

Well-being, Social Participation and Bridge

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Sociology of Bridge Research

- 52 interviews with elite players (UK & US)
 - ‘Bridge Encounters’ series - online *Bridge Magazine*
 - Themed articles
- **Gender and bridge**
 - Gendered Inequalities (Masters thesis)
 - Opportunities and barriers



EBED/Stirling University Partnership

- Literature review

Ashworth, R., Punch, S. and Small, C. (2016) *A Review of Possible Interventions into Healthy Ageing and Cognitive Stimulation: Exploring the Links between Bridge and Dementia*, Aylesbury: English Bridge Education & Development (EBED), <http://www.ebedcio.org.uk/health-wellbeing-research>

- Survey

McDonnell, D., Punch, S. and Small, C. (2017) *Individual Wellbeing and Bridge: An Empirical Analysis*, Aylesbury: English Bridge Education & Development (EBED), <http://www.ebedcio.org.uk/health-wellbeing-research>

- Benefits of bridge paper (to follow)

Future projects (seeking funding)

- **Bridge for Brains** – led by Dr Caroline Small, EBED
 - develop and maintain the neuronal pathways
 - biochemical process in the brain driven by the physical mental activity of bridge
 - functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI)
 - how bridge alters and preserves brain function

<http://www.ebedcio.org.uk/health-wellbeing-research>

Lifecourse learning

- 80% who complete taught lessons in English clubs do not transition into full club players (EBED)
- In the UK only approximately 2% of over 60,000 registered bridge players are aged under 26



Individual Wellbeing & Bridge



Research questions

- What are the characteristics of bridge players and their playing habits?
- Is there an association between playing bridge and measures of individual wellbeing?

Methodology

- 7,142 online survey respondents
 - 80% via English Bridge Union (EBU); 15% SBU; 5% other
 - 50.17% male + 49.83% female
- Questions relating to demographic, social and wellbeing domains used from Wave 6 of the English Longitudinal Study of Aging (ELSA)

Characteristics of Players and Playing Habits

- 94% have regular playing partners
- 16% had the same partner for over 30 years
- On average, 10 sessions a month (excluding online)
- Persistent feature of people's lives
 - On average: respondent 67 years – 29 years playing bridge



How did you learn?	N	%	Cumulative %
Books	592	8.70	8.70
Bridge weekend/cruise	94	1.38	10.09
Family member	1,167	17.16	27.25
In school	649	9.54	36.79
Lessons	3,070	45.14	81.93
Online	55	0.81	82.74
Other	1,174	17.26	100.00
Total	6,801	100.00	

%

Benefits

Responses

Cases

Other

0.32

1.64

Commitment to partnership

7.42

37.85

Interacting with people from different generations

8.32

42.41

Sense of belonging to a community

8.60

43.87

Welcome distraction/relaxing

9.37

47.78

Socialising with friends

12.38

63.13

Competitive element

16.14

82.26

Mentally stimulating

18.55

94.56

Enjoyable activity

18.89

96.30

Total

100.00

100.00

Why do you play bridge?

- *For the stimulation and interaction as well as a form of meeting people. As having recently returned from abroad after many, many years it got me back into the community.*
- *Aid my concentration and improve my memory. To meet new friends and enlarge my social group.*
- *It is sociable, gets me out of the house and keeps my brain active.*
- *Because I enjoy the competition, the mental exercise and the social interaction.*

Playing Bridge and Individual Wellbeing

- Findings:
 - Optimistic about their future and available opportunities
 - Satisfied with the way their lives have turned out
 - Sociable, unencumbered by money concerns
 - Feel in control of their own lives
- Sometimes feel that age and health prevents them pursuing activities

Statistical model using linear regression (age/sex/education/
retirement status/education/life partner/social network/whether play bridge)

- Effect of playing bridge is statistically significant:
 - a positive effect on wellbeing
 - regardless of number of regular partners or years spent playing

Findings consistent with:

- Bridge as a meaningful activity for older people (Ashworth et al. 2016: 19):
 - “includes a social aspect and sense of being a ‘team player’ alongside being mentally challenging”
- Taking up club membership at retirement leads to significantly decreased mortality (Steffens et al. 2016)



Conclusion



- Individuals who play bridge have higher levels of overall wellbeing than those who do not play (McDonnell et al., 2017)
- However, the question remains:
Does bridge have the positive effect or are healthier, happier individuals more likely to play bridge?