

Walking Through Theory: An Exploration of Theoretical Frameworks in Miniature

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Purpose:

This project explored how students reflect and make sense of theoretical frameworks through the creation of 3-D miniature spaces. This inquiry seeks a deeper understanding of the usefulness of arts and image-based practices in promoting an understanding of how we negotiate knowledge formation in higher education contexts (Raingruber, 2009; Schell, Ferguson, Hamoline, Shea, Thomas-Maclean, 2009). Additionally, finding alternative pedagogical practices supports student achievement and gives opportunities for engaging students.

Methods/participants:

The class this semester long practitioner inquiry (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2005) occurred in was *Introduction to Research Methods* for MS and PhD students in art education. Out of 18 total participants, 14 were in the MS program and 4 in the PhD program. While all students were working within arts related degrees, their fine arts background varied widely. Student work was viewed through an arts-based lens, utilizing Barone & Eisner's (2012) criteria for assessing arts based research. Analysis focused on the success of the pedagogical practice, rather than aesthetic merit.

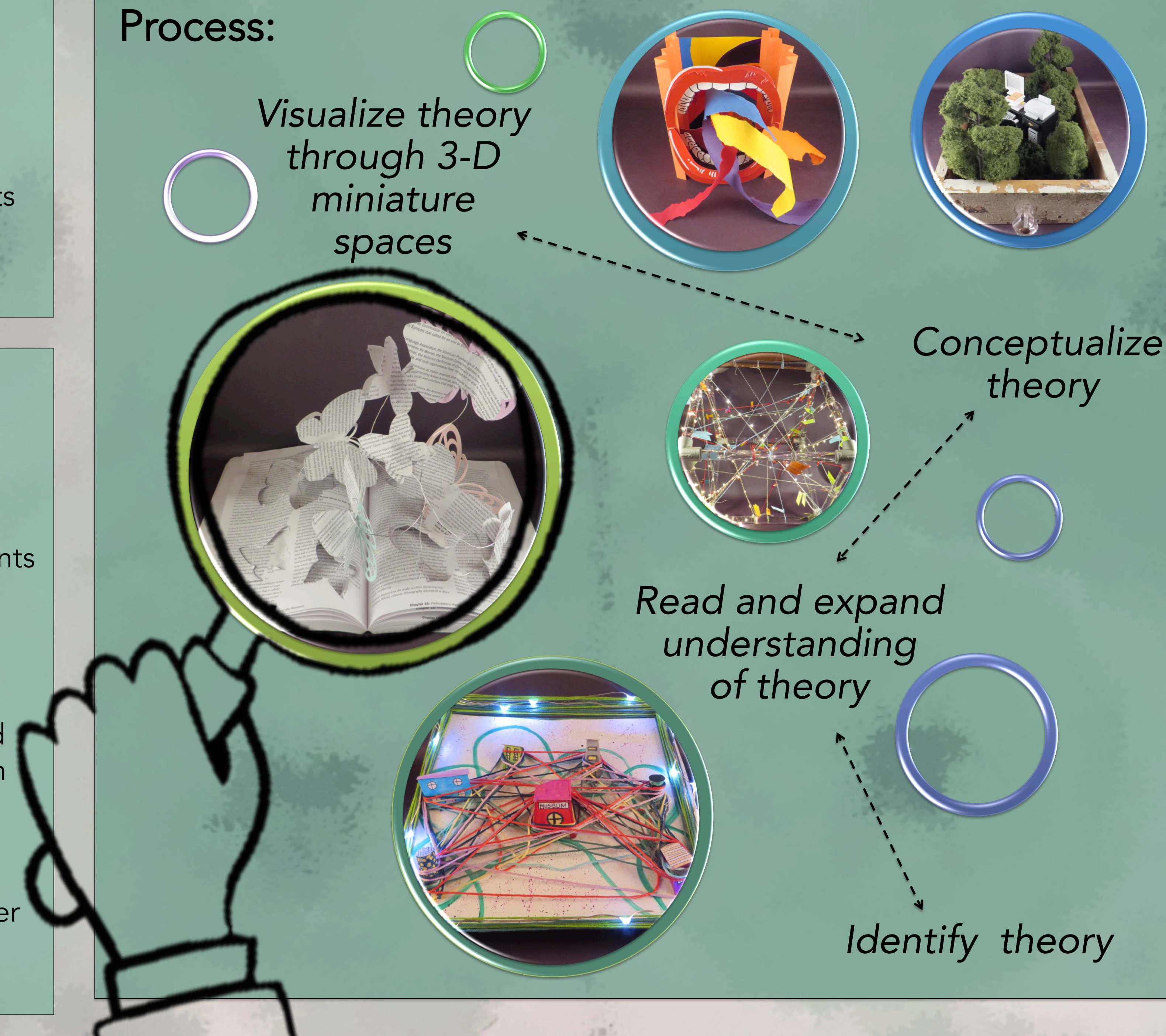
Guiding Question:

How might the creation of three-dimensional miniature spaces allow students to develop and understand their theoretical frameworks

Literature:

Bachelard (1994) discussed the importance of the miniature in his writing on the poetics of space. Exploring the very real way our commitments to representation shift when we are no longer bound by the reality of size and the confines of the real world. This shifting of viewpoints forces the maker and viewer to see the world in new ways. Bachelard's (1994) work moved me to think of the potential for this point of view in reimagining the significance and meaning of theoretical frameworks. By zooming in we are afforded a new perspective, a fresh view of something looked at over and over.

Process:



Outcomes:

The work of understanding and the work of creating live in similar spaces. To try and capture what this project did for students is impossible, because the experience morphed in response to individual needs and ideas. This alternate formation of knowledge, as realized through the construction of a three-dimensional space, allowed for the miniature theoretical space and theoretical concepts to contextualize one another. As qualitative researchers and teachers, we must find ways to engage our students in exploration and illumination of knowledge and artful pedagogical practices are but one way to accomplish this.