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# National hero and model minority: media representations of Chien-Ming Wang in Taiwan and in the US, 2005 To 2009

Yu-Kuei Sun  
*University of Iowa*

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NATIONAL HERO AND MODEL MINORITY: MEDIA  
REPRESENTATIONS OF CHIEN-MING WANG IN TAIWAN AND IN THE  
US, 2005 TO 2009

by

Yu-Kuei Sun

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

May 2011

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Catriona M. Parratt

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Graduate College  
The University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Yu-Kuei Sun

has been approved by the Examining Committee  
for the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts  
degree in Health and Sport Studies at  
the May 2011 graduation.

Thesis Committee:

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Catriona M. Parratt, Thesis Supervisor

---

Susan Birrell

---

Jennifer Metz

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Sport has widely been understood as a venue of power relations as well as a site of conflicts between different groups. As Birrell (1989) indicated, it is structured to produce relations of dominance and subordination on a temporary basis (p. 213). Because of the immense popularity certain sports enjoy, the interplay of media, sport, and power has been a key issue for cultural studies scholars (Hargreaves & McDonald, 2000). As for Major League Baseball (MLB), there are increasing numbers of players of different ethnicities and nationalities in recent years, and scholars' understandings of how they are represented in the media and how such representations reflect or strengthen dominant ideologies have become more complex.

This thesis examines the media representations in both American-based media and Taiwanese media from 2005 to 2009 of a Taiwanese baseball player who played in the U.S., Chien-Ming Wang. His dual identities in two different places make his media representations complex and intriguing. On the one hand, as one of the few Taiwanese playing in the MLB, his exceptional performances draw massive attention from the Taiwanese media, which usually place heavy emphasis on his national identity. Terms such as “splendor of Taiwan” or “pride of Taiwan” are attached to him regularly. On the other hand, as a foreign player and an Asian athlete playing for the New York Yankees, Chien-Ming Wang's Asian identity is usually the main focus of American-based media. In this study, I examine the following questions: What differences are there between portrayals of Chien-Ming Wang in the US and Taiwanese media? Is he represented in the US media in a positive or a negative way? Does his representation conform to certain Asian (American) stereotypes? Is he welcomed as a member of the Yankees, or is he seen as another “Asian invasion” (e.g., Verducci, 1994)? Do representations of him facilitate the hegemony of white-dominant society?

The thesis begins with a brief overview of the history of Taiwanese baseball.

This helps to place the meanings of Chien-Ming Wang for Taiwan in an historical context. Baseball has not only been identified as the most popular sport in Taiwan where it is known as “national ball,” but successive governments have utilized it as a political tool. Baseball therefore plays a complex role in Taiwanese society.

*Baseball in Taiwan and Taiwanese Baseball Players in the US*

The relations between baseball and Taiwanese politics have been complex. In 1895, China ceded Taiwan to Japan after losing the First Sino-Japanese War. During the era of Japanese occupation, the Taiwanese got the first taste of baseball. The first historically recorded Taiwanese team was formed in 1906 (Tseng & Yu, 2004, p. 21). In 1919, baseball was systematically introduced to Taiwanese schools and played an important role in the Japanese regime’s assimilation policy (Yu, 2007, p. 16). As a colonial regime, the Japanese government encountered numerous regional revolts by both Taiwanese and the aboriginal people, and teaching them to play baseball was regarded as means of “civilizing” them into “modern Japanese” (Yu, 2007, p. 16). In 1945, the Japanese government handed Taiwan back to the Chinese Nationalist government (Kuomintang, KMT). Four years later, the Communist Party of China, also known as People’s Republic of China, overthrew the KMT government and took over the mainland China, causing the KMT government to withdraw their regime to Taiwan. In the 1970s, the KMT government in Taiwan underwent difficult diplomatic problems: It was expelled by the United Nations, and many nations, including the United States, ended their formal diplomatic relations with it and turned to the People’s Republic of China. As a result, baseball became a political tool for the KMT to boost national morale and construct nationalism in Taiwan. The Chinese Baseball Association (CBA, the governmental baseball association in Taiwan) invited a Japanese elementary school baseball team to Taiwan to play friendly matches, and in one game a team from a rural small town, Hongye, defeated the Japanese, 7-0. This game attracted over 20,000 spectators and was broadcast on television. Moreover, the KMT-controlled media described the Hongye team as beating a “world champion team” from Japan, and the players practicing under desperate circumstances with



stones as balls and raw wooden sticks as bats. As a matter of fact, this statement was a media exaggeration since only one member of the Japanese team had been on the team which won the 1967 Little League World Series (Yu, 2007, p. 40), and while the Hongye team did encounter financial difficulties, it is questionable if they really practiced with sticks and stones. Nevertheless, the Hongye myth was extremely effective: it “proved” that the Taiwanese could defeat the Japanese. Thanks to a government-controlled media, these young children’s performance was seen by millions of Taiwanese and fitted perfectly with KMT’s political purpose. They were depicted as national heroes who had fought hard and eventually prevailed.

The KMT government continued to encourage and manipulate elementary school baseball. In the next two decades, the Little League Baseball (LLB) tournament, hosted annually in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, became the main focus. The very first Taiwanese team to participate in the LLB in 1969 won the championship. From the 1970s to the 1990s, Taiwanese teams won an incredible seventeen championships, dominating almost every match they played. Such dominance, of course, prompted much concern about cheating: for example, accusations that players’ identities were forged and overage players used. However, one championship of the Little League World Series after another kept the Taiwanese people cheering for these little national heroes. As Yu and Gordon (2006) state:

Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, one of Taiwan’s most cherished collective memories was to stay up through the early morning hours watching live games of Taiwanese youths on “crusade” in three levels of llb, thanks to three television channels controlled by the KMT, which were willing to broadcast those games at all costs. (p. 33)

In short, baseball has long been an instrument of the ruling regimes. Yu and Gordon (2006) point this out clearly, “nationalism has played a major role in the development of Taiwanese baseball. The ruling class has used baseball to implement their own agendas, including Japanization, Sinification and, most recently, Taiwanization” (p. 27).

At the end of the 20th century a new era of Taiwanese baseball was launched. In 1999 Chin-Feng Chen, a Taiwanese outfielder, signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers

and began his professional career in their minor league system. Chen was the first Taiwanese player to sign with an MLB organization. Similar to the Japanese player Hideo Nomo who became the first Japanese-born player to play in MLB in 30 years in 1995, Chen was a pioneer Taiwanese player. In the next decade, over 40 others signed with MLB organizations and many of them played in the minor leagues. There has been no sign that this flow is diminishing.

After playing in the minor leagues for over three years, Chen was promoted to the Dodgers in 2002, making him the first Taiwanese player in MLB. Right after his debut, Taiwan's president, vice president and top sporting officials all sent congratulatory messages and commented on how important a day it was for Taiwan (Yu and Gordon, 2006, p. 36).

While Chen's major league career was far from successful, Taiwanese baseball players in America found a role model in 2005. Chien-Ming Wang, who had been playing in the minor leagues for five years, was called up to the major league by the New York Yankees because of their injury woes. He made his debut as the starting pitcher in April and grabbed his opportunity. In his rookie year, he had an 8-5 W-L record, with an earned run average (ERA) of 4.02, above the average for a starting pitcher. In 2006 and 2007, he had 19 wins each season, making him one of the most effective starting pitchers in the MLB as well as the ace pitcher for the New York Yankees. Wang's consistently great performance inspired intense interest in Taiwan about him and the New York Yankees. Every five days when Wang was on the mound, Yankees games broadcast on television were the thing people most cared about, even though the games were played at midnight in Taiwan because of the time difference. Wang's Taiwanese identity was constantly mentioned by the Taiwanese media, while the label "pride of Taiwan" was firmly attached to him. It is clear that nationalist feelings were strongly connected to this baseball phenomenon, something which was consistent with the previous history of baseball in Taiwan.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Several key concepts are important for understanding the meaning of Chien-Ming Wang and his media portrayals. As stated above, Wang's huge popularity was connected to a long history of baseball as an expression of nationalism among the Taiwanese. But the fact that Wang signed with an American team and moved to the United States also means that he has to be understood in the context of the phenomenon of globalization. In addition, Wang's experience as an Asian athlete in America and US media representations of him help illustrate how race and sport are interconnected, allowing discussion of a relatively rarely considered subtheme of representations of Asianess in American sports media.

#### *Nationalism and Sport*

Smith (1991) defined a nation as a “named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members” (p. 14).

Triandafyllidou (1998) suggested that the very existence of a nation depends on three fundamental propositions. First, the world is divided into nations; second, each individual belongs to a nation; finally, nations must be united, autonomous and free to pursue their goals (p. 595). National identity is an important concept for understanding how individuals come to belong to the same nation. They don't necessarily have to be ancestrally related, as Connor (1993) argued, “the important thing is that they believe they are” (p. 376-377). Such “belief” among nationals is a key element of nationalism. Anderson's (1991) classic book, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, pointed out that nationality and nationalism are *cultural artefacts* that are either imagined or created, because the members of the nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them (p. 6).

When it comes to sport, imagining is even more important. Jarvie (1993) stated

that “the imagined community or nation becomes more real on the terraces or the athletic tracks” (p. 75), indicating that sport usually provides an arena for strengthening national feelings. Hobsbawm (1990) also stated:

What has made sport so uniquely effective a medium for inculcating national feelings, at all events for males, is the ease with which even the least political or public individuals can identify with the nation as symbolized by young persons excelling at what practically every man wants, or at one time in life has wanted, to be good at. The imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people. The individual, even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol of his nation himself. (p. 143)

In the case of Taiwan, baseball not only bonded the Taiwanese together and strengthened their national feelings, during the decade of the 1970s it also became one of the most unforgettable collective memories for Taiwanese people. As Triandafyllidou (1998) stated, “collective memories of a historical event, say a battle, are reinterpreted in ways that emphasize the contrast between the ingroup and outgroup” (p. 598). Watching Hongye and LLB championship teams on television was a powerful experience for the Taiwanese people, making baseball one of their most common and shared topics. Also, the way the KMT government utilized baseball illustrates Bairner’s (2001) statement:

Existing nation-states have frequently been shown to use sport for a variety of purposes, including enhancing prestige, securing legitimacy, compensating for other aspects of life within their boundaries, and pursuing international rivalries by peaceful means. (p. 18)

One occasion in Taipei exemplifies how important baseball was for the KMT’s attempt to reinforce people’s loyalty to the then-autocratic government. In September 1969, Jinlong, the first Taiwanese team to win the LLB championship, came back from America. The KMT government honored them with an eight-hour parade in which over 500,000 people attended. The players lined up in front of Presidential Hall and shouted, “Long live the Republic of China! Long live President Chiang” (Yu and Gordon, 2006, p. 31)!

### *Globalization and Sport Labor Migration*

Globalization might be the first and foremost concept to deal with in examining the flow of Taiwanese baseball players to America. Giddens (1990) suggested that

globalization can be regarded as a long-standing tendency within modernity that compresses time and space, and so links localities that hitherto had little direct connection in new and accelerated ways. Maguire (1999) argued that nowadays every aspect of social reality is intertwined with globalizing processes which features an increasing intensification of global interconnectedness. Maguire, Jarvie, Mansfield, and Bradley (2002) further pointed out that globalizing processes have unleashed new sets of “interdependency chains” which have interconnected people from distant parts of the globe (p. 6). While time and space compression, interconnectedness, and interdependency are the main characteristics of globalization, it encompasses several other dimensions. For example, in terms of migration, people from around the world have more chances to travel to distant places, thus facilitating the booming numbers of tourists, exiles and international workers. In terms of media, information and images from different countries can be shared more rapidly through satellites, cables and internet. Live broadcasting of sport events brings games from far-away locations to local televisions almost immediately. Internet users from around the world can chat instantly in a same on-line forum. Moreover, in terms of ideology, different values interact with each other more frequently. All of these dimensions should be examined under the context of global power networks (Maguire et al., 2002). For example, LaFeber (2002) argued that under the era of globalization, transnational corporations such as Nike played a dominant role in creating and defining American popular culture. Furthermore, they spread the culture throughout the world and affect people’s language, eating habit, clothes, and television watching (p. 19). In this case, American culture has gained a dominating and triumphant status because of globalization. It is also important to note that while American-based transnational corporations prevail, some scholars argue that a large amount of local companies, values, culture, and personnel, have become victims (e.g., Tomlinson, 1999).

There are many examples of globalization in the sport context. According to Miller, Laurence, McKay, and Rowe (2001), the National Basketball Association (NBA) has 11 offices outside America, and basketball stars of America have enjoyed

tremendous popularity in Europe. Michael Jordan was the most popular athlete with the Australian public and with teenagers in 45 countries in 1993 (p. 17). The National Football League (NFL) played a game before its biggest in-stadium audience (112,000) in Mexico City in 1994. Worldwide, soccer is undoubtedly the most popular sport: The games of England's Premier League are broadcast in many countries, and it is common for players of different nationalities to migrate from one country to another. As Maguire et al. (2002) indicated, the global migration of sports personnel, including coaches, officials, administrators, sport scientists, as well as athletes, has been a pronounced feature of recent decades and appears likely to continue in the future (p. 5). Ong (1999) argued that in the era of globalization, certain individuals develop "flexible citizenship" to accumulate capital and power. They strategically utilize international mobility and flexibility to accordingly facilitate themselves to different markets, governments and cultural regimes (p. 6). Giardina (2001) further pointed out that elite international or transnational athletes, such as Swiss tennis star Martina Hingis, are among such "new 'traveler' group" because they may have several bases in different countries but without "accepting (or requiring) ties to a single nation, imagined community, or identity" (p. 206).

Major League Baseball is no exception in terms of globalization effects. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, Americans tried to spread baseball games throughout the world but failed (Szymanski & Zimbalist, 2006). After decades of playing in insularity in the 1990s, MLB again found it worthwhile to market baseball overseas. Since the 1950s, MLB has had a tight connection with the countries in the Caribbean region (Klein, 1991), attracting much cheap baseball labor from the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Venezuela (Koble, 2008). Beginning in the 1990s, MLB also began to draw top players from across the Pacific Ocean, and the numbers of baseball players from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan have dramatically risen. According to Takahashi and Horne (2006), before 1994 there was only 1 Japanese player playing in MLB, while from 1995 to 2005 there were 26. As for Taiwan, although for now the numbers of Taiwanese players playing in MLB remain few, as

many as about 30 Taiwanese players played in the minor leagues in the 2009 season, and that number seems likely to continue to increase. Moreover, in 2006 MLB started to host an international baseball tournament, the World Baseball Classic (WBC), inviting 16 national teams to compete for a world championship every three years. Bud Selig, the commissioner of MLB, put it clearly, “our goal is to internationalize the sport...we were here to not only perpetuate and enhance the internationalization of the sport, but to create interest in a lot of places where there hasn’t been any. And we’ve achieved it” (Bloom, 2009).

The effect of globalization on baseball in Taiwan has been remarkable and involves several aspects. First of all, it catalyzed sport labor migration from Taiwan to the United States. Second, following such migration and thanks to the media coverage on these players and live broadcasting games on television, certain baseball players have been represented in ways that emphasize Taiwanese national identity. Maguire (1999) indicated that sometimes the nationhood of countries is viewed as indivisible from the fortunes of the national teams of specific sport (p. 178). And, in this case, although the representing medium is not a national team but individual players, they have been constructed as the representatives of the whole nation.

#### *Critical Race Theory*

Delgado & Stefancic (2001) suggested that the critical race theory (CRT) movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism and power (p. 2). They argued that racism exists in ordinariness, and that this may not be explicit but work subtly. Moreover, racism serves as a method to stabilize society, since it fits the interest of white elites materially and working-class people psychically (p. 7). Furthermore, critical race theorists indicate that races are socially constructed in ways which might have no basis in biological reality. Thus, “racism creates race” (Birrell, 1989, p. 218).

Studies on media representations of Asians and Asian Americans are abundant. Osajima (1988) suggested that since the 1960s, the mass media has presented positive images of Asian Americans, in the form of a “model minority”: intellectually

successful, hard-working, affluent, and problem-free. More recent studies also argued that the model minority discourse has been dominant in the media (e.g., Chen, 2000; Paek & Shah, 2003; Taylor & Stern, 1997). Although it is a positive move that Asians, especially Chinese and Japanese, are no longer regarded as “yellow perils” (Wu, 1982) as they were portrayed in American fiction (e.g., as sexual threats to White women and political threats to Western civilization such as British novelist Sax Rohmer’s fictional character Dr. Fu Manchu) (Chan, 2001, p. 3), the seemingly positive model minority images could still have negative impacts on certain racial groups. For example, Chen (2000) indicated that such discourse reaffirms the American dream myth, suggesting that opportunities are open for all, and thereby subtly denouncing other minority groups which receive government welfare (p. 317). Moreover, it also functions to maintain the status quo of the white-dominant society. Hurh and Kim (1989) borrow Marx’s term of *false consciousness* to explain the problem of disguised underemployment among Asian Americans, pointing out that Asian Americans tend to accept the dominant group’s definition of success in order to minimize their feelings of relative deprivation and discontent (p. 529). They concluded that “Asian Americans remain a socially segregated *minority*, whether they are called ‘model’ or ‘successful’” (p. 531). Chen (2000) further argued that Asian Americans are always perceived by mainstream as foreigners and “others,” for they have never been allowed to “melt” into a white society as European immigrants did (p. 321-322).

#### *Race, Sport, and Media Representation*

When it comes to race and media representations, studies on portrayals of African American athletes are abundant. Several scholars and journalists (Hoose, 1989; Jackson, 1989; Rada, 1996) pointed out that mainstream media treat black and white athletes with different linguistic comments. *Boston Globe* columnist Jackson (1989) examined television coverage of seven NFL playoff games and five college basketball games and found that in football, 65 percents of the comments on black players were about “Brawn”—including running, leaping, size, strength, and quickness, while 77 percents of comments on white players were about



“Brain”—intelligence, leadership, and motivation. The results in basketball games were also similar. He also indicated that while white players tended to be described as “quality persons,” the term “thief” was used for blacks when they made a steal, and animal-like descriptions were also common. Hoose (1989) examined CBS’s coverage of the 1987 NCAA basketball championship, focusing on broadcasters’ comments on the Indiana University team. He noted that only black players were described as “quick”, and that subhuman terms were used far more frequently on blacks than whites (p. 10). In addition, although only four white athletes on the team played a significant amount of time, the broadcasters praised them on their “thinking” and decision-making. Rada’s (1996) study on the television coverage of the 1992 NFL season conformed to the previous ones. He argued that there were significant differences across race between physical and cognitive attributions, and that African Americans received more comments relating to physical characteristics, while white players received more comments relating to cognitive characteristics (p. 235-236). Similar to Jackson (1989), Rada also found that only black players were given animal nicknames, covertly making them less of human-beings (p. 237). Interestingly, in a more recent study, Brantley (2005) examined newspaper articles on Major League Baseball and concluded that in 2003 African American baseball players not only received fewer negative comments than white players, but also received a lower percentage of physical attributions than them (p. 40). He concluded that the differences of medium (television being spontaneously broadcast and newspaper being edited) and sport (football, basketball of the previous studies and baseball of his) account for the difference. It should also be noted that Brantley’s study took place about one decade later than Rada’s, making it reasonable to think that sportswriter and commentators have been getting more sensitive and avoiding stereotypically racial descriptions of athletes.

Since there is now a higher ratio of Latino players in both major and minor leagues and some of them are superstars, the ways they were portrayed in the media were also scrutinized. Hoose (1989) described this vividly:

Latin baseball players have from the beginning been presented to U.S. fans in miniature as moody firecrackers with short fuses, as snappy fielders with light bats, as homesick men who go away with the songbirds in the winter and sometimes come back in the spring. To white fans, the Latin baseball player is a cheerful, peppery character from south of the border, . . . To U.S. fans, the Latin player is just happy to be here. "Beisbol," says comedian Garrett Morris's Latin shortstop, "has been berry, berry, good to me." (p. 92)

Butterworth (2007) analyzed the media contents of the homerun race between St. Louis Cardinals' Mark McGuire and Chicago Cubs' Sammy Sosa in 1998. He argued that sportswriters elevated Mark McGuire, who is White, to heroic status and regarded Sosa, who is a Latino from Dominican Republic, as the secondary role in the narratives of the homerun race. In this case, Sosa was not only portrayed as a stereotypical dark-skinned Latino, but also an exemplar of the American dream myth. Meanwhile, McGuire served as the taken-for-granted white archetype which promoted individualism and white masculinity.

As for Asian athletes' coverage in the media, research ranged from analyzing overt and covert anti-Asian sentiments to scrutinizing positive but still problematic media representations. Plymire (1999) studied American journalists' attitudes and reactions toward the 1993 Track and Field World Championships in which women from China won gold medals in every long-distance race and broke many world records. Although there was no evidence of cheating, American journalists questioned the results and clearly suspected the Chinese women of using steroids. In this case, politics (Communist), race (Asian), and gender (women), all played a role in imagined American attitudes toward these Chinese runners and discrediting their achievements. King (2006) showed how Asian and Asian American athletes were effaced and defaced in the media and in other settings through jokes and verbal attacks. Stories of golfer Fuzzy Zoeller's comments about Tiger Woods and NBA star Shaquille O'Neal's on Yao Ming showed that Asian athletes—and more importantly, Asians in general—still suffered from racial jokes, and that the joke-makers were usually treated lightly or even forgiven.

Mayeda (1999) examined how Japanese baseball players Hideo Nomo who played for the Los Angeles Dodgers and Hideki Irabu who played for the New York

Yankees were portrayed in American media. Though Nomo was generally depicted in a positive way when he pitched amazingly well in 1995, Asian stereotypical descriptions remained common. On the other hand, the much less successful Irabu was criticized harshly by New York media, and his Japanese heritage was emphasized again and again. Mayeda respectively categorized Nomo and Irabu as “model minority” and “economic threat,” both of which are mainstream stereotypical images of Asians and Asian Americans. Similarly, Nakamura’s (2005) study on Seattle Mariners’ outfielder Ichiro Suzuki (usually referred to as Ichiro) pointed out that Ichiro’s media representations reinforced both the “American dream” and “model minority” myth, while Ichiro’s Asian exoticness and otherness were also often mentioned.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions which this thesis examines are two-fold. First, by examining Taiwan-based media coverage of Chien-Ming Wang during the years he played for the New York Yankees in MLB, it explores which identities and themes were especially emphasized. To what extent was his national identity emphasized? To what extent was his team identity—a New York Yankees player—emphasized? How was he usually portrayed when he had a win and when he had a loss? Were his effort and accomplishments described as serving his own interests (for asking for a higher salary in the future), or those of the team (for getting more wins for the Yankees), or those of his original nation (for a higher recognition of Taiwan)? Which ideologies, or mainstream values, were highlighted in the media?

Second, through an examination of US-based media coverage of Wang, the ways in which he was depicted by the mainstream American media perspective are revealed. How different was the way in which the American media portrayed him compared to the Taiwanese media? Which identities and themes were more emphasized? To what extent was his foreign player status underlined? To what extent was his ethnicity (i.e., an Asian player) underlined? Did representations of him fit the racial stereotypes of Asian in the US? Was he accepted and embraced by New Yorkers or, to some extent, unwelcome because of his ethnic background?

Previous studies on Chien-Ming Wang provided some understanding of how the Taiwanese media has portrayed him. Not surprisingly, his national identity and the connection between Taiwanese nationalism and his performance seemed to be the predominant themes. Wen, Yu, and Benoit (2009) demonstrated how Taiwanese media dealt with his occasional losses or bad performance in 2007 (his W-L record was 19-7 in that year), arguing that a certain collectivistic image repair was applied by all the media text they examined. By emphasizing other non-Taiwanese, high-profile pitchers' poor performance or negative images, Wang's own poor pitching was made to seem

not that awful for the Taiwanese audience. Thus, the “national hero’s” group image could be maintained. Liu (2008) indicated that terms such as “light of Taiwan”, “son of Taiwan”, “pride of Taiwanese” and “treasure of Taiwan” were commonly used to describe Wang in Taiwanese media. The media even claimed that his performance made Tainan, Taiwan (Wang’s home town) “step up on the stage of the world” (p. 67). Liu also contrasted the media coverage on Wang and other high-profile Taiwanese baseball players such as Kuo Tai-yuan and Kuo Lee Chien-Fu who played in Japan in the 1980s and early 1990s, arguing such nationalistic terms were not in widespread use in the Taiwanese media coverage at that time. A similar analysis was also seen in Y. Lin’s (2009) thesis. She pointed out that Wang was portrayed as a “leader” or “fighter” of Taiwan, leading Taiwan in walking “on the stage of the world” (p. 64).

In addition, the Taiwanese media focused to some extent on Wang’s personality. As Chen (2007) indicated, because Taiwan politics were in chaos in 2006 and the then President of Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian, was involved in a series of corruption scandals, “baseball, especially Chien-Ming Wang, become one of the very few common identifications of all Taiwanese” (¶ 3). “In the 2006 season, his major-league leading 19 wins seemed to redeem all the Taiwanese from a confusing picture and regain a common value that everyone could agree” (¶ 11). Y. Lin (2009) demonstrated that the media called him “the silent ace,” a “calm,” “reliable,” “stable” style of leader (p. 70). Also, referring to the politic scandals of 2007, he was depicted as “honest, simple, and determined,” a “spiritually-reliable icon and role model for ‘people’” (p. 86), exactly opposite to the images of the corrupted politicians. Wen et al. (2009) also argue that bolstering Wang’s positive traits served as a way to repair his image when he lost a game. His strong will, likable personality, sportsmanship and professional recognition were the four main themes most commonly mentioned in the Taiwanese media (p. 184).

As for the US-based media, there is no previous study focusing on Chien-Ming Wang’s media representations. Therefore, I reviewed articles on other Asian baseball players who played in Major League Baseball. Mayeda’s (1999) study on Hideo

Nomo and Hideki Irabu argued that Nomo's representations fit the "model minority" stereotype of Asians and Asian Americans because he was portrayed rejecting Japan and wholeheartedly accepting America, and his personal qualities such as hard working, self-sacrificing, and quiet could falsely represent diverse groups of Asian nationals and Asian Americans (p. 211). Meanwhile, Irabu was depicted as a Japanese economic threat because he signed a high-priced contract with the New York Yankees but did not perform well. *The New York Times* constantly and prominently focused on Irabu's Japanese heritage and his big contract, thus reinforcing the notion of Japan being an economic threat to America (p. 213). Nakamura (2005) pointed out that Ichiro Suzuki's success (he was awarded the Most Valuable Player in 2001, his first season playing in MLB) in the United States reinforced the myth of the "American dream," strengthening the belief that everyone has a chance to succeed, especially immigrant or foreign players. Ichiro's media portrayal also indicated that he was well assimilated into American culture, again fitting the model minority myth. In addition, Ichiro's *otherness* was emphasized: He was frequently described as "cryptic," "inscrutable," "enigmatic," and "unfathomable" by the American media, and his body and even "manhood" also raised media attention (p. 476). In all, Ichiro's Asian identity and its associated exoticness and otherness were highlighted in the media.

On the basis of these previous studies, the hypotheses of the present study are that in the Taiwanese media, the representations of Chien-Ming Wang would emphasize his national and Asian/Taiwanese identities and downplay his other identities (a Yankees player, a baseball player, or simply a sport labour), conforming to the deep and longtime nexus between baseball and nationalism in Taiwan. In addition, I expect that the way the Taiwanese media portrayed him would in several ways reflect, emphasize, and encourage certain mainstream values in Taiwan, such as being hard-working, dream-chasing, persistent, adversity-overcoming, humble, and reticent. A certain version of "American dream" discourse might also be involved; in the US-based media, his national identity would still be a focal point, but his Asian identity would be more scrutinized. As Espiritu (1992) pointed out, White Americans

often fail to differentiate between Asian nationals, Asian Americans, and different Asian American groups (p. 134). Thus, in terms of race and nationality, Wang's identity as an Asian athlete is likely to make more sense to the American audience than his identity as a Taiwanese since all the Asian (American) tend to be categorized or panethnically labeled as a social group. I assume that the results would be similar to Mayeda's (1999) and Nakamura's (2005) studies on Japanese baseball players, as Chien-Ming Wang's portrayals in the American media would somewhat fit the model minority discourse. This, in which the stereotypical characteristics of Asians or Asian Americans such as hard-working, self-sacrificing, and quiet, are emphasized or over-represented, remains the typical perception toward Asians in the United States.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

This study applies qualitative research methods under the constructivist paradigm and interpretive approaches. Plymire (2005) indicated that qualitative researchers assume that reality is subjective and/or socially constructed; that “the ways that human beings experience reality are the products of human social interaction. Moreover, though the material world exists, qualitative researchers assume the meanings of that world do not exist prior to human interpretations” (p. 146). Thus, mainstream media texts which are distributed broadly in a specific society to a large extent construct the meanings of that social world, and the way the media interpret and represent certain incidents or celebrities also reveals to a large extent how people think and understand these objects. As for sport, McDonald and Birrell (1999) argued that sport celebrities and particular incidents in sport can all be profitably analyzed as cultural texts (p. 290), and as such reflect broader social and cultural forces. Trujillo (2000) also noted that sports are meant to be presented in the media, and mediated sports reaffirm mainstream values such as teamwork, competition, individualism, nationalism, achievement, and others (p. 17). McDonald and Birrell (1999) especially pointed out that reading sport critically serves as a way of interrogating *power*, since

subjectivity and social life are always already embedded in particular relations of power that produce particular knowledges. The world has been made to mean according to which particular groups have access to the important cultural signifying systems (like the media) to proclaim a particular world view. People shape knowledge, and this knowledge is linked to relations of domination and subordination. (p. 292)

While Chien-Ming Wang has undoubtedly been a sport hero and celebrity, or even a “phenomenon” (Chen, 2008) in Taiwan, his significance and popularity in the US are much lower profile but still evident, especially during his prime years (i.e., 2006 and 2007) when he was literally the best starting pitcher for the New York Yankees. Analyzing media texts of Wang in both Taiwan and the United States not



only reveals how meanings of Wang's performance were constructed in two different geographical locations, but also tells what mainstream values were reaffirmed, and what stories were downplayed or even unwritten.

For this thesis, a textual analysis of the Taiwan-based media includes two of the three English newspapers currently published in Taiwan, *The China Post* and *Taipei Times*. I assume that although the audience of these English newspapers in Taiwan may be somewhat different from those written in the official and most common language, Chinese, there would not be completely different perspectives. The US-based media include major newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *New York Post*, *USA Today* and large circulation size sport magazines such as *Sporting News*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *ESPN The Magazine*. Thus, through a comprehensive and thorough examination on major media texts, mainstream American perspectives on Wang and the ways in which meanings about him were constructed would be attained.

The time period I examine is from the beginning of 2005 to the end of 2009, the five-year period covered from Wang's career as a Yankees player start to end. In the 2005 season, he was promoted from the Yankee's minor league team and made his major league debut on April 30. In 2006 and 2007, Wang performed very effectively and gradually became the ace pitcher of the Yankees. However, in both 2008 and 2009, Wang's seasons were shortened due to injuries, and his pitching performance in 2009 was even worse with an ERA of 9.64 in nine starts. On July 4, 2009, Wang was pulled out of a game he started because of a shoulder injury, and his season ended following surgery. In December 2009, the Yankees did not offer a contract to Wang and granted him free agency, officially terminating his career with them.

For Taiwan-based media, *The China Post* articles were gathered through their official website, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/archive/result.asp>. Although all the articles during the targeted period are in their archive and free for search, their search engine was poorly designed and difficult for refining my search results, since "Wang" is a very common surname in Taiwan. Thus, I used the word "baseball" to search the archive and manually filtered out articles without mentioning Wang's name. In this

way, I assumed that every article about Wang would include the word “baseball.” There were 308 articles gathered from the search engine and eventually 53 *China Post* articles about Wang were analyzed. *Taipei Times* articles were gathered from the database Access World News, using the keywords “Wang” and “baseball.” A total of 146 *Taipei Times* articles were gathered and analyzed.

As for U.S. media, I utilized LexisNexis Academic database and SPORTDiscus database to cover the main newspapers and sport magazines mentioned above. In total, 1,377 *New York Post* articles, 622 *New York Times* articles, 95 *USA Today* articles, 14 *Sporting News* articles, 7 *Sports Illustrated* articles, and 2 *ESPN The Magazine* articles were examined.

CHAPTER FIVE  
TWIWAN-BASED MEDIA TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

After reviewing newspaper articles of *The China Post* and *Taipei Times* from 2005 to 2009, Chien-Ming Wang's portrayals could be categorized into several themes: Wang as Taiwan's light and pride, a Taiwanese role model who possessed "Taiwanese spirits," an (American) dream chaser, and the best of Asia. While they reveal different perspectives and angles describing his baseball performance and other public appearances, it was Taiwanese nationalism which predominantly pervaded the texts and set the homogeneously positive tone.

*Taiwan's Light and Pride*

The Taiwanese media started to dub Chien-Ming Wang "the pride of Taiwan" (the term varied slightly as "the light of Taiwan" and "son of Taiwan") almost as soon as he made his debut for the New York Yankees in April, 2005. Interestingly, Wang's debut on April 30, 2005 was not broadcast by any commercial television channel in Taiwan, causing huge disappointment among baseball fans. After much popular pressure, the Taiwanese government arranged for the only public television channel, Taiwan Public Television Service (PTS), to purchase the broadcasting rights from MLB. From Wang's second start on, PTS covered all of his starts. Thus, Wang's athletic performance on the field was inevitably related to Taiwanese politics on the national level. This article showed their close relationship:

Baseball fans in Taiwan, including President Chen Shui-bian, continued cheering New York Yankees pitcher Wang Chien-ming up although the Taiwan-born professional player failed yesterday to win the American League East game against the Tampa Bay Devil Rays....The Presidential Office said in a press release that Chen called Wang and lauded him as the pride and joy of Taiwan after watching the live televised game. ("Baseball Fans," 2005, ¶ 13)

Because of Chien-Ming Wang's enormous popularity in Taiwan, the then Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government not only arranged for public television broadcasting to cover his games, but governmental officers employed references to him for various purposes. For example, an article reported that Wang

was enlisted by the Government Information Office (GIO) to promote Taiwan's international images and "show Taiwan to the World" (Chuang, 2005, ¶ 1). In other cases, Wang's performance and images were used by the country to "put Taiwan on the map, bring the nation to a world audience" (Chuang, 2006, ¶ 6), bid for United Nations membership with the hope that "our voice can be heard by more people [because of his international popularity]" (Chuang and Huang, 2007, ¶ 3), and promote tourism (Shan, 2007b).

It should be noted that the government's promotion of Taiwanese nationalism and its subsequent endorsement of Chien-Ming Wang was significantly embedded in Taiwan's politics, especially its long, complex relation with China. While the official name of the Taiwanese government remains the "Republic of China," identifying as "Chinese," "Taiwanese," or both has been a continuous and sensitive struggle for many for decades, but to a greater extent since martial law was lifted in 1987. In 2000 when the DPP presidential candidate Chen Shui-Bian won the election and replaced the KMT government, thus enforcing the first political party rotation in Taiwan, Chen and his pro-independence DPP had been promoting a more rigorous Taiwanese nationalism. They encouraged more manifest "un-Chinese" political discourses which prioritized Taiwanese localism and more distinctly distinguished Taiwan and China by a series of "renaming movement," which roughly started around 2003 (S. Lin, 2009). Such movement removed the word "China" or "Chinese" from many public industries and replaced them with "Taiwan" or "Taiwanese." The renaming was controversial and resulted in protests from the China-friendly KMT party; however, it did successfully boost Taiwanese nationalism and Taiwanese localism while suppressing the rather outdated Chinese nationalism. The un-Chinese consciousness among Taiwanese was represented in the newspaper articles below regarding Taiwanese reactions when Chien-Ming Wang was regarded as a "Chinese" pitcher:

Wang's performance in the current US baseball season has garnered considerable media attention in Taiwan as well as in some other countries in Asia, including China.

But a feature story published in the Aug. 14 edition of China's Oriental Sports Daily labeled Wang as "a Chinese pitcher" or "a Chinese player," which upset

many of Wang's Taiwanese fans. Comments such as "shameless" or "What BS!" have filled online bulletin boards. (Shan, 2006b, ¶ 14)  
 ...Chinese Web sites that say New York Yankees' Taiwanese pitcher Wang Chien-ming is China's baseball phenomenon. "Everybody knows Wang Chien-ming is 'Taiwan's pride' and China should make the distinction clear," he [Executive Yuan Secretary-General Chen Chin-jun] said. ("The Government Information Office," 2007, ¶ 6)

Aside from being referred to in connection with governmental and political issues, what was predominantly reiterated and emphasized in the media was Wang's connection with all Taiwanese people and with the nation. Almost all articles examined used "Taiwan-born" or "Taiwanese" to identify him, and the term "pride of Taiwan" was often present (e.g., Huang, 2006; "Organizers to invite Wang," 2006; "Pitcher Wang," 2006; "'Pride of Taiwan,'" 2008; "Professional baseball," 2008; Shan & Huang, 2008; Tan, 2006; "Yankees star baseball pitcher," 2006) from 2006 to 2008, the period when he performed exceptionally well. He was extolled not so much for his great baseball skills, but more for raising the nation's reputation. For many, Wang not only pitched for the Yankees or himself, but he represented Taiwan and his performance "has mesmerized an entire nation" (Huang, 2006, ¶ 8). Being a starting pitcher, the centralized role of defense in baseball, Wang regularly pitched every five days from April to October, and on his pitching days the camera would focus on him when the Yankees fielders were on the field. Such advantaged exposure on television gave the Taiwanese audience the sense that Wang was not only a significant player of the Yankees, but also "led" the whole team to one victory after another. Thus, the Yankees, to some extent, became the national team of Taiwan because Wang was their ace pitcher. As a fan was quoted in a newspaper article, "[watching Wang throw the ball] is like watching a Taiwanese team compete against a team from a foreign country" (Shan, 2006a, ¶ 15).

As stated in the previous chapter, cheering for the national baseball team and enjoying its success in international competitions from the 1970s to early 1990s has been a cherished collective memory which many Taiwanese share. Wang's success apparently recalled such good, not-too-old memories. Although Wang played for an American team, the imagined community extended even further to include his

American and other foreign teammates who were also perceived as members of a “national” team, as the paragraph above indicated. In this case, national identity was so pervasively emphasized that not only Wang was representing the nation, but his teammates who had no connection with Taiwan at all, were also intertwined with the imagined Taiwanese identity. Thus, it was reasonable that while “Wang mania” was in full swing, many Taiwanese were cheering for the New York Yankees even when Wang was not pitching, and one blogger commented that the place with the highest density of Yankee fans was not New York, but Taiwan (Hu, 2006, ¶ 1).

#### *Wang’s Glory and President Chen’s Trouble*

To fully understand Wang’s representations and images in Taiwan, it is important to mention the political chaos of late 2005 through 2006. Then President Chen Shui-bian was involved in a series of scandals and corruptions including insider trading by his son-in-law, illegally buying and selling of shares by his wife, improper use of government funds, and other charges. Moreover, this scandal and the subsequent protests and campaigns, most noticeably the “Million Voices Against Corruption, President Chen Must Go” campaign led by politician Shih Ming-te in September 2006, resulted in more social conflicts and worsened the political divisions between DPP (or the “Pan-Green”) and KMT (or the “Pan-Blue”), the two major political parties. While such political chaos made the headlines for months, Wang’s fine pitching performance, either received through live televised games or postgame news reports, became a “spiritual refuge” for people who had “lost faith in Taiwan” (Shan, 2006a, ¶ 12). An *China Post* editorial titled “Wang Chien-ming is just right, how about President Chen?” and subtitled “It now seems that Wang Chien-ming has become ‘the son of Taiwan,’ eclipsing Chen Shui-bian—the original favorite son who is fast becoming fake” argues in this way:

Nowadays in Taiwan, when the “dump Chen” protests have dominated newspaper front pages and prime time television, Wang Chien-ming has suddenly become the media’s superstar. President Chen Shui-bian and his beleaguered party should thank Wang for diverting the public’s attention from the scandals involving himself, his family and his son-in-law Chao Chien-ming (same first name by accident).

All of a sudden, Wang has become a national hero. Perhaps an international

hero to boot. He has put Taiwan on the map, just as our little leaguers did three decades ago when they won LL World Series year after year....But the cultivation of that crop in the 70s and 80s was done by dedicated government officials and diligent people, who worked single-mindedly for national development. Had they been corrupt or lazy, the crop would not have yielded such a fine harvest as Wang Chien-ming. (“Wang Chien-ming is just right,” 2006, ¶ 2)

While this editorial utilizes Wang’s success to criticize President Chen and his government and contrast them with the previous KMT government, it is ironic that the author employed the LLWS “glories”—a fraud as stated in the previous chapter—to support the argument that Wang was a product of the diligent KMT government and manufactured goods of the “national development.” However, this example again demonstrated in the print media perpetuates nationalist ideology when it comes to sport.

#### *Wang as a Taiwanese Role Model*

When criticism of President Chen Shui-bian and the DPP government was vast during this period, Wang’s performance became “a source of inspiration” (“Pitcher Wang Gets Hero’s Welcome,” 2006, ¶ 4). As the president and other officials of the island were corrupted, unrighteous, and almost dumped, it seemed necessary, or economically beneficial, for the media to have somebody other than the political leaders to represent the “good” value and characteristics of the nation. Since Wang’s “national hero” status was firmly validated through his sports performance, he fit in this role just well. The media focused on and acclaimed Wang’s personalities and personal attributes. A *Taipei Times* article indicates that during a KMT political rally, the party showed a video clip of the nation’s baseball teams and its baseball stars, pointedly including Chien-Ming Wang, to “represent the strength and hard work of Taiwanese” (Wang and Mo, 2007, ¶ 47). In another article, one DPP politician claims that Wang’s “down-to-earth personality exemplified Taiwanese characteristics” (“Taiwan Quick Take,” 2006, ¶ 1).

In a *China Post* article about the United States’ Independence Day celebration in Taipei, Taiwan’s foreign minister James Huang, referring to the similarity and differences of people of the two nations, describes the United States-Taiwan nexus in

this way:

Foreign Minister James Huang said the people of both Taiwan and United States are characterized by their cordiality, generosity, hospitality, as well as for their love of baseball.

Quoting American Hall of Famer Yogi Berra's "it ain't over 'til it's over," Huang said the phrase is the essence of baseball games as well as American beliefs, while New York Yankees pitcher Wang Chien-ming represents Taiwan's spirit through his modesty and determination.

"Through baseball, the two peoples of Taiwan and the United States discover their similarities, and come to appreciate their respective uniqueness...I believe this is also true in expanding our bilateral relations," he added. (Wang, 2007, ¶ 7)

Still embedded in a nationalistic perspective, Minister Huang utilizes baseball as one of the commonalities between the two countries and applied American baseball player Yogi Berra's quotation as an aspect of "American beliefs," while Wang's "modesty" and "determination" is interpreted as "Taiwanese" spirit. Interestingly, whenever Wang is down-to-earth, modest, or hard-working, such characteristics are not seen as his alone, but they represent *Taiwanese* characteristics. Again, Wang's status as a "Taiwanese representative" is made and ascertained through his portrayed personalities in the media, regardless of the diversity of Taiwanese people in terms of personal traits.

#### *Wang's "Taiwanese" Spirits*

Furthermore, in Wang's media portrayals, what were the so-called "Taiwanese" characteristics that Wang possessed? Among the many, those most often presented were hard-working, adversity-overcoming, determination, team spirit, modesty, poise, and quietness.

#### *Hard-working*

Several articles suggest that working hard was one of the main reasons that Wang made it to the MLB and became the ace pitcher of the Yankees (e.g., "Baseball star protests," 2006; Langer, 2007). Although Wang was regarded as the Yankees' top prospect when they signed him back in 2000, his career in the MLB, marked as the most prominent one among the very few Taiwanese to date, was usually not explained through his athletic ability and talent. Instead, his work ethic was highlighted. In other articles, he was quoted as saying "[I] do my best" (Huang, 2005, ¶ 7) or "[I] show



the best to the fans” (“Wang Chien-ming wants to bring best,” 2006, ¶ 7), again consolidating his diligent, hard-working images.

*Adversity-overcoming and determination*

Related to the hard-working theme is the Taiwanese media’s focus on how he overcame hardship and came back from injuries. The language barrier he encountered as a foreign player was mentioned as a difficulty. In an article he was quoted saying he “didn’t speak any English” when he first came to the United States (“Second version,” 2006, ¶ 13). This disadvantage provided the ground for the discourses about him having to overcome more difficulties than his American teammates. Even more pronounced in this theme is his effort and ability to overcome injuries. Despite being the most productive starting pitcher of the Yankees in 2006 and 2007, Wang’s career had been plagued by injuries. In his minor league years, he went through a major surgery and missed the whole 2001 season. In 2005, he missed two months due to a shoulder injury after pitching brilliantly in the first three months of his rookie season, and then came back to join the Yankees again late this season. In 2008 midseason, he suffered from a foot injury while running around the bases and could not pitch again that year. He was injured in 2009 again and underwent another shoulder surgery, thus missing the whole 2010 season. An article depicts how he made it to the Yankees in this way:

Wang began his U.S. baseball career in June 2000 when he joined the Staten Island Yankees in the minor leagues. His early years with Staten Island were plagued by shoulder problems. With his *fortitude and tenacity*[italics added], Wang finally regained his health and perfected his professional skills to make it onto the New York Yankees roster. (“Taiwan-born pitcher,” 2007, ¶ 10)

This paragraph emphasizes his recovery from the shoulder problems in 2001, and implies that he was able to come back from injuries because of his strong will. After his foot injury in 2008 and missed the remaining season, he told the media that he had “no regrets” about suffering the injury and stated that “injuries are a part of an athlete’s life” (“Pride of Taiwan,” 2008). In 2009, after he was demoted to the minor league because of very poor performance, he was portrayed as “showing determination” when pitching in the minor league (“Wang steadily returning,” 2009).

These representations affirm Wang's toughness and ability to overcome adversity.

*Team spirit*

In Taiwan where individualism is not encouraged, team spirit is otherwise highly valued. The Taiwanese media tend to portray Wang as an unselfish team player who was always obedient to the manager and the coaches. Helping the Yankees to win seemed to be the most important thing for Wang, and when this goal could not be reached, the media highlighted how disappointed and upset he was. In the Yankee's first postseason game in 2007 which Wang started, he lasted only four and two thirds innings, gave up eight runs, and handed the Yankees a loss, 3-12. Wang was described as "disappointed" after the game and quoted as saying that he would have "no qualms" if the coach asked him to pitch again in the fourth game after a short rest ("Wang eager to play," 2007). Similarly, in 2008 when he could not return from injury, he was portrayed as feeling "terrible for not being able to work hard for the team" (Shan & Huang, 2008, ¶ 2). Moreover, when asked about the Yankees organization, Wang was quoted as saying the Yankees "are the best baseball team in the U.S." and "I hope I can stay there forever" (Shan, 2007c, ¶ 2). Such statements demonstrate his compliance and strong loyalty to the team, qualities which make him more praiseworthy and provide another reason for constructing him as a role model.

*Modesty, poise, and quietness*

Described as a "man of few words" ("Wang leads NY Yankees," 2005, ¶ 11), Wang's quietness and soft-spokenness have also been highlighted in the media (e.g., Shan, 2006c; Shan & Huang, 2008; "Wang Chien-ming wants to bring best," 2006). And while quietness itself is not necessarily a quality to admire, the media discourse connects his quietness with other parallel qualities such as being able to concentrate, remain poised, calm, and modest. A *Taipei Times* article titled "Taiwan's quiet man of baseball finally meets the press" expresses this:

Neither the glamor of being a starting pitcher for the New York Yankees, nor the accolades his performances earned during the recent Major League Baseball (MLB) season, have succeeded in transforming Wang Chien-ming from a man of few words into a chatterbox.... The theme of the press conference was "Quietness", and it attempted to portray Wang as someone who is able to focus

only on the catcher and the batter in a boisterous Yankee Stadium packed with baseball fans....Kao [Ying-Chieh] said that Wang always appeared quiet and was not particularly disturbed by what was going on around him. Kao recalled taking his baseball team on a hiking trip once. There was a creek along the hiking trail, and all the players were eager to hop into the creek, except Wang, who stood on a bridge above the creek and watched his teammates play. (Shan, 2006c, ¶ 11)

In this article, Wang's quietness and inactivity are translated into an ability to concentrate and remain undisturbed. And the author implies that because of such qualities, he could accomplish his pitching missions at the Yankee Stadium regardless of the high pressure and noisiness in the notoriously intimidating "House That Ruth Built." Thus, quietness here is not portrayed as a bad quality, but to be admired as a key to his success. Quietness and inactiveness here were thus interpreted as good (because they led to success) and Taiwanese (because Wang possessed them).

In all, the print media not only represent Wang as a Taiwanese "role model" (Chuang and Huang, 2007, ¶ 3; Chuang, 2006, ¶ 10) and a person who "no one can replace" ("Taiwanese fans," 2009, ¶ 19), but they work to beautify his personalities in order to "nationalize" them as the so-called Taiwanese spirits.

#### *An (American) Dream Chaser*

In the United States, belief in "American dream" is a dominant class ideology offering "a hopeful vision of boundless opportunities for individuals to succeed economically and live a happy life based on consumption" (Coakley, 2009, p. 319). People believe that everyone has the opportunity to succeed. Working hard results in success, while being lazy or lack of ability is always the main reason of failure. In Taiwan, will such ideas are also part of many people's beliefs, the American dream features in a more complicated, if not quite different way. Of the newspaper articles examined, several highlight Wang's "dream-chasing" career. While journalists do not mention his *class* background, they present his going to America and playing in the major leagues as an aspect of his status as a dream-chaser. An article quotes him saying "I am a baseball player doing the job that I love, pursuing my childhood dream of playing in the Major Leagues" ("Baseball star protests," 2006, ¶ 9). Another article, also citing Wang's own words, indicates that he had hoped to pitch in the professional

leagues in Taiwan after graduating from his university, but “never dreamed of pitching in the Major Leagues” (“Second version,” 2006, ¶ 11). The same article also highlights the language barrier Wang faced when he first went to the US. Reaching the major leagues and having a successful career meant more to Wang than others because of his status as a foreigner and the subsequent additional barriers. While the differences between baseball leagues in Taiwan and in the US—especially the major leagues—are huge in terms of economic power, popularity, and skill levels, playing major league baseball in the US, for a Taiwanese like Wang, could certainly be seen as a remarkable story which exemplifies the American dream paradigm. However, in Taiwan the “American dream” could generally mean anything related to emigrating to the United States, given the power and economic inequalities between the two nations. I argue such media discourses are closer to this understanding—moving to a wealthier nation (i.e., America) and being successful there—than the typical *American* understanding of the “American dream.” However, because only a few of the articles examined mention such theme, it is difficult to draw a clear conclusion.

#### *The Best of Asia*

Because the numbers of Asian players in the major leagues remain relatively few, Wang’s status as an Asian player is mentioned and highlighted in many articles. It should be noted that it is not his race which is the focus, but the fact that he came from an Asian country. He has been consistently compared with other players from Japan and South Korea, the two main Asian countries which feature high-profile players in the major league level. Several articles report that his first 19-win season in 2006 set a new record for most wins by an Asian player (“Taiwan-born pitcher,” 2007; Shih, 2008) and is “the best performance by an Asian player” (“Wang Chien-ming wants to bring best,” 2006, ¶ 9) in MLB. In another similar case, an early season injury which prevented him from pitching in the opening day game is interpreted as him missing “out on an opportunity to be the first Asian to be the Opening Day starter” (Shan, 2007a, ¶ 5). To highlight his achievement and compare him with other Asian players, a *China Post* article writes:

In the past decade, Major League Baseball has not been without its share of All-Star caliber Asian players. We have seen the dominance of the likes of Hideo Nomo, Hideki Matsui, and Ichiro Suzuki from Japan, and Chan Ho Park from Korea. It is the first time, however, that we have witnessed the success of a Taiwanese player at the major league level.... What differentiates Wang from his Asian predecessors are the opportunities which lie ahead of him. While pitchers such as Hideo Nomo and Chan Ho Park have amassed impressive resumes at the major league level, neither pitcher has led its team to a post-season victory. Wang, the new ace of a pitching staff that is otherwise aged and injury plagued, was able to secure his first playoff victory in his first try. (Huang, 2006, ¶ 7)

While emphasizing Wang's accomplishments as either the first or the best of Asia, the media focus on the comparisons between him and other players from either Japan or South Korea. The texts imply that while the numbers of Taiwanese players in MLB are fewer than Japanese and Koreans, Wang, a Taiwanese, tops all of them. Interestingly, in this context it is not race that is the focal point, but the players' nationality. Asian American players such as Travis Ishikawa, Kurt Suzuki, and Bruce Chen are not involved in such discussions. It is safe to say that within this theme, nationalism and international rivalry—either on or off the sports fields—among Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea are the main themes in such media portrayals.

#### *Answering the Research Questions*

The findings to some extent conform to the previous studies on Wang's media portrayals in Taiwan and could answer the research questions of this thesis. First and foremost, Wang's national identity is significantly highlighted. Since he is consistently dubbed "the pride of Taiwan," he is not "the pride of the Yankees" or anything else. The media interpret his achievement as more of a success of his country of origin than of the team or of himself. His performance seems to be more important to the Taiwanese nationals than to the New York Yankees, the fans of the Yankees, or Chien-Ming Wang himself. In addition, many of his highlighted personalities—hard-working, adversity-overcoming, team spirit, modesty, poise and quietness—are admired, valorized, and inscribed as the genuine Taiwanese traits, making him a legitimate Taiwanese role model. Besides this, the media also emphasize his dream-chasing career, especially as an aspect of his status as a foreigner/Taiwanese who eventually made a successful career in the US. Finally, the

media focus on his Asian status and compare him with other successful Japanese and Korean players. While arguing that Wang is the first or the best Asian player to accomplish certain achievements, the texts imply that Wang, as a Taiwanese representative, outperformed other Asian players and could claim the title of “Asia’s No. 1.”

In conclusion, the discourse of the Taiwanese media seems to be homogeneous and takes a very positive tone on Wang throughout the period of 2005 to 2009, even though in the last two years his performance was at best mediocre. The predominant theme in the print media, conforming to the recent studies (Y. Lin, 2009; Liu, 2008; Wen et al., 2009), is Taiwanese nationalism. Not only nationalistic terms such as “the pride of Taiwan” often appeared, but his personal traits were nationalized to make him a role model for all Taiwanese. Liu (2008) critically indicated that such understanding of baseball and Chien-Ming Wang is associated with the idea of “capitalist nationalism” and the growth of transnational sporting corporatism, in this case, Major League Baseball (p. 34). While the media help construct the belief that MLB, or even the New York Yankees, is the central stage of baseball in the world and has a much higher profile than professional baseball in Taiwan, Wang’s brilliant achievements in MLB nonetheless generate tremendous pride among Taiwanese. Because this helps MLB market their products in Taiwan, at the same time it means that “the local community would only watch the television screen of MLB games and thus restraining the capability of creating the genuine, multifarious, and local sporting culture images” (Liu, 2008, p.72).

## CHAPTER SIX

### U.S. MEDIA TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Wang's representations in the American media can be categorized into several themes: reservedness, obedience and (over-)conformity, otherness, and capability *only* on the mound. I also examine how the media depicted his poor performance in 2009. Through interpreting Wang's athletic performance, personalities, and the way he presents himself in press conferences and interviews, the media regularly portray him according to these themes, which conform to stereotypical characteristics of Asian nationals and Asian Americans.

#### *Reservedness*

An article of *The New York Times* describes Wang as "the Yankees' most reserved player" (Picker, 2006, pp. D1), and the media frequently mention his introverted, calm, and reticent traits. Adjectives such as "soft-spoken," "quiet" (or even "ultra-quiet"), "silent," "closed-mouthed," "sheepish," "shy," "placid" and "stoic" were usually attached to him. Other players, coaches, and personnel were also quoted testifying to what seems to be seen as a rare feature for professional baseball player. For example, one Yankees special adviser commented that he "has never seen a pitcher who is so calm; he's almost sleepy out there" (Curry, 2006, pp. D3). The then Yankees manager Joe Torre once called him as "even-tempered as any pitcher I've ever seen" (Curry, 2007, pp. D3). Another good example was on May 5th, 2007, when Wang had a perfect game bid until the eighth inning. After the game, Wang insisted that he had no idea that the perfect game might be accomplished, and manager Torre said "it would have been nice if Wang had pitched a no-hitter, in part because it would have been interesting to see how he would have celebrated" (Curry, 2007, pp. D3).

It is safe to say that Wang has a reserved nature. He is quoted as saying "everyone [in New York City] thinks I'm quiet because I don't speak much English, but that's just how I am everywhere" (A. C., 2006, pp.48). In another interview by *Sports Illustrated*, he explains his reputation of being quiet:

“I’m pretty introverted. I like to just sit there listening to everybody else making a racket, laughing and goofing off. I can understand their jokes more now. Once in a while I’ll make one back.” (Sun, 2006, pp. 29)

Nevertheless, the language barrier does play a role on his relationship with the American media. Although he “makes few waves” and “has little to say in any language” (Lapointe, 2009b, p. SP2), a *New York Post* article wonders why Wang, as the ace of the Yankees who by that time had the most wins in the major leagues since his debut in 2005, does not get the media attention he deserves and keeps a profile low:

First, he does not overpower. Strikeouts translate into any language.... Second, he speaks English haltingly. Those finesse pitchers with the highest stature - think Tom Glavine, Greg Maddux, etc. - are masters who can make the chess maneuvering accessible in post-game dissections. Wang, give him credit, foregoes a translator and tip-toes his way in a second language with reporters. But he hardly climbs above a whisper and a sentence that strays to even five or six words is long for him. (Sherman, 2008, p. 95)

It seems both his personalities and the language barrier contribute to his low-profile status, despite his being a prominent pitcher in one of the most publicized sports organizations in the United States. However, it is usually his personal traits, i.e., reservedness, quietness, and sometimes shyness, which are emphasized. Some newspaper and magazine articles focus on such traits in the titles (e.g., “THE QUIET ONE Chien-Ming Wang,” A. C., 2006, p. 48; “Yanks Count On Wang’s Cool Amid Heat,” Kepner, 2005b, p. 2; “Yanks’ Wang Proving Talking Is Overrated,” Kepner, 2005a, p. 1) and many more others (e.g., Brooks, 2006a, p. 99; Kepner, 2008, p. D1; King, 2006a, p. 98; King, 2006b, p. 94; King, 2007, p. 115; King, 2008a, p. 51; King, 2008c, p. 67; Lapointe, 2005a, p. D1; Lapointe, 2005b, p. 1; Lapointe, 2005c, p. D1; Lapointe, 2009a, p. B13; Morrissey, 2006a, p. 86; Morrissey, 2006c, p. 116; Sherman, 2007a, p. 91) reiterate them again and again throughout the text.

#### *Obedience and (Over-)conformity*

Wang’s “likable” personality, his obedience to the manager and the coaches, and good work ethic are regularly seen in the print media too. A *Post* article states that “a guy like Wang, there’s not a soul in this clubhouse who doesn’t feel good for him and have fun with him, he’s that type of personality” (Kernan, 2006, p. 97), though



without mentioning why he is so likable. Other articles (e.g., King, 2006c, p. 80; Marchand, 2005, p. 39) show that he works very hard—this is somewhat similar to his representation in the Taiwanese media—and takes losing very seriously. When he struggled badly in early 2009, a *Post* article noted that “no one takes losing harder than Wang” and that after one bad game “he sat in the dugout totally dejected” (Kernan, 2009, p. 95). In another case, when the coaches wondered if they should protect Wang from pitching too many innings in his first full year in the majors, Wang insisted that he felt strong and felt “like the same starter as Opening Day” (Sherman, 2006, p. 52). Not only is he represented as competitive and having a good work ethic, but the media also portray him as very obedient and submissive to the coaches. “Coaches tell me to pitch, I pitch” (Morrissey, 2006b, p. 54), as one article highlighted. In one game when Wang encountered some trouble and had the bases loaded, the pitching coach Ron Guidry visited the mound to talk to him. The next pitch Wang induced a ground ball and solved the problem. After the game, manager Joe Torre was quoted that “he [Wang] recovered very well. Whatever [the pitching coach] Gator said to him, it worked the rest of the game” (Picker, 2006, p. D1).

### *Otherness*

After two seasons as Chien-Ming Wang’s next-door-neighbor at Yankee Stadium, in the clubhouse sense, [outfielder] Johnny Damon still doesn’t know much about the quiet right-hander.

“[Wang] kind of sits there and does his fan mail, looks at his magazines and likes watches,” Damon said yesterday. “He’s a quiet guy. He’s just consistent business.” (Puma, 2007, p. 102)

The paragraph above may somewhat reflect Wang’s status and relationships with his teammates during his tenure with the Yankees. He may have had few conversations with outfielder Johnny Damon and other players even after he had been with the team for more than two years. However, this article seems to portray him as an inscrutable, unfathomable, and indifferent person. Such mysterious features make him an “other.” Along with reservedness, other unusual features also attract journalists’ attentions. As a player from Taiwan and an underrepresented Asian in MLB, his linguistic and cultural marks which are clearly not considered “American” are flagged

in the media. The *New York Post* constantly plays with his unusual first and last names, making up titles such as “Chien up,” “Ming Dynasty,” “dial Wang [long] distance,” “Wang [wrong] number,” “Wang-derful,” “Chien-Ming Gong” and “Chien-Ming Wrong.” An article also suggests that his teammates used to constantly mispronounce his last name (Morrissey, 2007, p. 99). These examples to some extent show that his name, while being a very common one in terms of both given and family names in Taiwan, is unusual, weird, and exotic. In another article showcasing an interview with Wang, the reporter asks “what was the first English word you learned?” and “how do you say ‘Fire Isiah [Thomas]’ in Chinese?” Wang’s answer to the latter question, translating to the English characters, is an inscrutable “Bay-ky-chula” (Serby, 2008, p. 97) which people proficient in both Chinese and English would not even understand. Such ways of representing the language differences only strengthen Wang’s otherness and exoticness.

However, Wang’s “abnormal” cultural traits are the more highlighted than the language distinction. The fact that he lived with his parents during the off-season is brought up in both *Sports Illustrated* and *The New York Times*. A *Times* article notes:

By the way, the next great Yankee pitcher still lives with his parents during the off- season in Tainan, Taiwan....As Wang readies for his first full season in the major leagues, he could end up becoming as vital as [Randy] Johnson or [Mike] Mussina. He might be the only Yankee who still lives with his parents and, no matter how much he achieves in 2006, those distinct living arrangements will not change.  
“It’s better for me,” said Wang, “if my mom cooks.” (Curry, 2006, p. D3)

Another *Times* article reveals that Wang was adopted and had two sets of parents, and this fact led to the interpretation that he had to work harder to support his two families:

He pitches with a sense of purpose and responsibility. For the Yankees’ Chien-Ming Wang, celebrity and earning potential grow with every ground ball. The better he pitches, the better he can take care of his family in Taiwan....“I felt I had to work even harder in order to help two sets of parents,” he said, adding later, “Most of my money I send home to let my parents manage. The rest I use for living expenses in America.” (Kepner, 2006b, p. 1)

Either interpreted as dependent on his mother’s cooking or serving as his families’ breadwinner, both the articles illustrate Wang’s strong family ties, and this

made Wang different from a “regular” American sport star, thus serving as a discourse to strengthen Wang’s foreignness.

In a few cases Wang is also portrayed as a mysterious person. A *Sports Illustrated* article titled “Wang has a Secret” conceives his good pitching performance as “enigmatic” (Chen, 2008, p. 44), and in another article, somewhat related to his reserved nature, manager Torre said “It’s so tough to read him. He doesn’t allow you much” (Lapointe, 2006, p. 1).

Mayeda (1999) pointed out that among the very few literature and mass media texts on Asian athletes in America, “they are either mysterious competitors, cultural appropriators, cheaters, or simply athletically inept” (p. 209). In Wang’s case, he fits in the mysterious competitor category. Because he is so different culturally and linguistically from most baseball players in MLB, there is no question he is an *other*.

#### *Capability only on the Mound*

Many articles use “poised,” “composed,” “cool,” “unflappable,” “not rattled,” to describe his pitching performance and ability to induce groundballs and generate double-plays to escape trouble. Journalists construe this pitching style (in contrast to that of other power pitchers who rely more on strikeouts) as another feature which is connected to his personality. This “man of few expressions” (Abraham, 2007, pp. 4C) can deal with pressure—when there are runners on bases—because he is so clam, poised, and focused when he is on the mound. Even when he gives up some runs, he can regroup immediately, as this article indicates:

“Torre used the word super to describe Wang’s poised pitching over seven innings Saturday, when he regrouped after Jacque Jones’s three-run homer in the fourth -- the only runs he allowed -- to retire 12 of the final 13 batters he faced.

Catcher John Flaherty, who called the pitch (a changeup), reacted with more distress than Wang, leaning forward with his hands on his knees. Wang simply stood on the mound and waited for Flaherty to throw him a new ball.” (Borzi, 2005b, p. D2)

Similar to the ways in which Taiwanese media transform his quietness to calmness and the ability to deal with pressure, the American media also connect his pitching success with his demeanor and personalities. He is a pitcher who

“understands the responsibility that has landed on his shoulders” (King, 2006e, p. 94), an individual “with a sense of who he is and what he means” (Brooks, 2006b, p. 90), and a kid with limited experience but one who could be counted on (Marchand, 2006, p. 51). In a slightly different case, an article portrays Wang as indifferent to his surroundings or his teammates’ injuries:

Only one other player, Octavio Dotel, was in the Yankees’ clubhouse Wednesday afternoon when the night’s starting pitcher, Chien-Ming Wang, settled into a couch with a Sudoku puzzle. Wang worked it intently for about 10 minutes, ignoring the flat-screen television in front of him showing baseball highlights. That done, he got up and wandered around the clubhouse. Wang hardly seemed concerned that Manager Joe Torre had to hunt around to find nine relatively healthy players to put in his lineup, especially after sending Alex Rodriguez back to the hotel with a sore throat. Wang would pitch so well that it did not make much difference who played as the Yankees beat the Mariners, 9-2, to squelch any talk of a post-Red Sox series letdown. (Borzi, 2006, p. D3)

Though this paragraph appears to be intended to praise Wang’s pitching performance and that whoever batted for the Yankees was irrelevant, such a portrayal makes Wang more of a hard-working pitching machine or robot which constantly generates outs on the field than a real human-being who has feelings. In addition, manager Joe Torre is quoted several times extolling Wang’s ability to “handle every situation” (Borzi, 2005a, p. 1) and “do the whole thing” (Kepner, 2006c, p. 4). Wang’s calmness, personality, ability, and, sometimes his “cheapness”—he was one of the few Yankees players who was not making large amount of money because he had not been granted free agency yet—are greatly praised by the media, especially in 2005, 2006, 2007, and the first half of 2008 when he enjoyed great success. *Post* claims that “all Wang did was keep winning” (King, 2006d, p. 120).

However, such seemingly “role model” status does not really make him a representative of the Yankees even in his prime years. The two articles below exemplify:

....Torre said. “But he pitched well for us last year, and sometimes a little bit of a language barrier is an advantage. You’re not having to answer a lot of questions and converse with a lot of people. It sort of insulates you. I have no doubt he’ll be able to handle it.” (Kepner, 2006a, pp. D1)  
Mussina thinks Wang’s lack of fluency serves as insulation in the white-hot spotlight of New York.

“He doesn’t get surrounded like this and asked a bunch of questions,” Mussina

said. “Because he only understands about a third of what you guys ask him, which is a convenient problem to have sometimes.” (Morrissey, 2006d, p. 101)

The lack of English fluency certainly degrades Wang’s status in the team.

Though he could do well what he is asked to do (i.e., pitching), he is not expected or encouraged at all to do what other elite players are doing, that is, be a leader or deal more with journalists. It is evident that throughout the many articles examined, Wang is not often directly quoted, and even when he is, his answers are usually very short. Although he can win games when he pitches every five days, on the days he does not pitch, “he does it very well while sitting far in the background” (King, 2008b, p. 100).

#### *What Do They Say When Wang Pitches Poorly?*

From 2005 to the midseason of 2008, Wang’s pitching career could have been evaluated from good to exceptional. He is among the winningest pitchers in MLB, recording 19 wins in both 2006 and 2007. However, in June 2008, his career faced a sharp turn. In a game against the Houston Astros, Wang severely injured his foot when running the bases and then missed the remainder of the season. In the beginning of the 2009 season, Wang recovered from the injury but could not regain his dominance on the mound. After his first three starts in 2009, his ERA is a horrifying number, 34.50. Wang continued to struggle throughout the season, and in July he hurt his shoulder to miss the remaining season again. While pitching so badly and encountering severe physical problems, how would the American media represent him?

#### *No One Cares About His Glorious Past*

Wang is now 0-4 this season, and the Yankees are 0-7 against Boston. Pick which you find more embarrassing. But the reality is that the Yankees cannot remove Boston from their schedule. However, they can get Wang the heck out of the rotation.

This is a major league season in which the Yanks must—MUST—win. And, right now, Wang is the biggest loser, so bad that he could give up four more runs and still have his ERA drop... to 14.34.

Wang needs to be removed and he does not simply get a spot back because of pedigree or a \$5 million salary.... Wang goes to the back of the line and waits for an opening; an opening is no longer simply created for him based on past achievements.

No one cares anymore if he was the ace to start last year. It is this year, and in 2009 Wang is the majors’ worst pitcher. And for the majors’ worst pitcher you don’t find excuses to put him back in the rotation, you find excuses to put him on the DL. (Sherman, 2009a, p. 81)

The article above seems one of the harshest criticisms against Wang during his terrible performance in 2009. Though somewhat extreme, the tone throughout the period is not much more moderate than this. Since his sole expected capability, pitching, is missing, he does not seem to be valuable anymore for many New Yorkers. His poor performance was not only described as “not fair” to the Yankees (King, 2009a, p. 96), but also “contagious” (Sherman, 2009b, p. 60); one article half-jokingly implies that Wang is responsible for other pitchers’ short outings. Wang himself, seldom quoted as usual, now seems to be a silent target to be blamed. His teammates, coaches, and the general manager Brian Cashman, sometimes come up with an explanation for his struggle, and sometimes just criticize him for pitching poorly. Pitching Coach Dave Eiland said “I can’t go stand behind the mound with him during the game” (Kepner, 2009b, p. B12), and outfielder Johnny Damon is quoted as saying “we have six losses on the year right now, and he’s got three of them,” “In all three of those games, we’ve been blown out and we’ve had to go to our bullpen, so maybe our bullpen’s not sharp the following days” (Kepner, 2009a, p. SP1). With these words and a consistently silent, under-quoted Wang, it is again evident that Wang cannot claim role model status. Without his good pitching, Wang is literally an underdog on the team.

#### *A Miscast Ace*

Moreover, Wang is at times described as a “miscast ace” (Sherman, 2007b, p. 88), “a No. 3 in No. 1 clothing” who cannot be truly trusted (Sherman, 2009d, p. 88), and one who is not a true ace but only had the title (Sherman, 2009c, p. 58). Such discourse is more dominant after his injury and a likely departure in 2009. In contrast to the media texts when he pitched outstandingly before 2008, it is interesting to see how the media changed its tone so drastically. Instead of debating Wang’s pitching ability and whether or not he deserved to be called an ace, it is important that his media representations imply that he is more a property of the Yankees than a respected human being. This seems, at least partly, to be because of his reservedness, otherness, and foreignness. His status, either on the team or for the fans, is at best

secondary. Once he cannot produce outs anymore, he is not needed (King, 2009b, p. 55).

*Nomo, Ichiro, and Wang*

It is now appropriate to compare the findings of this thesis with the other two journal articles, David Tokiharu Mayeda's (1999) analysis on Hideo Nomo and Yuka Nakamura's (2005) examination on Ichiro Suzuki, which both deal with media representations of Asian athletes in the United States. There are certainly similarities among Nomo, Ichiro, and Wang's media portrayals. Mayeda (1999) argued:

Certainly, it was Nomo's pitching success that garnered him positive media attention and the ability to surpass being orientalized and labeled an economic risk....Hard-working, self-sacrificing, and quiet (he was rarely quoted in newspapers), Nomo reaffirmed to readers that Asian nationals and Asian Americans were model minorities. (p. 211)

The portrayals of Wang's personality are very similar to Nomo's, as Mayeda suggested above. Wang is also quiet and diligent, and more often than not he is successful on the mound as well. This again consolidates stereotypically Asian traits and the belief that Asians are model minorities. Nakamura's (2005) paper on Ichiro's media representations argued that he was more otherized than regarded as a model minority. He was described as a "neo-samurai," "cryptic," and "enigmatic," all of them implying his exoticness and otherness. In Wang's case, there is a similar discourse. He is portrayed as a mysterious person and his family background and living arrangement are scrutinized and highlighted. In media portrayals of Wang, both model minority and otherness discourses are present.

The findings, however, do not wholly conform to those of Mayeda (1999) and Nakamura (2005). Nakamura (2005) indicated that the American media presented Ichiro as a player who having grown up "playing America's national pastime in Japan, giving it everything he had, comes to America and makes the big time in the biggest way" (p. 474) seemed to be "assimilated" or Americanized into American culture very well. Mayeda (1999) argued that Nomo was portrayed as rejecting his homeland, Japan, and wholeheartedly accepting America. Both of the cases served to consolidate the "American dream" myth: the belief that anyone—including immigrants who are

from foreign countries—who works hard will succeed. And, as Mayeda (1999) suggested, such belief and the discourse of “wholeheartedly accepting America while disregarding America’s realities of racism” serves as the foundation for the model minority myth (p. 210).

In Wang’s case, there does not seem to be such discourse. He is not described as assimilated to American culture, and neither does he reject his home country, Taiwan. The fact that he had spent about 5 years in the minor leagues before showing up as a major league player—this is not the case for both Nomo and Ichiro—may explain difference in his portrayals. Wang is a less than completely oriental player because he started his professional career in America and had been playing baseball there for a while. Nevertheless, the findings of the thesis still convincingly indicate that Wang’s otherness and model minority status are clearly seen in American mainstream media.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

## CONCLUSION

This thesis sought to understand the meanings of Chien-Ming Wang in two geographically and culturally different places—Taiwan and the United States—in the beginning decade of the 21st century. Each place had distinct interpretations of Wang and their media associated him with various identities. In Taiwan, his media representations could contribute to understanding -- borrowing Alan Bairner's (2001) words -- "the extent to which sport has been implicated in the development of particular national identities and the ways in which sporting nationalisms have responded to the forces of globalization" (p. 19). In the context of the history of Taiwanese baseball, the ways in which Wang was represented in the print media signify a new form of sporting nationalism which differs from that of the 1970s, when the government and government-controlled mass media promoted what might be termed a "Chinese Taipei"/Republic of China nationalism. This is complicated by the fact that Wang is highly intertwined with the global expansion and marketing of Major League Baseball in which governmental power is much less significant. Instead, as Bauman (1998) suggests, state power is subordinate to and dominated by the world markets (p. 69). This is exemplified by the fact that PTS, a national institution, obtained the broadcasting rights of MLB games in response to public pressure, and the ways in which many politicians, including President Chen Shui-bian, employed Wang's popularity for various political purposes. The state was reduced to the status of a responder which jumped opportunistically on the bandwagon of Wang's notoriety. As Liu (2008) indicates conceding to "capitalist nationalism" in this way undercuts the local sports culture. The result in this case is that, largely thanks to globalization and Chien-Ming Wang's success in the global sport market, Major League Baseball, a form of American popular culture, powerfully affects the way in which Taiwanese people perceive, understand, and enjoy baseball.

Media representations of Wang can also help us understand the ways in which

the Taiwanese perceive and construct the meanings of “Taiwanese.” By emphasizing certain personal traits of Wang, the media construe and define what it means to be a standard and “good” Taiwanese. Through baseball and Wang, national identity and even “national personality” are enhanced and consolidated.

Two conflicting forces are in play. Globalization and the domination of American baseball defines the local baseball culture in Taiwan, making it “Americanized;” however, Taiwanese nationalism and national identity are greatly strengthened during this process. It seems that globalization, or more appropriately, Americanization and American transnational capitalism, prevails since it is apparent that more than ever before, MLB represents baseball in Taiwan. And, as Bairner (2001) suggests, “we are confronted by a world in which multinational (or transnational) capitalism, a global media and international organizations of various sorts create an increasingly homogeneous world which is challenged only periodically by pockets of resistance” (p. 9). However, local nationalism, although somewhat obedient to the economic and cultural power of American baseball, is not only still alive but revived.

As for the representations of the US-based media, Wang’s quietness, reservedness, obedience, and otherness are emphasized. It is evident that the print media choose to emphasize these themes and characteristics to some extent because of his race and foreign nationality. For an American audience, no matter how successful Wang is on the field, he remains and will always be an exotic, shy, and reticent Asian player: an “other.” Although he is not commonly negatively portrayed and has never encountered racial jokes as have Tiger Woods and Yao Ming, as King (2006) indicates, just like other Asian players in MLB, the media representations of Wang fit the model minority discourse of Asians and Asian Americans. They may be successful and good but they are still accorded the secondary status of a minority.

#### *Limitation*

The limitation of this study lies on the materials analyzed. First, with respect to the Taiwanese media, only English print media were examined. Excluding Chinese materials may mean that many meaningful and interesting articles were missed, and

because the differences in the readership of English and Chinese publications were not taken into account the representativeness of the analyzed texts has not been considered. Also, television news, online blogs, and other forms of texts, in both America and Taiwan-based media, were not included. Because such sports coverage sometimes only takes the form of illustrations and pictures, these materials were not covered either. Moreover, Deacon (2007) indicated the potential problems of employing digital newspaper archives. Since keyword searching was used for collecting texts in this study, it could only track *things*, not *themes*. While baseball is something of an exceptional topic which does not usually have duplicated or symbolic meanings, this is not a major problem. However, Deacon pointed out that computer-based databases could still yield inconsistent search results, and it is very likely that some relevant articles would not show up. In order to have a more complete understanding of the meanings of Chien-Ming Wang, future research should cover a more comprehensive range of texts.

On October 3, 2006, the New York Yankees played their first American League Division Series (ALDS) game (and also their first postseason game of the year) at the old Yankee Stadium against the Detroit Tigers. Chien-Ming Wang, ahead of big-time veterans Mike Mussina and Randy Johnson, was scheduled to pitch in this series opener. In the stadium, the national flags of Taiwan/the Republic of China, featuring its “blue sky, white sun, and a wholly red earth,” which is banned by most international sports organizations, including the Olympics, were seen in several bleachers carried by passionate Taiwanese fans. Wang maintained his stellar performance, cruised through six and two third innings and was taken out of the game by manager Joe Torre during the seventh inning. As Wang was stepping down from the mound and slowly walking back to the dugout, the happy Yankee fans, regardless of their race and nationality, cheered loudly and gave him a standing ovation. Meanwhile, fans in Taiwan were watching live television broadcasting provided by FOX Sports in the morning hours, and they were as emotional, if not more, as the spectators in the stadium, especially when FOX Sports showed the map of Taiwan and

the commentators circled the spot of Wang's hometown on the map. As a Taiwanese who has followed Wang's games keenly since 2005, this moment was truly precious for me. As Bairner (2001) wrote, "national identities, at their best, make the world a more interesting and joyous place" (p. 16). Sporting achievements and their attendant joys come and go, but the issues and problems discussed in this thesis do not. While nationalism mediated through American baseball dominates Taiwan, Americans, who sometimes are confused about the pronunciation of Wang's name, see him as a typical Asian who is mysterious, inexplicable, shy, and quiet.

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