While I examined Michael Chang's model minority image within the context of conservative post-Reagan America, Michelle Wie's model minority image has been articulated within the context of neoliberal racism and postfeminism in 21st-century America.

American golf has been fascinated by Wie since the beginning of the 21st century. The LPGA Tour, sponsors, and media have all imagined that American women's golf could possibly replicate what has been called the Tiger Woods' effect on the PGA Tour. However, while Woods has played a key role in making the PGA Tour popular throughout the world, his mediated images in mainstream media and advertisements have in fact naturalized dominant power relations in American society (Cole & Andrews,

2011). For example, according to C. L. Cole and David Andrews (2011), the mediated images of Woods as a successful multiracial golfer has reinforced “the fantasy of a conflict-free and color-blind America” (p. 27).

Wie has been compared to Woods for her accomplishments as a professional golfer and her marketability as an endorser. However, her race and gender as an Asian American female golfer have distinguished her ideological influence from that of Woods. In my critical reading of the media’s promotional narratives of Wie, I argue that Wie’s mediated image has participated in the Asian American’s model minority stereotype, and that her model minority image has fulfilled neoliberal logics of individual initiative and responsibility as avenues to success. According to Helen Jun (2011), Asian Americans’ model minority status is not only “a domestic racial discourse,” but also “an expression of neoliberal principles” (p. 128). She also points out that this racialized stereotype has been used to “undermine the legitimacy of black political grievances to a broader set of neoliberal ideologies” (p. 128). Accordingly, in 21st-century America’s mirroring of neoliberal logics, adulation of Wie’s Asian-American rugged individuality and her accomplishments has made possible the implicit racist intent of neoliberal society. Especially noteworthy is that neoliberalism inherently reproduces racial subjects (Jun, 2011; Rhee, 2013). As Jun (2011) observes, Asian Americans have been fashioned as “idealized subjects of a neoliberal world order” (p. 9). Accordingly, Wie’s model minority image plays a significant role in reproducing Asian Americans’ racialized subjectivities within the neoliberal racial project. Additionally, her image as a self-enterprising and self-regulating subject reinforces dominant constructions of the individualism at the heart of neoliberal racialized subjectivities.

Media and promotional narratives surrounding Wie's challenges to the men's PGA Tour events are constituted by postfeminist discourse, and her mediated image as a liberated and empowered woman transcending golf's gender distinction reinforces the neoliberal agenda. More specifically, given that Wie's challenges have been regarded as individual achievements and her presence at the men's events has symbolized a gender-equal society in which governmental intervention is not necessary to establish gender equity, her mediated image reinforces a neoconservative agenda that champions self-help and personal responsibility. Postfeminism and neoliberalism are in fact closely linked to one another. Rosalind Gill and Christian Scharff (2011) argue that "neoliberalism is always already gendered" and that "women are constructed as its ideal subjects" (p. 7). More specifically, they argue that in postfeminist discourse "women are required to work on and transform the self, to regulate every aspect of their conduct, and to present all their actions as freely chosen" (p. 7). Similarly, Jess Butler (2013) conceptualizes postfeminism as a neoliberal discursive formation, and argues that postfeminist discourse supposes the alleged success of the women's movement and emphasizes individual choice and empowerment. Accordingly, media and corporate sponsors' unprecedented attention to Wie as an Asian American female golfer transcending race and gender barriers has not been a coincidence, and Wie's mediated images have reinforced not only neoliberal racism but also postfeminism.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

More than three years have passed since Jeremy Lin burst onto the NBA scene in 2011. American media has given a huge amount of attention to Jeremy Lin, and catered to those who have wanted to watch his exploits at the stadium as well as on TV. Lin's jersey dominated the displays at New York Knicks' store, resulting in an explosion of Jeremy Lin merchandise. The term Linsanity was coined to describe his meteoric rise. Linsanity was a cultural phenomenon that quickly spread across America. No one predicted that an Asian American NBA player could draw huge amount of media attention as well as becoming the face of a multitude of various products. After Lin's quick and sudden rise as a NBA phenomenon, most fans and critics alike did not predict Lin's sudden fall from basketball fame before the end of 2011-2012 season.

Within a year, Linsanity was over. Lin no longer commands the level of media attention he garnered in the 2011-2012 season. Lin is regarded as just another average NBA player, who comes off the bench and contributes to his team in marginal ways. After Lin left the New York Knicks, he played for three different teams (e.g. Houston Rockets, Los Angeles Lakers, and Charlotte Hornets), yet he was not a starting point guard. Mainstream American media underscored both Jeremy Lin's meteoric rise and his sudden fall (see Beck, 2012; Berger, 2012; Boren, 2012).

Despite the lack of current media attention, Linsanity is not over, at least, to scholars. Lin has provided valuable insight into how we view and understand race relations in American society. Scholars in the field of sport studies and Asian American studies still appreciate the cultural significance of Lin's efforts. They point out the rarity of NBA players who are of Asian American descent, and they regard Linsanity as an

unprecedented cultural phenomenon that no other Asian American athlete or celebrity has ever provided up to this point. The studies on Lin are not only continuing, they are multiplying, and they are continuing to expand in scope. To scholars, Lin is more than just an NBA player; he is an embodiment of multiple discourses enabling scholars to examine a multitude of power relations in contemporary American society.

My research is closely related to the scholarly attention paid to Jeremy Lin. One of my areas of focus deals with the attention that has been given to Lin and constructed around Lin and Linsanity. However, this research is not about jumping on the bandwagon of the scholarly attention that has been paid to Lin, as the heart of this research was conceived long before Lin became well known to mainstream American media. Rather, I argue that scholars should focus their critical attention on other Asian American sport celebrities.

Michael Chang and Michelle Wie are key two figures I selected for this study. Chang and Wie provide valuable sites of inquiry where scholars from a broad range of multiple disciplines can critically explore media representations of Asian American athletes and their cultural meanings. For example, Chang's triumph in the 1989 French Open surprised tennis fans from a variety of countries. At just seventeen years old, he became the first American tennis player to win the French Open since 1955. Wie's performance has been just as outstanding as Chang's in terms of media attention. Wie is the youngest female golfer to play on the PGA Tour, playing in her first event at the age of fourteen. The media even coined the term "Wiemania" to describe national and global fascination dedicated to Michelle Wie. The athletic performances of Chang and Wie are just as outstanding as Lin's play was on the basketball court.

In my final chapter, I synthesize and dissect the arguments and discussions I made in the previous chapters. I will also analyze the limitations of this study and suggest directions for future research on this topic.

Invention of Sporting Orientals and their Multiplicity

I argue that Michael Chang's victory at the 1989 French Open began the rise of the Asian American sport celebrity in U.S. culture. Chang's presence in multiple media and corporate commercials, as well as his easy accessibility to the general public enabled him to have a type of celebrity status, while distinguishing him from other Asian American athletes. Since then, Asian American athletes have been represented in a more general fashion in American mainstream media. Moreover, selected Asian American athletes have been used as "talking heads" to promote various products and brand names. The prevalence and commodification of their mediated images has helped create Asian American sport celebrities.

Asian American sport celebrities' mediated images have been constructed under the American Orientalist discourse. American Orientalism has justified the cultural domination of Asians and Asian Americans (Kim & Chung, 2005; Lee, 1999; Velasquez, 2015). Asian American athletes are regarded similarly, and understood as racial inferiors and perpetual others. Regarding Chang and Wie, Orientalist representations have been used to create an Oriental identity. Their images satisfy an Orientalist depiction that is comfortable to American audiences and consumers. However, this does not mean that their American identity is erased with an Oriental identity. Rather, their American identity has intersected with the Oriental identity. Subsequently, Chang and Wie are represented under the model minority discourse.

The model minority discourse has greatly impacted their mediated images. The blatant Orientalist “othering” of Asian Americans and Asian American athletes diminished with passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. The huge influx of Asian immigrants tempered these racist notions, but have been replaced with the image of the model minority. Asian Americans as the model minority employed to create a depiction of Asian Americans as economically successful but politically impotent. This has resulted in Asian Americans as being viewed as diligent, hard-working, self-sufficient, and family-oriented racial minorities, and happy to be so. (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Wu, 2002).

Mediated images of Chang, Wie, and Lin have promoted the idea of model minority discourse in various ways, and in different contexts. In order to make sense out of Chang’s success, American media outlets employed model minority characteristics, such as intelligence and work ethic. The use of Orientalist stereotypes about Asian American masculinity and physicality undervalued Chang’s outstanding performance on the tennis court. It was these stereotypes that made the mainstream American media suspicious of Chang’s athletic performance. Subsequently, these same media outlets assumed that Chang’s intelligence and work ethic compensated for his less-athletic Oriental body, and that these characteristics enabled his accomplishments on a white-centered tennis court. As with Lin in the 21st century, Chang is also misrepresented along with Asian American masculine stereotypes. In spite of the efforts of Chang and Lin, Asian American male athletes have been regarded as effeminate, emasculated, and unmanly during their time in the spotlight, irrespective of their accomplishments.

Because of longstanding stereotypes and misunderstandings, they have been understood as physically inferior and inept.

Kusz's (2007) analysis of the redemptive media narrative of Agassi provides further understanding of how Chang's images in various advertisements speak to the power of white privilege. As I stated earlier, Agassi became a media darling and the hope of American tennis. He was quickly regarded as the not just a promising young player, but also the new hope of American tennis. However, Chang replaced Agassi's as an American hope after winning the French Open in 1989. Chang held this dominant position until the end of 1990s when Agassi's redemptive transformation took place in a new set of media narratives. Kusz (2007) identifies the relationships between a redeemed white male figure in American popular culture and white privilege in the 1990s as follows:

Indeed, the redeemed white male figure was a prominent and implicitly politicized figure of the 1990s in the United States. The redemptive white male figure played a key role in popularizing an image of white masculinity as having undergone a transformative conversion from a white man who admittedly transgressed in the past and suffered for those transgressions, to one who has redeemed himself through his suffering to become virtuous in the present...this redeemed white male is perhaps the perfect embodied figure within this era of public critiques of white male privilege (p. 45).

Kusz (2007) also argues that the rearticulation of Agassi's image morphed from that of a Generation X slacker to a redeemed white sporting figure by the end of 1990s. Given that Chang's model minority images were pervasive during this same period and his model minority characters were implicitly compared and contrasted with the supposed slacker characteristics of Agassi, Chang's images were used to represent not only the unprivileged white male figure living in a colorblind and meritocratic society, but also a number of dominant social values during a "good" white guy's absence.

The model minority discourse was also employed to explain Wie's athletic accomplishments in women's golf. Wie dominated amateur golf as a teenager, which allowed her to have multiple chances to compete in more competitive events with better players, and she quickly became the youngest player ever to qualify for the LPGA Tour. In addition, her dominance enabled her to cross over gender barriers in golf. At fourteen, she became the youngest female golfer to participate in the men's PGA Tour. Despite her dominance in amateur golf, much of the mainstream media attributed her outstanding performance to model minority characteristics.

Commodified images of Chang and Wie in various television commercials also promoted the notions of a model minority discourse. A 1991 Nuprin commercial featured a conversation between a white American player (Jimmy Connors) and Chang. Although Connors is well past his prime as a competitive player, Chang treats him with respect. Chang's manner of speaking and behavior embodies the characteristics of an obedient, submissive, and respectful model minority. A 1991 Reebok commercial represents Chang as an intelligent and persistent tennis player. He is explicitly contrasted to tennis great Andre Agassi, who was characterized as having a poor work ethic in the early 1990s. The 1994 Eveready commercial also features Chang as a diligent and persistent player. In particular, the slogan, "Never Say Die," resonates with Chang's resilient model minority image. Wie's image in a 2010 McDonald commercial also embodies the depiction of a model minority athlete. This McDonald commercial represents Wie and her five friends. All of them are represented as college students. Interestingly, among her five friends, four of them are non-white actors. Just as the model minority image was created to blame other minority groups for social inequalities and serve as evidence of

American meritocracy, this commercial employs racial minority characters to serve its purpose, and implicitly refers to the significance of education as it relates to racial minority athletes.

The Asian American model minority stereotype has been articulated with conservative ideologies since the mid-1960s. This model minority image has been valorized to prove that American society is a meritocracy and that the American dream is still available to racial minorities. However, more importantly, the model minority has been used as an ideological device to maintain hegemony of white and upper-class Americans (Chou & Feagin, 2008; Velasquez, 2015; Wu, 2002). More specifically, within the context of the model minority discourse, the economic and political hardships of non-Asian minorities is regarded as an outcome of individual laziness and/or irresponsibility rather than structural inequality and institutional racism.

Although Chang and Wie have still been regarded as unassimilable Oriental others, the appropriation of their images in a conservative climate has reproduced the image of America as racially equal and hence a more democratic society. However, the articulation of the model minority has had different ideological connotations in different contexts.

In order to examine Chang's cultural meanings, I focus on media representations of Chang throughout the late 1980s and 1990s. In this post-Reagan era, Chang's embodiment of the model minority myth was ideologically justified by the New Right's reactionary agenda against welfare programs, affirmative action, and civil rights laws. More specifically, Chang's model minority images satisfied the New Right's conservative desire to create a racial minority that not only attributed to the alleged moral

and economic crisis in America to African Americans, but also served as proof that America was, and is, a colorblind society built upon meritocracy.

Wie's model minority images have different cultural meanings compared to Chang's in the late 1980s and 1990s. Since Wie turned professional in 2005, she has been mainly represented in different contexts in 21st-century America. As such, Wie's mediated images within the context of neoliberal racism and postfeminism is pervasive in 21st-century America and must be acknowledged and explored.

Neoliberalism is not only an economic theory, but also a complex ideological formation (Giroux, 2004; Omi & Winant, 1994). Giroux (2004) and Omi and Winant (1994) explain that the articulations of neoliberalism and racial politics in neoliberal regime result in a restructuring of economic institutions. Just as Jun (2011) refers to Asian Americans as idealized subjects of neoliberal logics, Wie's model minority images have been articulated within a neoliberal agenda, relying on traits such as self-reliance, responsibility, and independence. In other words, this feel-good story of a racial minority group promotes the privatization of racial discourse.

Along with an image of promising Asian American golfers transcending a racial barrier, Wie is also known for her multiple challenges to PGA Tour events. American media has portrayed Wie as a female golfer who has transcended a gender barrier and her victories as proof of the extinction of gender inequality. This media narrative is ideologically consistent with a postfeminist discourse. Postfeminism assumes that second wave feminist movement ended gender inequality in American society. Accordingly, within this postfeminist discourse, Wie's mediated image ideologically embodies a liberated and empowered postfeminist subjectivity.

Wie's liberated and empowered image is featured in the commercials for Kia Motors' 2010 and 2012 product lines. Just as McDonald (2000) explains, depoliticization and incorporations of the ideas of second-wave feminism as two key features, these two commercials explicitly deployed the political agenda of the feminist movement for the purpose of business and commercial advertising. More specifically, both commercials emphasize Wie's gender identity, as she is the only female character in these both commercials, and other characters are all men. In addition, while Wie is represented as a present and progressive character, the male characters are portrayed as outdated and conservative characters. Therefore, Wie's liberated and empowered image, along with her advent in male-centered sites (e.g. golf course and hunting site) are ideologically consistent with postfeminist discourse.

Wie's images transcend racial and gender barriers, yet they are not completely independent; rather, they are interrelated. Wie's success in the white-centered field of golf and her multiple challenges to men's tournaments have been represented as individual achievements of a racial minority woman. Her mediated images have reinforced the New Right's conservative belief that we are living in an equal American society in which a hard-working and productive individuality have enabled people to succeed no matter who they are or what their background is.

Lin rather than Wie

Why were scholars not interested in Asian American athletes until the arrival of Lin? Given the unprecedented scholarly attention being paid to Jeremy Lin, I have been curious about the indifference of scholars to other Asian American athletes who have not received the media attention that has been given to Lin. In the following section, I

compare scholarly reactions to Wie and Lin in order to more critically discuss scholarly partiality to Lin.

I believe that comparing media attention to Wie and Lin can be useful to critically examining scholarly partiality to Lin, as media attention to Lin is quite similar to media attention to Wie. There are three things in common with the media attention paid to Wie and Lin. First, Wie and Lin are the most recently recognized Asian-American sporting figures in 21st century America. Within the context of neoliberal racism and postfeminism in 21st century America, Wie and Lin have been represented as public figures that promote the alleged belief that we are living in a colorblind and/or gender-neutral society. In particular, self-help and personal responsibility have been valorized as key for their success as minorities in terms of race, gender, and class. For example, *Time* magazine selected Wie and Lin as among the 100 most influential people in the world in 2006 and 2012 respectively. *Time*'s reasons for selection reflect how their success stories have been understood within the neoliberal logics of individual initiative and responsibility for transcending social barriers as follows:

Wie is driving her way straight through golf's formidable gender barriers. She refuses to limit herself to ladies' events and intends to be the first woman to play the Masters. She has the talent: her game has both power and fitness, and her tenacity is Tiger-like (Chu, 2006)

Jeremy Lin's story is a great lesson for kids everywhere because it debunks and defangs so many of the prejudices and stereotypes that unfairly hold children back. He's dispelled the idea that Asian-American guards somehow couldn't hack it in the NBA - and that being a world-class athlete on the court is somehow at odds with being an excellent student off the court. Contrary to what you might read, Jeremy, 23, is no overnight sensation. In fact, he achieved success the old-fashioned way: he earned it. He worked hard and stayed humble. He lives the right way; he plays the right way...And I don't care whether you are an Asian-American kid, white, black or Hispanic, Jeremy's story tells you that if you show grit, discipline and integrity, you too can get an opportunity to overcome the odds (Duncan, 2012)

Both We and Lin can be seen as gendered and racialized subjects who promote dominant constructions of the individualism at the heart of neoliberalism.

Second, although Wie and Lin are Asian Americans, it is their American identities that have been emphasized. This is noteworthy because Asian American sporting figures have generally not been distinguished from Asian sporting figures. The American headline, “American Beats out Kwan,” is one of the classic examples demonstrating how Asian and Asian American athletes have not been distinguished in the American mind. However, Wie and Lin have been distinguished from Asian athletes, and their American identity has been highlighted. More specifically, in the case of the influx and domination of Asian golfers and alleged subsequent threat to the popularity of the LPGA Tour in the American market, Wie has been represented as an American professional golfer who can recreate the effect of Tiger Woods in women’s American golf. Lin also has been compared and contrasted with former Chinese NBA player Yao Ming. As these examples show, accounts of Wie and Lin have been partially affected by the racial and gender politics of 21st century America.

Finally, media outlets have played a key role in creating the celebrity status of Wie and Lin, and media prematurely assumed they would overwhelm their fields. For example, although *Time* chose Wie as one of the most influential people in the world in 2006, it took her eight years to win the U.S. Women’s Open, her first major championship. In addition, while the media expected Lin to become a savior not only of the New York Knicks but also the NBA, he was unable to play in the 2011-12 seasons because of knee surgery, which resulted in the Knicks deciding against resigning him.

Since then, Lin has played for two other teams and is now playing as a reserve point guard for the Los Angeles Lakers.

As I have shown, the media attention directed to Wie and Lin are quite similar. However, academic attention to these two Asian American professional athletes is quite different. There has been a significant amount of scholarly attention paid to Lin, and this attention is still increasing. However, the scholarly work on Wie has been limited, except for Billings, Angelini, and Eastman's (2008) quantitative research in 2008 about the media's biased comments concerning Wie's gender, age, and ethnicity. How can we understand the difference between the scholarly and media attention paid to two different Asian American professional athletes?

Given that one of the most obvious differences between Wie and Lin is their gender difference, I believe that the disparity of scholarly attention given to Wie and Lin has resulted from the tendency to automatically identify any athlete as male. However, this simple assumption of athletes as male is not enough to fully explain the disparity between Wie and Lin. Thus, I argue that, along with the assumption that athletes are automatically male, normative whiteness in contemporary feminist scholarship on gender, race, and sport has contributed to the disparity in media attention paid to Wie and Lin.

Early feminist scholars in the field of the sport studies have concerned their efforts with issues of male dominance in sport, demanding a critical approach to gender relations in sport since the late 1970s (Birrell, 1988; Birrell & Cole, 1994; Birrell & Theberge, 1994; Hall, 1996). Since then, analyses of women in sport has been one of the more significant research areas in the field of sport studies, and diverse methodological and theoretical approaches have been constructed and applied (Hall, 1996).

However, continuing feminist research in sport studies has mainly focused on white athletes and their participation in sports. In sum, intersections of race and gender have remained an underdeveloped area, and there have been critiques of the ethnocentricity of white feminism (Scraton & Flintoff, 2002). More specifically, Sheila Scraton and Anne Flintoff (2002) criticize the “little work focusing on black and Asian women’s experiences of sport or theoretical accounts which centralize ‘race,’ racism and ethnicity” (p. 109). Yomee Lee (2015) also points out the exclusionary practice of “Western feminism” in the field of sport studies, and argues that Western feminism tends to “reflect mainly the interests of white, middle-class, heterosexual women” (p. 13). In addition, she asserts that “sport studies research revealing the complexities of Asian American women is virtually nonexistent” (p. 14).

Therefore, Asian Americans’ sport experiences and their representations in sport media have not been regarded as significant research subjects in the fields of sport studies and Asian American studies. The White feminist paradigm in sport studies has dismissed the academic significance of sporting experiences of women of color and their representations in sport media (Scraton & Flintoff, 2002). Consequently, within the context of white feminism, Asian American women have been subordinated from academic discussions surrounding sport. In addition, although there have been studies about Asian Americans and sports, the emphasis has been mainly on Asian American men (Lee, 2015). This male-centered paradigm has also exacerbated the scholarly indifference to Asian American women. Therefore, I argue that the explosion in scholarly attention paid to Lin reflects white-centered and male-centered paradigms in the fields of sport studies and Asian American studies.

Final Thought

The main purpose of this study is to determine the cultural meanings of selected Asian American sport celebrities in their particular historical moments and contexts. The starting point of this study was a simple question: What does it mean to be an Asian American athlete? This question may seem superfluous to some because there have been numerous discussions about Asian American consciousness and identity since Asian American studies appeared as an academic discipline in the late 1960s. Accordingly, my question about the cultural meaning of Asian American's in U.S. culture may seem self-evident to scholars in the fields of Asian American studies and ethnicity studies.

However, this question has not been seriously examined in the field of sport studies. Recently, I can safely say this question is starting to be answered. I have already reviewed multiple scholarly works, and Lin and Linsanity have facilitated the scholarly efforts to determine what an Asian American and Asian American athlete/celebrity mean in contemporary society.

I hope that my dissertation research contributes to the recently growing interest in Asian Americans in American sport. However, I do not believe the research about Chang and Wie thoroughly discusses diverse aspects of media representations of Asian American sporting celebrities and their different ideological functions. In the process of this research, I have been cautious about the overgeneralization in the cases of Chang and Wie in terms of Asian American sporting celebrity. In addition, I have also realized that there are several limitations that I and other scholars must be mindful of in our research on Asian Americans and sport. Thus, in the following section, I point out four limitations

and suggest an alternative approach to expand our understanding of Asian Americans and sport.

First of all, specific articulations of power in particular historical moment and contexts need to be uncovered to reveal the relation to a larger social world. As multiple scholarly works about Asian American athletes have shown, representations of Asian American are still dominated by the model minority stereotypes. However, given that the term of model minority was coined in 1966, this characterization is ahistorical without considering what it is telling us about the contemporary social world. In other words, although model minority representations of Asian American athletes are common, scholars need to critically consider different ideological uses of them in different contexts.

Second, the Asian American athlete provides a site to challenge the dominance of the black and white paradigm in American sport and society. This binary understanding of race has been a prominent frame to make sense of racial differences and inequalities in America. Given that American sport has been a site that has naturalized and essentialized black and white differences, American sport can be seen as a site where the binary paradigm is reproduced and justified. However, the black and white paradigm does not provide enough understanding of diverse and growing number of racial identities in the contemporary America. In other words, growing population groups' sport experiences have been undervalued. Also, media representations work to maintain the hegemony of white and upper-middle class groups. Accordingly, it is important for scholars to critically understand the binary black and white paradigm when conduct research.

Third, Asian American is not a homogeneous group. The term “Asian American” includes various ethnic groups, and each ethnic group has different characters. However, since a racial category was created and used to designate pan-Asian identity since the 1960s, Asian Americans have been regarded as a standardized group. In other words, Americans with different ethnic origins were lumped together and seen as a panethnic group. Therefore, this panethnic identity does not fully consider how ethnic differences are related to Asian American sport experiences and their media representations. From this point of view, I suggest that scholars need to keep in mind that different ethnicities can have different ideological influences.

Fourth, intersections of race and gender need to be considered when examining Asian American women’s sport experiences and their media representations. Just as women’s sport experiences have been undervalued and female athletes have been gendered and sexualized, Asian American women and Asian American female athletes are no exception. However, Asian American women have been differently gendered and sexualized under the Orientalist discourse. Therefore, Asian American women’s racialization needs to be considered within the intersections of gender and sport.

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