

Bonsai growing in Australia: Practicing Ikigai and Kodawari within a hobby



Charles Sturt
University

Yazdan Mansourian, PhD

School of Information & Communication Studies

ymansourian@csu.edu.au

Introduction

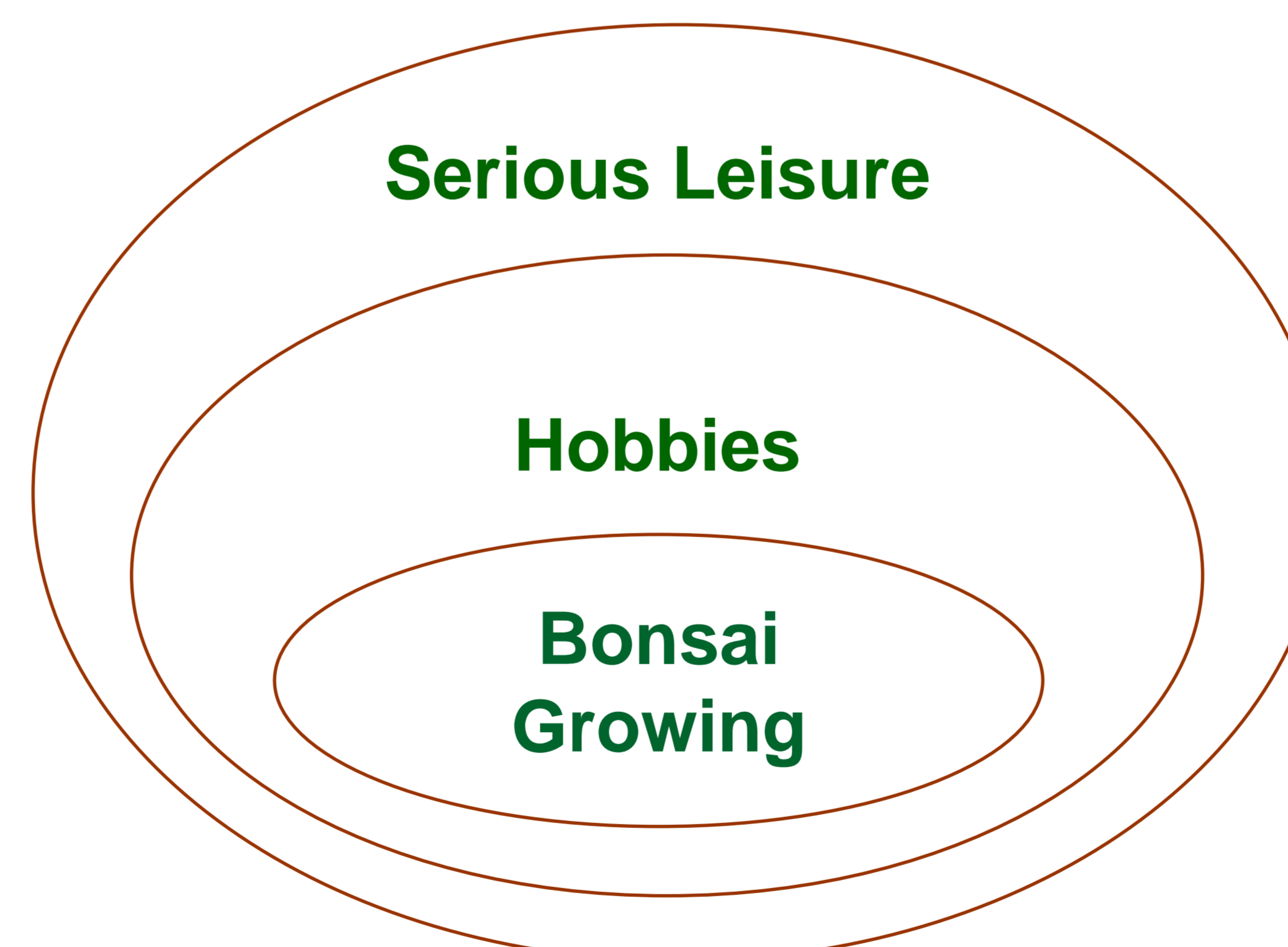
- ✓ This paper presents early findings of an ongoing project about bonsai growing hobby in Australia.
- ✓ The project is a phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of bonsai growers and aims to identify to what extent bonsai growing can contribute to the overall wellbeing of the participants.
- ✓ This study employs the Serious Leisure Perspective to conceptualise and contextualise the collected data.

What is Serious Leisure?

- ✓ Serious leisure is a term coined by Dr Robert Stebbins in 1982. It includes hobbies, amateurism and voluntary activities with six criteria: perseverance and commitment, potentiality to turn into a career, significant personal effort, durable personal and social benefits, unique ethos within a social world and personal and social identity.
- ✓ Research shows serious leisure is a rich source of pleasure, passion, and purpose for the participants and can enhance various aspects of their overall wellbeing.
- ✓ It brings numerous personal and social benefits such as finding opportunities for creating an expression, enjoying a sense of achievement, alleviating boredom, building social bonds, enhancing self-confidence and self-actualisation.

Research design

- ✓ **Theoretical framework:** Serious Leisure Perspective
- ✓ **Research approach:** Qualitative
- ✓ **Methodology:** Phenomenology
- ✓ **Data collection tool:** Online interview
- ✓ **Target group:** Bonsai growers in Australia
- ✓ **Sampling method:** Purposeful sampling



Mapping this research into a bigger picture

Early findings

- ✓ Bonsai growing is a rich source of cognitive, emotional and social wellbeing for the participants.
- ✓ Bonsai provides a space for the participants to practice Ikigai, the notion of a life worth living, in their daily life.
- ✓ Ikigai is a Japanese concept which means finding purpose and meaning in life and what makes life worth living.
- ✓ The participants frequently refer to their bonsai hobby as one of the main reasons to wake up in the morning and engage in their everyday life activities.
- ✓ Bonsai growing is an excellent example of Kodawari, that means the persistent pursuit of perfection through deep attention to details in a particular practice.
- ✓ Most participants showed interest in the richness of Japanese culture and philosophy. They believed bonsai growing is an open window for them towards the horizon of Japanese culture and traditions.
- ✓ Bonsai growing is a valuable opportunity to foster intercultural ties between Japan and Australia.

References

- Stebbins, R. (1982). Serious leisure: A conceptual statement, *Pacific Sociological Review*, 25: 251-272.
- Kono, S., Walker, G.J. (2020). Theorizing ikigai or life worth living among Japanese university students: A mixed-methods approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 21, 327–355.
- Mansourian, Y. (2021). Joyful information activities in serious leisure: Looking for pleasure, passion and purpose, *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, 73(5), 601-617.

The annual symposium of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Alumni Association in Australia (JSPSAAA), 29th & 30th March 2022, Sydney