Play in Vivian Paley's The Boy Who Would be a Helicopter

- Reflection as part of transformative practice
  - Paley reflects on
    - The role of the teacher
    - The role of play
    - The role of story

Text Analysis

- Methodology
  - Text analysis from a reading and rereading of texts (Perakyla)

Paley

- Generally atheoretical-does not mention theory in text
  - Draws on narrative theory
  - Draws on psychoanalytic theory

Dual methodology

- Records children's stories for acting out
- Uses a tape recorder which she listens to later for data

Dichotomies in teaching

- Adult perspective differs from child perspective

Role of the teacher

- Teacher is out of step
- "In my early teaching years I was in the wrong forest. I paid scant attention to the play and did not hear the stories" (p. 5) .
- "When I was a new teacher, it was the principal's approval I sought. I was afraid of the children" (p. 122).
- "Those of us who presume to 'teach' must not imagine that we know how each student begins to learn" (p. 78).

Punishment

- "Teachers announce it, children respond to it…I really think that punishing young children for what they have not yet learned, about social behavior or anything else, is completely counterproductive. It creates no useful dialogue" (p. 87).
- "Having given up the time out chair, I needed to replace it with a consistent and positive teaching strategy…I must not do to a child that which I would not have done to me. As my teaching errors have not been punishable by isolation, humiliation, and denial of activity, I would not impose these sentences on children" (pp 91-92).

Role of story

- Adult stories vs. the children's stories

Common culture but not controlled

- "The children like to dramatize books and fairy tales but are not dismayed if there is time only to read them. Acting them out is better, but listening is usually enough. They feel quite differently about their own stories" (p. 25).
- "Will my narration follow the "real" events of the story? They take for granted that fairy tales have the power to frighten them...fairy tales seem to have a life of their own, no matter how the sympathetic adult attempts to shield the listener" (p. 153).

Children's stories

- "She writes, "Amazingly, children are born knowing how to put every thought and feeling into story form." (p. 4).
- "They are story tellers. It is their intuitive approach to all occasions. It is the way they think. …It makes for a better story" (p. 17).

Play is critical

- "Play…the universal learning medium" (p. 10)
- "Play and its necessary core of storytelling are the primary realities in the preschool and kindergarten" (p. 6).

Adults and play

- "There is a tendency to look upon the noisy repetitious fantasies of children as non-educational, but helicopters and kittens and superhero capes and Barbie dolls are storytelling aids and conversational tools" (p. 39).
- "The children have many more safe and ingenious ways to deal with frustrations than I have" (p. 52).

Play as therapy

- Play also allows children to explore their identity in a safe way.
- "Pretend...is the stage upon which any identity is possible and secret thoughts can be safely revealed" (p. 7).
- "The power of fantasy play to restore balance and ballast can never be overestimated" (p. 53).

Discussion

- Adult view and child view are different
  - The role of the teacher
  - The role of story
  - The role of play
- Adult is out of step
  - Hands off view of play and story