



Bridge: A MindSport For All
Connects People, Challenges Minds



Faculty of Social Sciences

UNIVERSITY of STIRLING

Bridging Brains:
 Exploring Gendered Attitudes and Inequalities in a Mind-Sport

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1

More men win at top level in bridge

Four player partnership card game



- UK Gold Cup - 17/460
- English Bridge: Spring 4s - 16/250
- Scottish Winter 4s - 2/50
- US Vanderbilt Championship - 6/360
- World Team Olympiad - 0/84

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2

Methodology



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Indepth, semi-structured interviews

40 elite players (Europe + US)

- 12 male / 12 female (over 35)
- 8 male / 8 female (under 35)



Punch, S. and Rogers, A. (forthcoming)
 'Building, not Burning Bridges in Research: Insider/Outsider Dilemmas and Engaging with the Bridge Community'
Journal of Leisure Research

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3


Gendered Brains



'Men are from Mars, women are from Venus' (Gray, 2015)

Sex Differences in Brains: significant and biologically fixed

Critiques:

- the extent and nature of human brain sex differences overstated
- more convergence rather than divergence between brains (e.g. Hamlin, 2014; Joel et al., 2015; Ritchie et al. 2017)



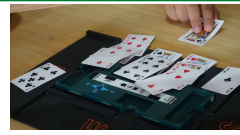
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4

Critiques of traditional neuroscience



Credibility

Lack of evidence (Stafford 2013)



"gaps, assumptions, speculation, leaps of faith and bad methodologies" (Hill, 2010)

Differences *between* the sexes are significantly smaller than those *within* the sexes (Spellman, 1996)


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5



Neurosexism

'Neurosexism' is the practice of claiming that there are fixed differences between female and male brains, which can explain women's inferiority or unsuitability for certain roles. (Rippon, 2016)

Gendered hierarchies of capability & incapability: appear 'natural'



Perpetuates gender inequalities (Fine et al., 2013)

6


Men are Rational, Women are Emotional

On a general level, men tend to be more logical... most good bridge players go to uni and do maths or similar sort of mathematical things and guys tend to be better at that sort of subject than girls do. (Nadine)

It's established that women have more of their brain wired for emotion generally than men do. (William)

Gendered emotions (Sargisson, 1996)

Men get angry, women get upset (Punch and Russell, forthcoming)



7

More/less Competitive



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Well, for one thing, men do a lot of competitive sports when they're growing up, so the idea of winning is very important to men psychologically. Because of that I think they're doing their best when they play bridge all the time. Women are more interested in playing nice – being seen as a friendly person – they're more social. (Scott)

Gender messages (Denny, 2011)



8


Reproducing Gender Inequality



Because men are considered better bridge players than women are, there's a general perception when you play together with them many women feel the pressure and don't perform as well. (Andrea)


Neurosexism (Fine, 2013)

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9

Women who Play like Men




I had to toughen up a lot because if you're going to play with and against the men, or you're going to try and beat the men and if they're quite tough and aggressive then you have to be quite tough and aggressive both in your style of play, but also in your behaviour. (Megan)

She has some of the best focus of any player I've ever played with. Probably all really good bridge players are really competitive and she just doesn't ever have a lapse in concentration and she has an unbelievably keen analytical mind... happy to back her judgment. She has played hands that were really incredible. She's one of the best people I've ever seen at sort of reading her opponents' discards accurately. (Colin)




10

"Men's brains are more suited to bridge than women"




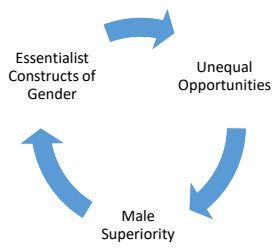
Masculine self-descriptions (Jost and Majors, 2001)

Neuroplasticity: human brain is a deeply responsive organ, constantly restructuring and changing in reply to social events and expectations (Doidge, 2007; Fu and Zuo, 2011)




11

Conclusion

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12