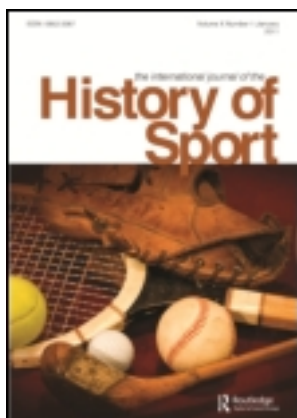


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Publisher: Routledge

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The International Journal of the History of Sport

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fhsp20>

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Published online: 01 Jun 2006.

To cite this article: Holly Swyers (2005): Community America: Who Owns Wrigley Field?, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 22:6, 1086-1105

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09523360500286783>

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Community America: Who Owns Wrigley Field?

Holly Swyers

The bleachers regulars of Wrigley Field regard themselves as one of the 'last true communities' in the United States. Although on the surface, they appear to share only a love for the Chicago Cubs, closer scrutiny shows that their sense of community is well founded in deep interpersonal ties. This essay considers the ways in which Wrigley Field plays an active role in constituting and maintaining this community. I argue that the regulars have humanly appropriated Wrigley Field, making it into a social space that they affectively 'own'. I go on to demonstrate how this sense of ownership shapes behaviours that promote a feeling of community. It is this feeling as much as any other factor that makes the community 'real'.

There is a pilgrimage that happens in early April every year. People come from across the United States and across town, gravitating to a single city block. Usually it is bitter cold, but outdoor grills are fired up around the neighbourhood anyway. Glove-clad fingers wrap around bratwurst and hot dogs that steam mightily in the icy morning air. Chili and beer are served as early as nine in the morning, and smiling, red-cheeked men and women travel from tavern to backyard barbecue, greeting everyone along the way, 'Happy New Year!'

The occasion is the Chicago Cubs home opener, and for bleacher regulars it is a high holy day of obligation. While small groups of regulars meet up over the off-season for hot-stove league sessions, football games, holiday gatherings or shared vacations, Opening Day signals the end of winter isolation for everyone. The community as a whole comes together, ritually renewing ties that in some cases extend back decades.

The bleacher regulars are a special category of Cubs fans. A bleacher regular is in part exactly what the name implies: someone who sits in the bleacher seats of Wrigley Field on a regular basis. To reduce the regulars to their seating preference at a sporting event, however, would be a grave mistake. Not every person sitting in the bleachers can claim to be among the regulars, and not all the regulars can still come to as many games as they did when they joined the community. The bleacher regulars

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are, as they will attest, a *true* community. It is a badge of pride, held up in defiance of public claims that community in the United States is eroding. While regulars may agree with the idea that generally speaking, few Americans understand what it is to be in a community, they almost universally agree that they are exceptions to the rule. As Al from right field remarked, 'Lee Elia [1] expressed it wrong, but he had the right idea. We *are* different. It's hard to put into words and explain, but if you're a part of it, you understand without being told.' [2]

There are somewhere between 200 and 300 bleacher regulars who understand without being told that they are in this community. Most share Al's sentiment; what regulars share is inchoate but real. Anthony P. Cohen, writing in 1985, described community as 'an entity, a reality, invested with all the sentiment attached to kinship, friendship, neighbouring, rivalry, familiarity, jealousy, as they inform the social process of everyday life. At this level, community is more than an oratorical abstraction; it hinges crucially on consciousness.' [3]

The sense among bleacher regulars that they are a part of something larger than themselves is a comment on the community *consciousness* of the regulars. The regulars simply *are*, with all the odd sort of impossible immutability that attends other social formations such as *nations*, *people* and *folk*. They are a community because they believe themselves to be a community, and this community is a concrete fact that they experience.

I joined the bleacher regulars in 1997, although I was not fully a member of the community until the end of the 1999 season. As a member of the group, I have been struck by this almost unexplainable sense of community. As a social scientist, however, I have realized that it is precisely this inarticulate *connection* that characterizes community and defies social theorizing. As Raymond Williams points out in *Keywords*:

Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships, or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships. What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (*state*, *nation*, *society*, etc.) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term. [4]

Community is a mushy word, a word that describes a *feeling* rather than an empirically measurable set of facts. Many writers have sought indicators that can measure community feeling or factors that can create such feeling. I have set myself a slightly different challenge. Using the bleacher regulars as a case study, I am working on an ethnographic monograph (*And Keep Your Scorecard Dry*) examining the daily practices and behaviours that help cement social connections. This essay examines one aspect of those behaviours: how bleacher regulars establish and maintain a sense of ownership of Wrigley Field and the surrounding neighbourhood.

Ownership – Possessed vs. Lived

A recent turn in American politics has been advocating an 'ownership society', claiming such a society ensures 'more vitality . . . in America', and that 'more people

have a vital stake in the future of this country.’ [5] This idea promotes a particular vision of ownership focused around private property, and advocates point to Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, John Locke and the American founding fathers as intellectual forebears. [6] The underlying premise is that people take better care of things they own because they have an interest in maintaining them.

This makes good intuitive sense to most people, and the word ‘ownership’ has crept into rhetoric about schools and health care in a metaphorical way. There are variations on the theme. The political spin used by the Bush-Cheney re-election campaign focused on how people own their own decisions, connecting ownership to choice. A completely other iteration is evident in the rhetoric of many community organizations, which promote an emotional tie and commitment between individuals and some central tenet or place. As an example, schools have sought to promote students ‘taking ownership’ of the physical plant and the space within it, reasoning that such an attitude will ensure that the school building and its inhabitants are treated with respect. [7]

When I speak of the bleacher regulars’ ‘ownership’ of Wrigley Field, I mean something closer to this latter usage, but I would suggest the term is more useful if it is decoupled from the implication of private property. Clearly, Wrigley Field does not belong to the bleacher regulars in any legal sense. Bleacher regulars purchase the right to enter the ballpark on game days, but unlike fans in the grandstands, the price of admission does not even reserve a certain seat. The bleachers are general admission, meaning the first person who claims a bit of bench on game day gets to sit there. Even this right of attendance is revocable; misbehaving Cubs fans are routinely removed from the ballpark.

What I would like to suggest is an alternative sense of ownership. While there are ample examples from other cultures of relationships to the world that do not revolve around the idea of private property, a more powerful case for a different mode of ownership in this case is derivable from the Western canon. I turn first to Adam Smith, widely regarded as the father of modern economics. In his seminal work, *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith points out that ‘The word VALUE, it is to be observed, has two different meanings, and sometimes expresses the utility of some particular object, and sometimes the power of purchasing other goods which the possession of that object conveys.’ [8] Commonly expressed as ‘use value’ and ‘exchange value’, these two types of value show Smith’s intuition of two different types of relationship between people and the world around them. [9]

Smith is very clear that while an item’s potential use value might affect its exchange value, ‘The things which have the greatest value in use have frequently little or no value in exchange.’ [10] There is a distinct difference in the human relationship to things people use and to things they hope to exchange. Exchange, after all, requires a certain emotional distance from the item being exchanged, and while an exchangeable item may be carefully maintained to preserve its value, a *useful* item is preserved to maintain its usefulness. An item with use-value need not be owned in a legal, private property sense by the person using it in order to have value.

This distinction is crucial, and it is picked up later by Karl Marx in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. With a caustic edge, Marx tells us:

[T]he *sensuous* appropriation for and by man of the human essence and of human life, of objective man, of human *achievements* – is not to be conceived merely in the sense of *direct*, one-sided *gratification* – merely in the sense of *possessing*, of *having*. . . . Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only *ours* when we have it – when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly possessed, eaten drunk, worn, inhabited, etc. – in short when it is *used* by us (italics in original). [11]

Here, even use-value is tied to a sense of possession. Although as an item is used, it is no longer something to be exchanged, in today's world it likely was an object of exchange before it was used. Tickets to ball games, after all, are exchangeable until they are used. [12] To the concepts of use and exchange values, Marx adds a third idea of objective human relationships:

[S]ocial organs develop in the *form* of society; thus, for instance, activity in direct association with others, etc., has become an organ for *expressing* my own *life*. . . man is not lost in his object only when the object becomes for him a *human* object or objective man. This is possible only when the object becomes for him a *social* object. [13]

I submit that the relationship between bleacher regulars and Wrigley Field is an objective human relationship in the sense that the ballpark embodies and is implicit in generations of interactions between regulars. The regulars *know* the bleachers of Wrigley Field from long-time familiarity, and that knowledge has produced a kind of ownership of the place. Its history is deeply intertwined with their history, and events in the ballpark get woven into the life stories of regulars. Memories are shared and fixed upon the geography of the ballpark in ways that make them collective property of a special sort.

I will describe the bleachers in more detail in a later section of this study, but first we should consider the relationship between a community and its space. While the bleachers are not the only place where regulars gather, Wrigley Field has a social life, an existence in the minds of regulars that almost gives it the quality of an actor in their lives. It is an anchor point for the community, and this contributes to the moral economy of regulars. It is, in short, a *social space*.

Henri Lefebvre, following Marx, defines social space as

not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. . . . Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others. [14]

This definition is clearer with concrete examples, and Wrigley is rife with them. Let us consider ‘the death seat’. This is the aisle seat in the back row of section 147. The death seat is so named because ‘the last four people who sat there died’, or so the regulars explain if anyone outside the group tries to sit there. With a not-quite-mock solemnity, centre-field regulars discuss their moral obligation to warn people of the death seat’s properties on dates when Marv, its normal inhabitant, cannot attend. Often in lieu of the work of warning people off the seat, a regular will take his or her life into his or her own hands and sit in the death seat.

What is going on here? A properly narrative history will clear up the confusion. Over the course of the last several decades, the death seat has been inhabited by the oldest of the centre-field regulars. As each of these older regulars has passed on, abandoning the ballpark due to failing health or death, the next oldest regular has claimed the seat. The seat has intense and ambivalent meanings for centre-field regulars. It is simultaneously a seat of honour and a reminder of one’s mortality. Over the years, the seat has also become storied as if it had powers of its own.

The death seat is oddly configured by bleacher standards. It is at the end of a row, and the rail that backs the bench ends in the middle of the seat and pitches forwards a little. There is also a step down in the foot space, so when a person sits in it, his or her feet are at different levels. To a person unaccustomed to sitting there, it is an uncomfortable seat. It is impossible to lean back comfortably, and the uneven footing puts the fan at risk anytime s/he jumps up to cheer something. Any time a younger regular, forced into the seat by Marv’s absence and the desire to protect the section from the intrusion of a non-regular, trips or stumbles or suffers some mishap while sitting in the death seat, it adds to the mythology of the seat. It not only is reserved for the eldermost member by convention, but increasingly it seems to reject anyone who has not ‘earned’ the right to sit there.

The death seat is socially produced, and every event tied to it gets incorporated into its legend. I use the word legend deliberately: the seat has a history, but every mention of the death seat involves a complicated knowledge of its relationship to the regulars and the regulars’ relationships to it. Regulars from other sections respect the death seat, and when Marv is not at a game, they will ask: ‘Who’s sitting in the death seat?’ The seat helps to order relationships, and it allows for a way of talking about situations when the section feels out of order. Its past becomes a part of the present, dictating what can and cannot be done and who can and cannot sit there.

From this, we can see how Lefebvre comes to say:

Let everyone look at the space around them. What do they see? Do they see *time*? They live time, after all; they are *in* time. Yet all anyone sees is movements. In nature, time is apprehended within space . . . each place showed its age and, like a tree trunk, bore the mark of the years it had taken it to grow. Time was thus inscribed in space, and natural space was merely the lyrical and tragic script of natural time. [15]

Lefebvre goes on to bemoan the loss of this time/space connection under the conditions of modernity, to which I offer the rebuttal that he has been caught up by

the logic of legal property and ownership. While it may be true that in the twenty-first-century world, we are conditioned to understand ownership as it relates to private property, I firmly believe that we still possess the capacity to understand and 'own' social space. In fact, I contend that one feature that every community must have is some kind of shared space of which they feel some ownership.

This is not news, but it opens two important and interrelated questions. What constitutes such space? And what purpose does it serve vis-à-vis a community?

The second question is deceptively simple. After all, how could a community exist at all without some place to bring people together? However, simply having a space where people can gather does not guarantee community. To complicate things further, there seems to be little consistency with regard to what kind of spaces will stir community sentiment. A street corner can serve, [16] and in recent years, a compelling case has been made for cyberspace as the starting point for communities. [17] The key seems to be this idea of shared ownership, of objective human relationships.

As already pointed out, the bleacher regulars do not *own* Wrigley Field in the legal sense. However, the feeling of ownership that emerges from daily experience and practice is crucial to any community – and to the creation of social space. It is unlikely that any of the legal owners of Wrigley Field know what is written on a name tag affixed to the wood under the fibreglass of row 6 in section 144. In fact, it is unlikely they know the name tag is there at all. I know about the name tag, announcing the seat in question is Jeff's, covered in commentary from fans sitting in row 6 in the late 1980s on days when Jeff was not there, because Jeff told me about it. Jeff no longer sits in row 6, and the name tag is no longer visible, but it remains in his memory as part of the landscape of the bleachers. He *owns* the memory and is able to share it with people who appreciate its significance and will incorporate the memory into their own mental maps of the bleachers. The concrete feeling of *being there*, of claiming a moment of time in a place, is a central element of this kind of ownership.

Having established a rough theoretical frame for considering this model of ownership, the next task is to consider the daily behaviours that allow the regulars to 'own' Wrigley Field. In contrast to Lefebvre, [18] I argue that there are certain geographical features of space that lend themselves to construction as social space, so I will include a description of the ballpark itself as part of this ethnographic account. The balance of this study demonstrates the ways in which the bleacher regulars relate to Wrigley Field, and how that relationship becomes a constitutive part of their community.

The Geography and History of Wrigley Field

Wrigley Field, as any Cub fan can tell you, sits on the corner of Clark and Addison streets on the near north side of Chicago. More accurately, the administrative offices, several ticket windows and one of the grandstand entrances, Gate F, are on that corner. Above Gate F is the famous Wrigley Field marquee and flagpoles for the flags of the cities and states of the teams playing at the ballpark that day. At almost any

given moment of any day, you can find tourists on the corner, taking pictures of the park entrance at Gate F.

Over the course of several hundred ballgames, I have not entered the ballpark at Gate F more than three times. Bleacher regulars do not enter there, and so even in the act of entering the ballpark they are identified as a group apart from the mass of Cubs fans.

This is why: Wrigley Field with its grandstand was originally built in 1914 as Weeghman Field for the Chicago Whales, a team in the Federal League. When the Federal League folded in 1915, the owner of Whales, Charles Weeghman, folded his team in together with the Cubs, who began to play at Weeghman in 1916. Four years later, William Wrigley bought the team and the ballpark, renaming it Wrigley Field in 1926 and adding a second tier to the grandstand. It was not until 1937 that permanent seating was built in the outfield.

Although the bleachers are attached to the grandstand, their history as a late addition to the 90-year-old ballpark is evident enough once known. In the left- and right-field corners, the bleachers meet the grandstand in narrow seating sections only four rows deep that older regulars still refer to as 'the catwalks'. The resulting bottlenecks make it unsafe to move masses of people through the space. This means that bleacher fans cannot enter the ballpark through any of the grandstand gates. Instead they line up every day at Gate N.

Gate N is at the corner of Waveland and Sheffield Avenues, and it has the feel of a back entrance. Aside from Murphy's Bleachers directly across Sheffield Avenue and a small parking lot kitty-corner from the gate, the streets leading to the corner are residential. Less than half a block down Waveland and clearly visible from the gate are the trestles of the El train with a couple of port-a-potties tucked underneath. The back of the centre-field scoreboard looms above, the words 'Chicago Cubs' picked out in neon, but the intended audience are the riders on the El, not the people on the street.

For many years, bleacher tickets were only available as day-of-game sales. There are boarded-up sales windows by Gate N, remnants of those days. People would arrive pre-dawn to line up for tickets, settling along the red brick exterior of the outfield walls. The same lines still form prior to gate opening as people arrive early to get the best seats. In the past 20 years, the bleachers have become The Place To Be at Wrigley, and on hot-ticket days, the pre-game lines can stretch the length of the block on both outfield walls.

It is clear, then, that the spatial realities of Wrigley serve to set the regulars apart even before they enter the ballpark. This sense of being set apart and subject to different rules, as was particularly the case when there were no advance ticket sales for the bleachers, helps to create a certain *esprit de corps* among regulars. It is one of several conditions of possibility for the existence of the regulars, since the shared experience of waiting at the bleacher gate has become part of what it means to be a regular.

Of course, there are other places in the world where people share the experience of lining up. [19] There is more to Wrigley Field's geography and history than its catwalks, and to understand the regulars, a person must first understand Wrigley

Field and its bleachers. There is no doubt that the park has a mystique. It is the second oldest ballpark where Major League Baseball is played. [20] It was the last Major League park to get lights. [21] It is widely described in baseball circles as a 'cathedral'. For the regulars, Wrigley is a crucial element of the community. As Bill from right field explained,

People bond quickly because they are avid Cubs fans. This is a place where you can let your hair down. It doesn't really matter what field of work you are in or what nationality, religion you are. We don't talk business a lot; we don't talk politics a lot. It's a Cub thing. It's a baseball thing. It's a Wrigley Field thing. It was not the Cubs who drew me out here originally, it was Wrigley Field. [22]

The magic of Wrigley Field is not entirely accidental. The ballpark had the benefit of the marketing geniuses of Bill Veeck, Jr., and P.K. Wrigley, inheritors of their fathers' stewardship of Wrigley Field. Bill Veeck, Jr., is perhaps most widely known for his publicity stunts; he was the man responsible for sending 3ft 7in Eddie Gaedel to the plate as a pinch-hitter in a 1951 game between the St Louis Browns and the Detroit Tigers. [23] P.K. Wrigley is the man who convinced the US Government that chewing gum was an essential wartime industry during the Second World War. [24] Together, the two men managed to make Wrigley Field a green island in the middle of the city. Veeck planted the ivy that stills climbs the outfield walls of the park. Wrigley mandated that radio announcers refer to the 'friendly confines of beautiful Wrigley Field', a tagline that continues to the present. [25] For decades, the virtues of the ballpark were extolled above the (frequently poor) quality of the team.

In truth, the splendour of the ballpark and the lousiness of the baseball played there are directly related. In their most cynical moments, regulars will point out the Cubs have never won the World Series at Wrigley, and if there is any curse, perhaps it is the ballpark. I have heard this comment most often as a kind of mythology: God gave Cubs fans a choice. They could have winning baseball, or they could play in the most beautiful park in the world. They chose the park.

The history is more concrete than the mythology, but the story is not much different. Peter Golenbock describes the history in his 1996 book *Wrigleyville*, explaining how P.K. Wrigley inherited the Cubs from his father in 1932, promising never to sell. P.K Wrigley apparently had no passion for baseball:

[He] made it clear that his first priority in running the Cubs was to make his father's ballpark a monument, and he set about refurbishing it and making it the most beautiful ballpark in America.

The reason he did this, he told Bill Veeck [Jr.], the son of the Cubs' late general manager, was that 'a team that isn't winning a pennant has to sell something in addition to its won-and-lost record to fill in those low points on the attendance chart'. [26]

Wrigley is also quoted as saying 'The fun, the game, the sunshine, the relaxation. Our idea is to get the public to see a ball game, win or lose.' [27]

Wrigley's strategy worked, at least in terms of creating a beautiful ballpark. He created an environment where people would come to see the ballgame and enjoy Chicago summer days regardless of the quality of the team. He ran the Cubs to be self-sustaining, unwilling to spend extra to bring in big-money talent, and he created a masterful balance of mediocre baseball and solid attendance figures for many years. His decisions regarding the park tended to turn to gold, even when his plans for the team on the field veered towards bizarre (he was the originator of the infamous 'college of coaches' approach to managing the team). Wrigley worked with Bill Veeck, Jr., to create a 'woodsy' theme for the interior of Wrigley Field, an idea which led to the planting of the signature ivy against the outfield walls.

Even decisions forced by exigency worked in Wrigley's favour. Wrigley Field was scheduled to join a glut of Major League ballparks installing lights in the period 1939–41. The lights were scheduled to go up in December 1941, but then Pearl Harbor was bombed. Wrigley immediately donated the lights to the war effort and later chose not to join the post-war push towards night baseball. Wrigley Field became known for day baseball, and baseball purists lauded the tradition. A grassroots neighbourhood organization, Citizens United for Baseball in the Sunshine (CUBS), sprang up to protest against the plans to add lights to Wrigley Field in the 1980s, and on occasion one will see one of the old bumper stickers from their campaign: 'Keep the park dark'. The installation of lights required a reworking of Chicago ordinances, and each contract between the city and the Cubs regarding night games involves careful negotiation with the Wrigleyville neighbourhood. [28] P.K. Wrigley knew not only how to honour tradition, but had a knack for creating tradition as well.

When the Tribune Company bought the Cubs from the Wrigley estate in 1981, Wrigley's place in baseball and in the city was well cemented. They maintained the hand-operated scoreboard installed by Veeck in 1937 and have proceeded cautiously in allowing advertising inside the ballpark walls. The games are still accompanied by organ music despite the existence of a sound system that could – and sometimes does – pipe in pre-recorded music. These decisions have helped ensure that Wrigley Field retains the power of nostalgia, and more than one first time visitor has remarked to me how much they can imagine it being 'just like this 50 years ago'.

Of course, the ballpark has changed over the years, and most regulars can detail the most minute changes. There have been significant structural changes, including the additions of luxury sky-boxes, electronic scoreboards (small, but nonetheless present), rows behind home plate, and the lights. Regulars can describe smaller shifts ranging from the changing arrangements of concession stands and rest rooms to alternate scorecard layouts. They know that to 'knock on wood', one only has to reach to the underside of the bench s/he is sitting on; the current fibreglass surface of said bench is only a cap over the original wood.

Because of the long history of the park, each of these changes serves to punctuate time and orient the regulars. When regulars are telling stories, often they incorporate information about how the bleacher space was different during the era from which

the story originates. This cements how long different regulars have been part of the community and positions regulars in an informal hierarchy. As an example, a regular might start a story by saying 'This was a while ago now, back when the men's room was right where that concession stand is now ...' Other regulars will interject: 'Oh, yeah, I remember that' or 'I've heard it used to be that way'. The first response establishes a regular of relatively equal authority to the story teller, while the second reaction marks a newer regular who has been around long enough to know the history but not to have lived it. A third response – an incredulous 'The bathrooms used to be up here!' – would signal a much newer regular or a fan from outside the community.

This way of using history would make it seem that Wrigley Field as a whole could be regarded as a social space, or at the very least that there must be thousands of Cubs fans who can demonstrate the same detailed memories of the ballpark. To a large extent, this may be true, but there is a particular feature of the bleachers that changes the quality of Wrigley Field memories from isolated nostalgia to community property. The bleachers do not have assigned seats. It is this quality of being able to sit wherever and with whomever one wants that adds another social dimension to the ballpark for the regulars.

The Wrigley Field Bleachers as a Social Map

The bleachers of Wrigley Field cover a boomerang-shaped space that is raked towards the playing field. Long benches follow the arc of the outfield wall with occasional aisles allowing access. This seating pattern is interrupted in two directions. In centre field, a wide aisle with a concession area splits the bleachers into an upper and lower level. Also in centre field, an entire section of seats has been replaced by shrubbery in box planters. This shrubbery, installed to provide a backdrop for hitters so they can see the ball more easily and duck high tight pitches, produces a buffer zone between left field and the rest of the bleacher crowd.

Neither left nor right fields have an upper level in the way that centre field does. This fact allows a distinction to be made between the right- and centre-field sections of the lower level of the bleachers. The point where the upper level begins, which is also where one of the bleacher entrance ramps provide access to the bleachers, is the generally acknowledged dividing line between right and centre fields.

What we see in the bleachers, then, is a seating area for 3,750 informally mapped into four quadrants by the regulars. The quadrants are left field, centre field (or right-centre field, depending on who you ask [29]), right field, and upper centre field. Each quadrant has its own regulars, although in recent years, upper centre seems to have faded as a presence in the bleacher regulars' cosmos. Regulars identify themselves by their seating area, and this identification produces a social map of the regular community.

How does this work? Let me take my own case as an example. I sit in right-centre field, and I call myself a centre-field regular. When I meet a regular I do not know, I

will introduce myself thus: 'I'm Holly from centre field'. This will generally produce one of two reactions. The first is an 'Oh! Okay', since regulars frequently talk about each other and a person might be known by name rather than by face. The second is alternative is an 'Oh, so do you sit by X?' The other regular will then name one or more people from centre field in order to place my social connections. Almost every regular knows at least one person in each of the other fields, and this getting-to-know-you ritual can begin to sound like the 'six degrees of separation' game. [30]

To unpack this a little further, 'centre field' serves in place of my surname in bleacher regular relationships. It identifies not just where I tend to sit, but also allies me with a certain social network. While I have friendships with regulars in left and right fields, it is understood that my primary loyalties and connections are with the other centre-field regulars. I am expected to be relatively up on centre-field gossip, to have a rough idea of what sorts of things are going on in the lives of centre-field regulars, to know the likes and dislikes and internal connections and animosities that define life in centre field. By a certain way of reckoning things, if the bleacher regulars are my kin group, then centre field is my immediate family.

The tricky part in all this is that I knew only one regular before I sat in the bleachers. My membership in the bleacher regular community is not a product of relationships I formed outside the context of Wrigley Field. Instead, the relationships I have with regulars outside the ballpark are all based on the relationships formed during ballgames. Those relationships grew out of *proximity* as much as anything else; my social connection to the rest of the centre-field regulars grew out of a spatial seating arrangement.

This is where the lack of assigned seats in the bleachers becomes significant. When I buy my ticket for the bleachers, I am only gaining entry to the ballpark through Gate N. The piece of bench I end up sitting on is determined by one of two things: how quickly I can get into the park; and/or whether or not someone has saved a seat for me. If I can arrive at Wrigley Field when the gates open, two hours before game time, I more or less have my choice of seats. Otherwise I am at the mercy of the seating patterns of the people who have arrived before me.

The same is true of every bleacher regular. A small percentage of regulars are able to 'arrive for gate' [31] on a consistent basis, but most are juggling other responsibilities and can only arrive early occasionally. Almost every bleacher relationship starts at some level with a desire to secure a seat on days when making gate is impossible. Or more to the point, the objective is to secure a seat *with pleasant company* when making gate is impossible. This latter motivation also applies to regulars who do arrive for gate, which makes seat-saving arrangements mutually agreeable. Otherwise, the hassle of protecting an empty seat in the bleachers would be too much to tolerate.

What this highlights is one of the more unusual characteristics of the regulars; most regulars have spent some portion of their baseball lives going to games solo. Many have friends they bring semi-regularly, but almost all are not only willing to but often do buy single tickets for games. One common theme for regulars is that the

point of going to Wrigley Field in the first instance is for the *game*, a distinction that's become increasingly important as Wrigley has become a social hot-spot in the city in the twenty-first century. I will discuss this point further later in this study. For the moment, consider the hazard of going to a sporting event by oneself: there is no guarantee that one's seat-mates will appreciate the game. For regulars who have been attending games in the bleachers back into the 1960s, getting a seat has not always been a problem. There were days, they report, when the bleacher crowd numbered in the hundreds and a person could 'count the house'. The upper deck of the grandstand was closed off most of the season in those days, so one could have the luxury of an entire bleacher bench uninhabited by another soul. Some regulars took advantage of this to work on their tans or play cards while the game went on on the field below.

Even in the current hot-ticket state of the bleachers, a single person arriving before the first pitch could find a seat somewhere. But a seat where a fan can burst out 'Now *that* was vintage Maddux!' [32] and be assured that the person sitting beside him or her would know exactly what s/he was talking about? Such a companion (or group of companions) must be discovered, and the regulars provide those groups of companions. A hard-core Cubs fan appearing in the bleachers might choose his or her seat according to a number of criteria: the angle on the pitch, the proximity to a particular player, the likelihood of scoring a home-run ball. Whatever the reason, the fan will eventually find the regulars in closest proximity to his or her seat of choice. Most likely, that discovery will come when the new fan realizes that s/he has been to x number of games, and at every one of those games, s/he has noticed the same group sitting in one particular spot. Because the bleachers offer freedom of movement, the soon-to-be regular can sit next to the regulars and begin to integrate into the group. Through the regulars in whatever field the person starts in, s/he will be made aware of other groups of regulars and may decide to sit in a different field.

This last step in the process is part of what creates the sense of different fields having different characters, adding a depth of meaning to the social map of the bleachers. Left field, for instance, has a reputation for being tremendously more organized than either centre or right fields. Centre field is stubborn and can be curmudgeonly, while right field seems to attract a more independently minded, live-and-let-live type of regular. When I identify myself as a centre-field regular to another regular, I not only reveal my social network, I am also making a statement about qualities of my personality.

Wrigley Field as Anchor

From the above discussion, we begin to get a sense of how the space of the bleachers gets folded into social relationships. Because the ties between space and people are part of a geography of relationships and seating patterns have become meaningful on an interpersonal level, we can say the regulars have appropriated Wrigley Field (or at least the bleachers). The ballpark has become a part of each regular's identity, and this

in turn gives regulars a sense of ownership. It is a *part* of each regular, and as such, it forms an anchor point for the community.

I have already mentioned that regulars spend time together outside the ballpark, and that many relationships deepen to the point where regulars attend one another's weddings and funerals, take vacations together and mind each others' children. These relationships, with very rare exceptions, share one common theme; they all *began* at Wrigley Field. Not only is Wrigley Field a part of each regular, it is a crucial element in the relationships between regulars.

A classic example of this is the friendship between centre-field regulars Judy and Colleen. Judy and Colleen met one another in 1975 in right field. Together with a few other young women around the same age, they attended hundreds of games, making a point of sitting together. They used to play cards on the bench between them while they watched the game and kept score. 'I don't know how we did it,' Colleen confessed. 'If we tried it now we'd miss plays.' Over the years, they got to know one another well, confiding in one another during slow games and rain delays. They travelled across the country to watch the Cubs play, every trip adding to the store of stories demonstrating the strength of their friendship. As they grew older and got married and had kids, their friendship deepened and today they still are best friends.

Throughout this friendship, the ballpark has figured prominently. It is not unusual to have them break out ballpark chants from an earlier era during a game, laughing as they share inside jokes. They compare levels of loyalty, Judy talking about bringing her infant daughter to a game, Colleen outdoing her by stopping by the ballpark on the way home from giving birth to one of her sons one Opening Day. While they are in daily contact throughout the year, it is clear that the continual returns to Wrigley evoke decades of memories and serve to renew the bond they share.

This is only one of hundreds of similar friendships that have blossomed between regulars and tie the community closely together. Even events that happen outside the 'friendly confines' get tied back to the ballpark by being recounted there during pre-game and between pitches. I have lost track of the number of news stories I digested by discussing them in section 147 of the bleachers, let alone how many events I have measured by how they have intertwined with my life in the bleachers. Even my relationship to the geography of the place where I did my graduate work has come to be mediated by the bleachers. When Marv, the centre-field elder, learned I was attending the University of Chicago, he told me about his experience training to be a pilot for the Navy during the Second World War. He was fresh out of high school, living in International House on the University of Chicago campus with the rest of the pilot trainees. A building called Ida Noyes Hall is situated directly across the street from International House. During the Second World War, Ida Noyes Hall was a women's dorm. My perception of that stretch of campus will forever be coloured by stories of the flirtations that happened over 60 years ago – stories I learned through years of pre-game conversations in the bleachers of Wrigley Field.

Wrigley Field is in this sense a participant in the lives of regulars, and that participation is significant. The bleachers colour every relationship in particular ways

and become part of the identities of regulars. The space is the context that makes many of the relationships possible in the first instance, and it is almost always a third party in the relationship between any two regulars. Its social quality makes it in many ways a living entity, and as such, its living rhythms are part of bleacher regular life. Knowledge of these rhythms has particular importance in community bonding, as we shall see in the next section.

The Wrigley Field Eco-System

Part of the aspect of ownership felt by the regulars is connected to the intimate knowledge they have of Wrigley Field as a living entity. The baseball season is six months long, beginning in early spring and ending in early autumn, with play-offs and the World Series running into late autumn. Regulars know the rhythms of weather, attendance, fan behaviour, insect infestation and bathroom line movement. This long familiarity with Wrigley Field and its quirks get reflected in day to day practices, which in turn inform social behaviours among regulars.

Let us begin with the weather. Wrigley Field is known for its capricious wind. In the early and late weeks of the season it blows in and cold from the north, stopping baseballs in mid-flight and causing would-be home runs to drop into outfielders' gloves. Spectators in the grandstand are forced to face into the teeth of the wind to watch the game, and it is not unusual to see people there wrapped in blankets in June. In the heat of summer, however, the wind blows out, carrying baseballs completely out of the park and pushing the warm air around rather than cooling anything. The bleachers are prime seating to take advantage of most of these weather conditions, [33] but only if a person is prepared.

A regular knows to pack shorts if it is sunny, even if it is only 50 degrees Fahrenheit outside. The scoreboard in centre field blocks the wind, and the bright concrete of the bleacher seating area intensifies the sun's heat. While television delights in showing the 'crazy bleacher fans' shirtless in April, those fans are not as insane as the announcers would have the audience believe. It can feel 15–20 degrees warmer in the bleachers than it does anywhere else in the city.

On the flip side, regulars also know to pack and wear layers. Chicago weather can change in an instant. Regulars still talk about one game in the 1990s that started hot and muggy. A cold front came through during the game, dropping the temperature dramatically. [34] Wrigley concessions stands were swamped, and reportedly every sweatshirt and jacket in the ballpark was sold. While this may be an exaggeration, I have had confirmation of the bleacher concession stands selling out all their cold-weather gear on more than one occasion and, more pertinently, I have complimented more than one regular on a nice Wrigley Field sweatshirt only to learn it was purchased on 'that one game in the early 1990s when it got so cold all of a sudden'.

The regulars carry their knowledge of Wrigley Field in their ballpark bags, usually perpetually packed with rain ponchos, sun block, towels and at least a partial change of clothes. The dimensions and appearances of these bags have changed over time,

particularly in response to security concerns after 11 September 2001. [35] Any regular can explain what a person can reasonably expect to be allowed to bring into the ballpark and what a person might need on a given day at the ballpark. This certainty also can translate into superstition: if a regular forgets to pack rain gear on a day that rain is threatened in the forecast, it will rain. In this sense, regulars do more than simply own the space of the ballpark, they own the weather that affects it as well.

The weather does more than dictate what regulars bring with them into the stands, however. It also is a means of estimating the temperament of the crowd at the ballpark. While certain match-ups also affect the emotional intensity of the crowd, [36] cold weather tends to dampen the exuberance. In contrast, an unexpectedly warm day creates large 'walk up' crowds ready to celebrate the weather – and anything else. The ambience on these days can quickly become carnivalesque and a large portion of the crowd can be expected to be ignoring the game.

The habit of ignoring the games on the part of many fans at Wrigley has become an issue in the rivalry with the cross-town White Sox, mapping iconically onto the city's race and class lines. The 'typical' Cubs fan is portrayed as a cell-phone-wielding, Mai Tai-drinking yuppie, ignorant of baseball and only interested in a good time. This reflects the local bias that Chicago's North Side is predominantly populated by white professionals. In contrast, Sox fans are stereotyped as gun-toting hooligans, spoiling for fights, playing into assumptions about the working-class minority neighbourhoods of the South Side. While regulars might share the disdain of the South Siders for the more yuppified Wrigley fans, their critique has a different tenor than the play towards city biases. I will talk more about the yuppies in a later section, but it is worth noting that the kind of social mapping that I have been describing is not exclusive to the Wrigley Field bleachers. In fact, a study of North Side vs. South Side stereotypes and why they persist would be fascinating, but is outside the scope of this essay.

To return to the bleachers, knowing crowd behaviours translates into a typology of Wrigley crowds, an awareness that the people within the space change how the space is experienced. Friday-afternoon games, for instance, are known for being businessmen's specials. The Chicago tradition of offering half-day Fridays during the summer allows people to go to an afternoon game after work. The Cubs cater to this after-work crowd by starting games an hour later than the traditional 1.20 p.m. The crowd on Fridays, as a consequence, tends to be 'blowing off steam' from the work week. Men in loosened ties and shirt sleeves pepper the bleachers with stacks of plastic beer cups in their hands. Well-dressed women in high heels mingle with them, and the game often feels secondary to the *scene*. It is not uncommon to hear one of these obviously post-work fans declaim: 'I went to the beer garden, and a ballgame broke out!'

In contrast to the Friday 2.20 games are the traditional Wednesday 1.20 games. The Wednesday day crowd [38] tends to be more sedate, a mix of retirees, families on vacation and dedicated fans. Different regulars have different crowd preferences, but the typology of crowds becomes a shorthand for the 'feel' of the ballpark. An unusually rowdy Wednesday crowd will draw remarks for feeling 'like a Friday crowd', for example.

These kinds of knowledge, incorporating all the different conditions in which a regular finds Wrigley Field, are intimately tied to the space of Wrigley Field and become incorporated into the social lives of regulars. The regulars use their knowledge of the rhythms of the park to affirm their relationships to one another and the connections they share. In 1943, Margaret Mead decoded the American tendency to ask a new acquaintance about their home town. She explained 'this home town business' as a symbolic exchange, a way for an American to ascertain 'Are you the same kind of person I am?' [39] We can see the same kind of symbolism when a bleacher regular waves a bee away from his or her food and remarks 'It must be September'. The correct response, 'Yeah, the bees are out', confirms that the people speaking are both regulars, both people with sufficient history to know there are always bees in the ballpark in September and rarely before.

Social Space and Social Distinctions

Not only do the regulars use their knowledge to signal their connection to one another, they also use it to mark their distinction from other fans. I have already described the 'Friday crowd', and my description of that crowd matches the already-mentioned South Sider critique of 'yuppie' fans at Wrigley. Regulars are at least equally critical of the yuppies because yuppies do not respect the game, but more importantly, they do not respect *Wrigley Field*. The regulars, with their deep personal knowledge of and investment in the ballpark, are openly offended when a fan comes for the 'party'. The following excerpt from a commentary on ign.com captures perfectly the spirit of the fans the regulars at best tolerate:

Besides being the best party in town, the bleachers clearly contain a different type of baseball fan. You won't find any families here. No Dads and sons taking in a game. In fact, I've been to at least fifty games in the bleachers, and can't remember ever seeing a kid under 12. That aside, what is the difference between a fan in the bleachers and a fan in the stands?

A: I think the guy or girl in the bleachers is a different kind of person.

Q: Someone completely devoid of moral fiber?

A: I wouldn't go that far. But, it's a fan that's here strictly to have fun. To enjoy the people around them. It's all about having fun.

Q: Can't you have fun sitting in the stands?

A: Not this kind of fun.

Q: What's the difference?

A: It's people your age. And knowing you'd have to try like hell to offend anyone. It's the tolerant atmosphere. That's a lot of it.

Q: Right, right.

A: It's the same people who went to frat parties on Thursday nights instead of going to the library. [40]

To regulars, this attitude completely misunderstands the bleachers. It in fact *does* reflect a lack of moral fibre, as far as regulars are concerned. Ironically, the idea of 'enjoy[ing] the people around them' is also part of the bleacher regulars' logic, as

I have demonstrated here. However, the self-involved quality of a fan that has not seen a family or a kid under 12 in the bleachers when both are frequently present would be pointed to as a signal difference between the yuppie group and the regulars.

The difference between the perceptions of the bleachers for regulars and the yuppie crowd strengthens the case for Wrigley as a social space. It can be many things for many people, and part of the reason regulars are so offended by the party crowd is exactly that. The fan who wrote the above description of Wrigley Field does not mentally occupy the same Wrigley Field as the regulars. The space for him is tied more to a nostalgia for an earlier biographical era (college, for example), and he and his peer group bring a shared history *to* the ballpark, rather than finding it there.

Despite the distaste the regulars express for this party crowd, it is likely that a generational renewal of the regulars will come from this group. A large percentage of the yuppie set will move on in their lives and consign Wrigley Field to their memories of youth. Some, however, will discover something about Wrigley that speaks to them and will start coming to the ballpark singly rather than in groups. They will learn the nuances of the game of baseball and will find themselves sitting with the regulars, learning the stories and the history that will establish them as legitimate members of the regular community. In the interim, however, they remain an irritating and often offensive presence to the regulars. They impose upon the regulars a need to set themselves apart from other bleacher fans, to be distinct, and in this way, their presence may well have strengthened the sense of community that bleacher regulars feel. [41]

Conclusion

We have seen throughout this essay how the bleacher regulars have a particular sort of ownership relationship to Wrigley Field. I have drawn from Marx's idea of objective human relationships and Lefebvre's definition of social space to frame an understanding of how the regulars relate to the space in which they have constructed a feeling of community. What is crucial to understand here is that this *feeling* is both real and anchored to a particular version of Wrigley Field. It is precisely this *feeling*, this *consciousness* of community, that makes the regulars describe their community as 'true' and 'real'.

How does the social space of Wrigley Field help constitute this feeling? In the first instance, it is available to be constructed as social space by features of its geography and history. Because the bleacher regulars are set apart from the rest of the fans, and because they are allowed to sit where they choose within the bleachers, they are able to engage in practices that help construct community.

What are those practices? I have described several. There are simple practices, such as packing a bag for baseball games, that become standardized through experience and in turn become a shared experience. There is the art of story-telling, which invokes history as a way of establishing legitimacy within the community. There are the habits of social mapping, a concretely realized version of the whim expressed by Walter Benjamin: 'I have long, indeed for years, played with the idea of setting out

the sphere of life – bios – graphically on a map.’ [42] Tied to this is the incorporation of Wrigley Field into biography, both personal and interpersonal. The relative permanence of Wrigley Field has made it a stable point of reference, a place to return to in order to mark the changing of the seasons and the years and to renew social ties. Its rhythms and cycles make it a predictable force, a knowable entity in the lives of regulars, and regulars use their shared knowledge to affirm their sense of community with one another.

The bleacher regulars *own* Wrigley Field, not in a legal sense, but in the sense of being intimately connected to it. They have appropriated it and made its space their own. It is a crucial component of their community, bringing them together and marking their commonality. In these ways, the creation and maintenance of social space is intimately connected to establishing ‘real’ communities. The ties that hold groups together need an environment in which they can form, and it behoves us to discover the sorts of spaces that allow for human appropriation. Among our questions in studying community should be ‘What is this community’s Wrigley Field? What space do they own?’ Such questions will help us see how the community in question is holding itself together and opens space for further inquiry.

Notes

- [1] On 29 April 1983, then Cubs manager Lee Elia unleashed a now infamous tirade against Cubs fans at a press conference. At the time the Cubs were 5–14, and the fans were vocal in their disapproval. Elia’s obscenity-laced rant included the following comments: ‘They’re really, really behind you around here . . . my f*ckin’ ass. What the f*ck am I supposed to do, go out there and let my f*ckin’ players get destroyed every day and be quiet about it? For the f*ckin’ nickel-dime people who turn up? The motherf*ckers don’t even work. That’s why they’re out at the f*ckin’ game. They oughta go out and get a f*ckin’ job and find out what it’s like to go out and earn a f*ckin’ living. Eighty-five percent of the f*ckin’ world is working. The other 15 percent come out here. A f*ckin’ playground for the cocks*ckers. Rip them motherf*ckers. Rip them f*ckin’ cocks*ckers like the f*ckin’ players. we got guys bustin’ their f*ckin’ ass, and them f*ckin’ people boo.’ Web Circle Design Services, ‘Baseball Quote of the Day’, online at <http://quote.webcircle.com/cgi-bin/features.cgi?idFeature=4>, accessed November 2004. Within days of this tirade, bleacher regulars were wearing buttons to games that read ‘Working Cubs fan’.
- [2] Interview, 30 Sept. 2004.
- [3] Anthony P. Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1985), p.13.
- [4] Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1983), p.76.
- [5] George W. Bush, ‘A Plan for Promoting an Era of Ownership’, online at <http://www.georgewbush.com/Agenda/Chapter.aspx?ID=3>, 2004. Accessed October 2004.
- [6] Cato Institute, ‘Ownership Society’, online at http://www.cato.org/special/ownership_society/philosophy.html, 2003. Accessed September 2004.
- [7] One good example of this comes from the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), which emphasizes the idea of community ownership of reform efforts: ‘the National Elementary school Networks(NESN), . . . building on the work of both [the Center for Collaborative Education] and the Coalition of Essential Schools, . . . aims to shift ownership of school reform efforts to school communities.’ CES, ‘Elementary School Networks for Change’,

- online at http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/24#sidebar1, 2002. Accessed November 2004.
- [8] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry in the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p.32.
 - [9] I am deeply indebted to both the 2004 teaching staff and students of the course 'Self, Culture and Society' for pushing my thinking on this point.
 - [10] Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, p.32.
 - [11] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (ed. R.C. Tucker), *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd edn (New York: Norton Books, 1978), p.87.
 - [12] There is also a collector market for ticket stubs from certain games, and various Wrigleyville restaurants and bars offer free food or drink in exchange for a ticket stub from the game. As it happens, most bleacher regulars will not participate in this 'used ticket' economy. Regulars routinely save ticket stubs, and the disposition of tickets – used or unused – is a topic for another essay.
 - [13] Marx and Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p.88.
 - [14] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), p.73.
 - [15] Ibid., p.95.
 - [16] William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943).
 - [17] John C. Rude, 'The Birth of a Nation in Cyberspace', *The Humanist*, 56, 2; David Holmes (ed.), *Virtual Politics: Identity and Community in Cyberspace* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997); Randy Stoecker, 'Cyberspace vs. Face to Face: Community Organizing in the New Millennium', paper presented on COMM-ORG: The On-Line Conference on Community Organizing and Development, online at <http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/papers.htm>, accessed October 2004.
 - [18] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp.116–17.
 - [19] The Department of Motor Vehicles in any large American city of your choice comes to mind for a 'lining up without community' experience.
 - [20] Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox, was built in 1912.
 - [21] Lights were installed at Wrigley in 1988. The first night game was attempted on 8 August 1988, but was rained out after three and a half innings. The first official night game was 9 August 1988.
 - [22] Interview, 13 Aug. 2004.
 - [23] Bill Veeck and Edward Linn, *Veeck as in Wreck* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp.11–22.
 - [24] Peter Golenbock, *Wrigleyville: A Magical History Tour of the Chicago Cubs* (New York, St Martin's Press, 1996), p.267. The true extent of P.K. Wrigley's marketing genius is evident by exploring the Wrigley Company website's 'About Us' section, http://www.wrigley.com/wrigley/about/about_story.asp. The link for 1944 describes how Wrigley's gum was removed from civilian circulation in favour of dedicating gum manufacturing to the support of the troops. Wrigley continued to market to its Wrigley's gum-deprived consumers by asking civilians to remember the Wrigley wrapper.
 - [25] Golenbock, *Wrigleyville*, p.268.
 - [26] Ibid.
 - [27] Ibid.
 - [28] The most recent round of negotiations lasted two years and concluded in February 2004. See <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2004/baseball/mlb/02/11/bc.bbn.cubs.nightgames.ap>.
 - [29] I routinely refer to the section where I sit as centre field, hence the preference for that term throughout this piece. 'Right centre' is a more accurate description, but it also marks a regular who has been sitting in the bleachers long enough to have sat in straight-away centre (that

section of the bleachers is now blocked off and has been since 1967). An occasional regular refers to upper centre as 'centre field' and uses 'right centre' to distinguish the two sections, but this is relatively rare.

- [30] The six degrees of separation game emerges from the 'small world phenomenon' described by Stanley Milgram. From Wikipedia: 'The small world phenomenon is the theory that everyone in the world can be reached through a short chain of social acquaintances. The concept gave rise to the famous phrase six degrees of separation after a 1967 small world experiment by psychologist Stanley Milgram which found that two random US citizens were connected by an average of six acquaintances.' Wikipedia, 'Small World Experiment', online at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Small_world_experiment, accessed November 2004. The game is to name a famous person and say who you know who knows someone else who knows someone else who has met/interacted with the famous person.
- [31] This is bleacher regular shorthand for arriving at the ballpark before the gates open. The expression gets formulated a couple of different ways: either 'I made it for gate' or 'I made gate.'
- [32] Vintage Maddux, of course, is a play on which the pitcher induces the batter to bounce the ball back to the mound and tosses him out effortlessly at first.
- [33] The exceptions are rainy days or extremely hot days. Under either set of conditions, the lack of overhead shelter or shade in the bleachers becomes a liability.
- [34] The amount of the drop varies with the telling, although 30–40 degrees seems to be a popular figure.
- [35] The baseball season was suspended for about a week after the attacks of 11 September. When play resumed, fans were rigorously screened and backpacks were completely banned from Wrigley Field. For a time, regulars were bringing their ballpark gear in plastic grocery sacks. Gradually, clear plastic backpacks were deemed acceptable, and finally small backpacks were allowed in again, although all bags are now subject to search. The search process has become fairly ritualized among regulars, and most of them will perform the requisite opening of zipper pouches and unfurling of blankets without prompting before entering the ballpark.
- [36] Most notably, games against the Cardinals and the White Sox will be high-energy affairs, regardless of any other factors. Games against Milwaukee have their own special character, and are notorious for being very long even if there is no reason they should be, which tempers the otherwise high energy of the rivalry. Games against teams such as Montreal or Tampa Bay, especially on weekday afternoons, can often feel flat if there is nothing in the game itself to keep the crowd engaged.
- [37] Before the advent of lights and after WGN television began including the Cubs in their programming line-up, every game at Wrigley started at 1.20 p.m. This was a change from the tradition of 1.30 starts, which was so much the norm in 1945 that the marquee was painted to read 'Games start one thirty'. Once lights were added to Wrigley, the threat of a game being called on account of darkness was eliminated, giving the Cubs more flexibility with start times. So why not a night game on Friday? City regulations prevent Cubs night games on Friday or Saturday nights.
- [38] A necessary clarification: in 2004, the Cubs changed several of the Wednesday games to night games. In previous years, there tended to be only two Wednesday-night games a year. Night crowds are distinctly different from day crowds.
- [39] Margaret Mead, *And Keep Your Powder Dry* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), p.18.
- [40] Todd Carr, 'Bleacher Bums: The Mystique of the Wrigley Field Bleachers', online at <http://formen.ign.com/news/10222.html>, 1999. Accessed September 2004.
- [41] This ties into an 'us vs. them' logic that is commonly identified as a unifying force for different groups. I address this dynamic more thoroughly in another part of my ethnography.
- [42] Walter Benjamin, *Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), p.5.