pioneered in Silicon Valley and Boston. After missing this transition, NSC languished, was bought by Storage Technology Corporation, and is now only a historical footnote—as are nearly all the other Minnesotan firms.

In the first chapters, Misa brilliantly situates Minnesota in the geography of the computing industry. But he never addresses the reasons that the regional computing industry could not reinvent itself. Were the local industrial leaders too focused on the mainframe and competition with IBM and therefore unable to see the changes underway in the computing industry? Was it because of a lack of complementary assets? Was it that industry there could draw only on the University of Minnesota, while Silicon Valley and Boston had access to more (and more prominent) local universities? Or was it due to a shortage of venture capital, as Minnesota had only a few local firms, whereas Silicon Valley and Boston had nurtured far more vibrant venture capital industries? The question of how and why the assets dissipated is not addressed, leaving me wishing for more.

Nonetheless, Digital State is engagingly written and exhaustively researched. Those interested in the history of the computing industry will find it a welcome addition to their libraries.

Martin Kenney is a professor of community and regional development at the University of California, Davis. He coedited Public Universities and Regional Growth (with David Mowery, 2015), Locating Global Advantage (with Richard Florida, 2004), and edited Understanding Silicon Valley (2000).

doi:10.1017/S0007680516000192

Reviewed by Christine R. Yano

In 1989, the Italian clothing manufacturer Benetton launched its United Colors of Benetton advertising campaign, asserting a connection between hip fashion and multiculturalism through juxtaposed photographs of people of color. This campaign garnered much publicity and criticism, not the least of which lay in its flippant message that racial diversity was trendy, cool, and fashionable. Race became style. In many ways, this landmark advertising campaign provides some of the grist of a new study by cultural and linguistic anthropologist Shalini
In Advertising Diversity: Ad Agencies and the Creation of Asian American Consumers, Shankar explores ways in which race and ethnic differences become commodified through processes of branding Asian America for both a general audience and one of Asian Americans. Based on fieldwork conducted at advertising agencies in New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles from 2008 to 2012, Shankar brings ethnographic and linguistic detail to the interactions and ideas that guide the development of ad campaigns with an Asian American focus.

One of the strengths of this volume lies in Shankar’s ethnographic vignettes and detailed linguistic analysis of people’s interactions. This kind of data brings the reader in close to the pulse that governs which decisions are made, considered, and reconsidered. Shankar proves herself to be an astute observer and keen analyst. Organized into chapters that mirror the advertising industrial process—the pitch, account planning, creative development, account services, production and media, audience testing—the book is a complex and open-ended story. Undoubtedly, advertising is a capitalist, profit-driven process for which representations of racialized and ethnic differences make good business. That good business reflects what has been constructed as the new “normal” in the United States—not “postracial” so much as “multiracial,” not a denial of color so much as the separation and coexistence of many colors as an assertion and a marketing tool. In fact, these are colors that shape new ways to buy and ultimately sell. In this way, the model minority stereotype that has plagued Asian Americans since the 1960s gives way to a newly configured middle-class model consumer legitimacy.

Shankar draws heavily on key theoretical concepts that lend themselves to her analysis. “The assemblage,” borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, inscribes the creative process as a “field of multiple maneuvers, as temporally achieved and open to transformation as it endures and circulates” (p. 11). These social formations coalesce and disperse over time and space, making the process open-ended—a challenge for the ethnographer, undoubtedly, but one that forces us to attend to their contingencies. Shankar herself gives three reasons for placing assemblage at the center of her analysis: to historicize the processes of development and production; to address circulation as political practice; and to recognize the variety of modalities of reception (intended and unexpected), including the linguistic, visual, material, affective, and sensory.

Shankar uses the term “language materiality” to refer to details of language and sound production and reception. By inserting materiality into language, Shankar asserts the centrality of sound—“the poetics of discourse, the way music and talk fill space and animate a product or a service”—in brand construction (p. 115). Language materiality thus
becomes an important component in “transcreation”—a term used within the industry to describe a combination of translation and brand creation. The process balances cultural insights (translation) with branded identity (creation), resulting in a product that more directly and fruitfully addresses a particular racial/ethnic group, such as Asian Americans (or a subgroup within that broad category). One of the means by which transcreation works is through “qualisigns,” a term borrowed from semiotician Charles Peirce to refer to “a sign that embodies a social or cultural quality” (p. 93). Thus, qualisigns always point to something beyond themselves, often embodied through material forms. They may point to what Shankar calls “racial naturalization,” here the reformulation of Asian Americans as a racialized group that finds a place within “normal” America.

At times, the writing can get thick with these theoretical concepts; if one is not already familiar with the terminology, one must keep a running checklist of definitions to look up. Shankar’s writing also makes use of what I assume to be industry-speak in the term “creative.” Here, “creative” is not an adjective but a noun and a verb. Shankar explains the use of the term as “the process of generating concepts and copy, what ad executives call creative (a term that is also used to describe the ad executives who do this work).” In spite of this definition, I sometimes had a difficult time parsing a sentence such as this: “Creative also imagines consumers interacting with branded products and services” (p. 90).

In Shankar’s work, gender takes a backseat to race. And yet, representations of Asian Americans in the United States have long held gender captive and central. There is a long and critical history of the exotic and erotic framing of the “Asian woman”; likewise, the emasculated image of the “Asian man” has been the bane of many media and social critics. One wonders how gender may have added a significant layer to this monograph, from the framing of the workplace itself to analyses of the advertising images and copy that issue forth.

Nevertheless, Shankar has accomplished plenty with this work and can be justly applauded for bringing to bear the detailed processes by which Asian American—images, sounds, languages, bodies, and lives—inhabit our mediascape. Advertising Diversity vividly demonstrates the role of ad agencies in constructing a place for Asian Americans to take at the colorful table of multicultural consumerism.

Christine R. Yano is professor of anthropology at the University of Hawaii. Her latest book, Pink Globalization: Hello Kitty’s Trek Across the Pacific, was published by Duke University Press (2013).