

Rachael Miyung Joo

TRANSNATIONAL SPORT

GENDER, MEDIA, AND GLOBAL KOREA



Transnational Sport

RACHAEL MIYUNG JOO

Transnational Sport

GENDER, MEDIA, AND GLOBAL KOREA

DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS

DURHAM AND LONDON

2012

© 2012 Duke University Press

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

on acid-free paper ∞

Designed by Nola Burger

Typeset in Scala by

Keystone Typesetting, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-

Publication Data appear on the last
printed page of this book.

To my parents

Han Pyung Joo and Un Suk Joo

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Note on Transliteration xiii

Introduction: Manufacturing Koreanness through Transnational Sport i

PART I SITUATING TRANSNATIONAL MEDIA SPORT

- 1 To Be a Global Player: Sport and Korean Developmental Nationalisms 35
- 2 A Leveraged Playing Field: U.S. Multiculturalism and Korean Athletes 65

PART II READING MASCULINITIES AND FEMININITIES THROUGH TRANSNATIONAL ATHLETES

- 3 Playing Hard Ball: The Athletic Body and Korean/American Masculinities 101
- 4 Traveling Ladies: Neoliberalism and the Female Athlete 131

PART III THE TRANSNATIONAL PUBLICS OF THE WORLD CUP

- 5 Nation Love: The Feminized Publics of the Korean World Cup 163
- 6 Home Field Advantage: Nation, Race, and Transnational Media Sport in
Los Angeles's Koreatown 194
- 7 Generations Connect: Discourses of Generation and the Emergence of
Transnational Youth Cultures 222

Conclusion: The Political Potentiality of Sport 250

Notes 267

References 303

Index 323

Acknowledgments

In writing this book, I was supported by the generosity and enthusiasm of family, friends, colleagues, as well as strangers who sometimes became dear friends. Many people were very excited about this project, and this enthusiasm inspired me to continue to research and write. They have waited a long time to see this book.

I am truly grateful to the people in Seoul and Los Angeles who were willing to meet me, to be interviewed, and to hang out. Despite their terrifically busy schedules, they opened their lives to me and often demonstrated a great amount of openness and trust. I know I can never repay them for their time. I hold them in high regard, and I hope that my affection for them shows in this text.

My academic training has been shaped by teachers and mentors who generously shared their passion for intellectual engagement. Purnima Mankekar has been an inspiration as an uncompromising intellectual, a passionate activist, and a close friend. I have been welcomed into her family, and I am more grateful for her generosity and friendship than I can express. The Cultural and Social Anthropology department (CASA) was an amazing program to be a part of while it lasted. When I became a member of its first cohort, a spirit of newness and creativity became the hallmarks of my education. My dissertation committee members, Purnima Mankekar, Paulla Ebron, David Palumbo-Liu, and Gi-wook Shin, were incisive in their critiques and unwavering in their support. Faculty members Paulla Ebron, Purnima Mankekar, Miyako Inoue, Sylvia Yanagisako, Akhil Gupta, Gordon Chang, Renato Rosaldo, Nicholas DeGenova, Valentin Mudimbe, and David

Palumbo-Liu made their mark through their labor as teachers, mentors, and advocates. Ellen Christensen and Shelly Coughlan kept the department together and kept me from falling apart. Richard Yuen, Cindy Ng, and Shelly Tadaki at the Asian American Activities Center (A3C) at Stanford offered me opportunities to share my work with members of the Stanford community and worked tirelessly to sustain dialogues around Asian American issues on campus. During coursework at UCLA, John Duncan, Tim Tangherlini, and Gi-wook Shin welcomed me to Korean Studies and convinced me of the enduring significance of Area Studies.

My fellow graduate students could never have been more supportive. I have great admiration for Marcia Ochoa, who demonstrates the centrality of political engagement to significant and cutting-edge scholarship. Marcia Ochoa, Natalia Roudakova, Nejat Dinc, Jen Chertow, Tim'm West, Kyla Wazana Tompkins Fisher, Lok Siu, Cari Costanzo, Kutraluk Bolton, Celine Parrenas Shimizu, Timothy Yu, Lalaie Ameeriar, Kelly Friedenfelds, Soo Ah Kwon, and Yoonjung Lee were excellent interlocutors and supportive friends. Graduate school taught me to never underestimate the power of a coffee break with colleagues.

During fieldwork, I was assisted by Seo Young Park, who was a patient and supportive colleague. Kim Hyun Mee, despite her insanely busy schedule, found time to take me out to eat and chat about research, national politics, and academic politics. I also appreciated the intellectual and social companionship of fellow academics Jennifer Chun, John Cho, Doryun Chong, and Juni Kwon during research in Seoul.

My year at Duke was an enlightening one. The kindness and generosity shown to me by Orin Starn, Christina Chia, Diane Nelson, Anne Allison, Grant Farred, Ken Wissoker, Tahir Naqvi, Margot Weiss, Neta Bar, and Caroline Yezer made it memorable.

My colleagues at Middlebury College have been extraordinarily supportive, and they have made Vermont a wonderful place to live and work. Members of the program in American Studies, including Michael Newbury, Susan Burch, Roberto Lint Sagarena, Holly Allen, Jason Mittell, Kathy Morse, Karl Lindholm, Andy Wentink, Tim Spears, Will Nash, and Deb Evans, have been excellent colleagues. Renee Brown is an extraordinary force in the department who makes me look a lot more competent than I actually am. I appreciate the help and feedback of writing group sessions with Leif Sorensen, Rachael Neal, Folashade Alao, Holly Allen, Joyce Mao, and Ben Graves. I am also grateful for the amazing work done through the Center for the Compara-

tive Study of Race and Ethnicity, especially Susan Burch, Jennifer Herrera, and Shirley Ramirez Collado. My students inspire me to produce relevant scholarship, and they challenge me to think about the ends and the ethics of research.

This book emerges from institutional support from the National Science Foundation, the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology at Stanford University, the Center for East Asian Studies at Stanford University, the Clayman Institute for Research on Women and Gender at Stanford University, the Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford University, the Center for Comparative Studies of Race and Ethnicity at Stanford University, the Institute for International Studies at Stanford University, and the Fund for Faculty Research and Development at Middlebury College.

I have received valuable feedback on parts of this book from generous audiences at Stanford University, Duke University, Cornell University, Temple University, Middlebury College, and the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Some of the material that appears in chapter 5 was presented at a 2004 summer workshop sponsored by the Korean Studies Program at Stanford University for a special issue of the *Journal of Korean Studies*. Michael Robinson expertly ran the workshop and guided our papers into publishable articles. I would like to thank the Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center and Gi-wook Shin for permissions to reprint “Consuming Visions: The Crowds of the Korean World Cup,” which was published in the *Journal of Korean Studies* in the fall of 2006.

At Duke University Press, Ken Wissoker has shown a consistent enthusiasm for this project. He has been generous with his time and has offered amazing feedback. He has also offered invaluable professional advice. I also want to thank Mandy Early for her patient answers to all my questions—big and little. Without her help, this book would have never been put together. Kathy Chetkovich and Anitra Grisales offered editorial comments at different stages in this process.

My family members have always provided solid support and constant encouragement. My partner Jason Schwaber has been totally supportive and has always offered to help me get my work done by reading drafts, listening to lectures, and assuming the bulk of domestic responsibilities. He was my lifeline during our multiyear, bicoastal relationship. Our son Cyrus was born just before the submission of the first complete draft of my manuscript. Every day, he reminds me that wonderful things are rarely, if ever, easy. All my life, my sisters Miok Joo Snow and Grace Joo have offered tough advice

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

and set high standards for me. They have showered me with generosity. My parents, Han Pyung Joo and Un Suk Joo, have supported me in my pursuits and have always thought that sport was a great topic. They remind me that a life of critical analysis is empty without compassion, generosity, and love. Their lives inspired this project, and I dedicate this book to them.

Note on Transliteration

I follow the McCune-Reischauer system of Romanization for Korean words, except for names and places that have their own conventions (e.g., Park Chung Hee, Kim Il Sung, Seoul). In discussing Korean figures or Korean authors, I follow the Korean practice with the surname first followed by the given name. In the case of Korean (American) authors writing or published in English, I follow the standard English practice with the surname last.

Introduction

MANUFACTURING KOREANNESS THROUGH TRANSNATIONAL SPORT

A few days after I arrived to begin fieldwork, all of South Korea seemed caught up in the frenzy of the 2002 FIFA¹ World Cup. So many people were wearing red T-shirts that televised views from news helicopters made the thoroughfares of Seoul look like a network of arteries that pooled crimson at massive digital screens. Throughout the month of June, I gathered with tens of thousands of Koreans and watched digital projections of games in stadiums, on the street, and in bars. Traveling as part of the crowd, I was in constant contact with other bodies, brushing by some and squeezing between others. The restless waiting was interrupted by kinetic cheers that each began with a single tone—a tone that generated sonic ripples and waves and quickly spread. Sometimes, stray cheers would develop into a unison chant. At other moments, the sound seemed to swell and result in a single loud boom.

Around each South Korea team match, I spent hours talking to companions and strangers about their feelings and thoughts on the events of the month and the impact of those events on their lives. I found that this month-long event was not primarily about sport per se; it was a great opportunity to celebrate with millions of others under the aegis of supporting the nation. It was a great chance for Koreans to attend the party of their lives, to brush up next to warm bodies, to inhabit collective spaces, to express emotions publicly, and to experience the intimate pleasures of mutual recognition.

After the Korean victory over Italy in the Round of Sixteen, I went to launch fireworks over the Han River with women from our *kosiwŏn* (boarding house). As we drank *soju* and snacked on *anju* (drinking snacks), Chŏng

Chi-hye, the kosiwŏn manager, explained that she was being an appropriate nationalist by partying all night. As she took a drink from her paper cup, she offered a playful invitation to the rest of the group and stated, “We must. After all, the whole world is watching!” Although there was an element of sarcasm to Chi-hye’s pronouncement, all the women joined her in the toast. Into the early hours of the morning, these women expressed their excitement at being part of an event that would go into the annals of South Korean and, quite possibly, world history. They were making their own inscriptions on a historical narrative that was in the process of being constructed. They could now claim that they had participated in the spectacular street scenes, and they could later reflect on their contributions to creating this incredible global spectacle. “Will there ever be another opportunity like this in our lifetimes?” whispered Lee Mi-sŏng. The scent of her drunken breath spread across the aluminum mat, and while no one responded to her question, her words created a sense of intimate connection.

The World Cup was memorialized in national history as it unfolded. The dies of nationalist history were cast prior to the event, and the sporting results greatly exceeded the expectations of memorialists. Due to the strong sense of anticipation prior to the event, a powerful feeling of nostalgia saturated the social interactions that occurred throughout the World Cup. This “nostalgia for the present” was not an effect of a postmodern lack of historicity (see Jameson 1989); rather, it was produced through the affective memories encoded through past nationalist spectacles that unfolded over the history of South Korean national development. Nostalgia was woven into the affective field generated by the crowds, and it was expressed in the attempt to capture every moment as a personal keepsake with camera phones, video recorders, and digital cameras. The ability to record (and review and delete) every moment digitally helped create a collectively edited memory that captured the “right” feel for the time.

The “intimate publics” that came together during this event captured what Lauren Berlant refers to as the “juxtapolitical” nature of mass culture. Berlant, in *The Female Complaint* (2008), explains that the affective spheres generated by mass culture operate to produce political potentialities. Indeed, both the embodied experience of mass(ive) mediation and participation in the World Cup crowds inspired the spectacular character of the large-scale protests against the U.S. military that took place in 2002 and were also recalled in the so-called “mad cow” anti-American protests that began in May of

2008.² The memories of movement, of proprioception, through the hundreds of thousands of emotive bodies that filled the spaces and streets around Seoul City Hall connected these large-scale sporting and political events (Massumi 2003). Proprioception entails the physical memories of bodily movement “of contorsion and rhythm rather than visible form” (179), and these physical memories of massive collective gathering, dancing, chanting, and gesturing during the World Cup were again evoked in the explicitly politicized domains of anti-government and anti-U.S. military protests. Korean subjects felt that they had helped construct this significant moment through their physical participation in the crowds and protests. This feeling was also shaped by mass-mediated images that reinforced ideas of community and connection among Koreans both within the geographic boundaries of the nation and around the world. This book proposes that the embodied participation generated through sporting events and sporting images contributes to the making of a global Koreanness. The text demonstrates how a Korean style of globalization, or *seggyehwa*, is projected through media sport, and how the debates and contests around the meanings of global Koreanness can be understood through an investigation of media sport. By media sport, I refer to competitive sports that are structured by commercial mass media and manufactured for mass consumption (Hargreaves 1986; Jhally 1989).

The women with whom I sat that evening helped craft the national images that circulated around the world. They understood the significance of those moments through their own bodily sensations and the visual reinforcement of mass media that surrounded them. They clearly expressed their own sense of place within this global event. Was this a unique opportunity to lose oneself in the thrill of the crowd, or was it an especially spectacular demonstration of the everyday forms of self-fashioning that take place in the media-saturated context of the twenty-first century? Were the expressions of intimacy that evening presenting a feeling of global connection, or were they expressing a desire for recognition within the nation and among themselves as a group of young women? I sensed that they felt they would never again experience the immense pleasure of being part of such an ecstatic event. Indeed, I often asked myself whether there would be another opportunity like this in my own lifetime. This desire to reexperience the immense power of such crowds raises important questions about the emotional intensity of the event and how it worked to expand the realm of emotional possibilities around national belonging. It is from this place of longing and desire for

another similar experience—one that tingles due to the size and intensity of the human convergence—that I approach the implications of sporting events and media spectacles from the perspective of cultural analysis and critique.

The World Cup framed my research on transnational media sport as it coincided with the beginning of an extended period of fieldwork about sport and Koreanness that informs this text. The World Cup demonstrated how hegemonic ideas of global Koreanness were generated through popular culture and how ideas of the nation were being shaped in significant ways through commercial media. Moreover, the event created dramatic social and political effects and left a powerful impact on Korean communities in both South Korea and the United States. Riding this wave of excitement, I investigated how subjective engagements with sport were woven together with the histories, political ideologies, economic circumstances, social realities, and everyday lives of South Koreans and Korean Americans. My research led to an analysis of how the social locations of subjects shaped their relation to the national discourses of media sport. The period surrounding the World Cup was used by many as an opportunity to express opinions about Koreanness and desires for representation within the national body. It brought attention to the representational practices of national subjects who were conscious of their role in shaping an idea of global Korea. It offered a framework to situate subjective responses along specific sites of global connection that cut across and intersect along local, national, transnational, and global vectors (see Tsing 2005). The subjective experiences of mass mediation and the embodied practice of crowd participation inculcated through the World Cup crowds were indeed ripe with political possibilities. Presence in these crowds shaped ideas of embodied citizenship that were later borne out in explicitly politicized terrains. Clearly, sport has played a powerful role in shaping the affective terrains of both Korean nationalism and Korean American transnationalism at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Global Koreanness and Transnational Media Sport

This book investigates the role of transnational media sport in producing notions of Koreanness in the contemporary global era. Media sport plays a powerful role in shaping the mass media content of urban economies around the world, and the study of sport in contemporary communities offers important insights into the cultural dimensions of globalization (Martin and Miller 1999). In this book, I focus on significant sporting events and

iconic athletes that have emerged in tandem with South Korean *seggyehwa* (globalization) policies in order to demonstrate how media sport as an assemblage of institutions, images, and people produces ideas of global Koreanness and how these ideas of Koreanness are lived and experienced by Koreans in both Seoul and Los Angeles. Changing media technologies, the transnational expansion of sporting markets, and the processes of media globalization have expanded the role of transnational media sport in the everyday lives of Koreans in both cities.

The emergence of transnational media sport featuring Korean players and teams began in 1998 with the popular successes of professional female golfer Se Ri Pak in the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) and baseball player Chan Ho Park in Major League Baseball (MLB). Both athletes became national heroes in Korea after their spectacular and closely followed successes in U.S.-based sporting institutions. Their successes initiated the regular entry and growth of Korean players in U.S. professional sports and the subsequent development of Korean-language mass media productions of transnational sport. The number of Koreans watching baseball and golf grew rapidly, and fan cultures formed around individual players and their respective sports. The debuts of Pak and Park can be interpreted as historical markers indexing institutional transformations³ that fostered the popularity of transnational celebrities and athletes and their continuous visibility through mass media within what is known as *Hallyu*, or the Korean wave of popular culture throughout Asia and beyond.⁴ Since then, mass-mediated representations of Korean athletes performing in North American, European, and Japanese leagues have increased steadily, and they have become a substantial part of Korean popular culture in both South Korea and the United States. At the Vancouver Olympics of 2010, Kim Yuna won the first-ever gold medal for South Korea in ladies' figure skating and set off a national and commercial spectacle that brought her more money and media exposure than any Korean athlete before her. When this book was written, she represented the zenith in celebrity-athlete exposure. She was hailed as the new queen of Korean women's sport and, arguably, Korean popular culture. The growth of transnational media sport within and among Korean communities around the world offers an important context for investigating and tracking social changes in an era of neoliberalism, and it also reveals how the affective fields of mass culture offer an important context for understanding national discourses.

In tracking media sport to *seggyehwa* policies in South Korea and to trans-

national processes in Korean America, this book details how Koreanness is evoked within the global assemblages of cultural power that shape ideas of nationhood in two specific sites, Seoul and Los Angeles. The emergence of transnational media sport featuring Korean athletes is situated within political and economic transformations in the public cultures of South Korea, including the expanding role of transnational media representations and cultural flows that shape national identities. The growing global circulation of South Korean popular culture, referred to as Hallyu, has depended on the spectacularization of individual movie stars, pop stars, and athletes as celebrities. Ideas of Koreanness in the United States are shaped, in part, by commercial mass media from South Korea, as demonstrated by the growing popularity of Hallyu stars in Korean American communities. This book offers insight into the movement of Korean people, goods, and images between Seoul and the United States. By regarding Seoul as a cosmopolitan center, this text presents an important narrative in Asian American studies that works to provincialize the United States in studies of Korean America. This text also brings attention to the narratives of nation, race, and gender that hail from mainstream U.S. institutions and shape ideas of Koreanness in the United States and South Korea. Though they may be critical of American power, investigations into the workings of U.S. hegemony in the transnational field too often focus exclusively on the United States as a defining force. I diverge from this tendency and argue that media sport exists as an important domain to demonstrate how Koreanness and Americanness are shaped in relation to each other and how these articulations of nation “look different” from different national locations.

Media sport exists as an important domain for tracking the ideologies of global Koreanness, as it highlights key components of South Korean *seggyehwa* policies. By the summer of 1995, the government of South Korea, led by President Kim Young Sam, had developed a plan to promote globalization at all levels—politics, foreign affairs, economy, society, education, culture, and sport (S. Kim 2000a). National *seggyehwa* policies were considered a way to promote economic liberalization and bolster a strong sense of Korean national identity. The economic aspects of liberalization eased financial regulations in the foreign ownership of banks, media companies, and other national industries; privatized many national industries; endorsed free trade over protectionism; and opened travel and a variety of consumer opportunities for everyday citizens. The state, however, wanted to emphasize the importance of national unity and a sense of national identity as a way to

dictate the nature of these changes within a nationalist context. The statement “The most Korean thing is the most global thing” was often iterated to convey a sense of national significance to the promotion of policies that would further connect South Korea to the global economy. The use of the transliterated word *seggyehwa*—rather than globalization—by policymakers, and my use of it in this text, indicates the nationalist tone associated with the policies of economic liberalization; South Korea needed to globalize in order to maintain its status as a significant player in the world of industrialized nations, but in the process of globalizing, Korea’s uniqueness and distinctiveness would remain intact and work to influence the rest of the world.⁵

The economic liberalization policies expanded dramatically during Kim Dae Jung’s presidency (1998–2002) due to the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and structural adjustment programs instituted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Song 2009). The Kim Dae Jung presidency was also a time of expanding social freedoms. With the expansion of travel freedoms and the deregulation and privatization of mass media outlets, South Koreans were able to purchase a wider variety of non–South Korean consumer experiences. The timing of these economic, political, and social transformations coincided with the successes of Pak and Park, and they help to explain why these athletes emerged at that particular time and became such powerful symbols of Korea’s globalization.

A central aspect of *seggyehwa* policies included the attempt to highlight the significance of Korean ethnic identity across national boundaries by promoting the notion of a global Korean diaspora. The mass-mediated image of the Korean athlete operated within the context of nationalist appeals to travelers, students, workers, residents, and citizens who reside outside of South Korean territorial borders and are known as overseas Koreans. This discourse became part of the official state policy and was instituted in the founding of the Overseas Korean Foundation in 1997. Within this discourse, narratives of a shared Koreanness operate across borders to promote a focus on intra-ethnic interaction and social reproduction among Koreans who might be located in different national contexts. These discourses of national kinship pervade the arenas of athletic competition, and the notion of a blood connection among Koreans continues to shape ideas that Koreans, regardless of their country of residence, possess an innate and natural connection to one another (Shin 2006). According to this racialized blood-nation logic, overseas Koreans are expected to maintain a sense of loyalty to the South Korean nation and act on that loyalty as citizens of a global Korea. The athlete, as a

gendered subject who travels transnationally, yet functions as a symbol of the nation, is easily absorbed into the discourse of the overseas Korean. There are increasing numbers of athletes who perform on a transnational circuit and possess Korean heritage but are citizens of nations other than South Korea, are biracial/multiracial, or claim dual citizenship. Nevertheless, Korean athletes continue to be presented primarily as ethnically and racially Korean. This focus on athletes' Korean "blood" works to connect Korean players and fans in ways that tap the emotions and passions of the sporting spectacle, and it uses feelings of national kinship to intensify the feelings of intimacy and obligation directed toward the athletes and their athletic abilities.

In this book, I attempt to offer an account of the complex lived experiences of global Koreanness. In order to do so, my analysis moves back and forth between Seoul and Los Angeles to describe how subjects located in and between the two sites comprehend transnational media sport, given their particular locations in two heterogeneous global cities. Going beyond a discussion that interprets this exchange as "cultural imperialism" or Americanization, I discuss the significance of media sport as it is constituted through connectivities between these sites (see Grewal 2005). These connectivities, or "transculturations" in Koichi Iwabuchi's figuration (2002), occur within and through asymmetrical relations shaped by the power differentials of nation-states, institutions, capital flows, and gender relations. As with other global flows, the "mediascapes" analyzed here are produced through the "differences and disjunctures" that exist between the subjective practices of production and consumption in South Korea and the United States (Appadurai 1996). Practices of media making and media consumption investigated in this text are characterized by uneven circulations of mass media and inconsistent practices of viewing and spectatorship. Obviously, not everyone is a sports fan, and each fan has his or her own subjective viewing practices. Furthermore, some people who are not fans might be interested in watching sports for a number of different reasons. Nevertheless, in this text, I establish that the realm of media sport exists as a significant domain for the distribution and circulation of ideas of Koreanness between South Korea and the United States.

For Korean American immigrant populations in the United States, the popular appeal of these "homeland" narratives can be explained as a response to the marginalization and invisibility these groups feel in political, economic, and media domains. This position assumes that a goal of Koreans

living in the United States is incorporation into what Lisa Lowe (1996) refers to as “U.S. national culture.” Although Korean Americans certainly face challenges as a racial and ethnic minority in the United States, many Korean migrants express strong Korean nationalist sentiments and remain invested in South Korea in political, social, economic, and emotional ways. These connections are structured through institutions that promote a shared Korean-ness, such as churches, veterans’ associations, business associations, school alumni associations, and regional community associations. The South Korean government also actively promotes a nationalist version of Korean culture and heritage in the United States by funding academic research, cultural events, and educational programs through institutions such as the Korea Foundation and the Overseas Korean Foundation.

One middle-aged, male Korean American respondent, Mr. Yoon, explained to me the essential superiority of the Korean nation as proven through the success of Koreans in professional sports. As he described the lovely hands of Korean female athletes and the fierce drive of Korean male athletes, his wife interjected by accusing him of an exaggerated sense of national pride and self-importance. She huffed, “You no longer live in Korea. Why do you pay so much attention to these Koreans? Why can’t you pay attention to America?” Even though she was also invested in Korean athletes, her self-conscious reproach of such nationalist sentiments was a common critique of the narratives of Korean nationalism, as well as a commentary on the inability of many Korean Americans to involve themselves with so-called mainstream U.S. interests and culture. Of course, the entry of Korean players into mainstream U.S. sports has offered immense pleasure for many Korean Americans, as it has opened new collective spaces for shared interest and attention among Koreans. Although it is not clear whether these Korean athletes point to a new direction and position for Korean Americans in mainstream U.S. society, engagements with these athletes enable Korean Americans to articulate their relationships to Koreanness and what it means to be Korean/American in the United States. The slash between Korean and American references the slippery, contradictory, and strategic connections between the two identifications (see Palumbo-Liu 1999).

I do not measure whether it is marginalization in the United States or a sense of connection to South Korea that underlies the popularity of media sport among Korean Americans. Korean Americans maintain varying degrees of affinity and affiliation to the United States and South Korea. Their relationships to both nations are shifting, contextual, and strategic. Media

representations of Korean athletes performing in the United States are conveyed through U.S., South Korean, and so-called global media outlets. South Korean athletes who perform abroad are situated within the narrative contexts of travel, exile, migration, and foreignness that resonate in some way with many Korean Americans. Many viewers in the United States relate to the challenges that athletes face as they struggle with language and communication issues, isolation, cultural misunderstandings, food cravings, and generalized feelings of displacement. Even while Korean Americans may see athletes as having similar experiences to themselves, part of the appeal of media sport for Korean Americans is connected to the relative invisibility of Korean Americans in other forms of mainstream media in both the United States and South Korea. Media sport operates as a highly visible context for the production and apprehension of multiple, often competing, narratives of nation, identity, and belonging.

For those located in South Korea, media sport productions offer representations of the nation that articulate a relationship between diaspora and homeland. When discussing athletes who perform in the United States, many of my respondents connected them to relatives, friends, or acquaintances who had immigrated, traveled, and studied in the United States. As Grewal, Gupta, and Ong explain:

Media representations of migration, themselves shaped by the need to address diasporic markets, then significantly influence the reimagining of the nation and its inhabitants. Diasporic populations, because of the growing importance of emerging markets and of remittances and investment to newly liberalized national economies, create new categories of belonging. *Transnational media and capital reshape the nation while they are transforming the diasporic experience.* (1999, 657; emphasis added)

Mass-mediated forms of communication, such as television, Internet, and newspapers, have facilitated the political, intellectual, financial, and social interests and investments of migrants with their respective countries of origin. These connections have sparked debates about the nature of the relationship between different diasporic Korean populations. Korean Americans, especially those with U.S. citizenship or permanent resident status, are privileged representatives of the Korean diaspora in relation to other diasporic groups, such as Korean Chinese and Koreans from the former Soviet republics (Park and Chang 2005).⁶ Clearly, financial, social, and political incen-

tives shape formal state policies and commercial appeals to Korean Americans as privileged “overseas” subjects.

Transformations wrought by transnational media, markets, and migration have affected political notions of nation, citizenship, and identity, but these modes of political identification are constantly rearticulated. Within the processes of globalization, nationalism remains a powerful ideological force (Smith 1997).⁷ As Roger Rouse (1995) points out, nationalism is unlikely to disappear, but it will most likely undergo transformations within transnational processes. Indeed, Gi-wook Shin, in *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea* (2006), details the resilience of Korean ethnic nationalism within the contemporary era of *seggyehwa*. He discusses the embedded histories and enduring legacy of Korean ethnic nationalism as promulgated by changing political regimes throughout the twentieth century. Whereas the rhetoric and presentation have changed somewhat during the current era, Korean nationalism has demonstrated a capacious scope as it hails all those who share “Korean blood” around the world.

National discourses embedded in transnational media sport hail Korean viewers in both South Korea and the United States as subjects of the nation. Narratives of South Korean and U.S. nationalism structure meaning in productions of media sport that feature Korean athletes performing in U.S. leagues. These media representations interpellate Korean viewers as national subjects through their specific modes of address (Althusser 1971; Hall 1985). This book attempts to track and detail a variety of nation and gender narratives that are embedded in media sport as a way to demonstrate the complicated relationship between transnational texts and the subjects hailed by these texts. I incorporate ethnographic material to analyze the subjective interpretations and social significance of media sport in the everyday lives of South Koreans and Korean Americans. Rather than use ethnography as a means to make authoritative claims about the subjects of my research, I use it as an evocative narrative that indicates the human possibilities of reading and interpretation (Mankekar 1999b).⁸ Using participant observation, I track national ideologies to their everyday effects. I acknowledge the existence of heterogeneous responses, but I draw attention to the ways that media sport frames events within highly structured narrative scripts. This book demonstrates the complex relationship of subjects to discourses of power, and it analyzes their negotiations with these discourses within the material realities that shape their everyday lives.

The Publics of Transnational Media Sport

New forms of transnational experience and subjectivity have been shaped by transnational mass media (Morley and Robins 1995). Following the influential work of Benedict Anderson, Arjun Appadurai (1996) emphasizes the work of the imagination in shaping contemporary ethnic and national subjectivities in an era of globalization. He points out that migrants can imagine themselves as connected to people in their “homelands” through mass media. The shared consumption of national mass media creates “diasporic public spheres” that are constituted through collective and simultaneous engagements by subjects located in different spaces around the world. These connections have specific routes, directionalities, and locations that reveal the specificity of these community-making practices. This book highlights the processes by which media sport works to generate a sense of national community, yet the affective contexts of media sport produce effects that that can hardly be limited to geographic spaces and nation-state agendas; indeed, they operate across porous boundaries with audiences that have complex identifications, which take place through a number of media productions (Berlant 2008).

Therefore, the audiences delineated throughout this book offer an important example of the contingent and emergent, yet fleeting, character of publics that are thrown together in an instance but disappear soon after. This book investigates characteristics of publics that respond to discourses of transnational media sport. Publics, as a “relation among strangers” (Warner 2002, 55), emerge in response to the circulation of mass-mediated texts around athletes and athletic events. Sporting publics capture the intimacy among strangers that has been described by Michael Warner as an “expressive corporeality” (2002, 57). In fact, the commercial genre of media sport depends on this very corporeality in its viewers and fans. Warner noted that publics are full of potentialities, but they are not inherently political. In this book, I attempt to demonstrate how the intimacies and affective intensities generated through the circulation of media sport connect to ideas of global Koreanness and work to highlight the debates around its meanings. These connections that constitute a public depend on the historical moment, the temporality of media circulation, and the nature of the collective participation. Media sport has the potential to draw together a crowd, and it also has the potential to inspire and intensify politicized affects.

In considering media sport as a genre, I borrow from Lauren Berlant, who

understands genre as “an aesthetic structure of affective expectation, an institution or formation that absorbs all kinds of small variations” (2008, 4). Berlant goes on to point out that genres have “porous boundaries allowing complex audience identifications” (ibid., 4). Berlant’s discussion of genre enables me to keep the category of media sport broad so that it includes performances, television, print media, and Internet sites that feature athletes, games, and teams. These are connected not by a uniformity of narrative or function but by an affective expectation generated around bodily sensations, feelings of belonging, and emotions around competition. Productions of sport absorb a great number of diverse viewers who watch for a variety of reasons—all of which involve the physical and embodied experience of sensing athletes’ movements. The dramatic narratives of competition and personal triumph elicit visceral reactions to each game and rivalry. The loyalties and allegiances, as well as the emotions and passions inspired by sport, blend well with the emotional requisites for nationalism in the global era. The visual field of media sport also inspires powerful feelings of recognition conveyed through the spectacular image-saturated contexts of national public cultures. The genre centrally relies on narratives of gender and sexuality to produce its affective charge. In this book, I demonstrate how consumer desires are shaped and intensified through the discourses of gender and sexuality, as conveyed through sporting productions. As a highly commercial genre, media sport highlights the power of corporate media institutions and the commodification of national ideologies within the context of global media.

During the World Cup month of June, if I mentioned the dangerous politics of nationalism or the possible drawbacks of large celebrations, the response was largely unsympathetic. When I expressed concerns about the uniform nature of the crowd, I came to be perceived as a dour critic who couldn’t understand the joy of Koreans on the streets (see H. Kwŏn 2002). Some pointed out that they felt my national and physical constitution as a Korean from the United States—a Korean American—explained my inability to fully immerse myself in the celebratory mood. At the beginning of the World Cup month, I was greatly moved by the massive human mobilizations. My enthusiastic participation, however, was tempered by outright fatigue toward the end of the month. At a viewing party with an Internet *moim* (group) during the middle of the World Cup, I failed to wear a “Be the Reds” T-shirt and was shamed by the eldest member of the group who ridiculed my pink blouse and asked whether I forgot my shirt. I was embarrassed about

the public shaming, and I mumbled something about not buying one, even though the T-shirts only cost about 3,000 won (around \$3 at the time, or the equivalent of a roll of *kimbap*), and they could be found easily in nearly any busy commercial area. In fact, I had intentionally rejected this expression of solidarity. My initial excitement was dampened by my research agenda and the concern of colleagues and friends outside South Korea who were worried by my enthusiasm for the national zeitgeist. Friends warned me to check myself as they watched events unfold with alarm, imagining me to be a lost red dot within a crimson sea of bodies where independent and critical thought were squelched. As a result, I began to think more critically about what it meant to be part of these extraordinary gatherings and why it was so easy for me to dive in and feel so good.

In my attempt to maintain a critical position that focused on the intellectual significance of the event, I was faced with many challenges: how to offer a critique of the nationalist character of the crowds while recognizing the political importance of the pleasure of women, children, and other traditionally marginalized groups; how to think of the crowds as a mobilization of the state and as a consumer response to state mobilizations; and how to recognize the various stakes involved in participation for people differently located within South Korea and Korean diasporas. In my discussion of the significance of this event and other productions of media sport, I am not interested in coming up with a conclusive depiction of how sport is experienced or with an exhaustive account of its social significance. Following Ien Ang's ideals for the field of cultural studies, I attempt to "[participate] in an ongoing, open-ended, politically motivated debate, aimed at critiquing our contemporary cultural condition" (1997, 134). The political importance of cultural studies resides in its ability to engage in a positioned and strategic critique of ideologies and institutions that sustain and reproduce relations of power and inequality (Mani and Frankenberg 1996).

Cultural studies have been especially important in demonstrating the power of mass media to shape political ideologies that have real social, material, and psychological effects.⁹ Rejecting ideas of universal meaning and interpretation in mass media, I investigate the various ways that Korean subjects positioned differently in the nation interpret the narratives of nation embedded in media sport. Rather than forcing a single determined understanding, mass-mediated texts produce interpretations that are contingent upon contexts of reception and meaning making. My attempt to contextualize the interactions between media sport and Korean viewers does not, how-

ever, assume that the process is wholly democratic. It is, rather, an attempt to situate viewing within structures of inequality and to highlight the various stakes involved for different actors.

Instead of celebrating the subject's ability to resist dominant narratives in mass media, Stuart Hall maintains the importance of paying attention to the dominant ideologies that structure narratives of mass media "though [they are] neither univocal or uncontested" (1980, 134).¹⁰ The dominant ideological discourses in mass media operate within contexts of power and knowledge to shape political subjectivities. There is, however, no necessary correlation between the discourses in mass media and the construction of subjectivities. Rather than an inescapable force of mind control or a factory of meaningless entertainment, the relationship between media sports and Korean subjects might be better understood as a site of negotiation between dominant discourses, resistant readings, contradictory interpretations, and intentional misreadings.¹¹

Instead of concentrating on dominant readings that are imposed from without, I adhere to an approach that attends to the negotiations over meanings that take place within subjective practices of reception and production. David Morley states, "the meaning of the text will be constructed differently according to the discourses . . . brought to bear on the text by the reader and the crucial factor in the encounter of audience/subject and text will be the range of discourses at the disposal of the audience" (1992, 57). Morley here argues for an investigation into the range of discourses encountered by a subject without assuming that the process is one of limitless interpretation. He points to the fact that the production of meaning is framed by the structure of the text as well as the subjective and social contexts of reception. Ethnographic methods offer an opportunity to detail the various ways that meanings are limned by historical, social, and subjective factors.

By investigating the practices of reception, ethnographic studies of mass media offer an important perspective into how subjectivities are constituted through everyday practices of media consumption (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin 2002; Mankekar 1999b). In attempting to detail how mass media constitutes subjectivities through ideological discourses, I draw from Althusser's notion of interpellation, which describes how individuals are hailed through ideology. Althusser understood ideology as the "imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (1971, 162). Althusser explains:

Ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in . . . a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals . . . or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects . . . by . . . *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: “Hey you there!” (1971, 174)

My ethnography aims to narrate this process—that is, the practices of recognition (and misrecognition) by Korean subjects of national and gendered ideologies. My study attempts to detail a multiplicity of ideologies embedded in mass media and the various ways that Korean subjects recognize and also fail to recognize these ideological discourses.

Clearly, reading practices are not as simple as identification or non-identification, recognition or non-recognition, acceptance or resistance. Hall draws attention to the unpredictability of these processes in his own work. Going beyond a binary reception theory, José Esteban Muñoz offers the idea of “disidentification” as a way to explain intentional misreadings that work as critiques of power and open possibilities for alternative readings of ideology (1999). Muñoz argues that disidentification brings attention to complex workings of ideology through the performative rearticulation of hegemonic ideologies by racial minorities and queer subjects. Although my own project focuses on hegemonic ideologies through what might be understood as readings of direct identifications to the ideologies detailed in this text, I do not want to preclude the possibilities for other kinds of readings, and, indeed, the ethnographic archive offers great possibilities in alternative and critical reading practices.

Martin and Miller argue that sport has the potential to offer new directions for research and intellectual investigation in the study of popular culture. They argue that sport can challenge “the very conception of the practical and popular as they have been understood in cultural studies more broadly” (1999, 1). In this book, I move from athletic icons to spectacular events as a way to demonstrate how media sport and transnationalism connect in a variety of ways. Sport has the ability to help us think about the connections among various fields of inquiry, including the social sciences and humanities (Cole 2001a). C. L. Cole points to the connections between bodies, mass media, political discourses, and structural conditions in her work on sport. Cole also points out that sport conjoins questions about the body and the socius; the local, the global, and the national; and the abject and the intimate (2001a). This text attempts to highlight—through specific case studies—the

complex connections among nation, race, sexuality, generation, and gender by investigating how sport operates within a variety of sites.

Gendered Transnationalisms

Between 1999 and 2008, I traveled multiple times from the United States to Seoul, South Korea with sport on my mind. Each time I arrived in Seoul, I was reassured of the relevance of this research topic by the regular sight of large crowds gathered about television screens and watching sport programming. People would stop in the subway, linger in department stores, and stand outside the front window of electronics shops. Although the practice of watching televised sports in public spaces in Seoul is not something new, the athletes and games that are watched mark a new chapter of mass-mediated sport—that of transnational media sport featuring Korean players and teams. Mediated sporting events that featured Korean players produced moments when people in Seoul took regular breaks from work, and, within the otherwise frenzied pace of city centers, foot traffic would slow and stop in front of television screens.

During these moments, I would scan the crowd and circle around it to get a better sense of who had stopped and for how long. Most people in the crowd were men across a range of ages and dressed in a variety of clothing styles—suggesting their diverse class and status backgrounds. The small female presence in these spontaneous gatherings was overwhelmed by the male-dominated space constructed around the television screens. Expropriating space around the televisions, men would stand as if mesmerized or squat comfortably and enter into an all-absorbed focus on the action occurring on screen. This street scene seemed to reflect what Cho Han Haejong commonly refers to as the androcentric public sphere in South Korea (2000). Cho Han argues that until the late 1990s, a possessive investment in male privilege silenced women and precluded female self-expression in public contexts.¹²

Throughout the 2002 World Cup, however, the crowds of spectators on the streets were characterized by the highly visible presence of women and feminized practices of sport fandom (Cho Han 2002a; Hyun Mee Kim 2002). This was especially noteworthy in light of the nationalist mass mobilizations of the past half century in South Korea, such as nationalist parades, sporting spectacles, and pro-democracy demonstrations, which were characterized by their male-dominated political cultures (Moon 2005). The World

Cup marked a shift in the gendered characteristics of mass mobilizations and sport fandom that work through Korean national themes. This transformation was widely noted and discussed by commentators across social and political spectra. The changes were attributed to rights won by women's movements as well as to the increasing power of women—as laborers and consumers—in the economy (Moon 2005). Whereas this event did not radically alter the masculinist structure of media sport industries and the male orientation of its productions, it did signal a significant change in the range of actors, practices, and purposes involved in the consumption of sport. The gendered shift is related to the spectacular aspects of media sport as a global genre of popular culture, which is based in celebrity worship and consumer advertising (see Miller 2002; Cashmore 2006).

Women's practices of reception, though not entirely different from men's, should be situated in relation to their gendered locations within the nation. The overdetermined gendered domains of media sport (e.g., female golfers in the LPGA, the “queen” of figure skating Kim Yuna, male baseball players in MLB, and male football [soccer] players in the World Cup) present various articulations of the relationship between gender and nation (Kaplan, Alarcón, and Moallem 1999). Gendered ideas of nation are conveyed through the presentation of national athletes within the sex-segregated spheres of athletic competition and the gendered meanings embedded in sport discourses. These gendered ideas of nation are also produced through different interpretations of and attachments made with sport by male and female fans. Thus, an ethnographic reading of Korean male and female athletes and viewers offers opportunities for the critical reading of transnational connections among gender, sexuality, race, and nation (Eng 1997; Gopinath 2005; Povinelli and Chauncey 1999). Subjective interpretations of male and female athletes present various understandings of these connections and how ideas travel across borders and become a part of peoples' everyday lives.

Korean male and female athletes powerfully demonstrate the gendered dimensions of transnationalism and how transnationalism as a discourse continues to rely on and work through narratives of gendered and sexualized differences. This book approaches questions of gender, sexuality, race, and nation in media sport through readings of athletes as transnational icons. The transnational athlete acts as an important symbol of a global Koreanness—one that travels across borders, a figure caught up in circuits of corporate capital, and an idealized representation of the neoliberal Korean subject. The Korean athlete demonstrates how ideas of gender and sexuality are defined

through the transnational movement of the athlete across borders. This analysis contributes to a body of work that points to the centrality of sexuality in transnational encounters (Gopinath 2005; Manalansan 2003; Mankekar and Schein 2004; Povinelli and Chauncey 1999). This line of research details how ideas of national sexuality travel across borders and how movements across nation-states become constitutive in the meanings of nation, gender, and sexuality.

The discourses of gender and sexuality in transnational media sport stimulate and sustain Korean and Korean American consumption of media sport and function centrally in viewing practices. Visual representations of Korean athletes act as generative sites in the production of national erotics for Korean/Americans (Mankekar and Schein 2004). The sexual desire and excitement generated around Korean national athletes operate as allegories of desire for the Korean nation. The erotic narratives in sport produce Korean nationalisms that emphasize the global reproduction of an ethnic Korean nation. These hegemonic Korean nationalisms privilege heterosexual intra-ethnic sexual relations that reproduce patriarchal family relations. They also operate through a discourse that treats the heterosexual family as a necessary context for staging capitalist success. In other words, the family acts as a primary justification for the accumulation of private wealth (see Ong 1999). Moreover, the discourses of sexuality in media industries promote and expand sporting and entertainment markets. The discourses of sexuality are easily commodified and packaged for sale in transnational commercial contexts of media sport. National sexualities operate through erotics that further promote national economic growth and commercial prestige in a globalizing capitalist world. Gendered icons convey ideas of a “global Korea” and a “powerful Asia”; in doing so, they appeal to Korean consumers within and across national borders.

Increasing female participation in sport and the rise of female athletes represented in media is understood by some as an indication of an advance in women’s positions (see United Nations 2007). The idea of female empowerment, as conveyed through mass culture such as media sport, should be distinguished from transnational feminist practice. Though there have certainly been significant improvements for women in South Korea, important struggles for equality are not resolved by images of powerful and wealthy celebrity transnational athletes. Seungsook Moon argues that the “asymmetrical incorporation of men and women into the nation” has produced gendered differences and inequalities in citizenship for South Ko-

reans (2005, 7). She points out that national projects of development and modernization have shaped very different relations to the nation for women and men. The developmental state has been depicted as pursuing a “hyper-masculine” approach to national economic growth, which treats men’s work as being of central importance to nation-building. Women’s work, on the other hand, is met with expectations of obedience and subservience to the nation’s needs (Hyun Mee Kim 2001). As a result of democratization and the growing power of women’s movements, there have been substantial gains toward gender equality in political and legal contexts. Although the rhetoric of women’s equality has become a mainstream discourse in this era of globalization, structural barriers to gender equality remain, as evidenced by material disparities between men and women in the workplace, in education, and in the home (Hyun Mee Kim 2001). The national economy continues to structure distinct and unequal roles for most women and men within current neoliberal contexts (J. Song 2009).

Despite these inequalities, both male and female Korean athletes, as icons of global capitalism, represent Korean competitiveness in the global economy. Their symbolic power has been connected to the intense commercialization of transnational sporting productions in South Korea over the past decade. The national discourses that infuse these athletic contexts offer gendered narratives of national economic subjectivities. The MLB player represents Korean masculine strength and competitiveness in the fields of global capital. The LPGA golfer signifies the flexible neoliberal subject of the transnational economy. The dreams produced in this global capitalist system promote particular class and gender fantasies through sport. The mythologies of the *chôn nom* (country bumpkin) turned baseball millionaire or the lower-middle-class girl turned elite lady golfer constitute national dreams of capitalist success within the context of global media.

Korean female athletes offer powerful representations of the ideal economic subject of neoliberal Korea. Through private initiative rather than state sponsorship, the female athlete demonstrates the ability of Korean female subjects to adapt to the flexible economic contexts of the new era of global competition. The Korean female athlete exists as a symbol of female empowerment and of the new Korean woman in the twenty-first century. She demonstrates that global recognition can be won without disavowing femininity. She is presented as a middle-class subject who represents the successful development of contemporary South Korea. In the context of globalization strategies of the South Korean state, she helps present the

Korean female as a respectable and sexually desirable subject across Asia, and she works to knit together ideas of biological and cultural essentialism to market the Korean female athlete as a distinct genetic type.

In the context of mainstream U.S. media, the Korean female athlete exemplifies a type of Asian/American female figure who is especially successful at adapting to White, middle-class norms. She is easily absorbed into the narratives of the good immigrant to the United States; her success as a migrant demonstrates the continued promise of the American ideals of opportunity and open access, despite disappearing opportunities for class mobility (see Honig 1998). Even though representations of Asian female athletes often fall into stereotyped generalizations of Asians as robotic and lacking individuality, the female athlete still demonstrates a relentless work ethic and quiet endurance that presents her as a model minority in relation to other minority subjects. Her model status extends to the realm of sexuality, as she helps to strengthen ideas of heterosexual femininity in sport and assuage anxieties around lesbianism and female masculinities. As a docile Asian female subject, she remains subordinate to men within the patriarchal institutions of commercial sport, and she remains dependent on men for her management and protection.

In contrast to the docile female subject, the hard body of the Korean male athlete represents South Korean nationalist discourses of global competition and economic development, as well as a masculine desire for geopolitical recognition. The military themes of loyalty, national honor, and a fighting “warrior” spirit often pervade sporting contexts. In this light, the Korean male athlete offers a kind of militarized masculinity; he can substitute mandatory military conscription with sporting success on the global stage. He also works as an index of South Korean national development on a modernizing scale of nations, and he offers a symbolic representation of how Korean men might compete within the highly competitive and overtly racialized contexts of global capitalist competition (Ling 1999). Even while the narratives of a newly liberated Korean woman pervade popular discourses in South Korea, male athletes continue to be privileged representatives of the national body. This might be understood as a reflection of an androcentric national culture, but male sport in general remains a privileged domain in global capitalist circuits of sport since male sporting productions continue to receive far greater media coverage and commercial investment than women’s sport around the world.

Transformations in ideas of embodied manhood can be traced to the in-