Malcolm, Dominic. "Cricket in America." *Globalizing Cricket: Englishness, Empire and Identity*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. 63–76. Globalizing Sport Studies. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781849665605.ch-004>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 07:58 UTC.

Copyright © Dominic Malcolm 2013. You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

Cricket in America

If cricket and Englishness could be said to constitute a pleonasm, within the popular imagination cricket and America are largely viewed in oxymoronic terms. Marqusee's *Anyone but England: Cricket and the National Malaise* begins with an autobiographical statement about his 'discovery' of the game and the way it contrasted with his upbringing in America. He wrote:

Everything that English people take to be 'American' – brashness, impatience, informality, innovation, vulgarity, rapaciousness and unashamed commercialism – is antithetical to what they take to be 'cricket'. For the English it is a point of pride that Americans cannot understand cricket ... As for the Americans, everything they took, until recently, to be 'English' – tradition, politeness, deference, gentle obscurantism – seems to be epitomised in 'cricket'. (Marqusee 1998: 15)

While the American case underscores the idea that cricket is the quintessential English game, it also provides an excellent example of diffusion 'failure'. It enables us to see the unevenness of the role of cricket in the process of colonization and how the development of cricket was influenced by the heterogeneity of British emigrants. It also raises questions about the applicability of describing cricket as the imperial game.

In exploring this argument, it has been necessary to limit the scope of the empirical discussion. It has not been possible to address the role of influential institutions such as schools and universities (see for example Melville 1992) or the popularity of cricket in a wider range of geographical areas (see for example Lockley 2003, or Redmond 1992 in relation to Canada). But this does not detract from the central point; while cricket was essentially taken to America as part of the cultural baggage of English/British emigrants it was in America, perhaps before anywhere else, that ideological beliefs about the game were subject to a degree of scrutiny and, in many cases, that scrutiny led to outright rejection.

Theories of cricket's demise in America

Sports historians largely agree that, outside of the Native American game of lacrosse, cricket was 'the first major team sport and the first organized team sport in America' (Riess 1991: 33). Records of cricket played in America date back to 1709. An advertisement for cricket players was placed in a New York

newspaper in 1739 and the first recorded match took place in Manhattan in 1751 (Majumdar and Brown, 2007). However, the period between 1840 and 1860 is generally regarded as a 'golden age'. Centred on New York, and in particular the St George's Cricket Club (established in 1840), the game 'showed considerable strength on the eve of the sectional conflict' (Kirsch 1989: 24). At this time cricket received extensive and largely supportive press coverage and was played in an estimated 125 cities in 22 states. Approximately 500 formally constituted clubs existed and, 'it is possible that there were 10,000 men and boys in the United States in 1860 who had played the game actively for at least one season' (Kirsch 1989: 42–43). After the Civil War, however, the popularity of cricket declined markedly. Baseball, whose first club, the Knickerbocker Base Ball Club, was founded in 1842 and produced its first set of written rules in 1845, was similarly centred on New York and superseded cricket both in terms of participant involvement and spectatorship by the early 1860s (Adelman 1990: 114).

The initial analyses of cricket in America were essentially adjuncts to histories of baseball (for example Seymour 1960; Voigt 1966; Tyrrell 1979). More recently historians such as Adelman (1990), Kirsch (1989) and Melville (1998) have provided analyses which more centrally focus on cricket for, as Melville notes, it is now recognized that an explanation of the demise of cricket is 'critical to the very validity of any theory that purports to explain the urban origin and subsequent development of American team sports' (1998: 2). Most recently Majumdar and Brown have revisited what they describe as the 'old dichotomy "Why Baseball, Why Cricket"' (2007: 139). Two explanations for the demise of cricket in the United States dominate such accounts: the structure of cricket and its incompatibility with American 'national character', and the post-Civil War rise of American nationalism. Both themes, to a greater or lesser extent, are predicated on the belief that baseball essentially replaced cricket. Scrutinizing these two arguments thus allows us to say something more about the (un)successful global diffusion of cricket.

Whilst the chronology of events indicates that the rise of baseball and demise of cricket were co-relative, the evidence for a causal connection is weak. As Waddington and Roderick (1996) have argued with regard to theories of the diffusion of soccer, one of the major problems with arguments that link the demise of one sport with the existence of another is that they are predicated on an implicit and unexamined assumption about 'sports space'. Addressing 'American Exceptionalism' to the global popularity of soccer (see Mason 1986; Markovits 1990; see also Markovits and Hellerman 2001), Waddington and Roderick note that such explanations are based on the 'assumption that in each society there is a limited amount of "space" for sports, and that once this "space" has been "filled" by one sport, there is no room for other sports' (1996: 45). However, when these arguments are cross-referenced, it becomes apparent that 'sports space' is either arbitrarily or teleologically assigned.

For instance, Waddington and Roderick note that just one sport (Australian rules football) is deemed sufficient to fill the 'sports space' of Melbourne in Australia and thus crowd out soccer, whilst in other places many more sports (as many as four in Canada) may be required. Ultimately the 'space' for sports in any given society appears to be determined by the number of sports which ultimately become culturally significant. We cannot, therefore, conclude that just because one sport became popular (i.e. baseball), another (cricket) would necessarily decline in popularity, for in instances where both remained popular, this could/would merely be taken as evidence of a larger 'sports space'. Moreover, if baseball and cricket could not co-exist as summer sports, why was there sufficient room within the 'winter sports space' for both US football and basketball? Given the timing of events it is inconceivable to think that the rise of baseball and the decline of cricket were not in some way related, but a more adequate way of conceptualizing this problem is to see the two sports – or rather, the participants in and advocates of the two sports – as subject to the same general social processes.

The notion of sports space is integral to the argument that the decline of cricket stemmed from the incompatibility of the game's structure and American national character. This theory asserts that various aspects of cricket – its slow pace, long duration, the inequality of opportunity for players to participate in meaningful ways – were at odds with an American national character forged by the experiences of a frontier nation and latterly moulded in the rapidly industrializing and urbanizing America of the late nineteenth century (Tyrell 1979: 207). For instance, Kirsch (1989) develops the idea that baseball's strength was its 'modern' character (relative to cricket), whilst Adelman (1986: 113–14) argues that baseball was structured to generate relatively higher levels of 'action' and 'exciting drama'. Thus many believe, as Melville concludes, that 'cricket failed in America because it never established an American character' (1998: 149).

Such essentialist arguments are problematic in two key ways. First, as we saw in Chapter 2, 'national character' is an artifice, constructed by particular people, with particular interests, situated in a particular social context. As Elias shows us, human personality structures do change over time. Moreover, such changes are more marked in periods of more pronounced social structural change. But even though post-Civil War America was clearly a society undergoing considerable social change, the idea that national characteristics can change so radically and so rapidly as would need to be the case to explain cricket's fall from prominence in the late 1850s, is simply not credible. The popularity of sports changes rather more quickly than can a national psyche (Guttmann 1996) although perhaps just as quickly as an ideological narrative can change. Second, one can invariably find contradictory evidence to such essentialist arguments. For instance, in the late 1850s, a series of conventions of the National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP) approved the dismissal of batters who continually refused to swing

at 'good balls' (thus making games shorter), but also (and more contentiously) agreed that catching the ball on its first bounce (on 'the fly') should not lead to the dismissal of the batter (Kirsch 1989: 63–68). Not only did outlawing catches on the fly make games longer, but moved the rules of baseball closer rather than further away from cricket. Moreover, if we undertake a cross-cultural comparison it is difficult to accept that cricket was sufficiently flexible to fit the 'national' character of the Indian, black-Caribbean, Australian, South African and New Zealand members of empire, but not Americans. The diffusion of baseball to Britain further counters the notion that the game's structure necessarily provided players and spectators with more excitement for the reaction of the English media to the game in the 1880s was to describe baseball as 'rounders made wearisome' (Bloyce 1997: 209). Consequently Kaufman and Patterson (2005: 90) are correct to note that, perceptions of the 'essence' of sports 'are as much an effect of the differential status of sports as a cause thereof'.

The 'nationalism thesis' is both the more popular and more convincing explanation of the decline of cricket in America (Melville 1998: 147), but still one that requires refinement. The first weakness of this thesis is the idea that the rise of American nationalism had a negative effect on the popularity of cricket in the 1850s and 1860s, for at that time cricket rather than baseball was the 'established international sport' (Melville 1998: 43). In other countries, e.g. Australia, playing cricket was a very successful vehicle for uniting the people and generating a sense of national difference. Secondly theses which argue that disassociation from English games was a way of asserting American independence (see e.g. Majumdar and Brown, 2007) are undermined by incompatible timings. It was Harold Seymour, in his 1960 study of baseball who initially proposed the thesis that Americans rejected cricket and chose baseball because the latter was a home-grown game, but Tyrrell (1979: 208) notes that it was not until the 1890s that the American origins of baseball became widely accepted. Indeed, the establishment in 1907 of the Mills Commission, from which the Abner Doubleday creation myth emerged, was in part a response to an audience's assertion that the roots of baseball lay in rounders and rather indicates that a consensus was reached some time after cricket's popularity began to wane. It must therefore be recognized that the early claims made for baseball as the national game were 'essentially propagandistic exercises' (Tyrrell 1979: 208) rather than expressions of popular will. Parallels with the 're-invention' of cricket as the embodiment of Englishness in the nineteenth century are clear to see.

It is, of course, no accident that the rise of American team sports, and baseball in particular, 'coincided with an intense wave of political and cultural nationalism' (Kirsch 1989: 91); these were, after all, key contextual factors in the development of cricket into England's national game. But the American example allows us to refine our conceptualization of the link between

nationalism and the differential popularity of sports forms by recognizing the distinction and potential for conflict between different forms of nationalism. The rapid influx of European emigration from the 1850s increased the diversity of *ethnic* nationalisms in America and thus helped to undermine or dilute the 'Englishness' of the United States. Many of these emigrants would neither have had a tradition of playing cricket nor much desire to participate in something so quintessentially English. But, particularly post-Civil War, such ethnic nationalisms were effectively challenged and suppressed as political leaders fostered ideas of *civic* nationalism in order to ensure the state's political continuity. Different ethnic nationalisms proved differentially resistant and, as discussed later, Englishness was one of the more powerful ethnic nationalisms in America at this time. Thus it was not simply the rise of one form of nationalism which explains the demise of cricket, but the interdependence of different forms and types of nationalism which provides a more compelling explanation.

In concluding this section on theories of the demise of cricket in America, it should be noted that previous analyses have fundamentally misunderstood the position of the game in England in the mid-nineteenth century. Melville (1998: 41) and Adelman (1990) argue that a key factor in cricket's demise was that it was too 'mature' a sports form, and too fixed in tradition to be adapted, or 'Americanized'. Kirsch similarly refers to cricket's 'time-honored rules and traditions' (1989: 103). These arguments are fundamentally flawed for, as discussed in Chapter 2, the nineteenth century was a period of considerable flux in English cricket, dominated by debates about the legality of round and over arm bowling techniques. These debates exposed weaknesses in the MCC's authority over the game and the 1884 revision of the laws of the game, which 'fill(ed) gaps previously left to the imagination' (Rait Kerr 1950: 42), was a significant point in the reassertion of the club's dominance. Crucially these rule changes were one manifestation of class tension in the game and wider society at this time. The dynamics of nineteenth century English cricket have largely been overlooked by American historians of the game (for example Adelman 1990; Lewis 1987).

Thus, counter to the situation portrayed by American historians, cricket in the mid-nineteenth century was not fully 'modern' but retained the characteristics of a folk game. What Rait Kerr refers to as 'gaps ... left to the imagination' were, in fact, local variations to rules and customs. One example is the practice whereby fielders would scramble to get the ball at the end of the game. Brodribb (1953: 177) claims that this was abolished after an incident in the 1848 England vs Kent match though it appears that a cricketer called George Pinder broke his collar bone thirty years later, during a similar scramble for the ball at the end of the 1878 Yorkshire v Nottinghamshire match at Sheffield. These local variations included physical contact between batters and fielders (laws about obstruction), the spatial separation of players and spectators through the use

of boundaries (see Chapter 1), but more centrally the way in which the ball was propelled to the batter (i.e. the debate over round and over arm bowling discussed in Chapter 2). Whilst some clubs in some parts of Britain will have followed the lead of the MCC, it needs to be recognized that there was not simply one cricket form in England at this time. Rather, game forms varied according to social class and geography and if cricket laws varied, then it is highly plausible to think that so too did cricketing customs, traditions and playing cultures.

The arrival of cricket in America

With the greater physical and psychological distance from London, it seems reasonable to suggest that such variations would have been more marked in America. Indeed existing historical analyses of cricket in America provide empirical support for this thesis of co-existing game forms based around class (as well as regional) difference. From the 1840s to the 1870s, the leading cricket club in America was the St Georges Cricket Club (SGCC) in New York. Formed by 'prosperous middle class' Anglo-Americans (Adelman 1990: 117), the naming of the club after the patron saint of England indicates that ethnic group identity was part of the founders' motivations. Indeed, Lewis notes that the English immigrants in ante-bellum New York were 'a group apart', remarkable for their 'clannishness' (Lewis 1987: 321). However, Melville considers that the formation of the SGCC 'may have been as much an attempt to maintain class distinctions common in English cricket at this period as it was to assert national identity' (1998: 11–12) and, in this regard, it is significant that almost from its beginnings the SGCC employed professionals and imitated the status emphasizing mechanisms widely employed in the upper circles of English cricket (and in the Caribbean) at this time.

However, whilst cricket's elite may have been drawn from the prosperous middle class, 'the majority of participants were emigrants from the emerging industrial centres of northern England; as such the sport was "closely bound up with steak and ale", the working class and gambling' (Adelman 1990: 101). Similarly both Kirsch and Riess note that the first Philadelphia cricketers were of 'humble origin' (Kirsch 1989: 23; see also Riess 1991: 21). Indicating that varied cricketing customs and styles of play existed within this working-class group, Kirsch further notes that Northern and Southern English immigrants 'sometimes resorted to "hard blows" to resolve their differences' (1989: 23). The abandonment of the 1846 contest between Americans and Canadians – the first international cricket match – provides a telling example. During the match, 'Samuel Dudson, a "sturdy, strong and rough" Philadelphia artisan was knocked down by a Canadian batsman while attempting to catch an opponent's fly ball' (Kirsch 1989: 35). Dudson reacted aggressively, at which point the

Canadians refused to finish the match. This incident presumably stemmed from the non-standardized character of cricket's laws at this time and the variety of playing customs and traditions of the game which existed both in England and to a more marked extent in America at this time. (Yates (1982: 7) claims that the custom of 'charging down', which was banned in the 1787 Laws, was common in the United States and other colonies until at least 1846. Catching on 'the fly' has only ever been permissible in baseball and does not feature in any of the known codes of rules for cricket.) American cricket historians have largely failed to recognize that the game of cricket being diffused to America was not of a unitary nature. Rather there seems to have been different social groups simultaneously introducing different varieties and styles of cricket to America at this time.

Central to understanding the diffusion of what therefore might be described as a polymorphous game is the specific nature of the interdependent relationships between Anglo-Americans at this time, characterized by a combination of unity (based on their common ethnicity) and division (based on English regionalism and social class). Middle- and working-class English immigrants appear to have been tightly bonded (Lewis 1987: 321) but this relationship can perhaps most accurately be described as one of 'harmonious inequality' (van Stolk and Wouters 1987). The respective status positions were both underpinned by tradition, and reinforced by the context in which the English immigrants were an 'outsider' ethnic group. Where English immigrants were low in number (e.g. New Jersey), cricket clubs were formed which crossed class barriers and forged ethnic identity (Benning 1983: 71). Where numbers permitted (for example New York), middle-class immigrants formed their own clubs and asserted their relative status by employing professionals and vetting club membership. The most common pattern was for clubs to be class based; 'very few clubs had evenly mixed memberships' (Adelman 1989: 152).

How were these ethnic/class interdependencies manifest in the diffusion of the game? Within New York the Anglo-American prosperous middle class which introduced cricket continued to dominate the game (Kirsch 1989: 123). While between the 1840s and 1860s the SGCC became increasingly class exclusive (Adelman 1990: 117), the establishment of the Union Star of Brooklyn cricket club indicates that the English middle classes were probably not united in this approach (Melville 1998: 18–19). At this time relatively few 'American' cricket clubs were formed in the city. The majority of cricketers in the metropolitan area remained English and politically the game was dominated by the social elite of the SGCC. By contrast, cricket in Philadelphia exhibited a rather different pattern. Introduced in the 1830s and 1840s by working-class English immigrants, the game was subsequently adopted by the American upper middle classes such that by the 1860s 80 per cent of Philadelphia's cricketers were white-collar workers and only 10 per cent were English

(Kirsch 1989: 134; see also Melville 1998: 28). Newark exhibited a different pattern again, with a relatively even split between Anglo-American and American players. In marked contrast to Philadelphia nearly 85 per cent of all cricketers in Newark were working class. Thus, the different English groups who were responsible for introducing cricket to different areas of America, experienced different degrees of 'success'. To understand this dynamic it is necessary to examine not simply the actions of the change agents, nor those of the receivers, but their interdependence.

Like the 'colonial' elites in other territories, the Anglo-American elite was held to have a high cultural status, as evidenced through the media's support for the character building properties of sports such as cricket, and 'late nineteenth century upper-class America's tendency to look "to the British Isles for standards of culture and genteel behaviour"' (Jable 1991: 218). Whilst Anglo-Americans were well-integrated into and had good and stable access to the broader American economy, they were by no means dominant. Their position was markedly different to that of the elites in the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent, which actively promoted the integration of colonized people through cricket to enable imperial expansion and consolidate dominance. Conversely, for this group of Anglo-Americans the cultural assimilation through cricket of those who saw themselves as more unequivocally American was unlikely to increase their influence in economic or political spheres. In short, Anglo-Americans simply did not have much to gain from proselytization. Consequently, members of the SGCC expressed little interest in spreading the game to other groups, or getting involved in the national governance of the sport. However, to retain their cultural status it was important for the Anglo-Americans to be seen to uphold the standards and traditions of cricket from which they derived their social prestige. Rather than adapt the game's customs to be more in line with the local culture, this group actively sought to replicate the status-emphasizing and exclusionary practices used by the elite cricketing groups in England, and thus contemporary critics blamed the exclusionary behaviour of Anglo-American cricketers in New York for stifling the development of the sport in the United States. Contrary to Adelman clubs were not 'formed to promote the sport' (1990: 111), and by resisting (or at least not cooperating with) the establishment of leagues and regular competitions, members of the SGCC were merely replicating the actions and aloofness of their counterparts who ran the MCC. Moreover, it was their association with the MCC which formed the basis of their cultural capital. Whilst others were not formally or explicitly excluded from entering the sport, any attempt by the upper-middle-class Anglo-American elite to incorporate other social classes and groups would have weakened the cultural basis of their social status.

This entrenched position was consolidated by the interdependence of Anglo-Americans and elite groups 'back home'. In part because of the relative

independence and economic power of the United States, but more particularly because of the impact of the frontier, Americans were insulated from the kind of questioning of the degeneration of physical stock which stemmed from ideas about environmental determinism. As Mennell notes, there existed a common perception that American civilization was unique, or at least fundamentally different from Europe, with 'optimism and activism towards collective social life and the general good' the dominant theme (2001: 230). Quite simply, the New World did not measure itself solely by the criteria and standards of the Old World. They were able, in a way that would only come to other colonies much later, to reject, revise and refute the ideologies that underpinned cricket's role in the process of colonization. When contrasted with the colonial elites in, say, the Antipodes, we can see how this ethos was empowering for the Anglo-American upper-middle-class cricketers of New York. For Australians, who 'have long had a sense of cultural inferiority to England' (Kaufman and Patterson 2005: 99), "progress" was measured essentially in British terms against British standards maintained by British institutions' (Stoddart 1979: 126). Cricket in the Caribbean was a similar case in point. But British and Anglo-American interdependence was very different. Consequently there was little external pressure on the Anglo-Americans to drop their exclusionary stance.

In contrast to this, English working-class immigrants did not have such cultural standing and therefore probably neither wished, nor had the capacity (in terms of social power) to act in exclusionary ways. Interestingly, not only did Americans take to the game in greater numbers where it was played by the English working classes, but both the American middle *and* working classes responded positively to the game diffused by the English working class. The diffusion of cricket to the Newark area might be described as homophilous (where change agents and adopters of a cultural form share comparable social positions. See Kaufman and Patterson 2005). There seems to have been a comparatively open reception to the game amongst the working classes, indicative of relatively low levels of ethnic or class competition. In Philadelphia however we see a heterophilous diffusion process (where change agents and adopters are socially unequal). Here upper-middle-class Americans assumed control of the game and came to dominate the Anglo-American working classes who had introduced it. Within the relatively rigidly class stratified community of Philadelphia (Melville 1998: 122) there was cultural capital to be gained from participation in the sport and, in particular, the link between cricket and the public schools of England 'may have impressed the social elite' (Tyrrell 1979: 212). To augment this, they, like the Anglo-American cricketers in New York, adopted much of the refinery and many of the customs of elite cricket in England, including the employment of working-class professionals. Thus whilst the potential existed for cricket to be diffused by working-class English immigrants, such developments were restricted in two ways.

Firstly, the existence of an identifiable Anglo-American elite meant that the working-class imported game came to hold a subordinate status. Secondly, the broader association of the game with high social class status meant that some American upper classes desired involvement in the game, in some cases subsequently marginalizing English working-class immigrants.

The development of cricket in New York, however, appears to have been characterized by more pronounced (class) conflict. New York was central to the development of baseball into firstly a modern sports form and latterly the American national game. Moreover, between 1850 and 1855, 87 per cent of New York's baseball players were white collar workers (Adelman 1990: 126). About half of these Adelman defines as 'professional-high white collar', though baseball in other areas of America appears to have had a broader mix of players, with a greater proportion of artisans and skilled craftsmen (Kirsch 1989). This demonstrates that in New York at this time there co-existed two exclusionary but relatively evenly balanced upper-middle-class groups, Anglo-Americans and Americans. The competition between these two groups was not only important for the eventual demise of cricket in New York, but had ramifications for cricket in America more broadly. The status competition between these two groups requires greater exploration.

Although American cricketers in New York were critical of the more elaborate customs such as the emphasis on after-match dining, two issues appear to have been particularly important – the use of professionals, and multi-club membership. Americans resented the Englishmen's use of professional players for, whilst they criticized the practice on ethical grounds, it also led to continuous and almost inevitable English sporting supremacy. For instance, one contemporary critic noted that, 'it came to be believed that no man who did not drop his H's could possibly win honours at bowling or wicket-keeping' (*Clipper*, 1858 cited in Kirsch 1989: 99). The American cricketers of New York were not so powerful as to see such sporting defeats as meaningless and one option was for Americans to embrace these practices. However, this did not occur. Why? Firstly, the American players did not have the cultural status, augmented by tradition and association with English institutions such as the MCC, to sustain such a 'harmoniously unequal' relationship. The exception to this, but an exception that appears to prove the rule, was in Philadelphia, where the dominance of cricket by the American higher social classes was relatively uncontested. Secondly, the majority of professionals were imported from England. Though the career of the professional tended to be 'peripatetic and insecure' (Melville 1998: 80), given the relatively strong ethnic identity of the English and the retention of links back to the 'Mother Country', Americans were simply not as well placed as Anglo-Americans to recruit cricket professionals. The common ethnic identity and the strength of the social bonding between the Anglo-Americans probably also made them

better able to sustain a system of multi-club membership as player mobility was predicated upon close-knit networks of interdependence.

Presented with such structural disadvantage, the American players attempted to alter the rules of the game. In this they failed and they failed because the Anglo-Americans had a relatively high cultural status and, moreover, were able to point to the even higher cultural status and tradition of the game as formalized by the MCC. American cricketers could have sought simply to split from the Anglo-Americans over these issues, but they were not sufficiently powerful to make such a decisive break. Moreover, to lose the backing of the Anglo-Americans may have meant severing links with the ideology of the 'character building' properties which formed the basis of the rationale for their sporting activities. Americans were therefore faced with the prospect of a sport in which their participation was not courted, at which their sporting (and by inference cultural) inferiority was repeatedly demonstrated, and which they were unable to alter to more adequately suit their interests. Though the supposed character building properties of sports participation made cricket an attractive pastime to some, this significant number of negatives detracted from the benefits.

While Americans were not sufficiently powerful to adapt cricket, neither were they so powerless as to be unable to significantly affect this relationship. This in part helps to explain the rise of baseball. Indeed the debates of the early baseball conventions indicate that status insecurity, and thus players' interdependence with other social groups, was important. Early baseball players were keen to distance themselves from children and younger players through fear of having the respectability and 'manliness' of their activities questioned (Kirsch 1989: 64). This is an apparently consistent trait amongst those involved in the formalization of modern sports forms for, it will be remembered, a similar discourse emphasizing manliness accompanied cricket's establishment as England's national game. Moreover, the staunchly amateur stance of baseball, and the rejection of a form of 'broken time payments' for players indicates that advocates of baseball were also aware of their status relative to their English cricket playing counterparts (Kirsch 1989: 67).¹ Like Gaelic games in Ireland which operated 'within a definition of sport which was essentially English' (Houlihan 1994: 192) baseball combined anti-English foundations with a faithful reproduction of the underpinning English amateur ideology. Consequently while American baseball players, like their English cricket playing counterparts, were socially exclusive, their exclusivity was manifest in different ways and for different reasons. It was not simply the case that the English proponents of cricket acted in exclusionary ways but that different social groups (Americans and Anglo-Americans), between which the balance of power was relatively even, enacted a kind of dual (or multiple) social closure. The different type of closure exhibited stemmed from the specific interdependencies in which these groups were enmeshed.

Cricket's peak and the rise of baseball

The dynamics of American cricket changed in 1859 with the arrival in America of the professional touring XI captained by George Parr. Interestingly, whilst the SGCC took a central role in organizing the tour it was the lower status New York Cricket Club, whose players would have been socially closer to the tourists, which made the initial arrangements (Adelman 1986: 108). Whilst many historians have discussed this team's impact on cricket in America, few have recognized the significance of the broader context of class tensions in which this tour occurred.

The expansive press coverage which the touring team gained meant that the co-existence of different cricketing cultures was given greater exposure than ever before, and thus the potential division between middle and working-class English migrants was thrown into sharper relief. Contemporary American commentators were disgusted by the blatant commercialism of this touring team (Kirsch 1989: 39–40). Clearly this would have appeared at odds with the game as defined by the SGCC, thereby raising questions about the apparently fundamental link between playing cricket and character building. Moreover, given the debate raging in England at this time, it is highly likely that the style of bowling used was somewhat contentious. To date, no empirical evidence of this debate has been uncovered and thus this point remains a matter of conjecture. However, given that this touring team consisted solely of professional players the actions of whom the MCC was continually trying to curb, and given that many of the Anglo-American cricketing elite would have arrived in America at a time when not even round arm bowling had been legalized, it is difficult to think that any such consensus over the laws of the game would have existed.

Moreover, just as the establishment of the William Clarke XI had demonstrated to English professional cricketers twelve years earlier, this tour illustrated the broadening range of commercial opportunities available to American professionals. It is notable that Sam Wright and his son Harry – founder in 1869 of the first all professional baseball team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings – were Anglo-American working-class professionals employed by the SGCC. Both played against the 1859 English touring professional XI (Ickringill 1995), whilst Harry and his brother George subsequently played against the English touring professional XI of 1868. As employees of the SGCC these players would have been expected to perform the kinds of subservient roles required of MCC professionals but, Ickringill notes, the example of the professional side gave Harry Wright 'food for thought' (1995: 148). As harmonious as the unequal relationship was between the elite who ran the SGCC and their professional employees, this tour demonstrated the commercial viability of 'exhibition' cricket matches. If it was possible to become an independent cricket professional in England, why wouldn't Wright, given his status as a

player and the greater opportunities for economic and social mobility which America offered, have been even more successful? The significance of this tour, therefore, was that it highlighted the changing nature of the relationship between the Anglo-American elite and working class cricketers and this in turn had significant ramifications for the development of both cricket and baseball.

Ultimately Harry Wright – who later referred to cricket as his first love – would choose baseball rather than cricket as the vehicle for his professional team. The reason why lies in the enabling and constraining effects of the relationships in which he was enmeshed and which constituted the broader American context for cricket. As noted, the social value of cricket in America lay in the perception of its ability to build character (an American version of Pycroft's *The Cricket Field* was published in 1859). As demonstrated by the criticisms levelled at the 1859 touring team, a professional version of the game – as existed in England at this time – was perceived to have a diminished social value. It was also likely that the Anglo-American cricket elite would actively resist professional developments. Consequently there were barriers to the establishment of an American professional touring cricket XI, barriers which Wright and others were not sufficiently powerful to overcome (this was also the case in Ireland in the 1850s). Wright was, however, highly familiar with baseball, and indeed there was considerable overlap of personnel and facilities at this time (Lewis 1989). The fact that baseball was a 'new' sport, and a sport which was not championed by a social elite whose cultural capital was so deeply entwined with the amateur ideology, meant that Wright was less constrained in his pursuit of an independent professional career. We can see, therefore, that the relationships between different class groupings in America, and between different groups in England and America played a highly significant role in creating the conditions both for baseball's rise and cricket's demise. Entrepreneurship and the establishment of leagues stemmed from the networks of interdependency and power balances which existed in this specific time and place. Thus the rise of professional baseball can be explained with reference to the same social processes that led to the demise of cricket, without resorting to an arbitrary or teleological assignment of 'sports space'.

Conclusion

The class and cricketing relations in England in the mid-nineteenth century had a significant impact on the diffusion of cricket to America. This alerts us to the importance of recognizing the polymorphous character of cricket's diffusion process, the variety of groups in 'receiving' countries, and thus the multiple motivations for adopting/adapting/rejecting the game. Examination of the interdependencies between the English and Anglo-Americans, between upper- and lower-class Anglo-Americans, and between

Anglo-Americans immigrants and Americans help reveal why cricket did not become central to the American way of life, and indeed subsequently became antithetical to the way the English understand Americans and Americans understand the English. Thus national identity and nationalism, if not necessarily national character, played a significant role in the diffusion of cricket to America. It played an equally important if rather different role in the development of cricket in the Caribbean. It is to this that we now turn.