



# Bridge: A MindSport For All

*Connects People, Challenges Minds*

## Summary Report Session 3A – Bridging Generations

The *Bridge: A MindSport for All* (BAMSA) Conference 2021 was attended by academics, administrators, and bridge players from 62 countries across the world. Session 3A of the conference focused on Bridging Generations. The presentations and the recording of the panel discussion can be accessed [here](#).

The session was opened by Prof. Alison Bowes, University of Stirling and sets the scene by discussing what healthy ageing means and what bridge has to offer in this context. Discussing this and the way that bridge connects people across generations were some of the key aims of the session. Panel speakers gave short presentations or had pre-recorded presentations which addressed these aims from different disciplinary perspectives and different global contexts.

Dr Marek Malysa based in Poland for example shared how learning to play bridge affects wellbeing and cognitive skills in the elderly population and is linked to a lower risk of Alzheimers. Dr Miriam Snellgrove of BAMSA, presented on research about loneliness and bridge during the covid-19 pandemic. She shared that divisions between loneliness and connectedness are complex with regards to online and offline bridge in particular. Polly Fong, University of Queensland, Australia, applied a social identity perspective to ageing well and aging in place, discussing how important social groups are for wellbeing. Her research is based on a case study of a bridge club. José Júlio Curado, Open University of Portugal contributed a global studies perspective on bridge, emphasising the importance of interdisciplinarity. He argued that the key question is how bridge can promote a more inclusive, fairer, and cohesive society whilst increasing social wellbeing. Finally, Chris Panagiotaros, based in Australia, focused on intergenerationality and developing community through bridge which he contextualised in terms of a 'crisis of loneliness' and the contemporary world of 'hyperindividualisation'.

During the session panellists and attendees addressed key themes and questions related to the role of bridge in older life, and how to encourage younger people into the game, and foster cross-generation interactions. Discussions included the extent to which bridge might be ageist. Miriam Snellgrove argued that the narrative about bridge as a being problematic due to it being an older person's game should be shifted to seeing this as a positive, whilst focusing on barriers to entry and continued participation by younger people.

There was a discussion about the role of academic research, and the importance of advocacy work. There was a desire to see more universities getting involved with and cooperating with BAMSA. Priorities for future research which were identified include a focus on adult play groups which Polly Fong argues are severely under-researched, especially links to health and wellbeing. Another gap is seen to be the focus on practice, and how to expose young people to bridge, and how this might translate into intergenerational relations and community development. Prof. Bowes suggests that international collaboration is important, and that there is scope for a focus on multi-disciplinary working, which not only benefits bridge communities but aligns with what research funders are looking for.

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