

CONCEPTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE AND TEACHING PRACTICE AMONG MUSIC EDUCATION STUDENTS AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT. This study examines undergraduate elementary and music teacher education students' constructions of teaching knowledge and practice. Two vastly different types of institutionalized notions of professionalism present in the two groups are discussed in relation to students' first-time teaching experiences. Emerging out of these two contexts are significant contrasts in how they perceive their identity, function, and role as teachers. Implications regarding current curricular reform movements are explored.

RÉSUMÉ. Cette étude analyse la façon dont les étudiants d'un programme de 1^{er} cycle en formation des professeurs du primaire et de musique construisent leurs connaissances et leur pratique de l'enseignement. L'auteur analyse deux types de notions institutionnalisées radicalement différentes du professionnalisme présentes dans les deux groupes par rapport à la première expérience d'enseignement des étudiants. Il ressort de ces deux contextes des contrastes frappants dans la façon dont les étudiants perçoivent leur identité, leur fonction et leur rôle d'enseignants. L'auteur étudie les implications sur la réforme actuelle des programmes d'études.

It is widely accepted that programs leading to certification for teaching of music exist institutionally apart from liberal arts oriented programs for certification in elementary education. Field experiences, as well as a general foundation of education courses and methods courses, rarely overlap in student enrollment. Casual observation of the typical course of study of music education undergraduates and that of the elementary education undergraduates reveals very little in common between the two. The professional sequences of study for both certification programs remain quite distinct despite their intended purposes of preparing teachers to enter the professional world of teaching.

Music teacher education's separateness from other teaching certification programs has been a source of pride for the music education

profession. As Colwell (1985) notes, the program itself has tended to be content with its accomplishments in meeting both the musical and educational needs of its preservice students without any systematic evaluation or critique. Its long detachment from the programs that certify teachers in elementary education reflects not only the history of music education itself, but, as Keene (1982) observes, a defining of what a music teacher should be.

Many teacher educators in elementary certification programs have argued for the creation of a more tightly controlled and specialized professionalization movement. The Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Task Force (1986), for example, have called for a more rigorous academic background for elementary teachers. Many such programs are now in existence. Making an analogy to the professions of law and medicine, these reforms call for fifth-year programs that would require teachers to have a bachelor's degree in a specialized academic area, followed by intensive training in a knowledge base of pedagogy. This specialized knowledge would be constructed in teacher training institutions and in clinical school settings (professional development schools) where students would gain field experiences modeled after medical residencies.

Although these reforms emphasize the need for strong foundations of solid disciplinary knowledge, as a practical matter, schools of education in universities and colleges have been able to exert little control over the courses of study in liberal arts and sciences departments which exist separate from departments and schools of teacher education. The net result has been a greater focus on the construction and control of a knowledge base in pedagogy for the various disciplines, ever more firmly rooted in cognitive psychology. Despite these goals, in practice, elementary teacher educators have difficulty teaching students "constructivist" forms of pedagogy when disciplinary knowledge has not been highly controlled.

By contrast, schools of music do more completely control the disciplinary base of skills and knowledge in music. Music teacher educators work within strong foundational and curricular classifications and canons. Courses in basic musicianship and performance, as well as courses in techniques and methods, mark out very specifically what is included in or excluded from the curriculum. However, music educators find it difficult to interest their students and colleagues in theory, history, composition, and performance in notions of conceptual learning and

teaching currently being constructed as a knowledge base in schools of education.

This study explores the impact these two types of institutionally constructed notions of professionalism have on student articulation: their conceptions of teaching knowledge and their conceptions of teacher practice. If both education programs consider moving closer to each other in reconceptualizing teacher knowledge and skills, the implications of this research have importance for both reform in elementary education certification programs and music education teacher programs.

METHOD

Because the nature of the study was to explore students' constructions of teaching knowledge and practice in music education and elementary teacher education, we felt that an ethnographic study of the two groups of preservice students' articulations was appropriate. One group was enrolled in a music education program at a school of music. The other group was enrolled in an elementary education certification program. The music group consisted of 20 first- and second-year music education students who were enrolled in an elementary general music methods class that met for three hours a week. Concurrent with their methods class, this group also spent one hour a week in an elementary school teaching either grade K, 1, 3, 4, or 6. An additional hour outside of field experience and methods class was spent in a reflective teaching seminar. This group was simultaneously enrolled in the first class of a sequence of classes in music theory, aural skills, and choral-instrumental techniques.

The elementary education group consisted of 23 first- and second-year education students who were enrolled in a cluster of classes which included language arts methods, social studies methods, children's literature, and a course in foundations of classroom behavior. This cluster included a field experience of two full days per week in a public school in grades K-6 for five weeks. The classroom behavior course served as a reflective teaching and field experience seminar.

Journal data, fieldnotes, and student interviews, as well as videotapes of the students' classroom teaching and their seminars, were collected. The narratives these students provided about becoming teachers not only characterize distinctive historical and structural differences, but also reflect how they position themselves in relation to knowledge,

pedagogy, and students. As their constructions of a sense of identity and function emerge, their representations take on unique properties.

In analyzing our data we relied upon the work of Basil Bernstein (1977) for direction regarding the relationship of historically formed institutional structures of both knowledge and pedagogy. In Bernstein's conceptual system for looking at education, he argues that the transmission of educational knowledge consists of an interdependence between its content and form as embodied in structures of social relationships (p. 3). Although we utilized Bernstein's work to create analytic distinctions, our intent was not to suggest that the teacher is the static product of such structures. Our idea is, instead, as Britzman (1991) argues, that "the teacher is continually shaping and being shaped by the dynamics of social practice, social structure, and history" (p. 32); or, in Feldman's (1989) words, it is the environment of specific cultures that "permits access to accumulated (and created) knowledge" (p. 249).

THE STUDY: CONCEPTIONS OF KNOWLEDGE AND OF PEDAGOGY

Making "musicians" vs. being a "role model"

We frame our discussion of students' conceptions of knowledge by trying to make sense of what it is they are attempting to learn that will, in their view, enable them to be elementary teachers or elementary music teachers. In this sense, students try to form an "identity" that anchors their study, that gives direction to their thinking and acting in the institutional environment. Our attempt was to examine these socially and culturally produced student articulations. Because both researchers were situated in the same institutional environment as the students, our ethnographic "goal" was to make what was "familiar" to our teaching "strange" to us as researchers. Our initial questions were: What do they talk about? What do they perceive as their task, goal, or assignment?

We found that in almost all cases, music education students construct an identity around being a musician and through acquiring "musicianship." Performing music is the central defining behavior that structures students' conceptions of what music is and what musicians do. Singing and playing are the essential components and the significant means through which students view the musical experience. This conception of music as performance is the dominant construction of what our students see to be the study of music and the teaching of music. As Paul, a music education student, says, "making music – that is what musicians do."

can look up to. If students in a sense idolize you then they may give it their all to do the best work they can, just to do it for the teacher." Their conception of being a "positive role model" is that of helping children understand. As Ramona explains, "What is important is creating an environment [that is] accepting and safe." Much of the students' conversation repeatedly centers around, what Janet calls, "the nurturing of ideas," while at the same time "being in touch and channeling drive and ambition."

When elementary education students talk about their classroom experiences, the focus is on building personal relationships, as opposed to developing mathematics or reading ability. What "counts" as professional knowledge for them is knowledge of individual student characteristics and needs. Talk about these relationships displaces discussion of subject matter even when subject matter considerations are intended to be the focus of the seminar. Instead, conversation continually refocuses upon relationships with students and cooperating teachers as well as any clues and connections that can be made regarding parents and the home lives of students.

When music education students talk about their teaching experiences, their focus is on music and its production. The teacher "role" is defined by subject matter. There is an explicit understanding and acknowledged desire that becoming a music teacher is becoming a "musician" and acquiring musicianship. Considerations of knowledge or forms of pedagogy outside the boundaries of musicianship-performance are, as Reimer (1996) observes, and confirmed by our conversations with music students, viewed somewhat intrusive and erosive of what it means to be or to make a musician.

Fitting students to music vs. fitting subjects to students

We found that inseparable from student conceptions of knowledge and identity are structural differences in pedagogy. Our analysis of students' constructions of pedagogy centered around the general themes present in the relationships of teacher to pupil for both the elementary education and elementary music education students. Our concern was to examine differences in pedagogical language and behavior of preservice students, given the vast differences in historically driven institutional pedagogical forms.

As Keene (1987) observes, the history of music education in the United States has always been one of reform centered around methodology and the pedagogy required to initiate students into what he calls "a viable

art form" (p. 354). Seen within the historical context of music teacher preparation, the aspirations of those who wish to teach music, especially in the schools, reflect not only a claim for musician status and curricular inclusion, but, as Leonhard (1985) observes, a movement of institutional professionalization. According to Colwell (1985), particularly significant for its impact on the institutionalization of music teaching and learning was the establishment of the 19th century European conservatory model of music education in higher education. With its focus on conserving and perpetuating performance practices through master-apprentice pedagogy, this grafting of the conservatory model into schools established primarily for the training of elementary public school teachers (or normal schools) and liberal arts institutions has resulted in what Leonhard (1985) has characterized as a hybrid model of professional preparation. The struggle for curricular dominance among these three traditions remains particularly problematic for the construction of what Boardman (1990) calls an "ideologically uniform" approach to music teacher education. The conservatory model, however, with performance practices as its goal and the master-apprentice pedagogy as its dominant form of developing musicianship, for the most part, controls music teaching and learning in schools of music and performance programs in public schools.

Our analysis of how pedagogy is structured and functions for music education students suggests a view of pedagogy that is "solution giving," in that initiation into, or learning, the "art form" requires the acquisition of states of knowledge, with curriculum progression moving sequentially from a surface to deep structure of knowledge, exemplifying increasing proficiency of skills that is dependent upon the master-apprentice form. Student-teacher relationships in this curriculum organization appear fixed or authoritarian, in that the interaction of subject matter discipline, performance practices, and pedagogical traditions tend to observe a hierarchical order. Such a focus on music as subject matter and performance suggests a privileging of teacher over child. Students articulate these hierarchies rather succinctly when they talk about "conducting" versus "teaching" or "directing a choir" versus "singing a song in kindergarten."

Whether analyzed by historical, disciplinary, professional, or pedagogical contexts, curricular interpretations and music education students' own interpretations of their curricula suggest that the emphasis on performance-musicianship is the normalized or institutional "model" for assuming any role in music (whether it be performer, composer,

Our exploration of students' conversations of musicianship and its acquisition reveals talk which depicts a conceptualization of knowledge that is fundamentally based on procedural knowledge. Such procedural knowledge, or knowing "how to sing or play an instrument" (or, less frequently in students' conversations, how to improvise or compose music) is a matter of acquiring competency or proficiency in a skill. Such knowledge is, according to music education students, a matter of "artistry."

"Interpretation," students say, lies at the heart of artistry. For many music education students the ability to perform a specific culturally defined set of standardized traditions of practice, for example, "baroque style," is understanding music artistically. However, artistry is not confined to specific practices of music but also includes the notion of "self-expression" or reflectivity. "Creativity" is the most common term students use to capture their constructions of what interpretation, expression, self-expression, or reflectivity means. "Talent," students also suggest, plays a considerable part in "determining" how successfully an individual attains artistry, and is able also to be expressive or creative.

Intimately bound up in students' concepts of music and their constructions of musicianship is feeling or emotion. As Peter says, "[Although] the elements of interpretation are most important for developing musicianship, music is not just a line of dots on a page, it's feeling, and emotion. That's what makes music enjoyable to all people." What "counts" above all as musical and professional knowledge for music education students, is knowledge of the aesthetic dimension. Possessing a "basic understanding" of the conceptual organization of music, that is, the formal and structural relationships of sound qualities (rhythm, form, tone color) and "skill in doing music" are seen as the principal means through which many students believe the aesthetic experience can be realized. Most often these behaviors and understandings are called "having an appreciation for and of music." Many music education students say that the "appreciation of music," that is, "coming to understand the feeling music possesses" and "coming to love and do music" is the ultimate professional goal they hope to achieve in their teaching.

By contrast elementary education students construct an identity by "working through" the "role" of teacher. They explicitly and repeatedly use the terminology of role model in a way that depicts a conceptualization of teaching constructed around building relationships. As Tiffany states, "Teaching is being a role model that children

scholar, or teacher [NASM, 1991, p. 55]). As Kyle, a music education major notes, "music teaching is best when it is one-on-one. That's really the only way a basic understanding of music and interpretation can be taught."

Our field analysis exploring practicum students' constructions of knowledge and pedagogy clearly suggests that in their teaching practices and student-teacher relationships, music education students emphasize ways to "fit" students to music, that is, elementary students are assessed according to "fixed points" of reference based primarily on skill attainment. Teacher practice and student success seem pointed to high ability. Beginning teachers who encounter the "less-able" remain very much at a loss as to "what to do with them." Most often, preservice music teachers, as Kristen says, "hope they [the students] will have fun," and as such assume a much less positional stance to students' abilities and their relationships with them. The less able students are told to "practice more" or "try harder." What remains most clear is that music education students view almost all teaching relationships with students as inseparable from performing music.

As outlined by Mattingly (1975), elementary education students are situated in a professional environment with roots in the normal school, historically centered on designing instruction around student needs and gaining teaching knowledge of a variety of instructional models. This eclectic mixture continues to define notions of teaching practice. As Kleibard (1995) observes, the historical struggle between conflicting visions of practice (child-centered, efficient, traditional, progressive) has resulted in a loosely framed collection of practices. Debate over these competing visions of practice and instructional design continues and individual and departmental or school positioning within that debate tends to define notions of "methods of teaching" practice in locally specific ways. Although no one pedagogic form dominates in schools of education, a focus on student growth and learning structures teaching goals (Liston & Zeichner, 1991). An emphasis on finding ways to "fit" subject matter to students characterizes elementary education students' views of practice and their major concern in teaching.

As Stober and Tyack (1980) point out, the pedagogical model that emerged in the elementary classroom was that of an age-graded self-contained classroom, headed by an unmarried female teacher. A hierarchical and patriarchal arrangement which included largely male principals and administrators in control of a largely female teaching force became (and remains largely so today) the paradigm of the elementary

school. Some contemporary and controversial feminist studies of teachers' work, such as those by Noddings (1992) and Lyons (1983), suggest that "caring" appears frequently in discussions of teaching children (Acker, 1996). As Acker (1996) states, "Maternal imagery is very strong in discussions of teachers and teaching, generally, especially at elementary levels, and has deep historical roots" (p. 120). Connectedness and creation of family-like environments are a central theme in current scholarship on elementary one-teacher-to-one-classroom environments. This language provokes notions of "altruism, abdication, and repetitive labor" (Grumet, 1988, p. 87, cited in Acker, 1996). Walkerdine (1986, cited in Acker, 1996) argues that such imagery connected to child-centeredness privileges the child over the teacher.

The language and imagery that elementary education students use is strongly suggestive of this historically situated feminized role of mothering, caring, and connectedness. Students' own interpretations of their practices continually emphasize the notions of caring for and maintaining connection to children. Students emphasize keeping children "on task," "doing their work," and "learning" in a generalized and generic way. The focus of these conversations can be said to encompass "everything," that is, as Tracy, a fourth-grade elementary education practicum student, says, "Doing work means, you know. . . like. . . mapping activities, math worksheets, making straight lines, listening to a story." Student stories and scenarios from their teaching experiences continually pick up the theme of defining "identities" or a sense of self as teachers in the classroom setting. Their struggle, or continuing dilemma, is to construct roles that make sense to them in the particularities of their classroom, with particular children and mentor teachers. For example, as Veronica explains, "I really feel like they are comfortable with me now. . . Scott actually tried the worksheet even though I know he doesn't like it."

In our analysis of both music education and elementary education talk, it becomes clear that what emerges in their conversations is the lived difference between two diverging constructions of professionalization in the institutions. Examples drawn from music education students' teaching seminars contain recurring conversations that focus on developing children's "musical artistry." The content of these conversations entails creating classroom-program opportunities for performing music, such as giving concerts or holiday programs, selecting "great" or "quality" music, singing "on pitch and expressively," teaching kids how to act on a stage, how to watch the teacher while performing, and how to be

“good” listeners while others are performing. Their recurring dilemmas revolve around finding techniques to implement in developing singing and playing skills and finding some key to motivate students to “have fun” with music when students “don’t act like they’re interested in singing” or “controlling” a class through notions of authority.

These differences between the two constructions of professional knowledge and pedagogy suggest two divergent constructions of teacher identity and function. Elaborating an identity of musician and the newly acquired function (or mission) of developing future musicians frames music education students’ concerns with their teaching role.

Indicative of this role is the practice of selecting and sorting children by skill-ability. For example, music education students talk about identifying “talented kids,” and actively “nurturing” musical skill development in these children. This function is perceived as an integral part of their professional role. A very real part of their pedagogy is to “recruit” special students and to develop “special” relationships with them. This controlling notion of talent is explicitly used by students for identifying possible future musicians and is implicitly understood as part of their function. For elementary education students, their professional identity does not revolve around being a mathematician or poet. As pointed out above, their explicit equation of teaching as being a “role model” refers to enhancing student talents more broadly.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Our exploration of the conceptions of knowledge and teaching practice among music education students and elementary education students suggests two fundamentally different conceptions of the relationship between knowledge and pedagogy. One conception is based on a dominant presence of procedural knowledge and skill in a specific and highly specialized field. The other is based on a dominant presence of nurturing behaviors and the development of student progress or growth in a whole range of various subject matters. In either case, the predominance of one does not preclude the presence of the other. In fact, “nurturing” is present in music education students’ talk, as is “subject matter knowledge and skill development” in elementary education students. This dichotomy, however, is useful in describing a key difference which is significant for understanding how institutional forms and pedagogic practices contribute to the construction of professional identity or role as a teacher. Particular institutional forms have a significant

impact on the positioning of the teacher in relation to students and the functions or goals of "instruction."

Much of the history of music education and the professionalization of music teaching has paralleled the professionalization of medicine. What counts as musical knowledge and practice is highly classified and framed (Bernstein, 1977). Caught in the dilemma, as Boardman (1990) suggests, of "whether to follow the artistic dictates of the performance setting [conservatory model] or continue to seek to meet the traditional educational goals of school, directed toward the growth and development of all students" (pp. 731-2), music educators have professionalized around constructing a specialized knowledge and skill base which is highly "product-oriented" and highly controlled by performance faculty in schools of music. This specialized body of knowledge and skill is centered on what "musicians do," and on the pedagogy necessary to "make music." This production of knowledge and skill, along with near total control of the normative and evaluative dimensions of the profession, has had the effect of creating an insulated and isolated, but powerful, professionalized field (Larson, 1977).

The professionalization of elementary teacher education reflects a history of struggle between competing interest groups, each with its own distinctive ideology and its own agenda (Kliebard, 1995). The certification of elementary teachers has been incorporated into the liberal arts college program from which teacher education students pull their subject matter knowledge. The task of teacher certification programs has been to impart pedagogic "know how" and to give students a background in child development and learning theory. This has resulted in a strongly classified and weakly framed group of programs, collected from the disciplines of psychology, liberal arts and sciences, and teacher education – which include foundations, separate subject matter "methods," and field experiences.

With the recent addition of music into the core curriculum for *Goals 2000: Educate America* project, and the challenge put forth by Charles Leonhard, editor of the *National Symposium on the Future of Arts Education* (1993), both music educators and educators in elementary certification programs are being called upon to explore a more pervasive integration of music into the elementary curriculum. The implications for such interdisciplinary work seem almost insurmountable in relation to the highly specialized world of music teacher education and the more

loosely organized liberal arts oriented elementary education certification program.

As our study confirms, the strong boundaries between the two professions, and the distinctions of each, provide a sharp contrast in the way skills and knowledge are currently constructed by novices entering each profession. Both professional control and identity or role are situated in different arenas. In music education, it is achieved through the control of skill as the route to membership in the profession, and teachers become major gatekeepers for the profession of music as a whole. Thus, students articulate this special relationship to music as primary. In elementary education, the locus of control does not revolve around subject matter specialization, rather it is situated in the relationship teachers construct with students. Subject matter knowledge is loosely collected from a range of disciplines and knowledge skills in these disciplines and, as previously stated, is currently viewed by many as sketchy.

For authentic disciplinary integration to occur, a radical transformation of both teacher education programs must take place, involving recentering the locus of control within and across both programs, and reconceptualizing both curricula. As we understand it, a transformation of this magnitude would be paradigmatic. The "institutionalization" of this ideological shift can only be imagined. What might curriculum integration between the two programs entail? For music education this entails designing a curriculum that is more focused on school children and how they learn and how they stand in relation to the discipline of music – not vice versa, and a more ecumenical view of elementary school education in general. Such a curriculum involves rethinking music teacher education programs as programs which prepare future teachers to think about what schools are for, about the context of music in individuals' lives – how music is used by children and how music relates to other subjects, and about how learning and teaching is as much a process as it is a product. Such a curriculum entails thinking about all the many possible ways of "how" musical knowledge is created rather than thinking about ways to acquire primarily a set of artistic skills aimed exclusively at the performance of music.

For elementary education this entails designing a curriculum that is more focused on the theoretical foundations of disciplinary knowledge, and a less diffused view of elementary school education. Such a curriculum involves rethinking elementary teacher education programs as programs which prepare future teachers to think about how disciplinary

study produces knowledge and skills that can be put to use in the specific contexts of children's lives. Such a curriculum entails thinking about how knowledge is created. For both programs, such a curriculum involves a greater commitment to liberal arts education and a professional sequence of courses aimed at the problems and issues generated by not only performance, but by the concerns of everyday life.

The current trend toward interdisciplinary work in the fields of literacy instruction, whole language or whole math, for example, is beginning to pull into relief or highlight some of these contradictions in schools of education. Two divergent trends are emerging. One, such as that stated in the introduction (Holmes and Carnegie), focuses on making elementary teacher education "like medicine or law," or, we argue, "like music teacher education" – discipline oriented, skill controlled. The other, such as that of whole language and literacy redefinition (Willinsky, 1990) tend toward centering subject matter around students and the function of literacy in the social context.

Music teacher education has not, as of yet, seriously considered the implications of any "integrated" approach that is interdisciplinary or "domain-specific," such as those suggested by Discipline Based Arts Education (DBAE) (see Smith, 1989). The recent content and achievement standards suggested by the *National Standards for Arts Education* (MENC, 1994), however, incorporate many of the ideas of DBAE and restructure music education around a broader definition of music education by including guided listening, improvising and composing, curriculum integration, cultural literacy, and critical thinking.

However, no curricular reform can take place unless fundamental shifts in the locus of professional control at the institutional and field level take place both within and across both programs. As Leonhard (1985) implores, at the institutional level professional control of the music teacher education program must move out of the hands of the music performance faculty and into the hands of music educators. For elementary education, professional control must move fully into the hands of teacher educators. At both the institutional and field levels the unequal power relationships that develop out of skill control in music education and the situated relationships elementary education teachers construct with students must be lateralized. Within the music education faculty and the teacher education faculty, there must be a redefinition of what education is and what it means to be educated. Such a vision is hinted at above. Across both faculties there must be, as Bernstein (1977)

argues, some “connecting supra-relational idea” or concept that focuses curriculum on the deep structure of all subjects and calls attention to points of intersection or points of relations among the subjects. Thus the creation of authentic curriculum integration between the two programs that is both disciplinary and cross-disciplinary may be realized.

It is possible, we believe, that, through various venues, an integration of knowledge and practices is possible. Such conversations hold the potential for informing and enriching one another’s teaching practices and clarifying direction for further inquiry. It is our hope that our work can serve as a historical and structural perspective on the dilemmas involved in curriculum integration.

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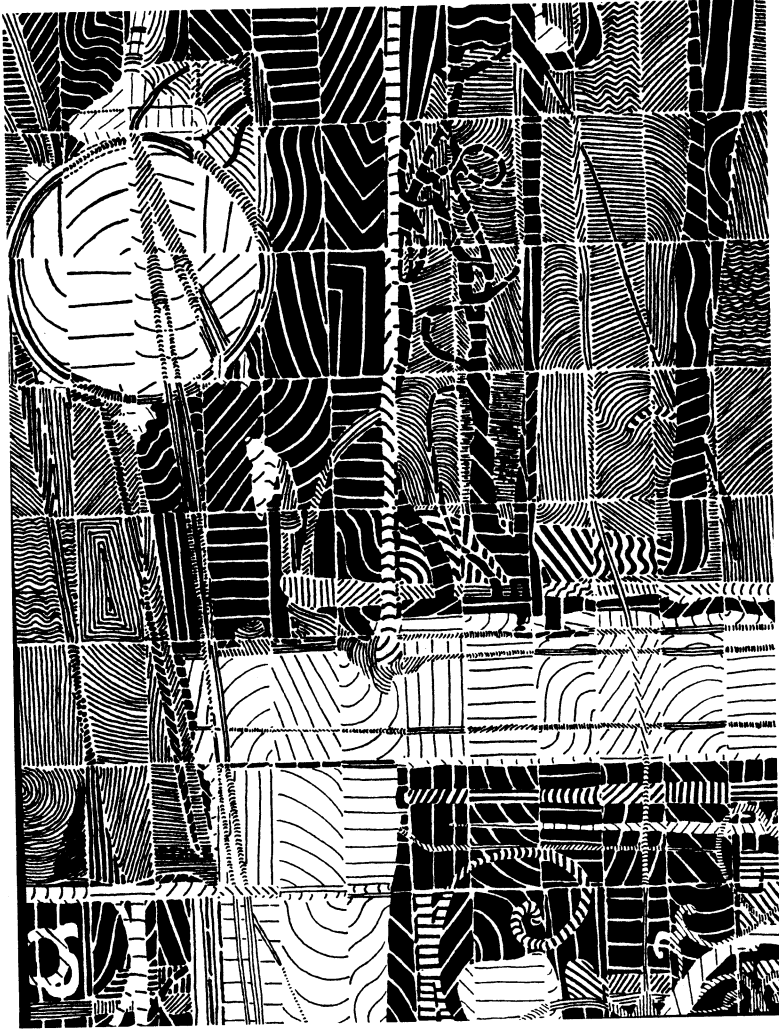
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