

# SOCIAL INFLUENCE IN SPORT

## B. Schwartz and S.F. Barsky (1977) The Home Advantage Social Forces Vol 55

**Aim:** To investigate the existence of the home advantage in ice hockey, basketball, baseball and football.

**Method:** Indirect observation.

**Participants:** Details of the following sports events:

- Major league baseball matches in 1971
- American football games in 1971
- National ice-hockey league matches in 1971
- Collegiate basketball matches over 15 year period 1952-1966

**Procedure:** Data was analysed for each sport on the following:

- Location of games
- Outcome of games
- Team's standing at time of game
- Attendance figures

Home advantage was measured by the degree to which home victories exceeded 50% of the games won.

**Results:** A home advantage was seen in all sports but the extent of that advantage differed from one sport to another. The percentage of home wins for each sport were as follows:

- Baseball 53%
- Football 60%
- Ice-hockey 64%
- Basketball 64%

The authors considered three possible explanations for the home advantage including:

### **1. Familiarity with the home arena and playing area**

Familiarity with the home playing area was discounted as an explanation as the greatest home advantage was seen in the sports with the most uniform playing areas that are least effected by environmental variations.

### **2. Travel fatigue in the away team**

Travel fatigue was discounted as an explanation by the authors as they felt that the home advantage should increase as the season progresses due to the effects of injuries and wear and tear become more aggravated by travel. However they found no significant tendency for the home advantage to increase as the season progressed.

### **3. Moral support from home spectators**

The authors concluded that the home advantage was primarily due to the moral support given by home spectators. They suggested that the home team were motivated to try harder in order to gain the reward of social approval.