

**Sociology of Bridge: Update to the Global Keep Bridge Alive Network**

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## SOCIOLOGY OF BRIDGE RESEARCH

Social interactions of the bridge world

- Characteristics & nature of the game
- Benefits, challenges, motivations
- Barriers to participation, opportunities for skill development, and engagement across the lifecourse
- Social networks: how bridge fosters sense of community
- Well-being and relationships at and away from the table

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## Bridge Community: What is it?

The 'bridge world': community where members share goals and interests

*"history, rules, practices, emotions, status, power, organization and boundaries... a community that is meaningful... that provides a social order" (Fine, 2015: 2)*

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## Keeping Bridge Alive....

Raise awareness of realities of bridge:

- re-brand and grow bridge community

Accessible materials aimed at different audiences:

- **Blog posts, newspaper articles, radio, academic journals**
- **Summary report for Bridge Organisations' websites & policy-makers**
- **Themed articles for bridge magazines & Bridge Winners blog**

Feedback & research ideas welcome = Global KBA Network

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**Many young people play bridge and compete against each other all over the world**

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## Bridge Research So Far


Project 1

- 52 in-depth interviews with elite players (Europe, UK & US)
  - On average 2 hours: wide range of themes & topics
- Insights into the bridge world
  - partnerships, team dynamics
  - benefits, skills

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

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### Project 2: EBED/Stirling survey



- Individuals who play bridge have higher levels of overall wellbeing than those who do not play

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>

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### Project 3: Gender and Bridge

From 52 elite interviews:

- Views of women's bridge, and gender differences
- Why, at the top of the game, are men more successful in terms of winning more prestigious events?

Qualitative email survey:

150 responses - 84 male and 67 female players

18-75 years: club, tournament, international & pro players

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### Project 4: Bridge and Schools

Research Question: *What helps and hinders learning for children in primary and secondary schools?*

- benefits and challenges of teaching bridge in schools in Northern Ireland (in the curriculum)
- perceptions of skills gained through bridge
- focus group and individual interviews with teachers, pupils and parents

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### Mind Sports and Leisure Communities: The Case Study of Bridge

Place, Belonging & Identity Module

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### Academic Bridge Research Team to Date

- Elizabeth Graham MSc dissertation: *'Intellectual Contests? Gender Inequality and Identity in the Game of Bridge'* Won the Faculty MSc Dissertation prize of 2015
- Dr Ashley Rogers: survey work and report. Two articles: gender and bridge and insider/outsider status.
- Charlotte McPherson: *Bridge and Brains – a nature/nurture discussion*
- Jessica Cleary: Comparative literature reviews on chess and mah-jong
- Catherine Pemble: Bridge literature review



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### 3 year PhD in Bridge

#### Bridging the Gap: An Exploration of Transitions in Play through the Lifecourse

Kevin Judge - 1 yr in

Why do people participate in bridge and what are the motivations and barriers for learning to play?

Transitions into learning & from lessons to clubs



[www.sociologyofbridge.wordpress.com](http://www.sociologyofbridge.wordpress.com)

Funded by EBED, UK and Irish Bridge Unions, and the University of Stirling

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NEW UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING  
**BRIDGE CLUB**  
 Learn the world's best card game from the best in Scotland!  
**Give Bridge a Go**  
 5.30 - 7.30pm Thurs 12th & 19th September  
 Location - PGR Zone (3rd floor of library)

8 Bridge Lessons for Autumn  
**FREE** for University Bridge Club Members  
 5.30-7.30pm Thursdays from 17th October  
 Location - PGR Zone (3rd floor of library)

All ages welcome - **join** at  
<https://www.stirlingstudentsunion.com/clubsocieties/societies/8518/>  
 £10 annual membership fee includes 8 free lessons  
 (only £5 if you already have a club and socs membership)  
 Enquiries: kevin.judge@stir.ac.uk

*I like to play bridge as I like the competitive and social aspects of the game. I have always enjoyed card games such as poker however, anyone that likes any form of card game would really enjoy bridge!*  
 (Ghinn Murray, PhD Student)

Up for a new challenge? Like games?  
 Email: [kevin.judge@stir.ac.uk](mailto:kevin.judge@stir.ac.uk)




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**Lessons Learned at Bridge Lessons:  
 A Sociological Exploration of the new University of  
 Stirling Bridge Club, Scotland**



Judge, K. & Punch, S. (2019) 'Lessons Learned at Bridge Lessons: A Sociological Exploration of the new University of Stirling Bridge Club, Scotland' SPARK, Issue 5. Available at: <https://spark.stir.ac.uk/issues/issues5/>



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**'Temperament is everything'**  
 Bridge partnerships, identities and emotions


Zoe Russell and Samantha Punch,  
 University of Stirling






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**Playing your Life: Impression  
 Management and Strategic Interaction in  
 the game of Bridge**



- Interactions at the bridge table based on Goffman's concepts of **strategic interaction** & **impression management**.
- Everyday interaction skills honed by elite players
- Through preparation and partnership, elite players employ **supportive silence**, **disciplined planning** & **reading people strategically** to play

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**Fun, Fights and Failures: Intimate couple relationships and playing bridge**

- Using ideas of **doing** intimacy (Morgan, 2013) and ongoing **intimate** relationship work (Jamieson, 2011).
- Negotiation and tension between game worlds and intimate lifeworlds.
- Everyday learned knowledge of the partner is used to sanction, help and hinder bridge






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**Taking Bridge Seriously?**

**DISCOVER SOCIETY**  
 MEASURED - FACTUAL - CRITICAL

- Online Magazine
- 1500 word article to be submitted **15<sup>th</sup> November** for **December 2019** issue
- 'Seriousness' as an academic study combined with practitioner viewpoints

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**Enhanced well-being, healthy ageing and social connection: Motivations for playing bridge in the community**

Prof Samantha Punch and Elizabeth Graham  
s.v.punch@stir.ac.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-being, Mental Stimulation and Social Connection**

*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)*

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**Bridge and Healthy Ageing:**

**Well-being, Mental Stimulation and Social Connection**

- "...bridge fosters connection and a sense of community." (Galbraith et al., 2018: 10)
- 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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**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
- socialising & belonging to the 'bridge world' may help combat social isolation and loneliness

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