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Elite Bridge Players' Motivations to Participate in the Mind Sport of Bridge

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WORLD BRIDGE FEDERATION 1958

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Sociology of Bridge Research

52 in-depth interviews with elite players (UK & US)

Insights into the bridge world

- 20 male +
- 12 female over 35
- 12 male +
- 8 female under 35



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Motivation

- driving force behind what people do and determines effort put into action (Penninger & Hidi, 2015)
- desire or will to do something
- motive, purpose and reason (Evans, 2015)
- Iso-Ahola (1980) intrinsic or extrinsic goals and rewards
 - intrinsically rewarding: participated in for its own sake
 - extrinsically motivated: obligation or to obtain a reward
- leisure is mostly intrinsic factors relating to self-expression, competence and satisfaction.



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Well-being, Healthy Ageing and Social Connection

- Bridge players have higher levels of well-being: 'with many centring on the pleasure derived from participating in the game, the mental challenge, the social element and often all three' (McDonnell et al., 2017: 13)
- Healthy ageing: a lifelong process optimising opportunities and preserving health and physical, social and mental wellness, independence, quality of life and enhancing successful life-course transitions (Peel et al., 2004)
- Leisure: concentration, stimulation, and active involvement in personally meaningful experiences (Ashworth et al., 2016)

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Social isolation and loneliness

- Almost 1/5 of the UK population in the UK often or always feel lonely (British Red Cross & Kantar Public, 2016)
 - negative impacts on health and wellbeing similar to those experienced by chronic long-term conditions
- 'Leisure can be a resource for healthy aging and self-managing their chronic health condition' (Hutchinson and Nimrod, 2012: 41).
- Social connection through quality relationships = satisfying and longer life (Marotta & Reid, 2015)


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Well-being and Rewards

'increasing work-related tension and strain' (Paulsen, 2014: 7)



each hand is an individual event. If you're playing chess, a lot of games just have a tendency to grind down into stalemates or be long, torturous endeavours. There is an appropriate mix of luck and skill, it's not all skill like in chess. And I like the fact that there's uncertainty and probability involved with it. You know, it's like you can take the down, but pick up, which is always one of the challenges. I like the social aspect of the game. (Eric Rodwell, over 35, US)

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I just love it. It's just so much fun. It has so many different facets and it's not just one way of thinking, it's putting things together. To me it's a little bit like detective work. There are some clues out there, you don't know what they are and where they are, so you have to go and find them. Once you have found them you have to put them together like a puzzle and then draw the right conclusions so it's really many faceted. To me that's fascinating. (Sabine Auken, over 35, Germany)

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... possibly the fact that you can never solve the riddle of bridge, because it's too tough and possibly because every second you find something new and interesting and a way to either show off your ego or your talent or your ... ability to be better than guys around you. And it's not that I'm the most competitive person in the world, I just get major satisfaction from the pleasure I get from playing the game. It's not a kind of deep motive, I think that it's a selfish motive. (Zia Mahmood, over 35, US)

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Winning as an objective: rewarding intrinsically and externally (Ellis, 2014)

I play bridge because I'm extremely competitive and I like to win so I guess it's addictive (Fiona Brown, under 35, UK)

Winning: positivity, joyousness and pride (Wu, 2014)

Brkljačić et al. (2017): bridge attracts intrinsically competitive individuals who are rarely motivated by external rewards



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Healthy Ageing and Brain Fitness

... playing competitive bridge is one of the few times ... when I can be totally absorbed in an activity and not experience any kind of boredom. (Simon Gillis, over 35, UK)

It's fully engaging which is what I like most about it, and ever evolving so I don't think I'll ever come to a point where it stops making me think and that's a huge bonus in terms of how awesome this game is. (Anam Tebha, under 35, US)

Every hand is a challenge - every hand is different and you don't have to stick by the rules (Fiona Brown, under 35, UK)

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Social Connection and the Bridge Community

I really like the bridge world, and the life and the social part and the game. I think just everything together. (Marion Michielson, under 35, The Netherlands)

Bridge has been incredible to me. I have friends all over the world... Bridge players are a great group of people. So diverse. By and large very intelligent people. (Jeff Meckstroth, over 35, US)

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Well it's the social part. Bridge has taken me around the world and still takes me around the world. It opens doors for me that I otherwise would never have gone through and I'm meeting people that I otherwise would never have met which I think is exciting. [...] You feel like you have friends all over the world and wherever you go you know somebody. (Sabine Auken, over 35, Germany)

... bridge fosters connection and a sense of community. (Galbraith et al., 2018: 10)

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Appealing Features of the Multi-faceted, Ever-evolving card Game

- well-being: pleasure, enjoyment, meaning, sociability, happiness, opportunity and satisfaction
- time, effort, dedication and commitment = mental stimulation, skill development, competition, recognition and success
- intrinsic motivation: self-expression and self-satisfaction
- extrinsic rewards: travel and a living for some
- socialising and belonging to the 'bridge world'

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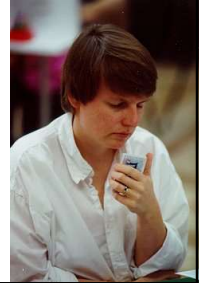
Motivations of elite bridge players

'...a sense of accomplishment and flow experiences'. (Brkljačić et al., 2017a: 20)

Three interconnecting themes

- well-being
- healthy ageing
- social connection

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