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## **Contract Bridge and Senior Citizens: from Entertainment to Competition**

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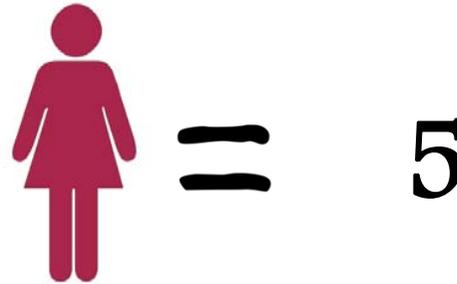
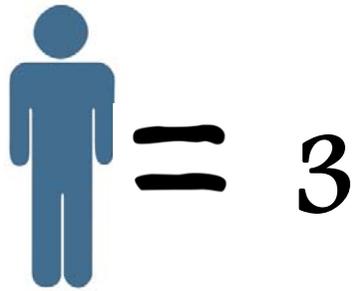
## Aims of the Study:

- to explore motivation of senior citizens to engage in contract bridge
- to analyze self-reported benefits of the game regarding Major's classification

## Serious Leisure (Major, 2001):

- benefits:
  - social affiliation
  - sense of accomplishment (i.e., self-confidence, power, and control)
  - health and fitness (i.e., physical benefits and stress relief)

## Method: Sample



age: 68~80

players who play at least once per  
week for last 8 years  
all approached agreed

# Method: Instruments

In depth semi-structured interview:

## **general:**

- \* age
- \* health
- \* social life including family
- \* work and other hobbies

## **bridge:**

- \* experiences
- \* motivation
- \* benefits from bridge

## Method: Procedure

- in depth semi structured interviews
- about 30 minutes
- voluntarily and anonymously
- agreed to share their comments for scientific purposes

# Results: Demographics

## **General:**

6 married/in a relationship, 2 widowed

7 university degree

all retired, 1 with disability

6 still worked part-time jobs

Free time activities: mostly intellectual and passive (reading, watching TV, cross-words/puzzles)

## **Bridge:**

average club players or better

5 started to play when they were over 60, 3 started to play earlier and had long bridge experience.

All played for at least 5 years.

## Social affiliation: Communication/Fun

*“There are lot of people in a bridge club. I like **chatting** to different people. I can’t go around and **talk** to people on the streets, or approach someone in the coffee-shop. That would be weird. I like the fact that **everyone knows me here.**”*

*“I like to **chat** with opponents. I don’t like serious tournaments. It is all **fun** to me. I don’t understand why people get upset.”*

*“You have to **talk**. It is very **social**. Some pretend to be serious, but it is a **game**, isn’t it?”*

*“On Wendsdays me and (name) go to different clubs. As soon as we come home we **talk** on phone for at least half an hour. About bridge hands if we remember. And **gossip** (laugh).”*

*“I never go to bars, but at the club I have a drink or two, **it is like going out.**”*

## Social affiliation: Going out, Plans, Life Routine

*“That’s **what I do** on Thursdays. I look forward to it the whole week.”*

*“I have to **get out** of the house. I will never quit bridge and smoking. I can’t walk, I come by taxi. But I don’t mind to spend on what I like.”*

*“Bridge is **stable** thing in my life for over 30 years.”*

## Social affiliation: Understanding, supporting

*“Last year we were playing some tournaments to collect money for the juniors. Later, one of them, during the club game said me (after I made insufficient bid): it is not problem, just bid what you wish. I don’t know, but I think we are kind of **closer** now. We **help each other**.”*

*“Most of the kids at bridge behave very nice. They **respect** me.”*

*“Oh, no, I don’t mind when they (youth) **call me by my first name**. I feel younger.”*

## Social affiliation: Status & Recognition

*“I agreed with junior player that he would help me something with my computer. When he arrived my friend was at my home, and she was astonished (how young guys come to help me). Usually she is the one with **adventures**.(laugh)”*

*“You know, it is nice to say... I can't (go somewhere) because I have to go to bridge. It is nice that you have any **plans**, and even better if they sound so good. I feel **important**. (giggles)”*

*“Yes, I think people think you are **smarter** when you say that you play bridge.”*

## Sense of accomplishment: Competing, Improving

*“Did you see how **good** I am. I check ranking list every day. I am even **better then** (name), and he thinks he is an expert.”*

*“**Winning** is very important to me. I am **proud of myself** when I do well. But, my play is much more important to me, than what partner does.”*

*“When I make **mistake I want to kill myself**. How could I be so stupid. Oh, yes, I am proud of myself when I make a contract that others didn't.”*

## Sense of accomplishment: Learning, Solving problems

*“Always in my life I was **active**. Because of bridge I can still be active and learn new things.”*

*“After I got retired I had to do something, friend told me about bridge. I never regreted. I put a **lot of effort** into it, and I know I **learned a lot**. I feel good about it”*

*“You can **study** bridge forever, you will never know it all. That is why I love it.”*

## Health: staying mentally fit

*“I never watched Spanish or Turkish soap-operas. I like thrillers. Bridge is similar to that. It is **good for my brain**. (laugh)”*

*“You will see once you get old, there are not many challenges. Oh yes, you cook, and help with grandchildren. They say grandchildren keep you young. They don’t. You feel old when you have to run after them (laugh). But, when you play bridge it doesn’t ask for anything you can’t do. **You are as good as you were before**. Or, at least I feel like that. (laugh)”*

*“Bridge keeps me **moving**. I **exercise my brain**. All my life I liked puzzles. Bridge is the best game of all.”*

## Quality of life

*“Of course I would leave him if he wouldn’t support my bridge. In this age, you have to be practical. But, he knows **bridge means a lot to me.**”*

*“Bridge **significantly improves quality of my life.** And I think it is the same for all of us. We feel good and accepted here.”*

*“I have other hobbies, but I **can’t imagine my life without bridge.** Because it is people and play, and tournaments. It is **interesting in so many ways.** If there was no bridge, I would play something else, as similar to bridge as possible.”*

# Limitations

- small convenient sample
- Croatia: cross-cultural differences
- familiar interviewer

# Main Findings

Bridge contributed to well-being of elderly by:

- advancing social affiliation

communicating with people of all ages, finding new friends, getting social support, recognition and status and going out of home)

- enhancing sense of accomplishment

learning, solving problems, competing, advancing and winning

- mental fitness

staying intellectually fit, learning new things, logical reasoning

While it seems that senior player often come to bridge because of social reasons, it is competitive element that keeps them there.

# Practical Advices

**Social inclusion:** dividing youngsters from seniors may not be the best idea

- \* Special games for specific generation should not be standard approach
- \* Cross-generation understanding and support should be encouraged

Would you rather be  
40 years old  
or 80 years young?

Dziękuję.

Thank you!