Introduction

You Play Sports? Asian American Sporting Matters

STANLEY I. THANGARAJ, CONSTANCIO R. ARNALDO, JR., AND CHRISTINA B. CHIN

African American baseball player Jackie Robinson entered the national discourse on race and citizenship when he joined the otherwise entirely white major Leagues in 1947. Although some athletes of color may previously have passed as “white” and played (Burgos 2007), Robinson was the first African American to publically integrate professional baseball in the twentieth century. There were two thriving Negro Leagues at the time, but the rules of segregation—de jure and de facto—affirmed in the Supreme Court’s 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision limited opportunities for multiracial, male-on-male professional sporting venues.

Robinson’s entry into white professional baseball was important in shifting some of the racial dynamics at play in America. Sport, in the mid-20th century, was a bastion of white supremacy and it embodied such U.S. national bodily ideals as white, heterosexual, respectable, Christian, muscular, and male.¹ Long histories of racial exclusion, racist violence, gendered policing, and sexual regulation positioned black men as outside the normative abilities of white men.² In this respect, sport was a microcosm of the racial nation, with the language of citizenship and racial resistance coded within black-white discourse. This black-white dichotomy failed to account for the long histories of Asian Americans in the United States (Chan 1991; Bow 2010; Bald 2013). As this volume shows, Asian American sporting cultures trouble the current racial synchronicity between sport and nation while illuminating multiple performances of “belonging.”

Sport has a special and important place in the processes of citizen-making and in the policing of national and diasporic bodies.³ Since
the 1800s in the United States, recreation and sporting activities have been instrumental to the representation of respectable national bodies (Bachin 2005; España-Maram 2006). As recreational facilities and college sports took off in the late 1800s, the expansion of U.S. Empire through institutions like the YMCA explicitly linked Christian musculature to national subjectivity and colonial dominance. With stringent anti-Chinese and anti-Asian immigration acts and local legislation, citizenship was already coded as black-white while Asian Americans were in the category of “perpetual foreigner” (Lowe 1996; Prashad 2000; Yep 2009). Asian Americans were not intelligible within the dominant racial logic. The exclusion of Asian Americans within the discourse of United States sporting culture is informed by larger societal marginalizations outside the field of sport as well. As Caribbean scholar C.L.R. James reminds us, sport is constructed in real life and real time and closely reflects larger social phenomena (James 2003). While the exclusions in sport are informed by broader societal marginalization of Asian Americans, Asian American communities can also use those very sporting cultures to stake their own claims to belonging while manifesting their versions of American identity.

The appropriation of sporting cultures is what sociologists Ben Carrington (2010), Douglas Hartmann (2003), and Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994) deem as a “racial project” through which communities interpret and reinterpret racial dynamics while attempting to reshape racial realities. Unfortunately, scholarship on race and American sport has itself been a racial project that perpetuates the ideology of racial life as determined through black-white diametric oppositions. Mainstream and academic understandings of sport in the United States frequently uphold the same racial logic they try to complicate. While Reuben May (2007) ethnographically investigates Atlanta’s black basketball community, he does not account for either the large Asian American or Latina/o community in the city, which could productively complicate notions of race. The study of race and sport often involves contending with the black-white racial dichotomy without acknowledging how many racial Others are part of the process of “racial formation” (Omi and Winant 1994). The sociology of sport barely touches the surface of racial others with a few exceptions, such as Kathleen Yep’s (2009) work on San Francisco’s Chinatown playground. When the literature on sport in the U.S. does not
account for Asian Americans and other communities of color, the black-white dichotomy is tautologically reaffirmed. In particular, the focus on black-white dynamics elides the racialized experiences of Asian Americans in American sport and does not attend to the multiply inflected racial parameters of national and diasporic belonging.7 This volume recovers important narratives about Asian American sporting cultures as a way to complicate the simplistic U.S. black-white racial logic while showing the multiple ways in which Asian American communities stake national claims and diasporic belonging through sport.

While most recognize Jackie Robinson’s entry into professional baseball as historically significant, a contemporaneous historically important sporting moment was met with virtual silence. Wataru “Kilo Wat” Misaka’s entry onto the New York Knicks basketball team that same year received little public coverage, while African Americans Earl Lloyd and Nate “Sweetwater” Clifton were seen as integrating white professional basketball three years later (Farred 2006; Lloyd 2011). Most Asian American studies and history books pay minimal to no scholarly attention to Misaka’s legacy. Misaka’s erasure from the narrative of racial progression in American sport sheds light on how Asian Americans have been situated outside the contours of “race” and “national belonging.”8 Japanese American basketball players like Misaka, as well as Chinese American basketball players, like Willie Woo Wong and Helen Wong, and Filipino boxers, like Ceferino “Bolo Puncher” Garcia, and horse jockeys like Japanese American Yoshio “Kokomo Joe” Kobuki have not been adopted as part of the national narrative.9 Asian American studies has minimally and sometimes somewhat uncritically engaged with sport. Rather, evaluations of Asian American consumption of U.S. popular culture and subsequent practices of cultural citizenship have foreground certain types of culture at the expense of dismissing the prevalence of sport within Asian America.

Critical work by Davé, Nishime, and Oren (2004), Nguyen and Tu (2007), and Desai (2004) has encouraged nuanced understandings of the ways in which Asian Americans negotiate their relationships to U.S. popular culture by emphasizing the different sets of attachments that heterogeneous Asian American and Pacific Islander communities have to popular culture, and the many contradictions within power structures. However, missing in this research is attention to how Asian American
communities generate affinity, find symbolic and emotional attachment, and form a sense of identity through sport. Only recently has work by scholars like España-Maram (2006), Yep (2009), and Regalado (2012) made evident longer Asian American historical connections to sport. This volume follows this latter trajectory while also highlighting the ways in which “Asian America” is disrupted and disjointed as it accounts for various “Others.” In the process, it examines mainstream sports in addition to nontraditional sports like spelling bees and mixed martial arts. Through multiple sporting practices, communities of color challenge the relationship between race and ability while expanding the parameters of American citizenship (España-Maram 2006; Gilbert 2010).

As we look back on Wat Misaka’s entry into U.S. professional sport, we have to set the context to fully understand the significance of his sporting history in relation to the larger U.S. society. As the first Japanese American man to join the Basketball Association of America (BAA), the precursor to the NBA, Misaka’s presence in the quintessentially American game of basketball was the product of a long engagement with sport. He was an active participant in basketball culture from an early age and carried that passion through two collegiate championships with the University of Utah in 1944 and 1947. However, such expressions of American identity were overshadowed by the legacy of Executive Order 9066 and the Japanese internment camps during World War II, which promoted notions of Japanese Americans as dangerous and unfit American subjects. Yet even in this climate, Misaka and other Asian Americans demonstrated intimate engagement with many U.S. popular cultural practices such as sport.

Misaka’s ascendance through the professional basketball hierarchy might seem exceptional, but Asian Americans’ engagement with sport is not. Sport is an everyday practice in Asian American communities and one stage for performing renditions of (Asian) American identity. There is a rich history of Asian American sporting cultures. By participating in American sports, Asian Americans have crafted American popular cultural forms into Asian American sites. Through an investigation of how these communities shape their identities, we can see how Asian Americans utilize sport as a racial project that changes the meanings of nation and diaspora in relation to race, gender, sexuality, class, and ability.
Introduction

This volume draws upon insights from a diverse spectrum of scholars and showcases how sport is a key terrain in which national, diasporic, racial, gendered, and sexual identities are created while at the same time challenging various racializations of Asian Americans. As sport has always had particularly intimate ties to nation and respective practices of citizenship, looking at sporting cultures and celebrities offers a means to understand the performance of belonging, as marginalized populations enact their claims to citizenship, diasporic nationalism, and everyday modes of living in bodily ways. Different Asian American and Pacific Islander communities have varying relationships to U.S. Empire (Burns 2012; España-Maram 2006), late capitalism (Hong 2006; Lowe 1996), and the ongoing “global war on terror” (Afzal 2014; Alsultany 2012; Naber 2012; Rana 2011), which in turn create multiple and different relationships to sport. Concurrently, sporting cultures challenge the very parameters of Asian America.

The term “Asian American” is a U.S.-based, politically charged, racial designation for a pan-ethnic Asian population that emerged out of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. Formed as a response to the racist designations placed on Asian ethnic groups, the term was given new meaning through the coalitional efforts of activists to claim Asian Americans’ legitimate place in U.S. history and society. The racial formation of “Asian American” involved various racial projects intended to invert and resist the racializations of Asian American communities. Asian American lives, however, are not always lived or shaped uniformly and equivalently at the grassroots level. The term “Asian American” implicates certain processes of racialization that are simultaneously expansive and restrictive, inherently contradictory, and subject to contestation as a result of geopolitical changes, contemporary transnational labor flows, and the tendency to rely upon particular narratives that privilege middle-class, heterosexual, masculine subjects. It is in this spirit that we draw on the work of scholars Lisa Lowe and Martin Manalansan, who argue for acknowledging and prioritizing the diversity of Asian American lives, including differences in gender, class, sexuality, religion, and nationalism, within the category “Asian American.” Therefore, the scholars in this volume do not take for granted the category of “Asian America”; they refuse to conceptualize it as singular and cohesive.
Sport constitutes one compelling stage on which to talk about difference within the category of “Asian America” and it illuminates corresponding tensions, conflicts, and disruptions. This book highlights the heterogeneity of Asian American communities, which include, but are not limited to, Filipina/o, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Hmong, Vietnamese, Samoan, Cambodian, Thai, and South Asian Americans. These communities construct notions of self and community in relation to whites, African Americans, Latina/os, and other Asian American communities, among others. The differing times of immigration among Asian American groups, their multiple and different attachments to the U.S. nation and to mainstream sport, and their disparate social locations render Asian American identities heterogeneous, multiple, and always “in process” (Hall 2003).

The experiences of Asian American athletes like Wataru Misaka and Jeremy Lin in basketball can provide compelling insights into how Asian American sporting cultures take shape in relation to dominant racializations. In the process, we see how U.S. Empire and Asian American renditions of (ancestral) “home” shape experiences of sport and “Asia” in the United States. However, Lin’s and Misaka’s stories alone cannot speak for the complex social formations and disruptions within Asian America. The chapters in this volume draw on historical archives, media texts, quantitative data, and qualitative social scientific research to complicate these social formations. They critically investigate the relationships between racializations of Asian and Pacific Islander American communities at particular moments in U.S. history, the various Asian American responses and consumptive practices of sport, and the ways in which these communities transformed American sport into Asian American and Pacific Islander places. Through these sporting cultures, the categories of Asian America and U.S. identity are put in flux, driven by what immigration studies scholar Lisa Lowe (1996) deems as “heterogeneity, multiplicity, and hybridity.”

When accounting for the sporting cultures of Asian American communities, one can decipher through their sporting narratives a metanarrative about U.S. society. The arrival on the sporting field/court of each community is accompanied by particular cultural baggage that includes different experiences of capitalism, many encounters with U.S. Empire, and multiple interpretations of race, gender, sexuality, class, and citizen-
ship. Filipina/o Americans, Cambodian Americans, Hmong Americans, Laotian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Vietnamese Americans bring stories of U.S. occupation and colonialism. South Asian Americans today experience sport at the height of the “global war on terror” discourse, which often imagines them as threats to national security and yet also the “model minority.” Similarly, Korean Americans experience a particular relationship of their diasporic community to their homeland(s) at a time when the U.S. state vilifies North Korea as part of the “axis of evil.” Instead of seeing the differences within Asian America as disparate and separate phenomena, the volume highlights the contradictions of identity formation and larger structures of power. In the process, it centers how Asian American identities always take shape in relation to other peoples, times, and spaces. By incorporating studies of “comparative racializations” (Hong and Ferguson 2011) across a heterogeneous Asian American community, this volume foregrounds how the underresearched realm of Asian American sporting cultures can productively interrogate place-making in diasporas and nation(s).

This volume presents the fluidity and contradictions in Asian American identity formation through a careful exploration of quotidian and spectacular engagements with sport. It offers a combination of the everyday practices of sport and the spectacular moments of iconicity to decipher how the ordinary practices of sporting cultures can offer extraordinary knowledge about U.S. society and global phenomena. In order to elucidate the complex manifestations of Asian American sporting cultures, the chapters in this book are organized around the following questions:

What can Asian American participation in sport tell us about the heterogeneity of Asian American lives?

How do Asian American communities lay claim to sport? How does this claim simultaneously complicate their conceptualizations of U.S. society and of Asian American communities?

What is the relationship of participation in sport to mainstream racializations? How do the inversions and negotiations of racializations through sporting cultures meaningfully reinterpret nation and diaspora?

What are the relationships of race, gender, and sexuality to racialization and corresponding sporting practices of identity?
How is place-making tied to identity formation in these various sporting circuits?
How do Asian American communities provide a critique of and expand the contours of the category of “Asian America” and American national identity through sport?

These governing questions serve a twofold purpose. First, they contextualize sociohistorical contexts in order to capture the particularity of dominant racializations and respective Asian American sporting cultures. Instead of stressing equivalence, the work of this volume explicitly and subtly takes up key tenets of women of color feminist theory (Lorde 1984; Davis 1985; hooks 1999; Hong 2006), which stresses difference within and outside of categories. Second, the chapters illuminate both the complexity of Asian America and the messiness of identity formation within U.S. sporting cultures. Asian American communities perform their ideas of identity and express ways of being a certain type of citizen on sports’ uneven terrain while illuminating various types of antiessentialist projects. In this process, the boundaries of nation, diaspora, and identity are concurrently loosened. However, not all Asian American communities have the same capital, bodily recognition, resources, and spaces to perform normative conceptions of sporting identity within the pan-ethnic category of Asian America in particular and in U.S. society in general. This volume underscores how Asian Americans’ participation in a variety of sporting practices can serve as acts of resistance to the multiple mainstream stereotypes that characterize them as the weak, passive, overly feminine, or the exotic “Other”; their athletic performances create alternate vistas for claiming American and Asian American identities.

Yet, as cultural studies scholars Mimi Nguyen and Thuy Nguyen Tu remind us, consumers of popular culture produce various meanings; appropriating popular culture can create new sets of pleasures while also allowing for another set of exclusions. For example, although Bruce Lee stands as a key figure of tough masculinity in Asian America (Prashad 2001), the celebration of such hypermasculinity serves to ingrain and naturalize the differences between masculine-feminine, female-male, and straight-gay. Since power operates alongside pleasure in the realm of popular culture, one has to be attentive to how popular culture
can create desirable, utopian, but also problematic social arrangements. When we return to the case of Jeremy Lin, his presence on the international basketball landscape inverts the racialization of Asian Americans in some ways, but we must not overlook his emphasis on Christianity, swagger, and respectability, which further marginalize Asian American communities that cannot similarly claim such “model minority” status (see Wang’s and Leonard’s chapters in this volume). Asian American celebration of Lin’s sporting performance cannot be read in isolation; rather it must be read in relation to African American athletes and the corresponding racializations of black communities which often figure black men as aggressive, uncontrollable, and innately (and undeservingly) built for sport (King and Springwood 2001; Farred 2006; Brooks, 2009). Furthermore, Lin’s racial legibility in this moment of U.S. sporting history is based on an overemphasis of muscularity that justifies sport as masculine to the exclusion of women.

The narrative of Jeremy Lin’s success and subsequent metonymic representations of both Asian America and U.S. society, while celebrated, problematically constrains expanding Asian American identity and U.S. belonging by narrowing the possible gendered and sexed categories of identification—as male-female—instead of allowing for an embodiment of a variety of intersex, transgender, gender nonconforming, and queer subjectivities. Although Lin’s story has opened up space for Asian American men in sports, his presence also serves to consolidate sport as an arena primarily for and by men. Thus, celebrating attempts at normative masculinity without allowing for a multitude of viable queer, masculine, and feminine practices leads to other projects of exclusion.

Here we see one of the contradictions of Asian American identity formation that simultaneously regulates boundaries of belonging in both Asian America and America. Inverting racializations through sporting practices and claiming sport as an Asian American place does not mean that Asian Americans refrain from using the same problematic categories of race, gender, sexuality, and class that initially marginalized them in U.S. (sporting) society. However, it is this very discourse of meritocracy within sporting practices that occludes attempts at discussing the political realm of sporting cultures.

In many cases, sport constitutes an intriguing realm of voluntary organization as well as mandatory practice; it serves to build communities
in ways that are mostly unexplored within Asian America. Although several of the communities and characters we meet in this volume take to sport voluntarily, the force of U.S. Empire and required sport/physical education classes in school illustrate how sport also operates outside of individual choice. Highlighting these practices and their subsequent contradictions in Asian American sporting arenas conveys important information about identity formation through sporting practices. This book additionally moves beyond the mainstream discourse of Asian Americans, which vacillates between epithets including “coolie,” “sexually deviant,” “exotic,” “terrorist,” “thug,” and “nerd,” by showing the instrumental role of sport in nurturing alternate visions of American identity that allow for women and racialized men, and nonnormative sporting practices to exist as new sites of “cultural citizenship” (Maira 2009). These alternate visions showcase explicit practices of place-making that collapse Americanness and Asianness while challenging monolithic representations of Asian America. Each Asian American group and their sporting cultures claim different places in the American symbolic and material landscape; sport becomes a medium through which to perform their sense of place and communal self.

Playing across Time, Space, and Asian America

To understand how Asian American participants of sporting cultures attribute particular meanings to leisure activities and express their identity through such practices, the chapters in this book shift between the past, present, and future to illuminate specific cultural processes at work. This text is structured to allow the reader to move through various historical points and gain a sense of how sporting practices have changed over time. Moreover, the ways in which different sporting cultures have come to take on particular meanings for a wide spectrum of Asian American communities will become clear.

We emphasize that there are no essentialist, monolithic readings of Asian American sporting cultures. Accordingly, the book’s structure encourages various types of reading practices. One does not have to follow a linear trajectory when engaging with the foreword, chapters, and afterword in this volume. J. Jack Halberstam’s foreword and Lisa Lowe’s afterword offer distinctive ways of reading, conceptualizing, and ana-
lyzing the role of sport, popular culture, and racialization. Readers may start with either of these pieces and may read the interior chapters in any order. The scholarship found here enables us to center taken-for-granted realms of popular culture while complicating the category of Asian America.

Part I. Asian American Sports in Historical Context

Asian American communities have a tangled relationship to sport. In many instances, Asian communities are not encountering American sports for the first time when they arrive on U.S. shores. Rather, Asian American participation in sports including baseball and basketball has had longer ties to U.S. imperialism, the Cold War, and the American corporate entry into new markets (Thomas 2012; Gurn 2014; Thangaraj 2015). In the opening chapter, Ryan Reft demonstrates the long, uneven, and unpredictable connection between Asia, Asian America, U.S. Empire, and sport. His historical project contextualizes the intricate terrain of Asian American sporting cultures with multiple relationships of persecution, subjugation, and resistance. Reft’s work illustrates shifts between relationships of dominance, resistance, and pleasure, looking at both macro- and micro-level implications. He extrapolates the relationship between sport, empire, and late capitalism, dismissing the hegemonic discourse of sport as “neutral” and structured through meritocracy by demonstrating the role of U.S. militarism in creating disjointed and contrapuntal zones of sporting contact.

As Reft’s chapter provides a historical backdrop of Asian and Asian American sports participation and their entanglements with imperialism, war, and economic markets, Shalini Shankar uses memoir to demonstrate how intimate family and personal histories across generations shape a different sports landscape. Using a creative and nontraditional form of academic writing, Shankar compels us to rethink the histories of South Asian American consumption of mainstream sports. Her work centers memoir as a form of critical analytic, self-reflexive practice, and offers a call to reshape how we understand the social world. She reconceptualizes immigrant family life by centering sporting practices of spectatorship, social interactions, and community building. Shankar offers a view of her family’s experience and her own experience as an
immigrant child. This approach enables a micro-level examination of the quotidian experience of U.S. sports and the tensions within enculturation and assimilation for South Asian American communities. In the process, Shankar delves into the changing landscape of New York City from the 1970s to the present to provide an engaged exploration of desi life that is always in conversation with larger sporting cultures.

**Part II. Asian American Sporting Celebrities**

While the first section provides insight into different aspects of Asian and Asian American sporting history, the second section moves to the contemporary period and teases out the construction, management, and celebration of Asian (American) celebrity athletes. Sporting celebrities play an important part in engendering sporting pleasures and desires, which in turn influence identity formation. This section interweaves discussions of famous Asian American athletes and the ideological, symbolic, and material force of their iconicity. Instead of conceptualizing Asian American celebrities as existing in a social vacuum devoid of value and affect, Oliver Wang and Constancio R. Arnaldo, Jr., explore how Asian American communities are made and remade through Asian American sporting celebrities and subsequent spectatorship.

Oliver Wang critically examines the “Linsanity” phenomenon to decipher how race structures and serves as the background to the production, reception, and appropriation of Jeremy Lin’s iconicity. His work analyzes how pundits/critics, commentators, and lay people sought to frame Lin—the person/player—and Linsanity—the phenomenon—using a recurrent set of themes related to masculinity, race and race relations, and the American Dream. The chapter is part media analysis but also a critical, self-reflexive exercise, as the author wrote extensively on Linsanity as it was “happening.”

Constancio R. Arnaldo, Jr., looks into the everyday practices of Filipina/o Americans and their consumption and understanding of Philippine pugilist Manny “Pac-Man” Pacquiao as a (inter/national) sporting body. Through ethnographic research and critical readings of receptive practices (Mankekar 1999), Arnaldo, Jr., provides a refreshing window into the ways in which the borders between the Philippines and the United States are blurred, recreated, and challenged through viewing
practices of sport. Pacquiao's global fame provokes very real localized pleasures, desires, and affective connections that help participants invert dominant U.S. racializations of Filipina/os while also reimagining how Pacquiao's victories produce alternative narratives of nationalism.

Part III. Complicating “Model Minority” Myths, Orientalism, and Gendered Stereotypes

Moving from iconicity and community formation, the chapters in this section examine how Asian Americans and South Asian Americans perform, contest, and affirm their racialized status as “model minorities” and intersecting gendered stereotypes (Prashad 2000; Gopinath 2005; Bascara 2006). In the process, the chapters by Pawan Dhingra, Jessica W. Chin and David Andrews, and Christina Chin destabilize the category of “model minority” and related racialized stereotypes through the frames of gender and sexuality. Highlighting the intersectional nature of identities, South Asian American spelling bee participants, Asian American mixed martial arts (MMA) female fighters, and Japanese American youth basketball players trouble the norms of both Asian American identity and sporting masculinity.

Pawan Dhingra explores the overlooked but fascinating site of spelling bees. Through his ethnographic investigation of spelling bees and other academic contests, Dhingra forces us to rethink sport concurrently with a questioning of how sporting participation in spelling bees challenges mainstream racializations of the participants as “nerds.” Instead of dismissing the pleasures and nonnormative potentials within this sporting culture and reaffirming a strong, tough, aggressive, heterosexual sporting masculinity, he centers the pleasures derived for the participants (Rand 2012), new forms of hero-making, and the possibilities for a new forum of sport that is equitable for all.

Jessica W. Chin and David L. Andrews look at how gender and sexuality play a critical role in the racialization and “Orientalism” (Said 1979) evident in the violent contact sport of mixed martial arts. In particular, they examine the stories of Asian American female fighters, the hypersexualization (Shimizu 2007) of Asian American bodies, and how the violence of MMA demands a reimagining of mainstream stereotypes of Asian American women. As sport is generally thought of as masculine
and male bodies are normalized in performing acts of aggression (Halberstam 1998), the case of female Asian American mixed martial artists demands a reconfiguration of that hegemonic discourse.

Christina B. Chin surveys participation in Japanese American youth leagues in Southern California. Instead of locating the prevalence of these leagues only in the Jeremy Lin moment, she takes a much deeper historical, generational, and transnational view of how Japanese American identity making and community building takes place through sport. As Japanese Americans are racialized as “forever foreign” and “model minorities” in the game of basketball, intraethnic relations in these leagues become a way to center a performance of Japanese American identity that challenges these mainstream racializations. In doing so, Japanese American youth and their families invoke and maintain a counter-space to preserve a legacy of sports participation that directly challenges microaggressions and reimagines their bodies, ability, and place on the court as Asian athletes.

Part IV. Refugees, Pacific Islanders, and Sport

The last section takes a very important turn to underscore the lives of certain Asian American communities that are not easily allowed into the fold of “Asian America” or its “model minority” moniker, categories that are politicized and policed. Membership in the pan-ethnic category of Asian America is not so easily claimed for all groups. For example, Hmong Americans and Pacific Islanders are racialized as “thugs” and “barbaric” in ways that dislocate them from the middle-class, professional respectability associated with the “model minority.” In this volume, the cases of Hmong American and Pacific Islander communities provide spaces that refuse an essentialized, singularly classed, and predominantly East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean American) hegemony of Asian America (Diaz 2002; Võ 2004). Sport becomes a site where members of these communities can be racialized, gendered, and sexualized in multiple ways.

Chia Youyee Vang examines the lives of Hmong Americans and their sporting cultures. Whereas Hmong Americans are frequently racialized as “gangsters” (Schein et al. 2012; Schein and Thoj 2009), as emasculated welfare-dependent refugees (Ong 2003), and as petite, nonnorma-
tive bodies, Vang demonstrates their active involvement and success in a variety of sports including American football, volleyball, and specifically Hmong games. Participation in a variety of sporting cultures showcases gendered realms of participation while highlighting the relation that working-class Hmong American communities have to sport. Their sporting participation provides an important window into conceptualizing the impacts of late capitalism and neoliberalism.

David Leonard gives us a nuanced comparative examination of Taiwanese American star Jeremy Lin and Pacific Islander American Manti Te’o. Whereas Jeremy Lin’s body and iconicity give us a way to read through the category of Asian America, his Asian American-ness is refracted through the presence of other Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. Pacific Islanders have a historical relationship to U.S. colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism in U.S. sport unlike that of Taiwanese Americans and Chinese Americans. Their lands have been colonized by the U.S. nation-state and their landscapes are places of various types of American military testing (Smith 2005). Within this problematic connection, Pacific Islanders, including Samoans and Tongans, are racialized as “excessive bodies” yet seen as fit for some U.S. sports. Accordingly, Manti Te’o is racialized differently but in ways that normalize the presence of Pacific Islanders, especially Samoans, in the National Football League. Not content to rest on this theoretical point, Leonard illustrates how Asian American and Pacific Islander American subjectivity is always in flux, fragile, and queered in multiple ways. He offers a queer reading of the hoax against Te’o to showcase how Asian American racial formations are always gendered and sexualized.

Through engagement with this volume, readers can comprehend how Asian American sporting cultures are not sites where identity is already consolidated prior to social interaction. Rather, racial meanings, racial subjectivities, gendered affects, and sexualized meanings are expressed, transformed, challenged, managed, and negotiated through sport. Sport thus provides one key site through which to understand Asian American lives. The critically attuned exploration of Asian American sporting cultures in this volume explicates how identity, nation, and diaspora are always fluid sites. Varying affective and material attachments to sport illuminate how Asian American identity in the U.S. sporting field is always performed in relation to larger racializations of Asian
Americans, in relation to whiteness and normative gendered identities, and in relation to other communities of color. A thorough analysis of Asian American sporting cultures provides an important counterpoint to the hegemonic discourse of sport as only a site of meritocracy. This volume highlights both the political nature of sport and the political realm of belonging in Asian American communities. As the chapters unfold, the field of Asian American sporting cultures provides a provocative space in which to tease out micro-level practices of identity and macro-level social phenomena in the United States.

NOTES
1 This is what Audre Lorde (1984) defines as the “mythical norm.”
3 See Thangaraj, Burdsey, and Dudrah (2014); Carter (2008); Burdsey (2007a); and Fausto-Sterling (2000).
4 See Farred (2006); Dyreson, Mangan, and Park (2012); Tyrrell (2013); and MacAloon (2013).
5 See King (2014) and Regalado (2012).
7 See Yep (2009); España-Maram (2006); Thangaraj (2013); and Regalado (2012).
11 See Nguyen and Tu (2007); Davé, Nishime, and Oren (2005); Thangaraj, Burdsey, and Dudrah (2014); España-Maram (2006); Regalado (2012); and King (2014).
14 See Kwon (2013).
15 See Võ (2004).
16 See Lowe (1996); Manalansan (2003); and Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan (2002).
17 See Smith (2005); Vang (2010); Ong (2003); Schein and Thoj (2009); and Diaz (2002).
18 See Puar and Rai (2004, 2002); Maira (2009); Rana (2011); Afzal (2014); and Thangaraj (2015).
19 See Abelmann (2009) and Joo (2012).
20 See Nguyen and Tu (2007).
21 For discussions of the relationship of sex to gender and the regulatory schemes at work, see Fausto-Sterling (2000) and Butler (1993).
22 See Fausto-Sterling (2000); Halberstam (2005); and Rubin (2012).
25 For more discussion of sport as voluntary organization, see the seminal work of C.L.R. James (2003) and Ben Carrington (2010).

REFERENCES


