

The Carolina Shaggers: Dance as Serious Leisure

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The concept of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1992) was used to investigate the social world of shag dancing to determine the reasons for long-term involvement and commitment to the dance. Data were collected over a three-year period through in-depth interviews at regional shag festivals. A method of ethnographic analysis was used to analyze the data (Spradley, 1979). Two types of dancers, casual and serious, were identified and differentiated into five subtypes. Results confirm Stebbins (1992) six qualities of serious leisure. Friendship was cited as the most important reason for long-term involvement and commitment to the dance. Findings indicate the shag world is a combination of serious leisure and casual leisure. Participants choose their level of involvement based on changing life-style needs.

KEYWORDS: *Casual leisure, commitment, fun, serious leisure, social worlds.*

Introduction

"Modern America is an archipelago of subcultures, a land where, to a peculiar extent, people shape their lives around private passions, and form national families of kindred spirits" (Sides, 1992). The involvement of individuals in particular leisure activities has been the focus of an increasing number of studies. This tendency can be attributed to the increased interest of researchers in showing how people become involved in leisure activities, why they cease or continue to be involved, and the development of a continuous, career-like commitment to an activity (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). Stebbins (1979, 1982, 1993, 1996, 2002) is convinced this goal may be reached through serious rather than casual or unserious leisure. Stebbins extensive research in serious leisure shows that people of all ages and social classes are drawn to the activity. He notes that, although they are small in number, there are some participants who pursue the leisure activity with unusual intensity and fervor. This presents the question of why some people "get hooked" on an activity. The purpose of this study is to examine shag dancing as a form of serious leisure. The subculture of shaggers is used to explore the six interrelated qualities of serious leisure as defined by Stebbins.

Indigenous to the South, shag dancing and beach music are almost entirely unknown outside of North and South Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia.

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The shag, South Carolina's official state dance and North Carolina's official popular dance, originated in the early 1940s as a favorite dance of white, southern teenagers (Bryan, 1995). Distinctive features of the dance include a languid sensuality and slow, casual thigh and chest contact. The shag is danced to beach music, a term that originated in the mid-1940s as a cover term for an eclectic assortment of early rhythm and blues, rock and roll, pop music, and black gospel (Crease, 1988). The subculture of shaggers is interesting because of its history of serious involvement and commitment. Some shaggers have been involved with the dance for more than sixty years. There is also an astonishing stability in membership. As both younger and older participants have been recruited, the subculture is now intergenerational.

Background Literature and Theoretical Perspective

Stebbins introduced the concept of serious leisure and its counterpart, casual leisure, in 1982. Serious leisure is defined as "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that is sufficiently substantial and interesting for a participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of its special skills and knowledge" (Stebbins, 1992, p. 3). In contrast, Stebbins (1997) describes casual leisure as an immediate, somewhat transient activity that is pleasurable, intrinsically rewarding, and can be enjoyed with little or no special instruction or training. Types of casual leisure include social conversation, passive entertainment, and play. Stebbins (2001) denotes three types of serious leisure participants: amateurs, hobbyists, and career volunteers. Of the three types, Stebbins has given the least amount of attention to volunteers. The primary concern of his research has been amateurs and, to a lesser extent, hobbyists. Amateurs are differentiated by the degree of seriousness with which they approach their leisure activity.

There are six interrelated qualities associated with serious leisure that distinguish it from casual leisure (Stebbins, 1992). First, there is the occasional need to persevere in the activity to overcome difficulties. Next is the tendency for individuals to create careers in their endeavors and for the activities to become "enduring pursuits with their own background contingencies, histories of turning points, and stages of achievement or involvement" (p. 6). A third quality of serious leisure is the significant personal effort required which leads to the development of special knowledge, training, and skill. The fourth quality of serious leisure is the provision of eight durable benefits: self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, renewal or regeneration of self, feelings of accomplishment, enhancement of self image, social interaction and belongingness, and lasting physical products resulting from the activity. In addition, Stebbins (1992) notes that a ninth benefit of serious leisure, "self-gratification or pure fun, which is considerably more evanescent than the preceding eight—also characterizes casual leisure" (p. 7). The fifth quality of serious leisure is the formation of a strong identity with the activity. The sixth serious leisure quality is a unique ethos that grows up around the activity and leads to the development of a special social world.

According to Stebbins (2002), most serious leisure activity is situated in a vibrant social world that has the ability to "attract and hold a large proportion of its participants" (p. 85). Unruh (1979) describes a social world as an internally discernible array of events, organizations, actors, and practices that have merged into an area of involvement and interest for the participants. Social worlds do not contain a "powerful centralized authority structure" and are joined solely by "universes of discourse" (Unruh, 1980, p. 277). This combination of characteristics creates a unique pattern of individual involvement. Building on the work of Shibutani (1955) and Bryan (1979), Unruh (1979) proposed a typology of social types: strangers, tourists, regulars, and insiders. The types are differentiated from one another by the following characteristics: (a) degree of commitment to the social world, (b) nature of social world experiences, (c) orientation to social world activities, and (d) interpersonal relationships within the social world (Unruh, 1979). Strangers are those who show very little commitment but nonetheless make an important contribution to the on-going functions of the social world. Tourists are transient members of the social world who are there for temporary diversion, entertainment, or profit. Regulars participate in the social world on a regular basis and, for them, commitment to social world activities is habitual. Insiders are those who identify strongly with the social world and exhibit an unusually intense commitment to the maintenance and advancement of social world activities.

Social worlds may be examined at any level and, within a given social world, subworlds may be regarded as distinct areas of analysis (Strauss, 1978; Unruh, 1979). For example, within the social world of shag dancing specific aspects may be examined nationally (shag dancers in the United States), regionally (types of shag dancers in the southeastern United States), or locally (types of shag dancers at a Society of Stranders shag festival).

In terms of the social world model, serious leisure amateurs, hobbyists, and volunteers are insiders and regulars in their distinctive social worlds. For example, a number of researchers have explored serious leisure in the social worlds of tournament bass fishing (Yoder, 1997), barbershop singing (Stebbins, 1996), mushroom collecting (Fine, 1998), and football fandom (Gibson, Willming, & Holdnak, 2003). Using the social worlds perspective, Scott and Godbey (1992) explored participation within the social world of contract bridge and found participants self-identified themselves as either social or serious players. Results of the study indicate that the social world of contract bridge world consists of two distinct subworlds, the subworld of social bridge and the subworld of serious bridge. Drawing on their previous work, Scott and Godbey (1994) examined types of involvement in the social world of bridge and found differences among player types in terms of their orientation to skill development, setting and game preferences, meaning of participation, frequency of play, and level of commitment. Findings suggest that "bridge players are not stages within a continuum of specialization but members of different social worlds" (p. 293). Similarly, Stebbins (1996) explored the social worlds of jazz, classical music and barbershop singing as forms of serious leisure and notes that each social world is "united by a shared lifestyle

and separated by distinctive lifestyles” (p. 107). Baldwin and Norris (1999) employed Stebbins (1992) six qualities of serious leisure to examine the hobbyist social world of dog breeders and found intense levels of involvement are maintained through the formation of a strong personal identification with the activity and enduring emotional ties to their pets. In their study of older golfers, Siegenthaler and O’Dell (2003) identified four golfer types based of their degree of seriousness to the game. Findings from the study support the idea that meaningful activity is important in later life.

Purpose of the Study

In order to further the understanding of serious involvement and commitment to a leisure activity, this study will examine the social world of a regional dance to determine what factors have contributed to the longevity of the dance and the long-term commitment of the participants. Because social dancing, especially a regional couples dance, has not previously been examined as a form of serious leisure, this study will be exploratory in nature. The following questions were used to guide the study: Does shag dancing possess the six qualities of serious leisure as defined by Stebbins (2001)? What factors lead a person to long term commitment and involvement with the dance? What are the reasons for the longevity of the dance?

Methodology

The study site chosen was North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina which is the location of semi-annual shag festivals held in April and September and sponsored by the Society of Stranders (S.O.S.) organization. The 10-day events, which are open to anyone, attract over twelve thousand shag devotees to the nine beach clubs located in the downtown area of Ocean Drive. Prior to data collection, the researcher attended S.O.S. festivals over a three and one-half year period, from 1996 to 2000, to become acquainted with the study site. Data were collected at the spring and fall festivals between April, 2001 and April, 2004.

Sampling

To secure a sample uniquely suited to the purpose of the study, random sampling was not feasible. The sample used in this research is a purposive sample which attempts to include variability through the intentional selection of sampling units thought to possess certain qualifications (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996). My objective was to interview people with different experiences and perspectives on the dance. Therefore, an attempt was made to gather data from a variety of shaggers by purposely sampling people who were known to differ from one another in terms of length and type of dance involvement, gender, age, and level of skill. As a result, the sample includes a combination of long time shaggers, newcomers to the dance, intermediate

level dancers, competitive shaggers, beach club owners and managers, festival deejays, shag club members and non-members, and S.O.S. festival officials.

Data Collection

Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with the shag festival participants. The interview procedures followed those of Spradley (1979) and Patton (1987). Based on the research questions guiding this study, a general interview guide was used. The guide provides flexibility in the format that enables informants to respond to interview questions in their own terms. Interview guides are helpful in keeping the interview focused while allowing "individual perspectives and experiences to emerge" (Patton, 1987, p. 111).

Although all of the people providing information were defined as informants, a beach club manager and a long-time shagger, both of whom were initial contacts, became key informants. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1996), information provided by key informants can "serve as a cross-check on the data the researcher obtains from other interviews" (p. 407). A total of 50 interviews were conducted with 17 couples and 33 individuals. Their ages ranged from 22 to 82 years old. Interviews were tape-recorded and lasted from 45 to 90 minutes. This produced 33 hours of interviews that were then transcribed verbatim. To promote the validity of the research, member checks and peer-debriefing were conducted with sub-samples of hard-core, competitive, and recreation shaggers. In addition, interview transcripts were reviewed with key informants to verify data accuracy.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, a method of ethnographic analysis described by Spradley (1979) was followed. The method consists of the following steps: (a) domain analysis, (b) taxonomic analysis, (c) componential analysis, and (d) theme analysis. The method provides an orderly and useful design for examining observations and a foundation for discovering categories of data that were expanded into cultural domains and taxonomies. A componential analysis was then conducted to investigate the differences among categories. Next, a typology was constructed to contrast categories by their associated attributes. Finally, themes were developed which integrated domains and taxonomies. Each of these steps is discussed and related to the analysis of data in this study.

Domain analysis. The identification of cultural domains is the first step in the research strategy. According to Spradley (1979), a cultural domain is any symbolic category that includes other smaller categories, each of which share one related feature of meaning. A domain consists of a cover term, a semantic relationship, and included terms. The name of the cultural domain is referred to as the cover term and the included terms are the smaller categories implied by the cover term. A semantic relationship serves to or-

ganize the domain by linking the cover term to the included terms within a specific cultural domain.

Spradley (1979) noted that a domain analysis gives "an overview of the cultural scene and some idea as to how the surface structure of that scene was organized" (p. 174). From reading the transcribed interviews, it became apparent that there were two distinct categories of festival participants, music lovers and dancers. Based on the research questions guiding this study, the decision was made to investigate the category of dancers in more depth. For example, it was found that informants use various names to describe shaggers. The following excerpts were taken from transcribed interview data in response to the question: Are there different kinds of shaggers?

Helene [pseudonyms are used for all names] [italics added]: There are the *old freestyle shaggers*. Then, on the opposite end, the extreme end, you've got the *professionals*. And in between you've got dancers who just like to have fun. . . . So you have all sorts, you know, mild to severe. On a continuum.

Chester: Uh, it's comical to me to watch people who want to be, *wannabes* in this thing, for lack of a better word. They don't want to be in it for the camaraderie. They're out there trying to impress somebody like they are something. They are the *wannabes*.

Jack: There's shaggers that have a lot of fun with the dance and there's shaggers that take it real serious. They get real uptight about it. It's drastic when a *serious shagger* dances with a *social shagger*. It's really drastic. It's happened to me because I'm a *fun shagger*.

Therefore, a cultural domain was constructed to represent the included terms indicated by informant responses. The cultural domain, *kinds of shaggers* (cover term), includes seventeen different kinds of shaggers (included terms) related by a semantic relationship (X is a kind of Y). For example, a *pro dancer* (X) is a kind of shagger (Y). As additional terms were discovered through transcribed interview data, the terms were added to the domain.

Taxonomic analysis. The second step in the research strategy is a taxonomic analysis that is performed to find the internal structure of a domain. The focus of the analysis is on identifying the relationships among included terms (Spradley, 1979). Therefore, a taxonomy was constructed from the included terms in the cultural domain *kinds of shaggers*. The domain is divided into categories by comparing similarities among included terms which informants use to describe various kinds of shaggers.

Componential analysis. The next step in the research strategy is to organize and represent the contrasts discovered in the data. This is done through componential analysis, which is a systematic search for differences associated with the categories in a cultural domain. Each domain is composed of included terms in restricted contrast, which means that an included term belongs to a category consisting of terms that are both different and alike (Spradley, 1979). Within the category, the contrast is restricted to a limited amount of semantic information.

For example, two distinct categories of shaggers were discovered: casual shaggers and serious shaggers. Although the two categories are different,

they also share an important similarity. They share the semantic information of being kinds of shaggers. The meaning of casual shagger depends on the fact that it is in restricted contrast with serious shagger. In other words, when someone says a casual shagger is on the dance floor, it is implied to those inside the shag world that a shagger, who is not a serious shagger, is on the dance floor.

Theme development. The identification of themes or patterns across the domains is the last step in the research strategy outlined by Spradley (1979). A cultural theme is defined as "any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains" (Spradley, 1980, p. 141). Once a cultural theme has been identified, it is then possible to look for a universal theme that includes the larger relationships among the domains. Two reoccurring themes in the shag world were the importance of friendships and of having fun.

As a result of componential analysis, a typology was constructed to differentiate among the various kinds of shaggers and their related attributes. The typology is based on past recreational specialization research (Bryan, 1979; Stebbins, 1979; Scott & Godbey, 1994) that explores variation in types of involvement and commitment among participants in a recreational activity. In the shag world, five distinct types of shaggers emerged: occasional, recreational, wannabe, competitive, and hard-core. Four of the dance types are similar to and support the social types identified by other researchers (Bryan, 1979; Unruh, 1979; Stebbins, 1992; Scott & Godbey, 1994). However, in this particular social world, a fifth type of serious shagger was also identified: *the wannabes*. Occasional and recreational shaggers are types of casual dancers; wannabes, competitive and hard core shaggers are types of serious dancers. A summary of the distinguishing characteristics of each type of dancer is presented in Table 1.

Results

Casual shaggers appear to be as committed as serious shaggers but in different ways. Casual shaggers are committed to dancing for fun and socializing with friends in a non-competitive environment. Serious shaggers, with the exception of hard core shaggers, are primarily committed to perfecting the technical aspects of the dance and to showcasing their dancing skills in the competitive arena. Hard core shaggers are seriously committed to the preservation, promotion, and enjoyment of the dance and to having fun with other like-minded individuals. Although the five categories of dancers are similar in that they are all shaggers, they vary in terms of their dance characteristics. Shaggers are differentiated on the basis of their (a) dance identity, (b) orientation to the dance and, (c) interpersonal relationships with other shaggers. The defining characteristics of each dance type are discussed in relation to the six interrelated qualities of serious leisure as defined by Stebbins (1992).

TABLE 1
Types and Characteristics of Shag Dancers

| Dancer Traits: | Dance Types | | | | |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|--|--|
| | Casual Shag Dancers | | Wannabes | Serious Shag Dancers | |
| | Occasional | Recreational | | Competitive | Hard-Core |
| Dance Identity | A range | Important | Important | Important | Primary |
| Dance Frequency (times per week) | Irregular | 1 to 2 | 2 to 5 | 3 to 5 | 5 to 6 |
| Practice Time (hours per week) | Limited to none | 2 hours average | 5 to 15 | 8 to 18 | Wide range |
| Tendency to Improve Dance Skills | Limited | Satisfied with current skills but receptive to new | Continuous effort to improve | Continuous effort to improve | Wide range |
| Tendency to Compete | None | Limited interest | Strong | Strong | Varies |
| Experiential Preference | To have fun | To have fun | Quality of the dance | Quality of the dance To have fun | To have fun Quality of the dance |
| Orientation to the Dance | Being with friends Enjoyment of music and dance | Being with friends Enjoyment of music and dance New cultural experience | Be a good dancer | Be a good dancer Enjoyment of music and dance Being with friends | Being with friends Enjoyment of music and dance Preserve and promote the dance |
| Interpersonal Relationships with Other Dancers | Acquaintances and friends | Family and friends | Acquaintances and friends | Friends and family | Family |

Hard Core Shaggers

Bryan (1979) notes that “for the most specialized fishermen the fish are not so much the object as the experience of fishing as an end in itself” (p. 46). Similar to Bryan’s specialized fishermen, hard core shaggers are seriously committed to the preservation and enjoyment of the total shag experience. Jean, a hard core shagger since 1956, described the shag experience: “If you are a true shagger, you love to dance, you love the music, you love the fellowship and you get to know a lot of good people, um, fellowship, dance, music, camaraderie, all of that. I think the majority of shaggers are in a shag social world.”

Hard core shaggers consist of a variety of individuals including professional and amateur dancers, shag and beach music promoters, and beach club owners and managers. These shaggers have earned the title “hard core” due to the intensity of their involvement and commitment to the shag world. The core members are the originators of the dance, a tightly knit group of freestyle shaggers, who spent much of their time at the beach as teenagers in the 1940s. Some worked as bingo callers, amusement ride operators, or lifeguards; others were simply “beach bums.” Norris, a shagger for over fifty years, explained, “Dancing’s just part of what you did while you were there. No one taught lessons then. You watched and you went home and practiced, in private.”

At night, this group of freestyle dancers socialized and danced at the local beach pavilions, improvising and creating their own dance steps and individual styles. An old-time shagger added, “A good dancer wouldn’t show you anything. You had to pick it up. That’s the only way you were going to learn it. They wouldn’t show you how to do these steps. They didn’t want you to know really.” Dr. Bill Saylor, former president of S. O. S. and a shagger for over sixty years, remembered,

The really great shaggers of the 40’s and 50’s had a great deal of ego. They were good and they knew they were good. They liked the recognition they would get. I mean, when they were dancing on the floor, other dancers began to pull away and stop dancing completely, just to watch them dance.

These dancers, who serve as a reference group for other types of shaggers, are the “legends” of the shag world. Hard core shaggers are not striving to “get there,” they are there. For most, proficiency in the dance is a given.

Dance identity. The shag is a primary component of identity for this group, which is apparent in the increasing amount of time spent in the shag world as opposed to other activities. For example, an increasing number of hard core shaggers, many of whom are recent retirees, have moved to Ocean Drive Beach where shagging activities are year-round. Ocean Drive is the birthplace of the shag and considered to be the Mecca of the shag world. Many hard core shaggers, as well as competitive shaggers, tend to congregate at Dockers Beach Club in Ocean Drive as one veteran shagger noted, “A lot of people go there to dance that are really serious.” The club’s reputation as home of the serious dancers has caused some problems. The owner of Dockers explained,

Docker's has the reputation that this is where the good dancers go. Your average shagger will say, "I don't want to go to Dockers and dance, I'll be intimidated." Well, ok, what would you like me to do? Would you like me to tell them to dance bad so you'll come over here? What do you do? I mean, it's a personal thing.

Although members of this group are committed shaggers who dance five to six times a week, there is a wide variation in skill development, tendency to compete in shag contests, and amount of time spent practicing. The fact that many of the hard core shaggers acquired their dance skills at an earlier stage in life may account for this variability. On the one hand, there are those, like 34-year-old Cammy, who constantly strove to improve their dance skills: "I'm doing it because I want to be good at it." On the other hand, there are some hard core shaggers who, although proficient in the dance steps, prefer not to compete. Chester, for example, is a 53-year-old excellent freestyle shagger who was drawn more to the social aspect of the dance:

They pick at me and say I've got a thirteen count basic [step] but I think that's the beauty of it. Whether you're a sorry dancer like myself or a great dancer, it's that camaraderie and the friendship. I get as much fun out of them pickin' at my dancing.

Some hard core shaggers, ranked as professional shaggers, have realized full-time leisure careers (Stebbins, 2001) as shag competitors, shag instructors, and producers of instructional shag videos. Chad and his wife, Julie, have won the national shag championship nine and ten times respectively. Julie, age 47, notes that she became a full time professional dancer in 1986 when "Chad was working at a real job." Chad, age 59, also became a full-time professional shagger in 1996.

Orientation to the dance. For hard core shaggers, the emphasis is on having fun, promoting and preserving the quality of the dance and enjoying long-term friendships with other shaggers. To ensure the continuation of the Southern tradition of shag dancing and beach music, hard core shaggers are focused on creating new experiences for other shaggers and on supporting activities that encourage newcomers. The owner of Fat Harry's beach club discussed his club's shag promotional strategies for 400 shaggers from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Johnson City, New York: "During S.O.S., we've had special parties for them. And I sell an awful lot of T-shirts to people from England that say, "I've been shagging at Fat Harry's."

Many of the hard core shaggers, who have made significant contributions to the preservation and promotion of the dance over many years, have been inducted into the Shaggers' Hall of Fame. Pictures of the Hall of Famers and their biographies hang on the walls in one of the beach club resorts. In addition to the Shaggers' Hall of Fame, this group has initiated other similar associations whose goal is the preservation of the dance and the music. The Keeper of the Dance Award, for example, is a Hall of Fame tradition. Each year the award is presented to a Junior S.O.S. shagger who

possesses the qualities that will help preserve the dance for future generations.

Members of this group realize many of the benefits of serious leisure. For example, participation in shag activities may become increasingly linked to enhancement of self-image. Davis, age 38, is a hard core shagger who enjoys competing in dance contests. When asked if money was a reason for his participation in competitions, Davis responded, "Money comes second. I like being on top. I like the title." In addition, some hard core shaggers experience feelings of accomplishment and self-actualization from the dance. Julie explained that the reason she dances was "because I can. You know you wanna feel good when you do something. . . . I like it and I want to keep improving it. And you are able to share what you do and really care about with other people." Many of these shaggers experience the benefit of lasting physical products from their involvement in the shag world. Anna Morris, for example, is a spry 74-year-old shag instructor who has been dancing for over sixty years.

Although committed to preserving the quality of the dance, hard core shaggers believe that self-gratification or pure fun (Stebbins, 2002) is an essential element that must be included in the dance experience to avoid burnout. Jared, an ex-dance competitor and currently a drummer in a shag music band, described dance burnout: "There are a lot of different kinds of burnout. There's the "This is not worth it" burn out, there's the "Been there, done that" burn out." William explained, "It's easy to let competitive dancing become too serious. . . . When you are all competitive and no social, that's when you start to burn out because you lost all the fun." For hard core shaggers, the experiential preference is first, to have fun and second, the quality of the dance. A long-time beach club manager described a typical night on the dance floor:

The majority of the Hall of Famers like to go out there and dance and cut up. They kind of stand in groups and tell lies and stories and like pickin' at each other and having a drink. Some of the best dancing is when they got a light buzz workin' and they're having fun. They'll do a step you would never see them do in a competition because they're just feelin' the lifestyle, so to speak.

Hard core shaggers are considered the in-world experts who set the social world standards and determine what is and what is not "authentic" (Strauss, 1982). For this group, whose total identity revolves around the shag social world, the dance has become a central life interest (Devall, 1973). Whether competing in shag contests or promoting the dance, hard core shaggers demonstrate a determination to persevere and a considerable amount of personal effort based on special skills and ability (Stebbins, 1992). Sid is a 31-year-old professional shagger who has been dancing for twenty-two years. Initially Sid was outranked by more experienced dancers but, instead of withdrawing because of stiff competition, he decided to persevere. Sid explained,

I started when I was nine years old in 1981. I didn't win a contest until 1988. I didn't come close to winning. I sort of knew I was paying my dues. I sort of

knew, hey, I'm not gonna beat this guy but I'm gonna stick with it because it was fun.

Interpersonal relationships. Hard core shaggers maintain strong interpersonal relationships that are familial in nature. Stan explained, "It's a community down here that's just so tight and it's like one big family. And they all have something in common, the dance and the music . . . that's what draws them closer together." Chad, one of the youngest inductees into the Hall of Fame, at age 59, agreed, "It's the dance, the music, the places you go, the people that are there. It's the atmosphere of being there . . . it's all together, not just shag dancing."

Hard core shaggers form strong bonds with other shaggers that lead to the development of a distinctive ethos. Stebbins (1992) describes the ethos as a reflection of a "local group's special beliefs, norms, events, values, traditions, moral principles, and performance standards" (p. 7). Values and norms in the shag world, which include manners and politeness, are an important part of the ethos and tend to mirror the South's "deeply rooted code of etiquette" (Wilson & Ferris, 1989, p. 635). For example, there is an unspoken dance code that requires a "lack of jealousy . . . when girlfriends, wives, or husbands are asked to dance by strangers. Everybody dances with everybody else" (Bryan, 1995, p. 105). In addition, most shaggers share the belief that a person must internalize the ethos and "feel" the dance and the music. A 37-year-old former Keeper of the Dance describes the shag as "more in here, inside, than it is down at your feet, more in your head. I mean, you have to feel it and feel the music and feel the dance and feel the people around you." An older generation shagger added, "It's feeling. So there is so much more to it than the beat."

According to Harry, age 74 and one of the originators of the dance, the shag is "much more than a dance, the shag is also a feeling of friendship." Johnny, a member of the National Shag Team, stated, "It's a family type of community." Those, like Jennifer, who began attending S.O.S. festivals in the 1980's formed friendships that span a twenty-five year period: "We know grandchildren. You know their children. You know everybody and it becomes a family. It made it very strong. It's not just about dancing." For this group, an important benefit of dancing is social interaction and belongingness realized through long-term friendships. Some of the older generation shaggers have been friends for more than sixty years. Through the years, relationships with other shaggers have become intergenerational.

Competitive Shaggers

Members of this group have established dance patterns and are the ones most likely to compete in dance contests. Although small in number compared to recreational shaggers, competitive shaggers tend to regard their dance involvement as important. In the shag world, a large amount of the diffusion of dance knowledge can be attributed to shaggers on the competitive circuit as David explained, "You learn most of your stuff by going to

contests. You can see the styles that other people are dancing. You get some ideas from the people that you are dancing against." Some competitive shaggers are members of shag dance teams that travel throughout the United States showcasing their dancing skills. A veteran shag team member stated, "We get together and learn these steps and we travel together and have a great time. I think we have charisma."

Dance identity. Competitive shaggers are committed dancers who identify strongly with the dance and constantly strive to improve their dance skills. Some competitive shaggers, like Ray, considered the dance to be a sport: "Go to the Shag Nationals and watch the divisions. That is a sport. It's very athletic. It's like a sprint, in a way, to watch them in competition. Not just relaxing and having fun, but in the competitive arena." This group of shaggers dances an average of five times a week, and most have a strong interest in the competitive aspect of the dance. David, a winner in the National Shag Dance Competition, gives his reason for competing as "being able to do something that was hard for everyone else to do. And even more than that, I thrive off of the fact that I won a contest." Before a dance contest, practice time ranges between eight and eighteen hours a week. Competing in contests requires perseverance and a large amount of personal effort based on special skills and abilities (Stebbins, 2002).

Orientation to the dance. For competitive shaggers, orientation to the dance is first, to be a good dancer and second, enjoyment of the dance and sociability. Norman described commitment levels among this competitive group of shaggers:

Well, I guess to say the highest level would be those who compete. So they are probably the highest level, those who really take it seriously. Then, those of us, I guess would be the next level. We don't want to compete, but we have a strong interest in doing it right.

David, a competitive dancer, stated, "To be a pro dancer, you've got to live it and breathe it, 24-7. The steps have got to be going through your mind. It's just a tremendous commitment to be really good at this." Whether competing or teaching shag lessons, competitive shaggers are highly oriented to competition as Judy, a shag instructor, confided, "It's a competitive thing, even if you're just teaching students. Whoever has the edge, whoever has the competitive edge and is winning contests." Shag contests provide a place where competitive shaggers can experience the benefits of enhancement of self image, feelings of accomplishment, and self-expression through skill development and creativity. Like the older generation freestyle shaggers, Danny is a 22-year-old junior competitor who enjoys making up his own shag steps and "knowing that I have been able to produce something that was unique in the shag."

Similar to hard core shaggers, the experiential preference for competitive shaggers is the quality of the dance and having fun. However competitive shaggers place a stronger emphasis on the quality of the dance than do hard core shaggers. Matt and his wife, Catherine, are 53-year-old competitive

shaggers. Matt explained, "I would love to go out and dance socially. I would love that, but to go in a dance competition, one on one, out there by yourself. . . . I think it makes you push yourself to be a better dancer." Danny agreed, "The shag has also been good for me on a competitive level to learn to drive myself and to learn how to be better at whatever I'm doing. I loved competing in it. That was fun." Jenna and her husband, Ray, are members of a shag team who also compete. Jenna added, "We make sure we practice and we do the steps correctly. We work hard at it. So we are serious when we're learning something, very serious, which is fun."

Most seasoned competitive shaggers, however, believe there must be a balance between social dancing and serious dancing to avoid burnout. James, a 36-year-old competitive shagger and member of the National Shag Dance Team, explained, "A good competitor will have a mix between competitive time and social time." Steve and his wife, Kathy, learned to shag 11 years ago and are now members of the Carolina Shag Team. Steve added, "It takes a long time to really become a good structured shagger and have fun with it."

Interpersonal relationships. Interpersonal relationships with other dancers, which are characterized by loyalty and enduring friendships, are also evident on this level. Mary Beth, a competitive shagger, explained, "It's a good group of people that enjoy having a good time together and that enjoy long-lasting friendships. It's not just a 'Johnny-come-lately' type of thing." Shag team members tend to form a strong camaraderie as Matt noted, "Anybody we've met in what I call the 'shag circle' is more than just a social friend. When you get into the 'shag circle' you form long lasting friendships. That's the most different thing I've seen about this."

Wannabes

Included among serious shaggers is a type of dancer, labeled by other shaggers, as the wannabes. According to other dancers, wannabes are the ones most likely to purchase the latest instructional dance videos, special dance shoes and dance shoe bags, and other shag-related paraphernalia. Wannabes come primarily to dance. However, to be accepted in the shag world, a person must do more than dance. They must abide by the norms and, more important, they must understand the ethos. John, age 78 and a hard core shagger since the 1940s, talked about the emergence of wannabes:

I didn't actually notice it until S.O.S. started. Everybody started going to S.O.S., and a lot of people who didn't shag went to S.O.S., and they wanted to learn. So they started shag clubs and then most shag clubs gave lessons. I've seen people who started dancing in 1991 or '92 carrying their little dance shoe bags and trying to tell people how to do this stuff, you know?

An attempt was made, in the spring of 2003, to interview two festival participants who were identified by a key informant as wannabes, but they declined the interview. The researcher observed the couple for several days during

the festival. In the beach clubs, they carried their dance shoes in a special shoe bag, rarely socialized with other dancers, and did not smile or seem to be enjoying themselves. They watched the dancers' feet and rarely made eye contact with the other participants. However, in January 2004, an opportunity presented itself to interview four dancers, three males and one female, who were identified as wannabes by two key informants.

Dance identity. Dance identity is important to the wannabes who would rather dance than socialize. Allen, a 59-year-old divorcee identified as a wannabe, stated, "If I didn't get to dance, there's a couple of times I would have gone into withdrawals." Terry, also identified as a wannabe, talked about his reason for shagging: "For me, it's serious because it's one of my most thought about and done activities. Some of them will sit and talk and socialize for 90% of the night, and then some of the people, like me, will dance for 90% of the night."

Wannabes are extremely oriented to skill development and continually strive to improve the quality of their dance. A long-time recreational shagger described wannabes as those who want to "emulate the better dancers. They take lessons, learn to a count, and do the steps. But they're more likely to copy what they see in 'natural' dancers than to originate their own steps. They don't feel it." Jean, a freestyle shagger since the 1950s, agreed,

I don't exactly like how some of these dancers, who are doing it now, look like they're programmed. They look like they are doing "and a 1 and 2 and 3 and 4, 5, 6." It's like, "Ok, let's mash the computer and see what step we are gonna do." . . . It is a feeling.

Wannabes dance an average of two to five times a week and practice time ranges from five to fifteen hours a week. Allen said, "I practice anywhere I am and not have to think about it. Pumping gas, grocery store lines, airports, uh, just wherever." Other shaggers describe wannabes as the ones who turn shagging into work, counting and practicing their steps during social dancing time as opposed to enjoying the dance experience. Two wannabes discussed their shag dancing encounters. Allen recalled dancing with a partner at a shag club in North Carolina:

I was telling her, "Let's do this" and "Let's do that," and she said, "Don't tell me what you're gonna do, lead me." I thought to myself, if you can't lead, you're no good. So I started trying to learn lead.

Terry, a retired high school teacher who attends 25 to 40 dance events a year, added, "I can show anybody that's down here right now two new steps by the time they get through dancing with me. I think that's kinda neat." Marci, a recreational shagger who has danced with numerous wannabes, noted, "I just wish they would lighten up and enjoy the music and the dance. I tell them they're working too hard, but they just don't get it." One beach club owner, who offers shag lessons at her club, stated she doesn't allow practicing on the floor: "Once the shag lessons are over and I see people trying to practice, I say, 'No, no, this is fun time now. We're gonna dance.

No practicing. You practice at the shag lessons.’” A professional shag instructor observed, “They need a better balance of competition, of reaching for goals, with social dancing. But you have to let them get it out of their system.”

Orientation to the dance. In general, for wannabes, orientation to the dance is to be a good shagger. Allen noted, “People will tell you, ‘I don’t go to Dockers because they’re all too good.’ And I said, ‘You know, the only way you get better is to dance with a good dancer.’” Wannabes prefer dancing with other shaggers who have perfected the technical aspects of the dance, which violates the unspoken dance code of shagging with anyone who asks you to dance. Allen stated, “Now I don’t have a lot of patience with beginners.” Terry agreed, “I don’t want to spend my whole night with a beginner, you know what I’m saying?” Lee, also designated as a wannabe, talked about shagging with a partner who doesn’t know the proper moves: “If I put her in a place, I expect her to be there when I come back. And if I have to look around, you just ruined the dance, especially if I was doing a spin.” Larry, a recreational shagger, recounted a story about his wife dancing with a wannabe: “She had to take lessons to learn to shag and there was this one guy that danced with her. She didn’t do something right and he just said ‘Forget it’ and walked off the floor. And it embarrassed her.”

For this group, the experiential preference is the quality of the dance but without the fun or social elements. Warren, a longtime shagger and beach club deejay, described wannabes as “the ones that don’t smile when they are dancing. You can tell it. They’re out there for different reasons other than enjoyment.” A seasoned shag competition judge stated, “The contests that I have judged, I look at the people and see if they are enjoying themselves, smiling at one another. Do they look comfortable or do they look more rigid and just stepping out the steps?” A 36-year-old professional shagger and former Keeper of the Dance, noted, “It’s all about good attitude. Uh, just very bad attitudes are not, they just don’t go along with this group of people, because every person I know in this community has a great attitude. They do it for fun.”

For wannabes, their primary reason for involvement is to be a good dancer. Wannabes are characterized by their emphasis on skill development, rather than on socializing and having fun, as evidenced by Lee’s response: “I come to dance. And that’s the reason we have the club is for the preservation of the dance which makes you want to dance and that’s the reason I go.” A devout hard core shagger expressed his concerns about wannabes:

I would hate to know that the next generations that come don’t understand the camaraderie. It’s that bond. And so many people, I think, in their life are looking for that. But they are looking for it as a wannabe. As a “How I dance,” not as a “Hey, my name’s John Henry, I like so and so, what y’all doin’?” It’s “Let me impress you with my dancing.” I don’t give a damn about your dancing. What kinda fella are you?

Interpersonal relationships. Although wannabes acknowledge their membership in a group in general, they do not express the intimate connections or sense of belonging noted by other types of shaggers. Wannabes tend to

regard other dancers as friends and acquaintances. Wendy and her husband, designated as wannabes by a key informant, learned to shag five years ago and are members of two shag clubs. Lee explained, "It's just been a little bit more of an enhancement for our social life probably. But for serious dancers, like us, it's just, um, you know, it's fantastic if you really love and enjoy the dancing." Terry, a wannabe who has been dancing for over forty years, explained that he felt like "part of a group in general, not in particular. For some, it's more of a social thing. They get too involved in a lot of stuff in shag clubs, become groupie-like. I don't do that. I come to dance." Chester, a hard core shagger who has been a beach club manager since the 1980s, gave his observation:

People can come in here and take a shag lesson and do the stuff and they can learn all the steps, but you've got to feel this stuff. And you can about spot 'em 200 miles away—the ones that know the steps and the ones that know the right stuff. And, if all you want to know is the steps, then you are missing 90% of what this dance is about, you know?

A Hall of Fame shag instructor, who has taught many wannabes, noted that they must "understand the love of the dance. It's more than a dance, it's a lifestyle. But they have to learn it on their own. You can't give it to them. And I think it will come for them, in time."

Recreational Shaggers

Recreational shaggers constitute the largest group of dancers. Many recreational shaggers belong to a local shag club that holds weekly meetings where members congregate to dance and socialize. Members of this group prefer to dance in informal settings among friends as opposed to competitive settings. One recreational shagger stated, "I don't like Dockers. I think it's elite. Those people are professionals who are cliquish and don't seem to want to interact with other people whereas Fat Harry's and The Cove seem more friendly, like we are." Jack and his wife, Kitty, are recreational shaggers who have never had the desire to compete in shag contests as Jack explained, "Kitty and I are just having fun, and competing is for those people who want to work at it more. We just want to showcase our dance in front of people in a fun environment."

Dance identity. Similar to the preceding types of dancers, recreational shaggers regarded their dance identity as important. Some, like Kitty, had formed a regional identity with the dance: "Once you have it, once you learn it, it belongs to you. It's something that belongs to our area you know." Although this group shows a disinterested attitude toward competition and ambivalence toward skill development, there is a significant amount of personal effort that is needed to learn new dance steps. Jan, a former competitive shagger and now a recreational shagger, gave her view on skill development: "Yeah, we were serious. We were practicing a good bit. Now I'm serious to the point that I want to learn new steps but, you know, if you can't laugh at yourself, it's not a whole lot of fun." When asked if he ever thought

about competing, Alton, a recreational shagger, replied, "No, I like what I'm doing."

The emphasis for recreational shaggers is on having fun with other dancers as opposed to competing in shag contests. Some recreational shaggers, like Ron, had established dance patterns and enjoyed a weekly night out dancing and socializing with other shaggers: "You plan for your weekend. The kids even know that, especially on Saturday night." For recreational shaggers, the experiential preference is to have fun. Warren, a long-time shag music deejay, explained, "It could probably be summed up in three words: fun is contagious. It's just people having fun and to be a part of that fun you either have to like the music or learn how to dance.

Orientation to the dance. Recreational shaggers show a wide variation in their reasons for involvement with the dance. Some, like the Jacksons, enjoyed the benefits of social interaction and belongingness (Stebbins, 2001): "You meet so many people, and that's what happens in the shag world. You dance with somebody, you talk and stand around and before you know it, you connect. You make such wonderful friends." Others emphasized enjoyment of the music and the dance. Burle, a Hall of Fame deejay, explained how his interest in music launched his leisure career as a deejay:

I went out bar-hopping and ran into the music and the people, and it was a different scene than what I had seen in my life. Just people having a good time and good music, and I got involved in it. I love music, and I love people and interacting with them. So it became my second life and then became my first life.

Lindy, an avid shagger, was attracted to the dance as an art form and as a social network: "It's the smoothness, the beauty of the dance, and the camaraderie of the people that participate. It's like a circle of people that all just care so much about one another and love to dance." Some recreational shaggers like Beatrice, who relocated to the area, were looking for a new cultural experience: "I wanted to learn to shag because it's just part of the South. It's what they do down here." Among recreational shaggers, the emphasis is on sociability, enjoyment of the music and the dance, and discovering new cultural experiences.

Interpersonal relationships. Recreational shaggers tend to form close interpersonal relationships with other dancers whom they regarded as family and friends. Ed and Glenda were members of a shag club for over 20 years. Ed stated, "It's a great family. It's a good clean way to have family entertainment." Margaret and her husband, Gary, were recreational shaggers who learned to dance four years ago: "We would take lessons and go practice at the shag club. So we gained another group of friends who became our best friends. James, an old-time shagger, added, "But it's just like a family. And like any other family, you have some brats; and like relatives, you put up with them."

Occasional Shaggers

Occasional shaggers do not exhibit the regular dance patterns that typify the other categories of shaggers. This group of shaggers tends to dance on

an occasional basis and vary in terms of their dance identity. Some have other dance interests and enjoy participating in a variety of dances. Although occasional shaggers share the same experiential preference as do recreational shaggers, they differ in terms of their dance involvement.

Dance identity. Occasional shaggers, whose identification with the dance ranges from limited to important, may be considered marginal members of the shag social world. On the one hand, dance identity is important to those who, for one reason or another, have made the transition from recreational shaggers to casual shaggers. For example, some recreational shaggers are now occasional shaggers due to outside commitments, such as family obligations. Some have assumed the responsibility of caring for grandchildren, while others have the responsibility of caring for an aging parent. Cathy, a recreational shagger, explained why she and her husband are currently occasional shaggers: "You know, family situations, other responsibilities. My mother stays with us now. We don't make it out on Wednesday night to the shag club like we used to." On the other hand, some occasional shaggers would like to participate in the dance on a regular basis but, due to varying circumstances, were only occasional shaggers. Ruth, for example, is 51 years of age and learned to shag as a teenager: "I shag probably once every two or three months, not often enough. I'd like to be one that does it for entertainment, but I'm one of the occasional ones because my husband doesn't shag." Still others, like Jon, had a variety of interests and do not regard their dance identity as important: "I have too many passions for too many different things. You know, between music and art and dance, there are so many things I enjoy." To Hal, a native of Pennsylvania, the shag was incidental to other dance interests: "For me, it's just another dance and I love to dance."

Orientation to the dance. Although occasional shaggers may be receptive to learning new dance skills, they have no desire to compete in shag contests. In other words, they do not possess the perseverance or the personal effort that characterize other types of shaggers. For this group, frequency of dance is irregular, varying from bi-monthly to once every six months. Practice time ranges from limited to none.

Interpersonal relationships. Similar to wannabes, occasional shaggers do not enjoy the close friendships experienced by other types of shaggers. This is due to a variety of interests, inconsistent dance patterns, and outside commitments. Consequently, for occasional shaggers, interpersonal relationships with other shaggers consist of social acquaintances and friends.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore a regional dance as serious leisure and to determine the reasons for the longevity of the dance and for the long-term involvement and commitment of the participants. The six interrelated qualities of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1992) are evident in shag dancing. Shaggers must persevere in order to learn the dance steps, to improve their dance skills, or to compete in shag contests. A considerable amount of personal effort based on special training and skill is needed to

become an amateur or professional shagger. Although all types of shaggers realize some of the benefits of serious leisure, the benefits most often cited by both serious and casual dancers are social interaction and belongingness and self-gratification, or pure fun. For some shaggers, the dance provides a leisure career that includes stages of involvement and achievement. Participation in the collective activity results in a strong sense of identity and the formation of a distinctive ethos. Stebbins (2001) notes that a primary component of the ethos is a unique social world that develops in connection with the activity.

The social world of the shag appears to be composed of two separate subworlds: a *serious* shag subworld and a *casual* shag subworld. The presence of two subworlds supports findings from previous studies (Scott & Godbey, 1992; 1994) and is consistent with Strauss' (1978) conceptualization that most social worlds "seem to dissolve, when scrutinized, into congeries of subworlds" (p. 123). Although serious and casual were primary sources of orientation for dance participation, a variety of dance types were found. Using a recreational specialization typology, shaggers were categorized on the basis of dance identity, orientation to skill development, frequency of dance, tendency to compete, orientation to the dance, experiential preference, and interpersonal relationships with other dancers. Findings indicate that participants in the casual shag subworld consist of occasional shaggers and recreational shaggers; serious shag subworld participants include wannabes, competitive, and hard core shaggers. Consistent with Stebbins (1992), "seriousness or casualness among amateurs, as personal approaches to leisure, are merely the poles of a complicated dimension along which individuals may be ranked by their degrees of involvement in a particular activity" (p. 6).

In the shag world, interpersonal relationships and the availability of leisure choices appear to contribute to participants' long-term commitment and involvement with the dance. Individual patterns of involvement may fluctuate over time due to career contingencies which Stebbins (1992) describes as "an unintended event, process or situation that occurs by chance" and may be the result of "changes in leisure or work environments or personal circumstances" (p. 70). In the shag world, contingencies that affect involvement levels include changing lifestyle needs, stage in the lifecycle, or personal limits in commitment. Some shaggers, for example, have taken on the role of caregivers for elderly parents, while others provide care for their grandchildren while the parents work. Stage in the lifecycle may be another contingency that affects patterns of involvement. Over the life course, enjoyment and continuation in certain activities may be easier than in others. For some shaggers, health concerns or age factors may result in a change from the serious leisure of competing in contests to the social leisure of shagging with family or friends. Personal limits in commitment may also be a factor that affects individual involvement levels. Some people may have interests in other leisure areas and differ in terms of their dedication to the dance. For them, the dance is not a central life interest.

Although findings indicate that the availability of leisure choices is one of the reasons for participants' long-term commitment and involvement with the dance, the primary reason appears to be the long-lasting friendships and camaraderie that result from a common interest in the music and the dance. An important finding of this study is that most people engage in the dance for intrinsic rewards: because it is fun and leads to long-term friendships. Continuing involvement and commitment to an activity may be the result of an intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic reward structure. Bryan (2001) noted that "the 'old fashioned way' of gradual and then increasing involvement in a sport or hobby is pulled along more by intrinsic than extrinsic reward structures. That is, the individual engages because the activity is fun; it is play" (p. 346).

Bryan (1979) and other researchers (Ditton, Loomis, & Choi, 1992; McIntyre & Pigram, 1992) suggest that outdoor activity participants progress, over time, along a recreation specialization continuum. However, Kuentzel and McDonald (1992) found that many canoeists and kayakers reach a plateau in regard to progression along the specialization continuum that may be due to limits in commitment or changes in lifestyles. Similarly, Scott and Godbey (1994) found that many bridge players do not progress along the specialization continuum and "the process of specialization or becoming serious appears to be related to a *desire* to develop skills at an advanced level" (p. 293). Results from this study support these findings. Although a linear progression from occasional shagger to another category is possible, it is not inevitable (Bryan, 1979). For many dancers, the most common career progression is from occasional shagger to recreational shagger. A smaller number of dancers, who wish to become more specialized, may continue their progression to the competitive level. However, from the evidence presented in this study, it would seem that some shaggers regress instead of progress. For example, former competitive shaggers, who are now recreational shaggers, cited reasons for discontinuing their career as no longer challenging or too time-consuming in terms of practice and travel time, too much work, and no fun. Progression to a hard core shagger requires more than proficiency in dance skills. To be accepted as a hard core shagger, a person must internalize the ethos, regard the dance as a central life interest and, over a number of years, prove themselves "worthy" of membership.

All types of shaggers, with the exception of the wannabes, emphasized fun as an integral part of the shag experience. What accounts for the wannabe category of dancers in the shag world? According to Unruh (1979), "sub-types, which represent finer discriminations, may certainly exist in specific social worlds" (p. 116). One explanation of the wannabe category may be what Scott and Godbey (1994) refer to as a "speeding-up" of the recreation specialization process that occurs when occasional players skip over intermediate stages and jump into a serious level of play. In other words, wannabes have been able to "jump start" (Bryan, 2001) their dance career. The availability of commercial shag lessons, instructional shag videos, and shag workshops has enabled them to skip over the normal socialization proc-

ess. The wannabe category may also be an example of “culture lag” which occurs when “some enthusiasts exhibit high-end of the continuum skills and commitment without ‘appropriate ethical conduct’ to guide the behavior” (Bryan, 2001, p. 346). Although wannabes show evidence of specialization in their dance skills and equipment, such as commercial dance lessons and special dance shoes, the ethical and other attitudinal components that guide the activity are not present.

A further explanation for the presence of the wannabe category may be the result of boundary setting (Strauss, 1982) by other types of shaggers. Unruh (1979) notes that social world members “are often willing to cooperate, receive, or at least tolerate new participants so long as reasonable conformity with the norms and values exists” (p. 125). According to some recreational, competitive, and hard core shaggers, the wannabes don’t understand the ethos or follow the social world norms. Becoming an authentic shagger involves more than just technical skills. It also involves attitude, behavior, and understanding the ethos. To realize the total shag experience, a person must internalize the ethos and feel the music and the dance.

Reasons cited by informants for the continuing popularity of the dance include freedom of expression and the challenge and versatility of the dance. According to Mannell and Kleiber (1997), those activities which adolescents tend to continue into adulthood are the ones which include peers with similar interests and which are complex enough to offer increasing levels of challenge. Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) flow theory is based on the assumption that people reach peaks of involvement in their lives that produce intense feelings of creativity and enjoyment. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) describes dancing as an activity likely to be flow producing: “Popular dance provides diverse opportunities for involvement. Some people emphasize the movement of their bodies; others try to maximize emotional communication; still others respond to the social dimensions of the activity” (p. 182).

A number of researchers have acknowledged a link between flow and serious leisure (Hamilton-Smith, 1992; Kelly & Freysinger, 2000; Stebbins, 1992, 1996, 2001). Serious leisure activities that promote aesthetic opportunities, exploration, and play are the ones most likely to be flow-producing (Hamilton-Smith, 1992). According to Kelly and Freysinger (2000), “when we match our developed skills with clear challenges, we are most likely to have that deeply involving experience” (p. 108). However, the matching of skills and challenges is critical. If the challenges are greater than the skills, the result is anxiety. On the other hand, a lack of challenge in relation to available skills is likely to be experienced as boredom. Whether a person chooses a serious orientation or a casual orientation to the dance, the shag offers a range of skill levels from mastering the basic step to proficiency with advanced intricate steps.

An interesting finding of this study is that when dance specialization gets ahead of socialization, there is a greater tendency to experience burnout with the activity. It appears that shaggers who emphasize the technical aspects of the dance, as opposed to being with friends and dancing for fun, have a

greater tendency to experience dance burnout. Therefore, a gradual socialization and commitment process may contribute to the participants' long-term commitment and involvement with the activity. One of the primary findings of this study was the importance of interpersonal relationships for long term involvement and commitment to the dance. Mannell and Kleiber (1997) have noted that little research has been conducted on the impact of leisure on intimate relationships and friendships. Future studies might focus on the ways in which social dance may contribute to the development of interpersonal relationships.

Overall, this study found that shag dancing is a form of serious leisure in which participants realize a career in the leisure activity. Stebbins (1992) suggested that serious leisure pursuits in the arts allow retirees to engage in activities that enrich and expand their social world. One prospect for future research might be to investigate the turning points and career contingencies that long-time participants have encountered during their career progression. According to Leitner and Leitner (2004) older adults are the fastest growing age group in the country. What types of benefits does serious leisure offer this particular age group? Do older adults, who participate in social dancing, share certain attitudes and behaviors?

Also, this research has importance for understanding a form of recreational activity that can be participated in over the lifespan. Given the intergenerational nature of the dance participants, what activities appeal to each age group? Does the socialization process vary among different age groups? Which leisure activities contribute to the quality of life for each group? Given this research was exploratory in nature, future research is needed to quantitatively test the typology proposed in this study. Do these social types exist in other dance populations? Future research may offer insight in these areas.

There are several limitations associated with the study. Because social dancing is a complex activity, results may differ depending on the type of dance investigated. For example, freestyle club dancing and group folk dancing are very different from shag dancing, which is a couples dance. This analysis proposes to be accurate in detail only for the specified sample, although it is certainly relevant to similar activities among other groups. Second, there are limitations in the chosen sample. The majority of informants were middle-class Caucasian adults engaging in a single interest area, a leisure activity from a specific region of the United States. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to other populations and interest areas but are limited to individuals with similar characteristics. Another limitation is that the background of the researcher may create a bias. The researcher is a Southerner, a shagger, and has experienced the Ocean Drive shag scene as a teenager. However, this may also be an advantage. It is possible that the researcher, being a shagger, has been allowed access to a "back of the house" tour that an outsider would not have been able to obtain. Finally, these findings are the result of qualitative research, an exploratory technique designed to provide insights, ideas, and hypotheses which may then be quantitatively tested.

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