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**Narrative Goes to School:
Boys Themselves as Educational Research**

**By
Chris Higgins**

**A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of**

Master of Education

**Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba**

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BY

Chris Higgins

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of
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ABSTRACT

Narrative has entered the lexicon of educational research both as an end product and as a methodology. At the same time, stories of teachers, students, and schools have altered the horizon of popular literature and culture. "Teacher" has become one of the stock cultural archetypes that artists and politicians depend on for common platforms of remembrance and public discourse. As educational research embraces the social ambiguities and opportunities of narrative, discussions about how to audit and inflect such subjectivity have arisen. In particular, there are quandaries about acknowledging the dynamic boundaries of texts, as well as agreeing on norms of research competency.

The purpose of this inquiry is to investigate narrative educational research as a process built upon researcher beliefs, needs, and motivations. Through an examination of Boys Themselves: A Return to Single-Sex Education (1996), this study focuses attention on the linguistic and rhetorical frameworks implicit in participant observation and the resulting research documents. Boys Themselves tells the story of an esteemed independent boys' high school, and its headmaster's quest to alleviate a multitude of educational and societal ills. By way of elements of literary criticism and character development, the study explores the roles of journalism, fiction, ethnography, and autobiography in this story of schooling.

Narrative Goes to School: Boys Themselves as Educational Research is based on two research questions. Paraphrasing Carter's (1993) assertion that a narrative is "a theory of something" (p. 9) it asks, "what are the beliefs or needs that shape this narrative?" The second research question revisits Bruner's (1996) query, "what is gained and what is lost in narrative?" (p. 130).

This inquiry concludes that researcher beliefs, needs, and motivations are a complex but inevitable aspect of all research acts and documents. As a close reading of Boys Themselves: A Return to Single-Sex Education (1996) demonstrates, narratives are texts of cultural significance, providing both losses and gains for researchers and readers.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Roy Graham, for his encouragement and consideration throughout this project. I also offer my appreciation to both Dr. Renate Schulz and Dr. Rosemary Foster, who served with patience as members of my thesis committee.

This thesis is the final step in a long and impassioned process. I am indebted to all of my professors, advisors, employers, and fellow learners at the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Education who encouraged me through years of study.

I am especially grateful to Terry and Claire, who sustained me in every possible way. Finally, I would like to dedicate this document to Julia Higgins-my mother and my finest teacher.

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Introduction

This thesis has been inspired by a sentence in Pinar's Curriculum Theorizing: The Reconceptualists, which says: "Ross Mooney talks of research as "inner and outer drama", where the researcher's experience with himself has traditionally been a search to present what is true rather than what is good" (1975, p. 178). The purpose of my inquiry is to investigate narrative educational research as a process built upon these beliefs, needs, and motivations.

In this first chapter, I will survey contemporary narrative-oriented research in education and attempt to define some common themes and goals. I will conclude the chapter with several directive questions, hopefully providing compelling reasons for my careful reading of an example of narrative as educational research.

Defining Terms

Customs within the community of educational researchers have been shifting incrementally over the last decades. Rather than collecting and measuring numeracy based data, educational research has turned towards telling stories--about teachers, students, and cultural institutions. Narrative researchers believe they "describe...lives, collect stories of them, and write narratives of experience" in education (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991, p. 121).

Is narrative just another way of presenting data, or a "world view" (Barone 1992, p. 22), that affects how real people are seen and understood during their educational journey? Research in education is not alone in its pursuit of narrative, story, and the "linguistic turn" (Derrida, 1978, p. xiv). Narrative is an ubiquitous, interdisciplinary, theoretical starting point; pivotal to intellectual discussions from hermeneutics to post-structuralism. A selection of vocabularies have been developed to describe this concept,

including rhetorical worlds (Fish, 1980), deconstruction (Derrida, 1978), language games (Lyotard, 1984), storytelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986, 1990, 1991), non-fictional stories (Barone, 1992), and moral stories (Nausbaum, 1990). Each disciplinary language attempts to describe a similar phenomena; how human beings construct reality, their identities, and group cohesion through language. Problematizing these constructs through a "linguistic turn" (Derrida, 1978, p. xiv) proposes transformation through language, and exposes tensions between disparate positions of the self at play.

Following the lead of educational researchers themselves, I adopt the designation of narrative to refer to this heterogeneous body of scholarship; which crosses such disciplines as history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, feminist theory, and literary criticism. I mean narrative to include investigations of the practices through which educational inquiry is articulated and maintained in specific cultural contexts, and extended into new contexts. As well, I have deliberately chosen to speculate through the controversial word "culture", for both its inclusiveness (as part of the social practices and linguistic traditions leading to the constitution of identities) and this term's connotations of structures or spheres of meaning.

In using both culture and narrative as operating definers, I feel it is crucial to emphasize that they each rephrase and abbreviate important theoretical differences, including significant scholarly work across the very boundaries I hope to articulate. In particular, I want to state that my aim is not to reify narrative as a formulaic style, but rather to highlight some important issues by which it might define and reshape the terms of educational research.

Why is Narrative an Important Development in Educational Research?

In a post-Derrida world, taken-for-granted categories and methods of data collection have become problematic; and so have taken-for-granted methods of representing the outcomes of educational research. Narrative is one of the strategies that researchers have employed to meet these challenges.

Many of the features inherent in the narrative approach to such gatherings and presentations have become considerations for any subsequent interpretation of educational experience. Seminal works like Willis's Learning to Labour (1977), McLaren's Schooling As a Ritual Performance (1986), Grumet's Bitter Milk (1988), Kozol's Death at an Early Age (1967) and Savage Inequalities (1991), have all had an impact on both the educational community and the public at large. Other volumes, such as Dryden's In School (1995), have led to questions about the efficacy, validity, and legitimacy of narrative as both a methodology and as a rhetorical protocol.

Narrative approaches have focused attention on the epistemic importance of research practices and the linguistic frameworks implicit in forms of presentation, as well as the presence of conflict and negotiation in shaping the outcome of texts (White, 1980; Hillis-Miller, 1990). The thawing of disciplinary boundaries (Carter, 1993), and the permeability of what is "internal" to education (Barone, 1992) have likewise been emphasized in educational narratives.

These texts have also been effective in telling stories about the dilemmas of educational explorers. Narrative researchers like Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1990, 1991), often discuss accessing, respecting, and responding to the needs and desires of participants. In addition, Grumet (1988), Barone (1992), and Carter (1993) have foregrounded issues surrounding the distribution of completed research texts.

Situating Narrative Approaches to Educational Inquiry

At this point, I want to introduce several descriptive vignettes to help situate the distinction between narrative as I visualize it in terms of educational research, and the literary, scientific, and philosophical traditions to which it is responding. I will continue with what I propose to be the core theoretical issues that define narrative as a significant and distinctive field of educational inquiry.

Tracing Narrative in the Social Sciences.

My first historical sketch recognizes the debt that narrative approaches in education owe to the social sciences. The “linguistic turn” (Derrida, 1978, p. xiv) notwithstanding, narrative methods have evidently advanced into the culture of education through the use of anthropological and sociological techniques. Narrative research in education can arguably be positioned along a continuum that grows out of the importation of non-experimental /observational procedures and theories from other avenues of social research. Proponents of this effort include Spindler (1955), and Bogdan and Biklen (1992). This theoretical stance is aligned with grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and socially constructed models of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

There has also been a trend towards the inclusion of field study and ethnographic approaches in educational research. Specific research methods have included Spradley's participant observation (1980), Atkinson's ethnography (1990), and the "thick description" popularized by Geertz (1973). Prior to this work, the use of experimental methods and the study of learners' psychology prevailed in educational research. With the inclusion of field-centred techniques, the educational researcher has been able to remain paradigmatic while expanding on these psychological theories and experimental methods. The perspective of studying education mainly from the horizon of experimentally-defined and psychological factors has been widened.

The movement of this research direction continues to shift away from gathering data and building theory upon it. Interpretive spaces within educational research now include action research (Carr, 1986), the critical theory typified by Apple (1990), and Anyon (1981, 1984), as well as a diverse body of feminist theory expressed by writers such as Belenky and her colleagues (1986) and Lather (1991). These perspectives all attempt to employ educational research as inquiry into exposing ideological positions more than exercises in results verification.

Defining Epistemology Through Narrative: Narrative Knowing.

Educational discourse has been informed by narrative both as an operating metaphor and structural form since ancient times. Plato's recounting of Socrates, and Rousseau's Emile (1762/1993) are both narrations of schooling.

However, the previously mentioned "problematization" of educational research and the movement towards narrative as remedy is often supported through a philosophical inquiry of language and human communication; as found in the thought of Habermas (1972) and Rorty (1989), for example. It appears that this appeal to narrative has enabled practitioners to link meaning making and Derrida's "linguistic turn" (1978, p. xiv) in educational contexts. I find that a reading of Jerome Bruner specifically supports this possibility.

Over the course of three works: Possible worlds: Actual minds (1986), Acts of meaning (1990), and The culture of education (1996), Bruner comes to describe the theories of knowledge that exempt multiple meanings from their purview as paradigmatic. He develops a belief in narrative as a mode of knowing that operates positively with inconsistency and contradiction. In Bruner's estimation, narrative is concerned with how this brand of knowing could be embodied institutionally and culturally, and especially how deviations, or "breaches" (1996, p. 131) from established norms and methods might be appropriately explained through "narrative knowing" (1996, p. 131).

As early as 1986, Bruner proposes two different ways of knowing or thinking which allow characteristic ways of constructing reality. He suggests that the two modalities of thought that can not be reduced to one another without losing their unique qualities. As a result, these two ways of knowing are irreconcilable, in both their functioning and in their verification criteria for the knowledge achieved. Bruner (1986) distinguishes these two modalities of thought in cognitive terms to begin with, as "landscapes" (p. 14). In 1990, he is still attaching physical and essentially individual criteria to a transactional meaning. But by the publication of The culture of education in 1996, he has baldly called the modalities "paradigmatic" and "narrative" or "metacognition" (p. 148).

The paradigmatic or logical-scientific modality attempts to be a mathematical, formal system of description and explanation. In contrast, narrative thought is presented by Bruner as consisting of telling stories of oneself--to oneself and to others. By telling these stories he would have us "making sense of..experiences" (1996, p. 130), with the construction of meaning arising from the account, plus a continuous actualization of the story entitled narrative plot. Meaning and knowledge have blended in Bruner's estimation, through the reflexivity and representation of narrative.

Kinds of understanding or modes of knowing are themes resonant in the work of other narratively oriented researchers. Elbaz-Luwisch also sees narrative as more than a collection or presentation method. According to her too, it leads to knowing through linguistic means. She says that "the search for a different kind of knowledge, knowledge that empowers rather than making possible prediction and control, is a significant reconceptualization of the purpose of educational research" (1997, p. 78).

As previously mentioned, Bruner has posited that this difference is rooted in language based meaning making. Extending this vista, McEwan (1997), also argues that there has been dramatic shift in emphasis, perspective, and purpose in educational research; causing "a fundamental alteration in basic research values, and in the language of research" (p. 86). These narrative practitioners appear to be denying distinctions between the imagination, reasoning, and the evidence usually viewed as criteria of knowing. For them narrative seems to include the biographical and social factors that were previously excluded from epistemological reflection. In this way, researchers employing narrative inquiry seem to want to say why something is the way it is, not just that it is that way. This treatment of problematized educational inquiry appears to me to be a cultural formation; one that can be understood through an examination of the resources its voices draw upon, and the situations to which it responds. A text that makes a claim to "why" knowledge pleads for belief through a narrative that originates in experience, and then moves from experience to a support of its claims. Following this train of thought, knowing through a text becomes belief supported, justified, and sustained through relationships that reflect human experience.

Defining Narrative by Political Stance.

My third vignette ponders the relationship between narrative approaches to educational inquiry and a critical stance within the educational community.

Contemporary narrative does not appear to be an unproblematic set of procedures for data collection; the narrative enterprise carries with it connotations of theoretical, epistemological and ethical controversy. The modern corpus of research involving ideological treatments of students, teachers, and educational experiences (especially concerning gender, poverty, and racial inequality) represents a large number of narrative texts. The works of Kozol and Willis are exemplars of a far-reaching discussion of inequalities in contemporary education. Indeed, narrative in the hands of educational researchers is very often the story of Bruner's "breached norms" (1996, p. 131). A tight relationship between accessibility (both availability and a vernacular voice) and effecting social change (as a result of reading) is addressed by Barone when he speaks of narrative researchers as public educators (1992, p. 22). As such, narrative approaches to educational inquiry are apparently situated not only in the aforementioned "linguistic turn" (Derrida, 1978, p. xiv) and its historical, philosophical, and social scientific interpretations, but also to the history, the culture, and political struggles over the right to know.

Narrative as a Practitioners Tool

By situating narrative approaches to educational knowledge in these three ways, I have tried to emphasize their affinity with crucial aspects in the culture of twentieth-century education. I would now like to focus the distinctive contributions of narrative to understanding educational experiences.

Commentaries, analyses, and criticisms of narrative approaches to educational research include introductory and explanatory writings like those of Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1990, 1991), personal reportages such as Bitter Milk: women and

teaching by Grumet (1988) and the self examinations of van Manen (1990). Authors like Barone (1992), Herrnstein-Smith (1980) and Carter (1993) are critical, in an attempt to refine and advance narrative in educational milieus. Historians such as White (1980), ethnographers like Atkinson (1990) and literary theorists such as Hillis-Miller (1990) all offer analyses that add a unique perspective.

A brief glance at these scholars' work demonstrates that this is not a homogeneous group: they have deep theoretical, methodological, and political differences. Given that narrative approaches to educational knowledge are both diverse and contested, there is something artificial about attributing to them a common picture of educational work. Yet there there are considerations that have narrowed my list, and provide its coherence. Somewhat ironically, I propose a number of criteria for the holistic concept of narrative as suggested by these respected and oft-published practitioners.

The Particulars of Narrative.

It seems that the interest narrative has evoked proceeds from a non-empirical, constructivist, or postmodern point of view, which considers the influence of human experience on perception as a fundamental tenet. A common thread in these writings is the belief that humans are storytelling beings who lead individually and socially storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986, 1990, 1991; Elbaz-Luwisch, 1997; van Manen, 1990). This translates into a rationale for inquiry by way of narrative as a study of the ways humans experience the world. These writers suggest that research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories, where all of the players are both storytellers and characters in their own and other's stories. For instance, van Manen (1990), determines that narrative inquiry “..is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience” (p. 27). He also directs the inquirer to ground the analysis of data inside rather than outside the personal in saying, “we check this to know that one’s own experiences are also the possible experiences of others” (1990, p. 54).

These authors agree that narrative offers an expression of reality whose sufficiency

is regulated by convention and belief instead of empirical confirmation and logical necessity. In their eyes, narrative operates on the criteria of credibility (verisimilitude), in order to produce a document that tells something not known before, in a way that is accessible to a reader. Atkinson states that "there is the perspective of everyday discourse on the natural or social world..."(1990, p. 39) in narrative. Verisimilitude in the hands of van Manen, Clandinin and Connelly, and others reflect Atkinson's focus on the everyday in their attempts to show experiences in a more authentic way.

Also implicit in Atkinson's determination of "everyday" (1990, p. 39) is an attention to detail that creates a plausible story. Since generalizable validity is not viewed as a criteria of justification in narrative, there is a need for specifics, "meticulously detailed observations", as Barone calls them (1992, p. 18). Authenticity is noted by van Manen(1990) as being the product of "a theory of the unique"(p. 7). Apparency and plausibility are also tied to this plethora of details. Barone (1992), quotes Langer in speaking about "semblance" and "shaped apparition of a new human experience" (p. 19). The inquirer strives for coherence and unity by way of both a multitude of particulars that serve as a reader's reference to reliability, and a textual completeness which is satisfying in its ability to communicate intentionality.

There is also a criteria of cause and effect rooted in a defined sequence of events, or chronology in narrative forms of educational research. Narrative accounts are expected to have a beginning, a middle, and an end; but as White identifies, this is justified internally as "an order of meaning" (1980, p. 5) rather than particularly by sequence. Barone (1992), describes this ordering as "a different kind of textual plotting" (p. 20), which is not logical or linear.

Finally, these inquirers seem to be inferring that narrative involves an investigation identifiable with a result based on persuasion. Connelly and Clandinin are comfortable with an agenda for narrative inquiry which catches a reader's attention through the "interesting and invitational...informing like an old gossip" (1991, pp. 136 -137). Narrative is understood by them to differ than some other methods of apparently objective description in its foregrounding of interpretation as a technique of understanding. As

Atkinson (1990), and many others point out, "tacit knowledge" of the "inferences" provided by the inquiry are the "culturally available ways of doing and recognizing such descriptions" (p. 41-42) for the individuals who are presented in the narrative mode.

Why Do We Need More Stories?

Even as I have suggested that the narrative approach to educational research has been an innovation with wide repercussions, this proposition is not untroubled. As Hillis Miller asks, "why do we always need more stories?" (1990, p. 72). Practitioners voice significant common themes in their reasons for describing and defining educational knowledge through narrative. They suggest they want stories (and more stories) because they need: different modes of language, a different relationship between researcher and subject, access to life worlds and culture in a concrete manner, clarification of realism, authenticity and value, and techniques to influence readers.

Different Modes of Language.

I maintain that narrative approaches to educational inquiry appeal to researchers as an antidote to the isolation of educational communities from other social groups and cultural practices. As most of those writers I have cited point out, the educational research tradition has often followed the sciences in this respect, emphasizing the special interests that constitute the shared beliefs, values, and concerns of educational communities. Barone (1992) and Elbaz-Luwisch (1997) provocatively suggest that narrative effectively destabilizes any distinction between what is "inside" and "outside" of education. I can postulate that these boundaries between education and society have always been porous; but at this point I will emphasize the manner in which educational work partakes of the culture outside. This movement involves new and different linguistic tools (vocabulary, metaphors, and analogies) as well as material and financial resources.

Techniques to Influence Readers.

This weakening of cultural and disciplinary boundaries is visible as a rediscovery of formations of language like rhetoric. Rhetoric has become recognized as central to research acts and texts by many of the researchers I have identified, including Atkinson, (1990); Barone, (1992); Connelly and Clandinin, (1986, 1990, 1991); Fish, (1980); and Lather, (1991). The classical roots of the theory and practice of rhetoric were argumentation and persuasion. Over time, distinctions between rhetoric and logic came to represent a void between these two methods of reasoning; so that science, reason, logic, and methods of evidence eventually were seen as opposing rhetoric, aesthetics, and persuasion. The separation of rhetoric from logic in the creation of modern disciplinary knowledge corresponds to other entrenched separations and dichotomies. It establishes the possibility of an observer armed with a neutral language of observation, and thus allows for distinctions between that observer and his/her observed.

The work of authors such as White (1980) and Grumet (1988) have related this weakening of cultural boundaries by way of narrative within an ideological perspective. White (1980) discusses ways in which traditional historical texts have a privileging effect, so that the persons and events who have been represented have been reduced to the objects of a dominating discourse. This privileged position of observer-author has also been questioned through the mechanism of feminist theory. A virtually identical set of issues can be described for the encounters of Grumet (1988), and Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1990, 1991), and their hopes that narrative allows them to avoid privileged representation.

Implicit in the use of rhetoric is the possibility of persuasion. A common theme for narrative practitioners is the extension of both accessibility for readers and explicit author voice into the presentation of research. Barone (1992) discusses the accessibility of data to readers as the difference between "writerly" and "readerly" texts in the Barthesian language of literary criticism (p. 19). The creation of an aesthetic experience for the audience appears to offer these writers a way to attract, to compel, and to "coax" (Barone, 1992, p. 22) their fellow citizens. He also states some of the possible political outcomes of rhetorical

persuasion; by accepting a "redescription of social phenomena" he hopes to make readers change their minds and take at least mental action (1992, p. 21).

A Different Relationship Between Researcher and Participant.

Secondly, practitioners want more stories in order to avoid the idea that there is a hierarchy of worth; in persons or content, that research must aspire to. As a result this body of work serves as a way to make the researcher/subject relationship rotate from a vertical to a horizontal line of connection. Connelly and Clandinin (1991), describe this as "a process of collaboration involving mutual story telling and restorying" (p. 127). They define narrative as a form of inquiry in which the researcher enters into the participant's "sphere of experience" in a manner which is "an interpenetration" (p. 125). For van Manen (1990), narrative research is "the cultivation of one's being" (p. 8). His implication is that since narrative offers a possibility of equal and reciprocal inquiry practice, a researcher can view oneself as collaborative and "tactful" (p. 11).

Connelly and Clandinin (1986, 1990, 1991), address the relationship between participant and researcher from an overtly feminist perspective. They suggest that reflexive, self-critical attitudes are particularly characteristic of feminist thought. Feminism through the eyes of Clandinin and Connelly, Carter, van Manen, Grumet and others all encourage an examination of power and powerlessness, and the mutual obligations of researcher and researched.

Clandinin and Connelly also emphasize that the political stance within narrative-oriented educational practice involves many of its identifiable features. These include; the scale, location, and accessibility of its objects of inquiry to their own data; their power to change and co-produce the data; the relations between theory and experimental or observational practice; the relative importance of description, explanation and interpretation in narrative, and the character and significance of the research's engagement with other cultural practices.

Access to Life Worlds and Culture in a Concrete Manner.

These political tendencies of narrative contribute to a third ingredient suggested for its attractiveness. One of the most important elements of the research status quo narrative researchers oppose is an explanatory stance toward educational inquiry. Traditional educational research typically presents itself as an explanatory social science, which can account fully for the epistemic outcomes of educational practices. According to narrativists such as Elbaz - Luwisch (1997) and Grumet (1988), the need to account for the phenomena in terms of a theory's explanatory concepts suppresses the differences and the humanity among the people and events being explained. For example, social/narrative explanations are not presented as explanations that may be appropriated and adapted by others in narrative forms of educational research. In this way, those with a narrative orientation are often concerned with the utility of what paradigmatic studies take as an unproblematic reality. Narrative approaches to educational inquiry insist upon the phenomenological, concrete, and discursive character of educational practice. Bruner (1986), calls on Rorty in describing his frustrations with the manner in which educational inquiry is often discussed; as if it were a body of autonomous ideas separate from the concrete and instrumental practices through which it was established (p.13). Narrative researchers such as van Manen (1990) prefer to emphasize the importance of specific people and places, utilizing their skills and techniques in shaping the sense and significance of specific knowledge. This intertwining of hermeneutics with cultural constructions of sex and gender has been very influential in the endorsement of narrative approaches to educational inquiry.

Clarification of Realism, Authenticity, and Value.

Researchers using narrative also appear to seek a way to invert the existing questions of realism and truth. The historical and stylistic continuities with so-called realistic texts have been well documented (Tallis, 1988; Atkinson, 1990; Barone, 1992). In

particular, Barone (1992) and van Manen (1990) identify realism as the dominant mode of representation in educational research, and they note realism's penchant for a detached, omnipotent, and distant voice. They see realism as presented from the point of view of impartial authorship; where the narrator's point of view is the dominant, or only one. This voice serves as the criteria of authoritative reportage. As both a style and a collection of literary devices, proponents of narrative believe such realism is central our cultural history of "true", authoritative accounts and representations. Despite a historical tendency towards this realistic approach, it is not clear to narrative researchers that realism is the best way to produce accounts of educational worlds. They contest this realistic representation of social reality.

Educational researchers who favour narrative acknowledge the complexity of social life and its collective representations. They also believe in the constitutive nature of language; that language use creates and constructs social reality. The conventions of realism are founded on a very different treatment of language, as realism has historically encouraged little or no concern for the language of representation itself, and assumes that language is a taken-for-granted asset. Bruner (1986) asks "how is reality rendered subjunctive by language?" (p. 29), and responds that readers are "rewriting the story" (p. 39) according to their own knowledge and needs. In this way narrative seems to be offering practitioners a negotiated state, which does not respond to orthodox questions about what is real. Narrative researchers appear to endorse neither the universal defenses of principles often put forward by philosophers, nor the attempt by traditional research stances to describe how educational inquiry is articulated in cultural contexts, while bracketing or relativizing any critical assessment of it.

Narrative also appears to attempt to subvert questions about whether research can (or ought) to attempt value neutrality. In this chapter's preamble, I quoted Mooney as saying research has "been a search to present what is true rather than what is good"(cited in Pinar, 1997, p. 178). Many practitioners of narrative as educational research wrestle with this dilemma. Discussions around the question of value neutrality can fix the concept of value in the same manner those about realism attempt to reify truth. Questions about such

authenticity inevitably devolve into multiple questions about significance, relevance, intelligibility, or burdens of proof. Similarly, Bruner (1996) has posited that the question of value-neutrality is not one question but many; for himself and his audience (p. 141). Bruner and others appear to desire a stronger reflexive sense of their own cultural and political engagement, and typically do not avoid epistemic or political criticism. They seem to find normative issues inevitably at stake in educational research.

The problems of authenticity, reality, and representation in educational texts loom as simultaneously moral and epistemological. In fact, I wonder if these issues of representation do not highlight the extent to which the ethical and the methodological issues in narrative are inextricably linked.

Compelling Reasons To Inquire Into Narrative

Although we have seen that a number of thoughtful and respected authors have engaged with narrative approaches to educational inquiry, there are challenges inherent in this embrace. Barone (1992), White (1980), Carter (1993), and Hermstein-Smith (1980), have all raised concerns about the goals of explaining knowledge through a narrative lens, the opposition between descriptive, paradigmic, and normative approaches, and the very intelligibility of the questions that narrative interpretations of knowing are supposed to answer. I was struck by Carter's (1993) assertion that a story "is a theory of something" (p. 9). She offers fresh criteria for the interpretation of narrative as research, and proposes that there is an inevitable evolution towards generalization in the resultant texts. Barone (1992) also questions, introducing thoughts of relative value with considerations of "quality control" (p. 21). But others; like McEwan and Egan, are firm in their belief that narrative offers a step forward "not just facts or ideas or theories, or even dreams, fears, and hopes, but in facts theories and dreams from the perspective of someone's life and in the context of someone's emotions" (1995, viii). Even those generally agreed upon qualities (such as verisimilitude and multiple perspectives), are debated by both narrative's opponents and proponents.

As well, researchers who espouse a human science point of view in opposition to scientific or paradigmatic approaches have created an abundance of thorny questions. Of particular interest is Bruner's (1996) question; "what is gained and what is lost in narrative?" (p. 130) Traditional research collection and presentation methods appear susceptible to a role as poor reflections of the life that was always there. The preoccupation within narrative is for more intimate, honest, and therefore more legitimate information; but according to who's measure? I return to Carter (1993), who postulates "narrative is a theory of something" (p. 9). I therefore wonder if value has a place within interpretive practices in educational research, in conjunction with questions of authenticity.

In particular I question whether the role of rhetoric has been clear in the structuring of narrative as a presentation of educational inquiry. The emergence of narrative as a mode of research within the public sphere has focused attention on the linguistic frameworks implicit in this form of presentation. Authors such as White (1980) and Graham (1995) claim that narratives are fundamentally rhetorical in that they are expressions directed toward an audience with a specific purpose. According to Barone (1992), narrative allows access to the public with fewer human intermediaries. This direct line of contact between the inquirer and the public raises the possibility of acts of mass persuasion by way of the "nonfictional educational story" (p. 17).

I also find purpose or motivation related to rhetoric in narrative approaches to educational inquiry. Barone states that narrative seduces educational researchers because they have purposes which are unique in relation to say, the social sciences. He says "understanding" and "emancipation" are goals for practitioners of narrative, and appeals to Habermas in claiming that moral persuasion is its primary purpose (1992, p. 20). But perhaps, narrative is favoured by researchers because they can insert more of themselves into the results, and therefore feel more sure that what they see as important is conveyed to the reader.

Research Questions

A superficial glossing of the concerns raised by these theorists suggests that narrative research texts are inaccurate and lacking in method. Yet I find that these writers are not advocating a dismissal of careful and deliberate methods of creating and expressing such "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27). On the contrary, this tumult around narrative allows me to "problematize" such research texts. From my reading, I identify critical spaces for myself within the ostensible contest around meaning and the struggle to establish credibility. In this thesis, I am seeking a framework for placing these concerns about meaning and credibility into a perspective based on understanding. The concept of subjective researcher purpose as sketched by Barone, and the related goals of understanding (van Manen, 1990) and belief (Hillis Miller, 1990; White, 1980) are my primary objects of analysis.

I will construct this thesis around two questions. My first rephrases Carter (1993), as she asks if a story is "a theory of something" (p. 9). I will take a single example of narrative as educational research and ask "what are the beliefs or needs that shape this narrative?" In this way I will inquire about whether a narrative researcher is a theorist-defined as someone who formulates a principle which she/he proves through story.

I take my second question "what is gained and what is lost in narrative?" from Jerome Bruner (1996, p. 130). In Bruner's speculation about rewards and deficits I read grounds for a discussion about what the persuasive boundaries are in a text beyond which, it stops being accessible-"thick" (Geertz, 1973) to its reader, and becomes uninformative about the events and persons it addresses.

A Methodology of Interpretation

I propose to offer an account of the intentional act of a researcher, and the relationship of his intended audience to this act of research and representing. I believe that the interpretation of a single example of narrative has the potential to deepen and extend insight into "what's gained and lost in narrative" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130).

Although hermeneutics and exegesis have a long history, my inquiry through what Phelan and Rabinowitz (1994) label as "understanding of understanding" (p. 2) does not immediately bring to mind a toolbox of devices and strategies. After much thought, I have identified a tradition of analysis that I feel is appropriate to a study of research and representation. In this thesis, I will seek to connect narrative research in education to aspects of literary criticism. My strategy is based on the belief that narrative could benefit from a set of interpretive lenses that focus on its first principle—that of understanding. In particular, this approach allows a search for authenticity found in Carter's question of narrative as "a theory of something" (Carter, 1993, p. 9) without an automatic turn to empirical research methods and findings.

Some of the frameworks and techniques of literary criticism can help expand both the conceptual and practical domains of narrative research, by serving as a foundation for inquiry. Specifically, the rhetorical analyses of audience, purpose, and character found in reader response approaches to criticism appear promising for this project. These critical lenses function through close readings of elements like causality, plot construction, and point of view, to name just a few. I intend to approach this inquiry through an examination of the characters/participants in a "nonfictional educational story" (Barone, 1992, p. 17). Although description of the physical surroundings provide essential context, it is the people that matter in narrative. As such, character depiction seems to me the flash point around authenticity (meaning and credibility) in this debate. These elements of literary criticism offer me an understanding of character based on established narrative-discourse elements; verisimilitude, emphasis, and tension.

Finally, my methodology of interpretation will draw on the manner in which cultural studies exposes culture in action, as I re-read a text through the codes, aesthetics, and motives controlling society. I am directed by Lyotard's discussion of narrative's embedded legitimation, where he attaches individuals to social tales:

There is, then an incommensurability between popular narrative pragmatics, which provides immediate legitimation, and the

language game known as the question of legitimacy....

Narratives...determine criteria of competence and/or illustrate how they are to be applied. They thus define what has the right to be said and done in the culture in question, and since they are themselves a part of that culture, they are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do (cited in Rorty, 1991, p. 164).

Chapter Two

What is an Educational Story?

In the first chapter of this thesis, I survey the expert opinions of commentators on the status of narrative in contemporary educational research. In this second chapter, I focus my inquiry on a problem of understanding; about how these criteria and expectations of narrative apply to a particular story as narrative research.

The aim of interpretation is understanding, and I see one way to achieve understanding as textual analysis. I believe the interpretation of a single example of narrative that asks "what are the beliefs or needs that shape this particular narrative?", has the potential to deepen and extend insight into Bruner's (1996) larger question of "what's gained and lost in narrative" (p. 130). I shall argue that in order to understand "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) in an educational milieu, such a narrative needs to be reconsidered and reexamined from a stance that links Lyotard's "question of legitimacy" (Lyotard, cited in Rorty, 1991, p. 164), and "breached norms" within the story (Bruner, 1996, p. 131), to a particular author's appeal to "trust" (Barone, 1995, p. 63) and authenticity. At this point in my process, I speculate that I am examining the role of narrative researcher as theorist (Carter, 1993)---defined as someone who formulates a principle which she/he proves through story.

What is an Educational Story?

The apparently simple act of selecting a narrative text for study has provided me with a springboard to my research question, "what's gained and lost in narrative" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130). My first task is to situate the comprehensive notion of narrative in an educational context. By clarifying the term educational in relation to narrative, I ensure that I will "problematize" a text ostensibly designed to express "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) as educational research.

What is an educational story? Certainly, such a narrative takes an individual reader away to a new place, introduces characters that the reader can identify with, and reveals a situation that the characters in the story must deal with. In this way an educational story spurs on a voyage of imagination into an existence that is at the same time different and common to our own.

I find that such stories also have an instructive or argument dimension—they are the way in which individuals make sense of the amorphous mass of information each person receives. An educational narrative performs this instructive function in helping a reader interpret and synthesize this information into something meaningful. As a holistic embodiment of culture, educational narrative permits a reader to understand the present, the past, and the future in a unique way.

To understand an educational narrative in this manner is to resist a reductive urge: one that categorizes or labels texts instead of describing or interpreting them. A narrative of education does not appear as an unchanging and pure form in the Platonic sense. Rather, it is an axis where genre, metaphor, and language collide with "situation, conflict or obstacle, motive, and causality" (Carter, 1993, p. 7). When defining educational narratives as those that are instructive, I ascertain that what is educational has blurred into genres previously considered merely informative or entertaining. A consequence of this perspective is acceptance of a multitude of sources for an educational story. In particular, the decreased isolation between what is "interesting" (Kidder, cited in Othis, 1998, p.1) and what is of "critical significance" (Barone, 1995, p. 64) has led to texts characterized by their interaction with disparate genres and theoretical repertoires.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, I have discovered that this instructive perspective for educational narrative is usually combined with a focus on the portraits of individuals within formal schooling environments. For instance, Barone calls a "nonfictional educational story" (Barone, 1992, p. 17) that which tells "stories about schoolpeople" (1995, p. 64). Carter describes educational narrative as a "rhetorical device for expressing sentiments about teachers or candidates for the teaching profession" (Carter, 1993, p. 5). I am discomfited by this "bracketing" (Husserl, 1970) of all cultural testimony that features

teachers, students, and school buildings as educational. In my studies, I have been instructed by texts with no mention of schooling, and yet have searched in vain for insight within works that transpired completely in a classroom context. However, in light of a lack of other fixed criteria to apply to the enigma of "what is an educational narrative?" I remind myself that it is the people that matter in narrative, and I commit to interpreting a text that tells "stories about schoolpeople" (Barone, 1995, p. 64).

As well, educational narratives are customarily assumed to be a product of research. My search begins by pursuing an artifact of a classroom based study, perhaps published in a scholarly journal or a university based press. But what constitutes research and its products? According to Geertz, research products "tend to look at least as much like romances as they do like lab reports" (1988, p. 8). Whether the recent proliferation of research representation genres is the result of intentional textual techniques by postmodernists, or an intrinsic consequence of a movement toward "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) by way of participant-observation, a wide range of genres now include "stories about schoolpeople" (Barone, 1995, p. 64). The vast majority of educational narratives referenced by narrative theorists are in fact written by authors who identify themselves as either journalists or ethnographers.

Typically, the activities of the educational researcher centre around three fundamentals; forming research questions, performing and analyzing field-work, and writing the research report. Van Maanen encourages a blurring into aesthetic and literary activities, as a way of legitimating narrative forms of inquiry (1988). Moreover, Van Maanen has also directed me to a story whose purpose:

...is to keep the audience alert and interested. Unusual phrasings, fresh allusions, rich language, cognitive and emotional stimulation, puns and quick jolts to the imagination are all characteristic of the good tale (Van Maanen, 1988, pp. 105-106).

In the same vein, Barone (1995) suggests an "artful" (p. 67) text, which

foregrounds the practice of embracing researcher voice as part of research reports.

Confessional Tales

One form of educational narrative that speaks to my research questions is designated as a "confessional tale" by Van Maanen (1988, p. 75). He describes research reports that are identified by "their highly personalized styles" (1988, p. 73), which emphasize the subjectivity of the researcher/author. These confessional texts often feature "a foxy character" (1988, p.76), in the form of the author. Van Manen claims the "confessional tale... begins with the explicit examination of one's own preconceptions, biases, and motives, moving forward in a dialectical fashion toward understanding by way of continuous dialogue between the interpreter and the interpreted" (1988, p. 93). The focus is on the researcher's life, where he/she reveals frailties and failures as a way of building an empathetic personality within their textual construction.

In "confessional tales", the ethnographer also broaches the dilemma of scholars who try to capture the "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) of any place and time (including schooling and teachers) in a text. Through a mixture of more classical research methodologies and literary sensibilities, "the foxy character" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 76) selects "specific techniques [which] achieve a blurring between fact and fiction. The goal is of achieving just the right amount of blurring to arrange ethnographic facts into a story without denying the story's factual foundation" (Geertz, 1983, p. 9), and attract and seduce a reader as much as to present data. In these confessional tales, the layering of participant and researcher experiences departs from objectivity in a conscious manner.

Van Maanen (1988) also points out a related truism of such confessional tales; that "the confessional is apparently interesting only insofar as there is something of note to confess, as well as something of note to situate the confessionauthors of unknown studies will rarely find an audience who cares to read their confession" (p. 81). Of great interest to me is the manner in which these confessional tales allow the reader to relate to events both through the eyes of the author and from the perspective of others within the

culture.

In expanding further on the notion that doing ethnography is part of the researcher's biography, Denzin (1989) suggests that interpretive inquiry is unavoidably linked to an author/researcher's own tale. He instructs: "only you can write your experiences. No one else can write them for you. No one else can write them better than you can. What you write is important" (Denzin, 1989, p. 12). It seems apparent that Denzin's view of interpretive inquiry not only allows for researcher subjectivity, it demands it. From this perspective, the identifiable veneer of any educational text is the narration of the researcher.

New Journalism

Both Van Maanen and Denzin seem to be promoting a retreat from objectivity in educational narratives. Why then, are so many of these texts written by journalists, who are reputed to be unbiased and dispassionate? For reasons I suspect relate to my research questions, journalism has in fact re-oriented itself in the same manner as ethnography.

Since the mid 1960's, Tom Wolfe and other (usually American) journalists have been known for a genre called "new journalism" (Wolfe 1973, p. 31) that departs from objectivity in a conscious manner. From a technical perspective, new/participatory journalism is non-fictional writing that embraces literary methods. The innovation suggested by the label of new (or participatory) journalism acknowledges an author who reflexively participates in the story, and then incorporates herself into the text. Before the onset of this genre, externally focused non-fiction was a feature of standard scientific or news articles, and was considered either a transparent carrier for information or a disposable commodity. In contrast, the literary writing found in poems and novels has been seen as more subjective, reflexive, and interior focused. Of course, the realistic genres of autobiography and memoir writing have partaken of many of the approaches and devices of the literary, including the use of dialogue, the creation of dramatic scenes, and an emphasis on character; despite a general assumption of objectivity. In The New Journalism, Tom Wolfe, describes four devices that characterize new journalistic writing: scene by scene

construction, recording dialogue as if it were verbatim, third-person point of view, and the detailing of everyday practices and styles (1973, pp. 31-32). For Plimpton, the author of the new journalism classic, Paper Lion (1966), "participatory journalism means you actually become your story" (Plimpton, 1998).

Although rhetorical criteria does define how new journalism looks, it seems to me that the deep difference between participatory or new journalism and the old forms is the concept of the "right to know"-an ideological principle found in our place and time. The public, which traditionally played a passive role as readers, is regarded as the motivater for the production of participatory, values-laden journalism. As a representative of the public (rather than as expert) the new journalist is a means of transmitting and contouring a whole cultural system (White, 1980). Just as White discusses how narrative drives history into a publicly accessible location, the same impetus allows the contemporary public an opportunity to read instructive descriptions of educational people and places. What could be more "interesting" (Kidder, cited in Othis, 1998, p.1) or of "critical significance" (Barone, 1995, p. 64) than stories about schooling?

The rhetoric of literary journalism consciously combines the techniques and styles of fiction writing and journalism, in the same manner as the ethnographic "confessional tale" (Van Maanen, 1988). These qualities; of being "literary in style with emancipatory potential" (Barone, 1995, p. 64) are what blurs the borders of the narrative paradigm between new journalism, confessional tales, and educational research. Genre blurring imbues rhetorical issues with a cultural analysis-a questioning of traditional forms (Geertz, 1983). Through the images they command and the themes they foster, any of these narratives share an interest in what our society views as possible. Techniques of literary criticism function for me as the starting point for an analysis which moves beyond a traditional dichotomy of research/literature, and forces me to look at the fusion of blurred genres as something distinctive. This newness for educational narrative is in both form and content, as well as in the relationship between author and reader.

Boys Themselves: a Return to Single Sex Education

The example of "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) I have chosen to study is a text which challenges these ideas of genre, legitimacy, and trust in educational research.

Boys Themselves appears to be a narrative where a researcher's intent to provide information coincides with a conscious decision to write for an audience's social or aesthetical illumination. It is a text with a stake in the "cultural conversation" (Keroes, 1999, p. 89). As the author Michael Ruhlman makes obvious, modern community and its intersection with education, gender, and religion are his subject matter. Being a professional non-fiction writer, Ruhlman is also a defensible subject of examination as a producer of intentional writing.

Boys Themselves: a Return to Single-Sex Education tells the story of an esteemed independent boys' high school in Cleveland Ohio. In this "tender anecdote" (Zengerle, 1997, p. 1) of his own alma mater, Michael Ruhlman chronicles nine months of events at University School in 1993 through the lens of "paradoxes" (BT, p. 9)¹. He adds, "the general notion is America was that the single sex form (of schooling) was bad, and yet there was no evidence to suggest that this was true...this paradox needed to be addressed" (BT, pp. 9-10).

Ruhlman is the central figure in both of the two tightly intertwined narratives in Boys Themselves. He is the reporter of a story, and as such is a presenter of reports, statistics, and opinions about single sex schooling in general. He is simultaneously the Narrator of a series of vignettes about individual teachers, students, administrators, and most critically, himself.

At first glance, Boys Themselves is shaped as a chronological telling events from the perspective of a narrator, with a trio of books that follow the seasons of the school year (fall, winter, and spring). However, this story is not entirely tied to the calendar. Instead, Boys Themselves uses the voices of several individuals to guide a reader through the

¹ Boys Themselves: a Return to Single-Sex Education hereafter referred to as BT

nineteen chapters to graduation day. These encounters are usually expressed in layers of detail over time; an event is never fully explained in one episode. Events and opinions are addressed and re-addressed according to Ruhlman himself, in the role of Narrator.

Boys Themselves features the names of several dozen boys and men, and detailed physical descriptions of several of them. As a rule, individuals are introduced by name, and then speak in a brief fragment a few pages later. Sometimes they are alluded to, or quoted, again in later chapters. Many people appear in Boys Themselves only as a part of a manifest of names. Nine women and girls also enter into this narrative, with teacher Nancy Lerner being interviewed and observed over time. The voices of the Narrator, Nancy, and the headmaster Richard Hawley comprise the core of this text.

In the first chapter of Boys Themselves, I am introduced to Cleveland's luxe suburb of Hunting Valley, where University School is located. An impression of detachment and wealth is developed through further description:

The upper campus of University School, which houses grades nine through twelve, is not visible from any road. Except for the playing fields which spread out like a pasture at the rear of the school's two hundred acres, all other space used for school business—seven tennis courts, the building itself, the drives and pathways—appears to have been carved out of the woods as if from a linoleum block (BT, p. 7).

By page eight, Ruhlman has already begun the process of becoming his own story in the manner of Plimpton's Paper Lion (1998). As he says on his first day of fieldwork:

the all boys school was not strange to me because I'd graduated from this place more than a dozen years earlier. Today was not simply an entry into an all boys' school, a single sex laboratory, it was also a journey into my past (BT, p. 9).

After introducing the major participants in the narrative, the Narrator addresses chapter three through Nancy Lerner, chapter four by way of a young teacher named Paul Bailin, and chapters five through eleven through Rick Hawley. Chapters twelve and thirteen return to effects of Hawley's philosophy and actions on students and faculty of University School. Beginning with Book III, (Spring), the text focuses on tying up the events and arguments introduced earlier, intertwining all of these individual stories into a graduation day conclusion. Coexisting with this (very simplified!) schema are a series of interjections by the author in the form of arguments for boys' schools and against coeducation. In this capacity, the text provides both numerical and anecdotal data that compares and contrasts single gender and co-educational institutions; usually in the context of private (independent) schooling in the U.S.A. Throughout this progression of people and hypotheses the Narrator is an ongoing presence, introducing students and editorializing on the thoughts and events salient to all of the characters in Boys Themselves. As a reader, I live vicariously through the events at University School and participate in its debates in the service of this Narrator, who presents all of the other participants in this research document through his own filters.

From the beginning, Boys Themselves combines the techniques of fiction writing and journalism to style the participants in this story as characters. The critical use of the term character when considering the portrayal of participants in narrative is widespread, but without clear definition. As a result when narrative texts like Boys Themselves partake of characterization, they invite questions about what constitutes an authentic portrayal. In focusing on character, I am emphasizing how these authenticity questions affect me as a reader. Phelan (1996), says "narrative requires audiences to judge its characters" (p. 27), and this common sense directive seems crucial to the exploration of Boys Themselves as narrative research.

In selecting Boys Themselves as part of the "cultural conversation" (Keroes, 1999, p. 89), I have designated it as a text that wrestles with "breached norms" (Bruner, 1996, p. 131) and issues of purpose and motivation. How can I be sure that the author of this work is a willing participant in my interpretive project? Although Ruhlman finds the idea that

boys' schools are a "way out of trouble ...compelling" (BT, p. 18), he sees his examination of University School as an impartial one;

In fact, I came here with no conclusions whatsoever. Hawley was making some pretty big claims; I wanted to question those claims. And I wanted to ask my own questions. What were the societal ramifications of schooling boys together? Were boys once they left this sheltered and comfortable boys' world, prepared for life outside it? Could I learn something about gender, about how the development of boys' attitudes about themselves, specifically, and about women generally? (BT, p. 20).

There are multiple motivations driving Boys Themselves. The first of these motivations for Ruhlman is what he refers to as "a good local story with a national-issue angle" (BT, p. 19). In this capacity, he is performing as a reporter, who says, "I write about things I really care about" (Ruhlman, 1996 (b), p. 1). Following the contemporary stance which leads "the New Journalist to present us our reality embedded in his own ego" (Arlen, 1972, p. 45), Ruhlman has set out to create an atmospheric, info-tainment about an "issue" (BT, p. 1).

Then as Narrator, the author identifies his second motivation. Although Ruhlman enters University School asking "What happens to boys day to day when you cloister them in a school?" (BT, p. 21), religious isolation is not the central issue on his mind. He describes his research impetus as the social climate of the early 1990's, when "issues pitting men and women against each other were on broil" (BT, p. 19). Explorations of masculinity were a fixture of news reports, pop psychology, poetry (particularly Robert Bly), and organs of mass media such as the mens' magazine Esquire. From Ruhlman's perspective:

the Esquire features and many of the men's issues books all seemed

founded on the same premise: that masculinity could somehow be fashioned, that its components could, every five years or so, be picked apart, scrutinized, then popped back together like so many Lego blocks to form a shape that would match whatever mores happened to be in vogue that day (BT, p. 18).

Although he has “no conclusions” (BT, p. 20), this excerpt informs me as reader that Ruhlman wishes to explore by looking from his own gender outward at how society, women, and the world “outside” (BT, p. 20) affect his school. In this way, Ruhlman casts me as a reader who asks, “what are the beliefs or needs that shape this narrative?” I begin my interpretive project by peeling back his question further and asking myself, “more than what-whose beliefs or needs?”

Chapter Three

Nancy: Credible Melodrama

Ruhlman probes the nature of gender in Boys Themselves by laying out the events of Nancy Lerner's life. This creative act leads him into representations of, and reflections on, a research participant and her culture. Consequently, Boys Themselves provides fertile ground for exploring the authentic portrayal of participants in narrative as well as for examining the relationship between characterization and the other elements of narrative.

To determine whether the label of character is applicable to Ruhlman's representation of Nancy I propose an understanding of character based on the narrative-discourse elements identified in chapter one; verisimilitude, emphasis, and tension. My purpose in accessing these concepts is twofold. I want to address character as a unique factor in narrative, but with the full awareness of its ties to other discourse ingredients. I am deliberately sidestepping the Aristotelian chestnut of mimesis; the "critical acts which are traced ...from the root proposition that Art imitates Nature" (Harvey, 1965, p. 12) in favour of contextual, relative meaning. I find that this understanding of character speaks to the substance of narrative through the dramatization of Nancy in Boys Themselves, as the author is "making sense of..experiences" (Bruner, 1996, 130) through his construction.

Nancy can be interpreted either as a successful rendering of a "fish" out of water (echoing Ruhlman's metaphor of himself as a "fish" who wants to make "a serious analysis of the pros and cons of water" BT, p. 172), or a creatively inaccurate realization. Perhaps the pragmatic answer lies somewhere in between, but my developing experience of Nancy as a reader allows me to cast a net over the questions of authenticity in narrative.

Verisimilitude, emphasis, and tension are but a few of the "readerly" (Barthes, 1975) instruments that serve Ruhlman in this text. They allow him to evoke the characteristics that I respond to in Nancy, and to allude to his motivations for narrativization as a whole.

In order to shape this character, Ruhlman doesn't present a participant's transcript

as much as compose: choosing excerpts, developing relationships, and adding text to transcend the original situation and research event. By emphasis I mean the relative amount of narration that Ruhlman devotes to an individual portrayal, as well as the structure of such a portrayal. Verisimilitude (credibility) relates to the particulars of "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) that create a sense of reliability and honesty, as well as the unity of inter-relationships. In considering verisimilitude I am drawing on Phelan's (1996) description of characters in fictional settings who relate to "unstable relationships between or within characters and their circumstances" (p. 30). I am investigating tension critically from my viewpoint as a reader, by responding to the covert pressures that both echo and dispute the surface narrative. In exploring tension as it relates to "an order of meaning" (White, 1980, p. 5) or "a different kind of textual plotting" (Barone, 1992, p. 20) I become attuned to the narrator's choices about what to tell and how to tell it.

Ruhlman's introduces himself as a "presence" at University School (BT, p. 20) and creates a Narrator during his retelling of Hawley's first interview. At the same time, he provides an occasion for a first look into Nancy's thoughts, and a hint that the management of narrative elements in the story could be an issue for her presentation.

The three elements I identified (verisimilitude, emphasis, and tension) are part of Nancy from her origin in the story. The narrating voice introduces Nancy with "I asked a lot of questions, and at one point Nancy Lerner went to Rick and asked "are we supposed to tell him the truth?" (BT, p. 20). This opening exchange asks me to analyze Nancy's words for credibility and honesty. As Hillis-Miller says, "beginning is the start of the ending" (1998, p. 53), and Nancy is emphasized here as a conclusion to questions of authenticity during her very first insertion into the narrative. Nancy's initial appearance in the text also foreshadows the tension and instability she creates for both Richard Hawley and the Narrator. The headmaster's response to her-"I thought so" (BT, p. 20) confirms these tensions between herself and Hawley, and by inference for the story.

Nancy appears again in Boys Themselves as the first person in chapter three, when she alleges "I am the most uncoordinated woman in the world" (BT, p. 28). The Narrator flags her verisimilitude again in this second statement. He seems to make light of

this by bracketing her words: "her claim says more about her than about how far she can throw a baseball" (BT, p. 28). But in the next sentence, he expands this bracketing into credibility statements about Nancy's general character, saying she is "someone who speaks in absolutes" (BT, p. 28), in "the grand sweeping style of the literature she teaches" (BT, p. 28). The last sentence in this paragraph reaches a conclusion; that "she is an expert at raising the ordinary to a level of credible melodrama" (BT, p. 28).

The choice of melodrama as a denotation for Nancy carries tones of artificiality rather than verisimilitude. The definition of melodrama is "a play or drama...(where) the plot is made up of sensational incidents" suggests skepticism about the "emotions displayed (which) are violent or extravagantly sentimental" (Funk & Wagnalls, 1963, p. 854). This attachment of "credible" to "melodrama" prepares me as reader for a breaching of the narrative "order of meaning" (White, 1980, p. 5) through Nancy by the end of her first extended narration.

By the end of chapter three the events, thoughts, and interpretations of this teacher constitute about one third of the story. Considering that most of the participants in this story garner only slivers of text space, this indicates that Nancy is a significant actor in Boys Themselves. Her extended and detailed treatment early in the narrative is suggestive, as she garners far more attention than Ruhlman's ostensible object of study of whom he says "I might have gone to any number of boys' schools...but Rick Hawley was here" (BT, p. 13)

As a result, a reader may well wonder about how Nancy is going to be portrayed overall, and just how she is going to contribute to the story. Will she remain a figure whose function in the text is to serve as the female teacher example? Her selection as a representation by both gender ("I believed it important to watch a class of boys taught by a woman" (BT, p. 36) and job description is acknowledged:

She was one of five faculty who have doctoral degrees and is the only female PHD. There are a total of three women who teach in the five major academic departments and the other two

who double as administrators teach only one section each

(BT, p. 36)

Although Nancy protests that "I'm not a representative teacher" (BT, p. 36), she is still the only female person given sustained voice in Boys Themselves. Of course, from the description above, she has no choice but to speak on behalf of all female teachers ("taught by a woman" BT, p. 36) as well as for herself.

The Narrator pursues a thread of verisimilitude by way of his reports on Nancy in the classroom. Although Nancy describes herself as "the most uncoordinated woman in the world" (BT, p. 28), he directly contradicts her statement in observing that "the most uncoordinated woman in the world has an agile improvisational classroom style" (BT, p. 30). Nancy's personal philosophy is also discussed in terms of credibility and stability. These references connect verisimilitude to the text's overt motion; "the textual plotting" (Barone, 1992, p. 20) of Nancy Lerner and Rick Hawley's seemingly inevitable ideological controversy.

According to the Narrator, Nancy is motivated by idealism in the same manner as Hawley, even though she lacks coherence. Nancy voices her "drastically different tone" (BT, p. 34) in passage that validates her significance as a character;

..."You've all heard of the old male faculty miniskirt response... essays should be like miniskirts, short enough to be interesting, long enough to cover the subject". The class laughs but she doesn't, she seems momentarily annoyed, and then adds "A feminist shouldn't say that, but I suppose there's a grain of truth in it" (BT, p. 34).

In this passage, Nancy raises the specter of the "issues pitting men and women against each other" (BT, p. 19) that underlie the writing of Boys Themselves. As the narrator has pointed out elsewhere, Nancy speaks or is interpreted as unstable, and

these comments about "the old male faculty" certainly do not match the remainder of the sentence. To define others in terms of "old" and "male" suggests that gender has been an issue related to Nancy's preparation for the classroom.

But although Nancy elsewhere says "we're taught to mistrust the bias of the speaker so here's mine..I was born October 15 1938" (BT, p. 228), this information is not offered to me as a reader until much later in Boys Themselves. In fact, Nancy is 58 years old at the writing of this book, and "miniskirt" is a fragment of vernacular from Nancy's own student days before the development of contemporary feminism. Is it any surprise that Nancy's remarks are wary, and hint at generational fault lines? That it is orthodox, pragmatic, or authentic to be ambivalent about declaring herself a feminist seems to have escaped the Narrator, as he focuses on highlighting Nancy's inconsistencies. He proceeds with this train of thought;

When asked about this remark after class, she explains, "I'm a feminist in that I believe in equality, but I'm not a militant." She adds "I'm more of a humanist"... She is a teacher and a scholar who has taken the recent politicizing of the Western canon seriously, and found it tiresome. "If I stopped to address every feminist issue we'd never get through anything." And if they avoided everything that has, she says, "an un-PC slant-Eliot's anti-semitism, Shakespeare's misogyny-I'd have to throw out all of culture. I can only teach literature as literature. I've seen enough great literature get lost (BT, p. 34).

This fragment jumps back to the classroom conversation, and Nancy seems to equivocate with "I'm a feminist in that I believe in equality, but I'm not a militant" (BT, p. 34). Although this ambiguity again speaks volumes about this woman's experience and reality, her events and experiences are reduced to the Narrator's generalization about the Western canon. As a result of the narrator's technique of summarizing Nancy's thoughts,

I'm not even sure if the quote that follows; "If I stopped to address every feminist issue we'd never get through anything", is the product of the same conversation. The metaphorical language ("politicizing of the Western canon") summarizes and conflates feminism with bigotry and the "throw(ing) out all of culture" (BT, p. 34). More importantly, Nancy's cultural stance as a feminist remains inconclusive-apparently by design. What is clear to me as a reader though, is that feminism is a form of militancy.

With the inclusion in this discussion about what is "PC", the narrator recasts Nancy's earlier status as a "female PHD" (BT, p. 34) from phenomenological into societal terms; translating the problem of her understanding into its political consequences. Is it possible that the Narrator has presented this tableau in order to suggest a challenge to cultural permanence through Nancy and her tentative (or pragmatic) feminism? In the process, a social dialectic (feminism/change vs. University School/permanence) is loaded onto Nancy's concerns. In fact, Boys Themselves consistently presents as societal discord what might be also be regarded as simply personal contradictions within the structure of contemporary gender and belief systems.

After Nancy demonstrates her philosophy as confused through the Narrator's selections, she defines her over-reaching self-concept as a totally "intellectual" teacher:

She tells me what an incredible life college was for her, and may be for some of these boys-to understand in your heart that a life with literature alone can be a rich one, she tells me, to live in a purely intellectual world. For her it was to be she says "overwhelmed with joy". Nancy stops fussing with her papers, looks up and says, "Some never want to leave that world. And they become teachers" (BT, p. 328).

But the Narrator also challenges her verisimilitude by quoting her as saying the opposite; "she knew she was a teacher when she realized..that she loved them, that this was a gift from God that has nothing to do with me" (BT, p. 229). Whether she is a teacher

by intellectual need or divine providence, Nancy eventually resigns from her position at University School. The Narrator's questioning of her internal stability continues until her final appearances in Boys Themselves. In this concluding excerpt, the Narrator conveys an affectionate condescension about her, suggesting that he has come to know more about Nancy than she knows about herself:

her last day of AP English class is tomorrow and its time to start cleaning out her desk and unloading shelves of books. It's a full day's job and Nancy will take more than a month, almost up to graduation, to complete it...she has no need to be at school. For Nancy, who has complained all year about the strain of teaching and the demands on her time, these weeks might have provided an early start on the solitary reading and writing she's been longing for (BT, p. 325)

While determining that Nancy's statements are untruthful, and that her "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) is not a realistic representation of an "individually and socially storied life" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), the Narrator also employs the technique of emphasis to shape Nancy's interior conversation for me. When the Narrator is trying to arrange permission to sit in on Nancy's class. Ruhlman "slips" into his Narrator and relates that:

When Nancy asked me to stand and tell her class about myself and about my work, and I detailed my intent, she felt a serious jolt of surprise: wrong, not in my class, not this year, last thing I need, somebody chronicling my bad hair days, I'm swamped as it is with obligations I didn't choose (BT, p. 35)

The narrator states that "she felt a serious jolt of surprise" (BT, p. 35). As a reader,

I would like to know how she actually experiences her contradictory emotions, and how they affect her words and actions. This passage contains compelling moments, and I wonder what they mean to Nancy, and in what sense that they partake of her internal dialogue—the emotional versus intellectual creation of her essential self. Instead, the Narrator transposes her speech and offers his own reflections. Consider the voice emphasized in this crucial passage:

Nancy is not happy this fall. The emotional and physical demands of teaching, combined with the time it devours, are wearing on her. She doesn't have enough time for her husband. She doesn't have enough time for herself. There's so much yet to read. When she took this job two years ago it was to be part time only; she intended to spend the afternoons grading papers and reading. Her daughters are grown, and her husband makes a comfortable living as an interventional radiologist, so she doesn't have to work at all. Yet her colleagues have watched her parlay this part time schedule into a full time job (BT, p. 33)

According to which participant in this narrative is Nancy's time "devoured"? Is she is burned out? Or perhaps she is merely incompetent? And what ideology and life role is defined for her by statements like "She doesn't have enough time for her husband" and "she doesn't have to work at all" (BT, p. 33). How do I read her readiness to "parlay this part time schedule into a full time job"? (BT, p. 33). A few pages later, Nancy is coincidentally a teacher who tries to avoid the Narrator's observation because it might interfere with her social life ("If I can't go to the orchestra some night...", BT, p. 36).

As I'm asking these questions I have become aware that this narrator is not simply an copyist, through which impressions circulate from the text to me as reader. This involved and integral participant is also the one who decides what to tell and how to tell it, and must be seen as the important element in the novel's discourse about Nancy. In the

manner of a fictional "unreliable" narrator he overspeaks, interrupts, and judges.

This process is discreet and varied. On first glance, passages from Boys Themselves can appear to be "tactful" (van Manen, 1990). This point is demonstrated in the following quotation, where this shaping Nancy's "thoughts" about an aspect of gender are universalized:

Having taught both coed classes and boys classes, she's fascinated about questions of gender. She reads the class a description of Clytemestra, who kills her husband Agememnon, King of the Greeks, when he comes home from the Trojan War: "And she maneuvered like a man" What is he saying about gender?" she asks the class (BT, p. 32).

What goes on in her mind before and after she verbalizes this unfinished proposition? Had the retelling begun with Nancy's version, instead of this transposed inner speech ("she's fascinated about questions of gender"), it would have indicated an assurance of Nancy's point of view. Instead the narrator selectively notes what happened in the classroom but leaves Nancy's thoughts unfinished. Considering the question at the core of this study is "Could I learn something about gender, ...specifically, and about women generally? (BT, p. 20) an inquiry like "What is he saying about gender?" (BT, p. 32) deserves more emphasis on Nancy by means of either an extended inner view or narrative development.

The unreliability of the Narrator's emphasis is pervasive. In this passage, Nancy's actual experience cannot be known:

As the boys file past her and out the door, Nancy's entire frame, released from the spotlight of teaching, sags. She is exhausted. She is exhausted not only from the cold that won't leave her head, and from the teaching and from staying up too late to grade their rotten Hamlet papers which had taken her far too long (untouched

on her desk at home the entire break "they sat there" she said, "accusing me"). All this was part of the teaching life she'd known for fifteen years (BT, p. 226)

Although this excerpt contains words in quotation marks, it presents the Narrator's version of Nancy, since it is detached from her side of the dialogue (that must have occurred between herself and Ruhlman). He recognizes Nancy's inner struggle: "from the teaching and from staying up too late to grade their rotten Hamlet papers" (BT, p. 226). However, he chooses not to permit her to express herself, instead counting on provisional and contingent expressions of her experience. He begins with her appearance, "Nancy's entire frame, released from the spotlight of teaching, sags" (BT, p. 226), and places his prime emphasis on this level of description. The second and third sentences of the excerpt play up the significance of confusion and failure, suggesting that Nancy lacks the kind of wisdom necessary to see herself as in trouble. This mental state is simply summarized by the Narrator, with no prior explanation except in terms of her prominent trait as "someone who speaks in absolutes" (BT, p. 28).

These sentences also demonstrate that the narrator is not "tactful" (van Manen, 1990)) at all. This orientation is emphasized for me as reader by the same "readerly" (Barthes, 1975) techniques that invoke Nancy's stated incoherence, such as the use of parentheses and the rhetorically charged rendering of speech. In its timbre, this passage resembles many others in the text. It begins with the Narrator's statement about what Nancy has experienced, moves then to a general statement about her qualities, and carries on not to Nancy's thoughts on what this incident means to her, but to the Narrator's deductions. This uneven emphasis has the rhetorical effect of positioning me as an eavesdropper, and I begin to question the Narrator's perceptions.

Emphasis in the narration is also defined through Nancy's voice as one of "difference" from the those around her at University School. As Nancy emerges into narrative focus in the third chapter, she appears to be a person in complete contrast to her colleagues. Outnumbered and exiled, one of "approximately ten women in an audience of

420" (BT, p. 23) Nancy describes University School as like "walking into an alien world" (BT, p. 35). Her difference again begins with the visible, in "she is the only teacher in the school who requires a red wagon" (BT, p. 28), and extends into the Narrator's version of her inner thoughts. The emphasis continues with selections like Nancy feels "a serious jolt of surprise" because she's "swamped as it is with obligations I didn't choose" (BT, p. 35). But according to the Narrator she does choose, as in "yet her colleagues have watched her parlay this part time schedule into a full time job" (BT, p. 33). However, neither of these sentences are spoken by Nancy herself; as this is another example of transposed inner speech. Even the involvement of Nancy's fellow teachers in this citation and their intimated opinions, is expressed solely by the Narrator.

Most notably, Nancy is different because she is the emotional voice of Boys Themselves. Nancy's voice creates relationships in the narrative between breakdown and discontinuity, and tears and crises figure largely in her selected and assigned portrait. This characteristic is established early in Boys Themselves, with "for all her obvious adoration of the students-sometimes when she talks of them her dark eyes sparkle with tears..." (BT, p. 33), and sustained through comments like "I cry at the drop of a hat" (BT, p. 324). None of the other staff members at University School are composed by means of their emotional output; an intellectual accounting based on philosophical precepts is the judgment criteria for the men at University School. The Narrator clearly stipulates of Nancy that "everything she did seemed to rise from the deepest recesses of her heart" (BT, p. 227).

Nancy is also quoted as saying to her students: "yesterday I had a very, very, emotional day and I told my second period about how I felt, and afterwards I sort of felt that it had been rather manipulative (BT, p. 327), as well as "yesterday she tells her class "I was in a state of crisis" (BT, p. 110). The suggestion that emotion is an interference and a negative in Nancy's classroom seems clear in these comments. In expressing these emotions Nancy echoes Ruhlman's gender-organized relationship between women as a "drop of water in a pan of hot oil" (BT, p. 60), within this site of "culture's citadel of order and tradition" (BT, p. 56)

The Narrator weighs heavily on Nancy's dissimilarity when he shows how this

"difference" translates into an instructional style at variance with others at University School. In noting that;

she's taught hundreds of students in both public and private high schools, and has learned to move with student rhythms to direct them forward by using their questions and responses as a springboard to plunge deeper into a text (BT, p. 30).

Here the Narrator allows a direct comparison to Hawley, who "drives through his classes, charges them, jackhammers, sprints" (BT, p. 179). However, Nancy's approach is highlighted as ineffective; "nothing I have ever done has changed-I'm going to use one of Rick's words-their trajectory. Boys are on a course of their own" (BT, p. 222). This fundamental polarity reminds me as a reader of Hawley's statement that "I know certain things...I believe certain things. I'm going to pass that on. That's what I do. That's my job" (BT, p. 184). A careful reading reveals a contrasting thesis from Nancy; "I don't have anything to say to the boys...what I have to say to them, I say in class. I meet them at the text" (BT, p. 324)

What's more, Nancy is represented as having doubts about the privileged existence found at private schools. When Nancy describes herself as feeling guilty because "people are starving" (BT, p. 37) while she has chosen to teach in a privileged atmosphere, because "I had to have Shakespeare" (BT, p. 38), she airs concerns about equity that do not surface elsewhere in Boys Themselves. Nancy's quandary about the social elements of privilege is very different from Hawley's protection of "what is fixed and true" (BT, p.18) as the basis of human relations.

Nancy has another difference that becomes part of her characterization. She is described as having "confessed" that she is "a non practicing ethnic Jew" (BT, p. 147), like no one else in Boys Themselves. In a world where the forthrightly Christian headmaster is quoted as saying;

is it possible to leave your convictions and beliefs at home?... You can't leave it at home because your religious dimension tends to operate at the very center (sic) of your thinking and feeling. It determines the style of your personal relationships; it is the fixed point of reference you use in making a decision (BT, p. 129).

Nancy's "mistrust" of "good" Christian(s)" (BT, p. 135) leads her to cry out; "you cannot know what it means to be a Jew at this school" (BT, p. 147). Could anyone be more of a "fish" out of water? The inclusion of this phrase in the narrative seems to speak directly to me as a reader, and converges strategically with Nancy's isolation in the discourse; suggesting that emphasis on Nancy as different is constructed rather than discovered in Boys Themselves.

In a fictional work, tension is a plot device that usually reaches a climax—a point where the problems are greatest. In Boys Themselves, tension occurs more as a pattern of instabilities within the narrative. Within this examination of Nancy, I find that the notion of tension as instability of awareness, expectation, and value leads me to explore White's "order of meaning" (1980, p. 5) through this narrative-discourse element.

Nancy's presentation creates an awareness of her inner conflict through the qualities and incidents selected for her portrayal. In my discussion of verisimilitude I have highlighted a number of inconsistent statements, attitudes, and responses that the Narrator elected to refer to in Nancy's portrait. This pulling together of contradictory elements forces them to highlight each other, and captures my attention as a reader. However, the crisis of meaning caused by the juxtaposing of contrasting elements means I have difficulty organizing the story in my own mind—I'm too busy trying to make Nancy cohere. Although this internal tension is problematic as a window into "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27), it provides a propulsion to Nancy as a character who stirs up this narrative. Ruhlman also employs the standard character development issues in Nancy—the character as someone who has a problem (Nancy is "not happy" (BT, p. 33), "guilty" (BT, p. 37), "in crisis" (BT, p. 110), and "wants to be ignored" (BT, p. 38), along with a series of

untruths and inconsistencies in presentation (uncoordinated/ coordinated, devoted/dilettante, feminist/not). By providing these contrasting details Ruhlman is able to generate a representation of Nancy that gives her definition and complexity.

Nancy's internal confusion ripples out into the story as a whole, and serves as a pointer to a profound tension in Boys Themselves. The Narrator reveals the relationship between Nancy and Hawley in a way that develops a positive portrait of her and circumvents his original discussion. Hawley's recognition that "she brought a real intellectual edge to the school" (BT, p. 323), and that he "esteems her like no other colleague" (BT, p. 30) is mirrored by Nancy's admiration of him in saying "Rick is formidable. ForMIDable" (BT, p. 30). She admitted that were it not for Hawley, she might;

never have surprised herself and taken a job at a boys' school in the first place. But this headmaster was like no other school administrator she'd encountered. He was foremost a committed teacher, but he was also a scholar who could match her level of discourse on literature, as well as a writer she admired. From these shared passions, a friendship grew; throughout the school year she and the headmaster would talk for hours about nothing but books and students (BT, p. 35).

This complimentary perspective of Nancy as an "elegant, conservative, professional" (BT, p. 29) is interspliced with her ongoing presentation as an incoherent actor in Boys Themselves. The tensions within this relationship between Nancy-the-good and Nancy-the-bad foregrounds the ideological basis for the teachers' differences. This develops gradual expectations and an inevitability-"textual plotting" (Barone, 1992, p. 20) through the patterns of instabilities within her characterization alone.

Tension serves Boys Themselves well as an aid to narrative progression. But in this text, Nancy as a character is determined by a plot she says she didn't write; the plot of a text which begins with a teacher who has a problem of difference and ends with her

isolation.

Is this consideration of character in Boys Themselves worthwhile? Reading Boys Themselves as a story about participants as characters unlocks its meaning in a new way. The elements of verisimilitude, emphasis, and tension are widely accepted techniques in narrative as a whole. In contemplating a sense of character based on these aspects of narrative construction I am able to broach the connections between a participant's story and the rhetorical and creative acts of the author, Michael Ruhlman. While not getting caught up a debate about whether Nancy's representation is "realistic", I am also able to consider whether her story is authentic within the framing of this text.

In envisioning verisimilitude as the sense of instability within a participant's portrayal, and the unity of their self and their circumstances (Phelan, 1996) I have been able to decipher this baffling realization of a female teacher. Nancy's lack of verisimilitude is extensively illustrated. Nearly every quality that Nancy attributes to herself is matched by another quote or description in which the opposite is demonstrated to be the case. As well, numerous other events and opinions are discussed by the Narrator that call her reliability and honesty into question.

This lack of verisimilitude of Nancy as a character appears to be an attempt on Ruhlman's part to direct me as a reader to an instability of ideology, especially for those who don't speak in encapsulated philosophical aphorisms like Hawley or "research data" like himself. Just as tellingly, the lack of cohesion in Nancy's portrayal suggests that other voices in the story may also be improvised. The characterization possibilities latent in the editing and framing of participants' "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27), and the emplotting mandated by a predetermined image of someone are highlighted by examining verisimilitude in this narrative.

When verisimilitude is combined with the various forms of emphasis I have identified (both the attention Nancy receives as well as the techniques of her depiction) I am likewise able to see that the character of Nancy is a poor fit between her described features and the Narrator's responses. The shifts of emphasis from Nancy to the Narrator, or from one method to another of rendering speech (whether internal or spoken to others) raise

questions about the authenticity of the story as a whole. Ruhlman often changes his emphasis from one speaker to another in a vague and complex fashion. As a reader, I have difficulty following these shifts in emphasis, and make mistaken assumptions about the source of essential information about Nancy on first reading. My alignment as an eavesdropper creates a situation where my knowledge of the story is incomplete.

A successful description according to narrative criteria must provide both particular and general knowledge. The discussion about Nancy in Boys Themselves emphasizes the universal, and then seeks out particulars that apply or fit, creating a character rather than describing her "human condition" (Arendt, 1958, p. 14).

In considering tension as "an order of meaning" (White, 1980, p. 5) I have applied Ruhlman's own organizing metaphor to my analysis. The pressures that seem part of Nancy's interior world correspond to the "peculiar forces" (BT, p. 61) that emplot Boys Themselves. The widening of Nancy's instability of awareness, expectation, and value into the relationship between Nancy and Hawley directs the meaning found in all levels of this narrative.

In examining tension through the character of Nancy in this way I want to make room for an understanding of Ruhlman as a person who is "making sense of..experiences" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130) through his text. In developing Nancy through the techniques so rooted in fictional works, Ruhlman has listened to the professional stories (Barone, 1992, p. 20) of both narrative research and new journalism.

What have I learned examining the relationship between characterization verisimilitude, emphasis, and tension and the other elements of narrative? In focusing on character, I am notably able to connect these authenticity questions to my alignment as a reader. I trace Nancy's steps in this text as a result of her portrayal, but this experience does not silence my questions about this text as an journey into a world that is educational.

Nancy's dilemmas are a problem for me because I have been directed to make an internal judgment of this speaker. That is, in responding to Nancy I am aligned by the Narrator through the quotes and discussions of Nancy found in Boys Themselves-she has a signature as character. When I begin to consider her role in the central, philosophical

exchanges in the narrative, Nancy has already been demonstrated to be inconsistent, over-emotional, and a representative of a particular life view. These cues I have been given lead me to develop an opinion about Nancy as a speaker, and are part of a sequencing of estimations I have been aligned to make about her, and others like her.

In order to follow Boys Themselves as a story it is difficult not to make these judgments about Nancy, because they are implicit in the verisimilitude of the world of University School. Narrative as "the theories and dreams from the perspective of someone's life and in the context of someone's emotions" (McEwan & Egan, 1995, viii), comes to rest in Nancy when I must "judge its characters" (Phelan, 1996, p. 27) in order to follow the tale. Each episode about Nancy has implications on the events and words that follow, and radiates from Ruhlman's narrativizing motivations about single sex schooling and his own personal journey.

As his intended audience, I have been invited to apply a generalizing eye on his description of this female teacher. If my initial response had been to accept Ruhlman's interpretation of Nancy's story, I would not have returned to this volume. However, after my first reading I am left with a enigmatic and tangled impression of Nancy. I am perplexed by her commentary, and frustrated by her enigmatic role in the Boys Themselves conversation. She seems to be the "paradox" worthy of examination, rather than "the public perception of the single sex school" (BT, p. 9) that Ruhlman and Hawley want to debate.

Chapter Four

Hawley: A Reverse Image Kurtz

After unraveling Nancy, I have become a concerned and uncomfortable reader. I wearily imagine a narrative arm-wrestling match opposite Ruhlman; with each of us bent over a text built out of “issues pitting men and women against each other” (BT, p. 19). Perhaps it is a feint, but Ruhlman’s representation of the headmaster at University College seems to construct different alliances with me as reader.

After his graduation, Ruhlman formed an image of Rick Hawley from alumni mailings, and felt that “the new headmaster was saying some of the oddest things” about society and schooling (BT, p. 16). Over time, he concluded that “Hawley seemed a sort of reverse image Kurtz, dispatching soulful messages from a reverse image wilderness” (BT, p.18). Ruhlman’s backhanded allusion to Conrad’s character is remarkable, given Kurtz’s place in Western cultural iconography as an emblem of power, violence, and madness. Conrad (1902) creates a satire on leadership in Kurtz, who pronounces that “by the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded” (p. 118). Of course, this character is notorious for being “hollow at the core” (p. 131). My interest in author motivations for narrativization leads me to question whether there is purpose in the characterizations and allusions that are stated, omitted, or rewritten in Boys Themselves. Can Ruhlman be employing a sardonic literary metaphor in comparing University School to a colonial outpost, with a leader corrupted by absolute power?

In his article, Trust and Educational Storytelling (1995), Barone suggests that “stories about schoolpeople can achieve a degree of critical significance”(1995, p. 64). In Boys Themselves, the characterization of Hawley is clearly visible as a textual assemblage of such narrative-discourse elements as verisimilitude, emphasis, and tension. However, by shaping the headmaster Hawley through reference to the iconic Heart of Darkness, Ruhlman heightens my attention to the gravity of such a figure; inside a text and beyond.

Richard Hawley is presented as an enigma to be decoded through a series of statements, actions, and revelations. He is laid out in the first few pages of Boys

Themselves as “controversial ...within the school community-students, teachers, parents, (and) alumni” (BT, p. 12). Ruhlman describes how some see him as “a dangerous radical”, “a moral absolutist”, and an “ultraconservative with hopelessly archaic, perhaps harmful, notions of right and wrong” (BT, p. 12). But just as quickly, Hawley is also portrayed in the most flattering of terms, because “many adore him, stand in awe of his erudition, his literary work, his intelligence...(BT, p. 12). Ruhlman goes on to say that, “over the past few years he’s been writing and speaking about boys’ schools, (and) has become, in fact, a sort of boys’ school guru” (BT, p. 13).

These titillating but unattributed rumours are plainly presented to ensure that my first thoughts about the leader of University School are ambiguous. This reading is further encouraged by Ruhlman, when he whispers a rare aside to me as a reader: “I know some people who’ve never met Hawley and hate him anyway” (BT, p. 13). Suitably prepared, I am introduced to the contentious “guru” as neither a “proud fatherly headmaster” nor a “sly, clever revolutionary” (BT, p. 13).

The initial chapters of the text accumulate more layers of eccentricity upon Hawley. In a school constructed through worldly success and comfort, it is this “unworldly, disoriented... vacant...”, and even “addled” administrator who is an exemplar of genius and moral conduct (BT, p. 13). Ruhlman sketches out his original interview with this perplexing headmaster by saying, “listening to Hawley, when he gets going, is like trying to speed read...” (BT, p. 20). Apparent laws of nature fly about wildly as the headmaster contends that “gender is deeper than race, it is deeper than culture. Deeper than humanity, all the way down to plant phylum” (BT, p. 19).

Ruhlman the reporter prefaces this first contact with Hawley in terms of his contribution to contemporary explorations of gender formation and representation. This perspective is elegiacally sandwiched between cultural heavyweights like The New York Times (Ruhlman’s current employer) and Esquire magazine (BT, p. 18). However, Hawley immediately pokes holes in this carefully woven intellectual biography, by voicing the aforementioned Rushton (1997) study-style genetic theories. Hawley is clearly not adding his voice to the discussions about feminist, gay/lesbian, or queer theory that abound

in educational theorizing at this time.

Shortly afterward, Ruhlman switches from a reporter to the Narrator of this school story. He begins his year of research with the first assembly of the term; where Hawley tells his students and staff that University School is both “a theory” and a response to an educational “crisis” (BT, p. 24). Like the “deeper than humanity” interview, this speech expresses Hawley’s claim to philosophical scientific expertise, which he combines with nostalgia for a Victorian world. This nostalgia seems to serve as ideological propaganda, as “the anti-heroic age” (BT, p. 360) is taken up by Hawley and used as a metaphor for the gender based social shifts that followed World War I. In a delicious piece of understatement, the Narrator mentions that Rick Hawley’s “favourite subject is society” (BT, p.176). As a reader, I wonder if he and I inhabit the same society at all.

The Narrator concurs that “Hawley is clearly not of his time” (BT, p. 151). For Rick, the “majestic causeway” of philosophy ended at the first world war “like the frayed ends of a rope” (BT, p. 150). Unlike Nancy, Hawley is entrusted to speak directly to me as reader; to show how he conflates longing for a “backward glancing” (BT, p. 163) nostalgia with a process of intellectual editing and simplification. For Hawley, ethics are what is “objectively knowable” (BT, p.333), “what is true” is also what is “fixed”(BT, p.18) and aesthetics are the difference between the “beautiful” and the “coarse”(BT, p. 292). After offering both an interpreted sketch of Hawley as a ideologue and allowing him to make his own case, the text then turns to Nancy, with the headmaster bumbling in and out of the story line mainly to demonstrate that he is the product of a nostalgic retreat from recent history.

There are variable messages that can be constructed from this presentation of Hawley as someone who wishes to avoid a post WW1 “age of irony and the anti-hero” (BT, p. 360). In The Place of Story in the Study of Teaching and Teacher Education, Carter (1993) asserts that teacher stories are constructions that face “problems of veracity and fallibility” (p. 8). It is possible to interpret the portrayal of Richard Hawley as a story of such “breached norms” (Bruner, 1996, p. 131), where the conflict between what a research participant says and the actions narrated create a character who seems neither

candid nor valid.

This assessment of Rick returns me as a reader back to thoughts about verisimilitude in Boys Themselves. Phelan (1996) suggests that an examination of "unstable relationships between or within characters and their circumstances" (p. 30) allows "audiences to judge" characters (p. 27). I am able to consider Hawley critically through verisimilitude with the assistance of the Narrator. Unlike Nancy, who is related to me as reader entirely through the his words, the dichotomy between the "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) of Hawley (and all of the others he impacts) and his formal suppositions is illuminated through numerous voices in Boys Themselves. In the absence of this single omniscient viewpoint, the headmaster is permitted to develop in the text through a series of moral and philosophical arguments that are contrasted with his described actions and effects. Recalling how Hillis Miller (1994) highlights "the displacement ...from a focus on the meaning of texts to a focus on the ways meaning is conveyed" (p. 84), I carefully note the differences in how the participants in Boys Themselves are depicted.

The presence of this headmaster is actually shaped as a series of negative actions. Hawley re-enters the story at the one-third point of the text, as he enacts the role of a leader who is the creator of a spiritually repressive culture, who demands unreflective obedience from staff and students, and who restricts knowledge to exclude alternative human conditions. In several incidents, the Narrator relates how Hawley's nostalgia combines with "truth" and religious belief so that he performs unauthentically at University School. For instance, the headmaster's belief that "what is true" can be "fixed" (BT, p.18) is the basis of Hawley's inability to comprehend that there might stripes of religious faith coloured unlike his own. The narrator retells yet another assembly speech, where Hawley informs the entire school of an incident in which a committee advised him to downplay candidates' religious affiliation. He frames the debate for his audience by saying, "Beneath that statement...lies a very modern and recent attitude" (BT, p. 129). He then adds:

is it possible to leave your convictions and beliefs at home?... You

can't leave it at home because your religious dimension tends to operate at the very center of your thinking and feeling. It determines the style of your personal relationships; it is the fixed point of reference you use in making a decision (BT, p. 129).

According to the twenty-two pages of text devoted to this philosophical cause and its effects, the headmaster first manages to make a mockery of University School's non-sectarian mandate by dictating "special assemblies and curricular changes" (BT, p. 149) with "an explicit Christian bias" (BT, p. 145).

Following this goal, he imposes his will upon the adults in the story. Staff and administrators at University School are "edgy", and "one sighs audibly" (BT, p. 129) as they endure the headmaster's sermonizing. The same religious initiative is described by the Narrator as a "bombshell" that "rocked the faculty" (BT, p. 133). In revisiting the subject of religion the Narrator also comments that, "a majority of the faculty were wary of Hawley. Some did not trust the man outright; others believed that anachronism or not, Hawley would do what he pleased with regard to religion and discipline and that there was little anyone could do about it except leave" (BT, p. 163).

Students are also impacted by Hawley's desire to pigeonhole "what is fixed and true behind so much that seems to be shifting and muddled in the news of the day" (BT, p. 18). The Headmaster's essay contest on "what is the place of religious belief and practice in a non sectarian school?" is presented to students with "originality, good reasoning, and persuasive prose" as its criteria (BT, p. 130). The Narrator cites several eloquent responses in favour of "diversity" and "accommodation" (BT, p. 146) over specific curriculum, but also reveals that the winner of the contest was the only student who sided with Rick Hawley's views.

Rick also draws on philosophical arguments to manage friction in his closest relationships. Nancy declares; "you cannot know what it means to be a Jew at this school" (BT, p. 147). Hawley responds to her anguish with; "I'm working at understanding. I certainly understand her position emotionally. I really don't understand it intellectually

because again it rests... on toxicity and historical interpretation in Western history (BT, p.147). However, Nancy finds herself saying "it was suggested that tonight would not be a good night for me to be there" (BT, p. 133), as she is excluded from staff meetings due to her faith.

After describing this persistent pattern of conduct, the Narrator writes: "Hawley is not a fundamentalist" (BT, p.148), and the headmaster does couch his objectives in terms of inclusivity and "tolerance" (BT, p. 130) often in Boys Themselves:

If you live well and lovingly with people, you'll thrive and prosper and if you don't and take away any grounds for doing so, you're going to be divisive and in conflict...(if you)don't even allow people to talk about it, I think we're going to have bad times (BT, p. 149)

But just like Conrad's Kurtz, Hawley renders himself unauthentic through the conflicts between his beliefs and actions as they are retold In Boys Themselves. In attempting to represent his ideology as historical, Hawley shows himself as inconsistent and unbelievable. As a reader, I am also confronted with the "veracity and fallibility" (Carter, 1993, p. 8) of Hawley's actions in more utilitarian terms, due to their moral inconsistency by any measure of educational leadership. I am left to question why my sense of the headmaster's "lived experience"(Van Manen, 1990, p. 27) appears in this text in such uncompromising and visible terms.

The peculiarities surrounding Hawley's verisimilitude return me to the other elements of literary criticism I speculated about with Nancy. Reflecting on emphasis (both the allocation of narrative space and the approach to her portrayal) led me to conclusions about Nancy's role in this school story. Considering the headmaster in view of emphasis restates the enigmatic aura around Hawley introduced through verisimilitude. In the main, it is wry juxtapositions of situations and basic verbal irony that are used as emphasis in the character of Hawley; serving to expose the disparity between thinking and experiencing for both the Narrator and the headmaster. Moreover, this play of language is more than a

stylish accident, as it serves to distance the Narrator of this text from the dark side of the headmaster so cleverly called up through allusions to Heart of Darkness.

Irony is an organizing device in Boys Themselves. The characterization of Rick Hawley is very obviously constructed around his demonization of irony as destructive to males. For example, Hawley and his admirers find irony "degrading" (BT, p. 152). The Narrator does try to moderate Hawley's disparagement of irony by defining it as opposite to "words and ideas...imbued...with a sweetness" (BT, p. 152), but as a reader, I am perplexed by this repeated reference to irony as a sort of character trait.

On another level, ironic emphasis allows the Narrator to make a break from his author and solicit judgment. The ironic mode as Eagleton (1983) describes it places a textual voice at a critical distance from the situations and images that he or she presents. It also invites a similar discriminating appraisal from a reader, who is asked to appreciate the differences between stated and intended meanings (p. 53). In particular, ironic emphasis is central to the manner in which the headmaster's theories and opinions about gender are presented in Boys Themselves. Certainly the vocabulary selected for Hawley plays with an inconsistency between meaning and sense. There is a surface of celebratory, heroic rhetoric emanating from Hawley's depiction in Boys Themselves, as the Narrator phrases many apparent tributes to Hawley's visionary intelligence, calling him a "guru" (BT, p. 13) and suggesting that "every boy in this class accepts Hawley's brilliance as a given" (BT, p. 174). He begins his tale ostensibly transfixed by the "this backward glancing headmaster" (BT, p. 163), and specifies that "I might have gone to any number of boys' schools...but Rick Hawley was here" (BT, p. 13). However, the unexpected dualisms of the headmaster are interpreted by this same Narrator in comic or ominous ways. Hawley is often described as a bit of a buffoon, even akin to Hamlet (BT, p. 124). This blunt emphasis on Rick's failings is puzzling, until the Kurtz-like aspects of Rick's behavior are revealed through the chronology of distressing events in Boys Themselves. As a reader, I find it is hard to decide at first whether the narrator is seeking excuses for Hawley's dark side, or deliberately comparing his words and actions with critical intent. However, this pattern of allowing Hawley to make a pronouncement on gender and then demonstrating unfavorable

conduct is established in the first chapter of the text, and remains constant throughout. Since Hawley talks about himself but the Narrator shows and interprets his actions, he is able to mock Rick's attempts to create a "grand narrative" (Lyotard, 1979/1984, p. xxiv) of gender quite openly.

The Narrator gradually increases the bite of his ironic emphasis. By the final chapter, he is juxtaposing such valourizations as:

What he didn't seem realize was that the people who had heard a hundred of his speeches were enormously grateful for his work, and those who didn't know him had heard of him and maintained enormous expectations, a sort of hope that verges on waiting for a personal savior for their school (BT, p. 357).

with outlandish statements from Hawley himself like; "Biology, anthropology, and all manner of social sciences confirm that we are deeply gendered; gender runs more deeply than culture; more deeply I believe, than even biology" (BT, p. 359) The Narrator then invalidates the headmaster, interpreting Hawley's speech as "having just dispatched the anti-male feminists and delivered another thrust of his lance to contemporary culture..." (BT, p. 359)

The technique of ironic emphasis is most overt when the Narrator's posture accentuates Hawley's theses about gender as a scientific construct. Boys Themselves presents data from several sources about single sex schooling, and the factual commentary is undoubtedly steered away from Hawley's "odd" (BT, p. 16) views even though he is the person responsible for their presence in the story. The Narrator distances himself from Hawley's scientific didacticism even as he introduces himself in Boys Themselves:

Before I could sit, he said gender was really important. He said it was deeper than humanity...gender is a big deal ...gender is deeper than race, it is deeper than culture. Deeper than humanity, all the way

down to plant phylum (BT, p. 19).

This passage, with its finely balanced tone of naivete ("a big deal") and inclusion of prominent dissonances ("deeper than humanity") expresses Ruhlman's discomfort about the rigid categories found in Hawley's pseudo-scientific gender principles. In a period where skull measurements (Rushton, 1997) are widely derided as the basis of exclusionary practices, the Narrator knows well enough to report on, but not to appear complicit with, with Hawley's claims. By including details about seating, he points out his separation from the headmaster.

This distancing is also apparent when Hawley organizes the female half of the human race as "alien" (BT, p. 20). While speaking in his official capacity as school spokesperson, the Narrator carefully reinforces the authority of the headmaster's role by saying one thing and meaning quite the opposite. By saying, "he didn't sound like a headmaster at all" (BT, p. 20), the Narrator alludes to Hawley's Kurtz-like subtext of intolerance and incongruity.

Using irony to complicate and often contradict the surface text, the Narrator succinctly becomes a mirror of the "paradoxes" that Ruhlman mentions as his impetus for study. The problem for me as a reader is balancing my incredulity at the Narrator's revelations. The portrayal of Nancy in Boys Themselves is knowing and relentless, but the characterization of Rick Hawley is filtered irregularly. I can't distinguish between what seems spontaneously revealed in the text and the interpretive commentary structured by the Narrator through his tools drawn from literary criticism.

In my discussion of verisimilitude and emphasis I have highlighted a number of statements, attitudes, and inferences conveyed in Hawley's portrait. As with Nancy, I am also led to an understanding of his motivations through the narrative element of tension. Tension is traditionally an emplotting device that functions to develop excitement and a crescendo of unifying satisfaction for the reader. Although there is a conventional use of tension in Boys Themselves both through seasonal chapter divisions and the peaks and valleys of incidents, (Beaverfest-Soltis letter-religious curriculum-Zinn letter Paul resigns-

Nancy letter-school play-graduation), my focus is on tension as it affects participant representation.

As the Narrator directs me to “judge” (Phelan, 1996, p. 27) the situations that unfold for Hawley, I find that tension in Boys Themselves revolves around the conflict between his internal and external life. While it is interesting, and perhaps even amusing, to read about headmaster Hawley as an iconoclast with an intense attachment to theoretical precepts, the Narrator must convince me as a reader that these human dilemmas are worthy of my concern. In order to achieve this, Boys Themselves creates a sense of consequence with respect to Hawley’s impact on the people around him. It is this demonstration of Hawley’s philosophizing in combination with his enactment of authority that compels me to continue reading this text. In Boys Themselves, White’s “order of meaning” (1980, p. 5) becomes character centred through an incremental orchestration of Hawley’s thoughts and actions, as the headmaster’s internal confusion propels the story as a whole.

The Narrator first establishes Hawley’s importance to the story of University School:

I had returned intending to watch the boys in this school, how they played off teachers and each other in this unusual world; but it quickly became apparent that this headmaster...was the elemental force driving this century old school, and the thoughts and actions of everyone in it could not be fully understood without taking into account their headmaster (BT, p. 67).

Then, as Hawley’s personal conflict is laid out, he is described as having two lives simultaneously. In this passage the Narrator establishes the headmasters status as exalted theorist in the outside world:

Hawley is also unusual in that he’s a literary administrator with a ten year faculty tenure at the Bread Loaf Writers Conference and a dozen

books to his name, including an epistolary novel, a libretto, a memoir, poetry, a psycho-social tract-drawing from electron-cephalogram studies and Greek philosophy the purposes of pleasure as it relates to adolescents and drugs, and a new book published last summer entitled Boys Will Be Men: Masculinity in Troubled Times (BT, pp. 12-13).

Just as clearly, Hawley is shown as a challenged administrator and teacher inside University School:

When Hawley headed down the dimmed maintenance corridor and out into a dark cold night after the ineffective and disheartening meeting of the Religions and Ethics Committee, he was not a happy headmaster. He was certainly not a well-liked headmaster at that point either (BT, p. 163).

As the consciousness of the text, the ironic and ambiguous voice of the Narrator modulates my perceptions and my understanding of the headmaster. Once I am aware that Hawley is "present like the garlic in stew, not always distinct or identifiable but permeating everything" (BT, p. 237), the Narrator orders philosophical monologues, events, and Hawley's responses to these incidents in order to create tension throughout the story. As a result, the principal facet of tension around Hawley is provided through the tone of the Narrator's "voice-over" style disclosures and interpretations. The use of this technique in the text is most conspicuous when the circumstances around the student Tyler Soltis's letter are relayed to me as reader. The incident is introduced by the Narrator, who describes the events leading up to Hawley's set-to with Tyler. In keeping with the sage, case study manner set out in the pages preceding, the Narrator's tone is somewhat pedantic, much like the headmaster's speaking style. As Hawley enters the dialogue though, the tone changes drastically, and takes up a forceful staccato cast akin to a sports report. The Narrator recreates the boy's thoughts in writing that:

When Tyler hangs up the phone, he's not sure what to do. Some deep breaths. Assess the situation. He runs through the conversation. Pretty one sided. Yes, Dr. Hawley did say, "I have never read anything so offensive in twenty six years of teaching." Yes, Dr. Hawley was clearly piqued. He hadn't given Tyler much chance to respond. In fact, Tyler hadn't said a word other than a grunt or two to acknowledge he was still vertical... (BT, p. 114).

Suddenly the Narrator is calling up a torrent of physical verbs ("breaths" "grunt") in this paragraph, upsetting the flow of the narration and foregrounding the ferocity of the acts described by this unprecedented contrast in sentence structure and punctuation. This recital immediately reverses moderate expectations available me as reader about Hawley, and introduces a sense of fate, a "textual plotting" (Barone, 1992, p. 20) based on the question "what will he do next?" in the headmaster's characterization. The Narrator is controlling the tension within the tale by "enframing" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 20) the participant, relegating him into an ordering that eliminates other possibilities. After reading about this incident, my vision as a reader is directed towards looking for more "proofs" of the headmaster's personal conflicts. From this point on, Hawley's story is shaped by the question of what happens when an ideologue is also a teacher. Hawley states that "I know certain things...I believe certain things. I'm going to pass that on. That's what I do. That's my job" (BT, p.184). Part Two of the book (Winter) begins with a long description of Hawley's teaching style; intended to show him implementing his abstract ideals. The Narrator tells of both the appearance of his classroom and his world view;

Room 270 has recently been redecorated. The walls, once off white institutional paneling, have been sheathed in oak....This is also the room in which Hawley teaches philosophy. The headmaster had for years coveted the room of a teacher at Hathaway Brown(a nearby sister school), one with the ornate warmth of a Cambridge tutorial

chamber. Hawley wanted his school to have at least one room whose interior was commensurate with the study of Greek philosophy, Aeschylus, or Shakespeare...he had in mind a room worthy of the students who would inhabit it for a full year, students who were enrolled in one of the most advanced humanities courses offered by the school...Only these students would be assigned to this room. It would be perfect. The walls themselves would almost exhale knowledge and truth (BT, p. 29).

In this selection, Hawley is shown practicing his nostalgia harmlessly through architecture, as a sort of Prince Charles of Cleveland. However, the imposition of his slant on schooling recalls Conrad again, when the Narrator foregrounds the social Darwinism of "worthy" students and "perfect" educational experiences.

The Narrator ensures that Hawley's actions in the classroom are also shown to have serious consequences. Initially, he confides; "several of his students were tired of his philosophy class they told me, disappointed in it; they found Hawley overly opinionated and indoctrinating; and they had responded by shutting down.. (BT, p. 16). After reminding me that Plato's cave allegory "asks what is a leader" (BT, p. 179), the Narrator spells out that Hawley offers up "lectures, as he does about 90 percent of the talking in his philosophy class that's what they amount to" (BT, p. 173), and then becomes overtly critical with "once Hawley begins, he drives through his classes, charges them, jackhammers, sprints" (BT, p. 179). He continues by showing Hawley playing the students out, "us(ing) their definitions against them, or borrow(ing) their words to prove his own point. There's a constant butting of heads and Hawley always wins...Hawley never concedes" (BT, p. 174). Students are ultimately presented as seeking "coup(s) de grace" (BT, p. 188) as the primary method of discourse with their teacher and headmaster. These actions echo deeply against Hawley's pronouncements about having "a heroic vision" for boys based on "like or trust" (BT, p. 360).

Being alert to Rick's trajectory in Boys Themselves allows me as reader to

discover that Hawley's reverie of self control, appropriate love, moderation, and upright morality is interpenetrated with authoritarian and unfair practices. Even more than with his development of Nancy, the Narrator is able to involve me as a reader in the task of contemplating a sense of "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) based on aspects of narrative construction.

Chapter Five
The Narrator: Who am I?

In narrative inquiry we see that the practices drawn out in the research situation are lodged in our personal knowledge of the world. One of our tasks in writing narrative accounts is to convey a sense of the complexity of all the "I's"; all of the ways each of us have of knowing (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991, p. 140)

Is there a character named the Narrator in Boys Themselves? There is certainly someone who identifies this text as his personal story-"a journey into my past" (BT, p. 9). However, there is more than one "I" speaking in Boys Themselves, as Ruhlman describes his "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) as a participant observer through the words, thoughts, and actions of a Narrator. By means of this trope, Ruhlman gains an ability to decenter or "bracket" himself from his role as an author, and create another perspective running parallel to his main debate.

The appearance of such a Narrator calls attention to the challenges this author faces in defining an appropriate role for himself in the ongoing process of observation. The Narrator also allows for an examination of Ruhlman's representation of the other participants in Boys Themselves, in comparison with himself. Most importantly though, the existence of the Narrator demands a different level of understanding from me as a reader, as I consider what this Narrator reveals about "what's gained and lost in narrative" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130).

Every text has some form of narration, but why did Ruhlman include such an awkward and troublesome voice in Boys Themselves? After all, this is a Narrator describes participants with passages like:

Paul does have the odd, cartoonish look of someone who could well

have been born looking exactly as he does today. One can almost imagine the doctor arriving at the side of Iris, who's exhausted from labour, and handing her a swaddled Paul, with spectacles perched on his formidable beak, moustache damp and glistening, the distinctive Adam's apple cruising a long tubular neck. "Congratulations, Mrs. Bailin, it's a forty year old" (BT, p. 76).

As a reader, I can speculate that a Narrator who speaks out this oddly might be included in Boys Themselves for several reasons. Perhaps the Narrator is hinting that the entire text is a fable. Possibly he is experimenting with postmodern literary techniques in the style of Julian Barnes, who Ruhlman credits as an influence (BT, p. 375). He could even be a response to requests for "artful" (Barone, 1995, p. 67), "confessional" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 93), or "new" (Wolfe 1973, p. 31) voices in texts. Such possibilities indicate that this character warrants special care, as he also appears to exact a price from the author who creates him. I suggest the inclusion of the Narrator foregrounds the genuine paradox of Boys Themselves; the way in which Ruhlman's personal story veers this text away from a defense of single sex schooling into a much more emotional tale.

Committed theorists of narratology could produce volumes on Boys Themselves, with their discussions of narrator types in conjunction with variations in audiences/readers and of course, authors. In this chapter, I focus on only two narratological concepts of the many applicable to my discussion of this Narrator. From Chatman (and others) I have adopted the idea that a narrative can be divided into a "story"- the events in a text, as well as a "discourse"-the means by which these events are arranged and communicated to me as reader. Both Chatman (1978) and Genette (1980) speak of story and discourse as representing two different narrative levels, allowing a reader to develop a relationship with both a narrator and author at the same time. That said, I make no pretense of attempting an exhaustive account of the very complex textual relationships possible between this author and his narratorial creation. My intention in this chapter is to discuss the Narrator as a participant at the story level of Boys Themselves, comparing his treatment to that of Nancy

Lerner and Richard Hawley.

As well, this discussion is predicated on a variation of the accepted principle of the implied author fostered by Booth (1980). As a general rule, the implied author is a construct that is created by the named author to act as his/her idealized proxy. In Boys Themselves, there is certainly an "I" who is an omniscient purveyor of opinions, figures, and thematic structures. However, while interpreting both the implied author and the Narrator as textual creations I cannot ignore the common sense way in which Ruhlman is the author of Boys Themselves. According to Wimsatt and Beardsley,

the speaker of a literary work cannot be identified with the author-and therefore the character and condition of the speaker can be known by internal evidence alone-unless the author has provided a pragmatic context, or a claim of one, that connects the speaker with himself (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1998, p. 749).

Boys Themselves is the end result of a study, and has been published with the names of participants intact. At least one of the "I's" in this text is a man named Ruhlman, and even the students' pseudonyms are only lightly disguised. Applying an unreflective application of literary criticism methods could dehumanize these people, many of whom are still a part of the University School community. As a result, this text seems to require just the sort of "pragmatic context" (1998, p. 749) Wimsatt and Beardsley specify for shortening of the metaphorical rope between the implied author and Ruhlman the researcher. It is a challenge to consider the distance between the "I"s as part of my task to read carefully and "tactfully" (van Manen, 1990, pps.1-2) for all participants in Boys Themselves. However, this "pragmatic context" also offers a unique opportunity for an understanding of Ruhlman as a person who is "making sense of..experiences" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130). All the same, the admittedly theoretical tool of an implied author makes it conceivable to see the Narrator in Boys Themselves as the major influence on the story, whereas the implied author controls the discourse. In the end, I do consider that there is a

constructed implied author in this chapter, while maintaining an awareness of the individuals involved.

"Readerly" (Barthes, 1974, p. 4) texts encourage readers to conduct themselves as receivers of an unalterable artifact. On first glance, the Narrator in Boys Themselves performs only "readerly" functions, in that he controls the reader's knowledge of his year at University School. Technically, he is well designed for this role, being a first-person (homodiegetic) narrator "who acts as a character within the tale which he is narrating" (Genette, 1980, p. 245). The actions and conversations of the other participants are presented by this Narrator, either through scenes in which the participants interact with him, or through passages of interior monologue.

The elements of verisimilitude, tension, and emphasis are both tools of the Narrator and elements of his own construction. A close reading of the Narrator shows that he is very distinct from the implied author, as he is found only at the story level, generally speaks in present tense, and affects a lyrical vocabulary. In contrast, the researcher "I" is able to inhabit both narrative levels, usually refers to all events in past tense, and favours a more bland tone of speech. This construction occasionally produces odd paragraphs where tenses and dialects bang together, such as in ; "I'd hoped that catching him off guard would give me a slight advantage. I want to be a part of this" (BT, p. 120).

The text begins with the authoritative implied author plunging me into a boy's bedroom, introducing me to University School, and announcing that Boys Themselves is an argument in favour of boys' schools. On page nine, the researcher "I", who "arrived with questions" (BT, p. 9) is joined by the aforementioned Narrator "I", who had "graduated from this place more than a dozen years earlier" (BT, p. 9). From this point on, the Narrator is an ongoing presence, offering both descriptions and editorializing on the thoughts and events salient to all of the characters in Boys Themselves.

As with any first-person narration, it's impossible to ignore this Narrator's bias, especially since he is always directly involved in the events described. Not surprisingly, the Narrator is framed in a way that anticipates my doubts about these limitations. First, he attempts to lessen my concerns about his maturity and competence, by reminding me that

he is an adult and a magazine editor; someone who keeps careful notes by "looking at my little tape recorder" (BT, p. 20). Then he makes it clear that he is as fresh to the specifics of Hawley's views as I am ("Before I could sit...", BT, p. 19) and implies that we can both begin his story at the same time.

But despite these claims to rationality, the Narrator offers a long series of less than plausible interpretations of what he sees and hears. He adds the first of many editorial comments at the end of this sentence: "I kept looking at my little tape recorder, half expecting to see steam rising from it" (BT, p. 20). This fanciful conjecture starts the yet another guessing game about verisimilitude as "unstable relationships between or within characters and their circumstances" (Phelan, 1996, p. 30) in the text.

This pattern of fabulism through the voice of the Narrator continues throughout Boys Themselves. Though lovely prose, the following passage certainly must lead any reader to wonder about judgment criteria like "veracity and fallibility" (Carter, 1993, p. 8) for this character:

All year long people kept asking me how had the school changed? I could never answer. Eventually I stopped trying to say anything because it hadn't changed. When I arrived in September for the first day of school, the sense of ghosts was so strong I almost expected to see my old classmates drifting in and out of the locker area (BT, p. 375).

This Narrator is not simply a conduit of impressions about University School, issued by the text to me as reader. But perhaps it is neither possible, nor essential, to have literal descriptions. After all, the Narrator is reporting on the contents of his own mind in this selection. Nonetheless, the veracity of the Narrator's words have an impact on the legitimacy of the larger story.

In chapter three, I suggest that one of the compelling paradoxes in Boys Themselves is the enigmatic portrayal of Nancy. Nancy's presence in this text is dominated by the Narrator's repeated demonstrations of her lack of credibility and stability.

The small dispute about Nancy in the classroom, where the Narrator places her claim that she is "the most uncoordinated woman in the world" (BT, p. 28), up against his statement that "the most uncoordinated woman in the world has an agile improvisational classroom style" (BT, p. 30), seem much more questionable in light of his larger pattern of hyperbole. The Narrator's practice of summarizing Nancy's thoughts, re-working her conversation into contextless fragments, and especially providing me with interior thoughts about "bad hair days" (BT, p. 35) lead me as reader to discount his representation of her larger concerns, such as feminism and religious discrimination as well. The Narrator brushes off such quibbles about verisimilitude with comments like "that's fiction-good fiction certainly" (BT, p. 56), but it would appear that this is one cost of including the Narrator in Boys Themselves. His attraction to implausibility challenges and undermines the veracity of the discourse level of the text-the argument for single sex schooling.

The costs of writing the Narrator into Boys Themselves begs the question of his value to the story. A key to understanding his presence is to look beyond how this character functions as a shaper of the other participants' stories, and listen to what he says about himself. The critical incidents the Narrator chooses to reveal, and the stance he adopts as a self-referential storytelling character greatly enhance Boys Themselves as a text of "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27).

Most directly, the Narrator allows Ruhlman to tell a personal story of "boyhood" (BT, p. 375) and its traces, as part of his "journey into my past" (BT, p. 9). For me as reader, this invitation into the Narrator's "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) helps me gain a sense of the private motivations behind a young man's study of his own school. At first, I cannot separate this naive and myopic fellow from the observer "I", and I try to read the Narrator's story literally. Soon enough though, the tensions between the Narrator's point of view and my apprehensions about the text lead me into a more metaphorical reading.

Perhaps out of deference to Nancy and Hawley's real life counterparts, this Narrator is the character who spends the majority of the text as a structural prop. He provides a thread of customary tension; traveling on that "journey" (BT, p. 9) from season

to season, overcoming problems along the way. But despite, or perhaps because of, his obvious constructedness, the Narrator is also the most compelling voice in the text.

Just as for Hawley, I find that tension for the Narrator is contained in the conflict between his internal and external life. Hawley is presented as a photograph-frozen at the same point on the final page as he is in his introduction. He is "enfram[ed]" (Heidegger, 1977, p. 20) by the Narrator through comparisons of his words and deeds, ordering him into a series of "proofs" of his limitations. But, although the headmaster's incongruous thoughts and actions slowly accumulate to create a sense of impending doom, there is no denouement for Hawley in the story.

The Narrator also has predicaments, but they are woven into a satisfying resolution. In Boys Themselves, White's "order of meaning" (1980, p. 5) plays out in the Narrator's refashioning from a researcher into a biographer. This story within a story involves the Narrator in a performance based on fascination rather than credibility. In complete opposition to the detached and omnipotent voice of the researcher "I", this Narrator feels a lot, but knows very little. He makes this plain in broad statements like "I honestly don't know what to believe anymore" (BT, p. 249) and "I can't tell if she's angry or glad" (BT, p. 232). This leads directly into his quest for "boyhood" (BT, p. 375), as the Narrator gradually feels his way into a whimsical, boy-like state of mind. This boyhood motif is central to the Narrator's story, and an examination of its progression in Boys Themselves demonstrates how powerful such depictions are in the hands of a persuasive author.

The fear of social change that pulls the Narrator into "boyhood" (BT, p.375) leads him to speak of the world of University School as amazing. He arrives at school full of warm memories, and commences his project of reattaching to a place that he believes remains unchanged. At first he flows along, as "someone who asked a lot of questions" (BT, p. 20). In "Fall", the Narrator contours his reports in a professional manner, saying, "On Thursday, November 11, I arrive as usual around eight, buttoning my shirt collar and knotting my tie as I move toward my seat in the auditorium... essential routine. I take out my notebook, though more often than not, there is little to record..." (BT, p. 100). However, he contrasts these temperate thoughts with, "I have every reason to believe

assembly will carry on as it does most every days of the school year until it occurs to me that the atmosphere in the assembly, like a slack cord, has suddenly pulled taut" (BT, p. 100).

The tension created by these ongoing interjections of mystery are sprinkled throughout the text. Over time though, it gradually dawns on him that the adults in Boys Themselves don't see the world this way, and he identifies more and more with the young students. Passages crop up where the Narrator shares, "I'd tried to remain impartial but I couldn't help myself from siding with Tyler. Like most of the students, I was surprised by the gravity of the situation, created entirely by the headmaster himself" (BT, p. 119-120). In his mind, the situation declines, as he further underlines a pattern of tensions between himself and the adults at University School. He claims that, "...adults seemed to bristle with suspicion when I entered a room...I began to wonder what it was that people didn't want me to know...something was rotten here" (BT, p. 248). Again the Narrator uses tense changes to slip around in his perspective (and mine); developing a context that is both actual and symbolic. The passage finishes with two puzzling lines; "I return the next day. The school is standing where it always was" (BT, p. 248). As a reader, I am brought up short by this shift in tense, tone, and meaning; and become an eavesdropper on what feels like an emotional transition for this character.

A later revelation begins the climax of the Narrator's story. The image that triggers his memory occurs when a teacher reminds him, "I guess this was kinda like a graduation for you too" (BT, p. 374). He continues, "I hadn't thought about it till then then but she was right...I am leaving" (BT, p. 374). Finally, the Narrator wraps up with,

I'm feeling pretty peculiar, leaving high school for the second time... almost exactly thirteen years ago, I had driven away from my high school on a day very much like this one, sunny and hot, alone in my car. There are times when you don't want to be an adult, and today is one of them (BT, p. 375).

The Narrator's attempt to redefine himself coincides with his acknowledgment that the researcher "I," has been submerged by this boyhood story. He admits, "A male myself, I saw nothing else; how could I freely observe what I was immersed in, what contained me?" (BT, p. 343). He then revisits the overarching argument of the text's discourse level—"single sex education and boys' schools" and separates himself from the debate by labeling it as "abstract" (BT, p. 343).

Of course I'll never know if Ruhlman created his Narrator to perform these subversive acts and deconstruct his textual authority. However, while challenging myself to interpret this voice with "tact", I still read the Narrator character as a repercussion of the act of participant observation for his author. The existence of this Narrator seems an acceptance that inclusiveness in the University School community remains an illusion, like the ghosts the Narrator imagines in the halls.

Reflecting on both the allocation of narrative space and the approach to his portrayal (emphasis), leads me to final speculations about the Narrator's role in this school story. Here, author Ruhlman shows himself to be in full command of his contemporary writing skills, skillfully using ironic emphasis to manipulate the Narrator's "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) for persuasive purposes. For me as reader, the ironic and self-reflexive aspects of this character offer a pause from the story, where I can to contemplate upon "readerly" and even "writerly" (Barthes, 1974, p. 4) layers of his representation.

Even though Boys Themselves is not a fiction by popular or critical definition of that term, the Narrator demonstrates some play with the features that coincide with postmodern fictional writing. The postmodern predilection for intertextual references has already surfaced in this text's casting of Hawley as both Kurtz and Hamlet. The manner in which the Narrator's self referential exploration of his "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) self-consciously acknowledges its artifice reflects these interests as well. The Narrator's ironic reflexivity acknowledges the incongruity of his return to high school, and how this may be a marker of his fear of societal change overall. Such emphasis is also a gentle critique of his job performance, since he blurs the roles of participant observer into that of a barely reflective participant. He justifies himself with coy asides like "how could I

freely observe what I was immersed in, what contained me?" (BT, p. 343).

The Narrator plots his story for me with a series of qualifications that underscore his role as a self aware beguiler. He admits this dimension of himself, using understatement to question his own reliability. As noted earlier, the first pages of Boys Themselves declare this text as an appeal to save boys' schools. Meanwhile, the Narrator announces the opposite; that "... I came here with no conclusions whatsoever" (BT, p. 20). He also reports that others question his credibility, as Nancy jokes, "are we supposed to tell him the truth?" (BT, p. 20).

Kaufmann (1994) asserts that post-modern narrators are more likely to be explicit about the problems and processes involved in the act of narration. This is certainly a feature of the Narrator in Boys Themselves, who steps out of the text to say things like: "It should be noted that when I use the words "busy" or chaotic" their meaning is particular to this school" (BT, p. 60), and "I honestly don't know what to believe anymore" (BT, p. 249). The Narrator's direct addresses to me as reader describe his story within the story far more than they report on a time span of research.

All of these applications of emphasis in Boys Themselves have at least two effects. Most obviously, the abstractions force me as reader to attempt a deciphering of the relationship between the Narrator and the researcher "I". In all of this my awareness is redirected from the events on the story level to consciousness of the text's development. Secondly, the overt rhetoricity of the emphasis draws attention to the Narrator's voice in a rather different way. In an escalation of the use of irony to distance himself from Hawley, the Narrator employs this ongoing strategy to shift my attention from the problematic abuses of power the researcher "I" has uncovered at University School. A noteworthy example of the Narrator's maneuvering is his introduction of the headmaster's theories and opinions about gender, where he claims that the renowned expert "didn't sound like a headmaster at all" (BT, p. 20).

Hillis Miller maintains that "irony is truth-telling, or a means of truth telling, unveiling...it is also inadvertently a means of participation" (Hillis Miller, 1989, p. 222). Certainly, seeing the Narrator as a recalcitrant element of Boys Themselves foregrounds

him as communicatively subversive stylist and orator. I find that this play within the character of Narrator-his ironic asides, his sarcastic renderings of others, and his manipulation of himself also engages me as reader in the construction of his characterization. And if this Narrator denies interpretive certainty, he nevertheless points toward the creative potential of a participatory, "writerly" (Barthes, 1974, p. 4), text more than any other element of Boys Themselves.

Chapter Six

Research and Persuasion in Boys Themselves

In the first chapter of Boys Themselves, Michael Ruhlman describes himself as a reporter seeking "a local story with a national angle" (BT, p. 19). By providing this resume, Ruhlman invites me as reader to expect a tale, but also sanctions his text's drift into journalistic apparent objectivity.

The most obvious examples of this drifting occur when Ruhlman inserts a series of essays or explications into the story in support of boys' schools. These additions are primarily a sequenced history of his conversations with educational researchers and commentators Cornelius Riordan and Diane Ravitch, along with Richard Hawley. Are these digressions found in Boys Themselves because Ruhlman the reporter feels obligated to provide a reader with his sources? Or does this connection between data, characters, and events indicate a persuasive, (and more broadly, ideological), purpose behind the text?

As reader, I see these allegedly factual driftings as omens-the surrounding stories seem more shaped in my eyes as each data segment is presented. I question whether these digressions deserve their own status as a narrative, with expectations of tensions and a satisfying conclusion. By the time I've reached "Spring", I do expect them, and the larger process of narrative comprehension in the text seems voiced over by these fragments. Is each digression something to decode, modifying my response to the author, Narrator, and people researched? Indeed, in this interplay between argument and description in Boys Themselves, there may be a narrative which is intended to be like Carter's (1993) "theory of something" (p. 9).

Perhaps boys' schools need and deserve a defender like Ruhlman, who will protect these "evolutionary oversight(s)" (BT, p. 8) from assimilation through the time honoured tradition of tract writing. Possibly I am too critical a reader. I find this position of open mindedness demanding though, as this text is conceived on two controversial principles. The first is a premise that a "national opinion" (BT, p. 9) sees single sex schools as "elitist, snobbish, and Victorian" as well as "oppressively severe, frigid, and scarring" (BT, p.

345). In order to attend to the narrative of educational research in Boys Themselves, I must acquiesce to this author's argument about the existence of a nation (The United States) of people who are either for or against boys' schools. After accepting this principle, I must also agree that "both positions could not be right" (BT, p. 10) in order to keep reading.

In addition, Boys Themselves demands that I tolerate a finite definition of gender. In chapter two, Ruhlman reiterates his beliefs about culture as bifurcated, where "issues" are "pitting men and women against each other" (BT, p. 19). He then proposes an investigation of boys' schools constructed solely on this narrow us vs. them definition of gender. However, an alert reader of Boys Themselves notes that Ruhlman's "paradox" of "biology" (BT, p. 18) is not the only one in the text. He has either mislaid or ignored the partners closeted with gender in any culture; power and economic status.

The supposition that gender in educational research is about more than surface differences between girls and boys has many respected adherents (AAUW, 1992; Anyon, 1984; Lee & Bryk, 1986). In light of the contemporary play on gender by Crawford and Unger (2000), Herdt (1993a), Kessler and McKenna (1978) and others, it seems increasingly gauche to claim a finite line between males and females at all.

Gender issues in education once focused on girls' schooling with masculinity being regarded as the norm by which success is measured (Geile, 1978; Spender, 1981; Tetreault, 1987). However, the aforementioned perspectives have problematized masculinity, leading to its re-examination as a social construct and a context-bound phenomenon. Authors such as Segal (1990) and Gilligan (1982) specifically posit that the research around gender and schooling reflects the development and nourishment of power and status differences throughout society as a whole.

However, it is possible to empathize with Ruhlman's perception of some gender oriented research as "anti-male" (BT, p. 356). Currently, much of the research and most of the media attention around boys and young men pathologizes the experience of masculinity. There are common focuses on boys' failure at school compared to girls' recent accomplishments, describing their reluctance to reach out to others, and male risk-taking and substance abuse. Boys are also reported to have rising crime and suicide rates, high

unemployment, and an irresponsible approach to parenthood (Dale, 1974; Pollack, 2000; Riordan, 1990). Mass market publications such as Reaching Up for Manhood: Transforming the Lives of Boys in America (Canada, 1998) are structured around statements such as "our beliefs about maleness, the mythology that surrounds being male, has led many boys to ruin" (p. 2). The renowned Harvard Research Centre of Women's Psychology, Boys' Development, and the Culture of Manhood operates from the perspective that there is:

an enormous crisis of men and boys is happening before our eyes without our seeing it. There's been an extraordinary shift in the plate tectonics of gender; everything we ever thought is open for examination (Brawer, cited in Rosenfeld, 1998, p. 2).

Boys Themselves is a text that can be located within this context of masculinity reappraisal predicated on alarm and crisis. In speaking of gender as a category of "breached norms" (Bruner, 1996, p. 131), this author is not outlandish or even unusual. However, Boys Themselves presents a very narrow spectrum of the published material about single sex education available to Ruhlman. Further, his readings of the work he does use pose questions about political agendas, authorial transparency, and candor.

Concerns about the research presented by Ruhlman are apparent in the first pages of Boys Themselves, when he declares that, "beginning in the late 1970's and growing steadily, research has described clear advantages of single sex education over coeducation in both cognitive and social outcomes" (BT, p. 8). This is not an isolated statement, as he attests to "proofs" (BT, p.355) repeatedly throughout the text. Other assertive claims include; "the entire past decade of research would seem to have boded well for single-sex schools and, particularly, for the private boys school..." (BT, p. 350). In contrast, my own literature review suggests that studies about single-sex education present conflicting claims. Ruhlman's assurance of clarity and success in research findings notwithstanding, the information concerning the benefits of single-sex schools for either gender is actually

limited and inconclusive; and nearly all of the research studies published refer to identifying and remedying imbalances towards female students only.

Three Approaches to Gender Oriented Research

Equity Focus.

Very roughly, there are three approaches in both research and popular discussion about gender and schooling. Generally, feminist perspectives direct attention to the concept of equity—that all students should be able to learn successfully, with an emphasis on social and attitudinal outcomes (AAUW, 1992; Lee & Bryk, 1986). Thus, much of the burgeoning commentary about boys achievement can be seen as a continuation of previous research on the challenges girls face around schooling. Sadker and Sadker (1994), and Smurak (1998), are examples of a major focus on differences in learning styles and the quantity/quality of teacher-pupil interactions in both qualitative and quantitative feminist literature. At least partially as a result of these studies, some researchers believe that many girls can benefit from single sex education. Benefits suggested by Robinson and Smithers (1999) include increased opportunities to take on leadership roles and exposure to strong female role models. However, there is far less consensus about the benefits of single sex education for boys. When Ruhlman was composing Boys Themselves, equivocal studies by Brody, Nagel, and Pace (1994), Riordan (1990), and Lee and Bryk (1986), were all widely available.

Social Crisis Focus

Another prolific area of debate about gender and schooling veers off into concerns about morality and citizenship for all students; with a recurring theme of a societal crisis which can be mended through educational reform. This philosophical thread of decline and reform is the basis of considerable commentary, but minimal classroom based study.

Generally a drive for improvement in this strand of the literature promises pedagogical certainty within a society characterized by uncertainty and instability (Allen, 1995).

Ruhlman includes Ravitch in Boys Themselves as a representative of this perspective, as well as a government spokeswoman. In inviting Ravitch into his text Ruhlman shows his political stripes, as Ms. Ravitch has been described as a "staunch conservative" interested in "the standards that existed at the century's outset" (Lemann, 2000, p. 89).

Effectiveness Focus

Very often, this call for reform is related to another overreaching focus in contemporary educational research; that which defines and promotes principles of effectiveness for learning. School effectiveness arguments have captured the enthusiasm of educational researchers, policy-makers, and politicians across the political spectrum, as school effectiveness studies have sought to establish that testing, competition, and a concentration on basic skills will benefit whatever gender the researchers are examining (Arnot, 1982; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Riordan, 1990; Thrupp, 1999). As well, writings by D'Souza (1991), and Bloom (1995) amongst others have contributed to a critique of academic standards for all American students in comparison to foreign schooling. These studies pursue comparisons of testing scores, graduation rates, and other numerical data almost exclusively, searching to determine which gender has an "advantage" (Riordan, 1994, p. 2) over the other. What's more, because the majority of this research is quantitative, the aspects of difference in comparing data-variables becomes a paramount concern in these studies. Marsh (1989), and Woolnough, Guo, Leite, de Salmeida, Ryu, Wang, and Young (1997) all state that is difficult to separate the impact of single sex education from other variables affecting student achievement such as ethnicity, socio-economic status, academically biased student selection, and levels of parental support. The religious affiliations of many single sex schools are an additional element that is often acknowledged, but not rigorously examined. Riordan, whose publication Boys and Girls in School: Together or Separate? (1990) is paraphrased extensively in Boys Themselves,

defines his research in the late 1980's as about "the formal structure of single-and mixed-sex Catholic schools in the United States" (p. 62).

In Boys Themselves, Ruhlman promotes boys' schools according to all three of the research threads outlined here. Following Ravitch and Allen, he places boys' schools in "a time of despair in American education" (BT, p. 21), where "the problems were far larger, the issues infinitely more complicated than simply addressing who learns more in what kind of school" (BT, p. 355). As reader, I can detect this ideological construct of crisis in Boys Themselves by page eight of the text, with the citing of Ravitch as the partial instigator of Ruhlman's "paradox" of gender. As a member of the Republican Bush administration (and education advisor to George W. Bush's 2001 campaign), Ravitch espouses a partisan position on education which includes privatization as a primary goal (Giroux, 1998). Ravitch is foremost a supporter of private schools, which coincidentally are the only schools now permitted to be gender restricted in the United States. Ravitch speaks to readers of Boys Themselves in her role as promoter of education as a fundamentally financial "choice" by saying, "there's a lot of ineffectual schools now that ought to be put out of business..." (BT, p. 352). It is no surprise that she asks "why should single sex education have to prove itself when coeducation can't?" (BT, p. 9). By employing the controversial Ravitch as a voice in Boys Themselves, Ruhlman aligns his text with a "theory of..." (Carter, 1993, p. 9) gender as a code word for partisan politics, social position, and wealth. This political/gender rhetoric of us vs. them is reinforced in a truly disingenuous fashion, when a reader of Boys Themselves is informed that "Dianne Ravitch was replaced in the new administration" (BT, p. 9), as if the incoming Democrats were unusual in removing such an official. As a reader, I am shepherded towards a sense of sympathy that, "her project to evaluate the efficacy of single-sex educational institutions was scrapped" (BT, p. 9). Here, I detect a ideologically persuasive purpose behind the text.

Boys Themselves also defends boys' schools as "good" (BT, p. 163) on the basis of effectiveness. In this area of a "theory of something" (Carter, 1993, p. 9), Ruhlman adds his own spin to the classic efficiency arguments, declaring as "effective" schools that

have two things: "forceful, authoritarian, durable leaders" (BT, p. 159), and access to "all but guaranteed" (BT, p. 153) college entrance for students. As a reader, I concede that Richard Hawley is developed as both a forceful and an authoritarian character in the story of Boys Themselves. It is when I begin to pull apart the apparently objective information about college entrance statistics that my relationship to the Boys Themselves story wrapped around these data segments becomes uneasy.

According to the literature, boys' schools are indeed remarkably successful and effective-if high levels of college entrance are considered as a primary goal for a high school. However, researchers such as Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York (1966), Dale (1974), Lee and Bryk (1986) and Riordan (1990) all note that the higher college entrance statistics achieved in male and female single sex schools are closely correlated to socio-economic factors. Single sex schools charge fees, and therefore draw from higher socio-economic communities than most co-educational schools. As Ruhlman makes clear, "the elite prep schools did for many decades offer all but guaranteed inroads to the nations top colleges for those who could pay for that advantage..." (BT, p. 198). For Boys Themselves to propose that "rarely did attending a coeducational secondary school prove advantageous" (BT, p. 8) based on its acknowledged population of primarily "rich white boys" (BT, p. 199) is glaring imprecise.

Of the 53 million school children in the United States, only 5.9 million or 11 percent attend private schools, according to The National Association of Independent Schools (2000). These institutions are funded by student tuition, which ranges from a few thousand dollars to approximately 20 thousand dollars per year. The majority (83 percent) of these institutions are coeducational, along with an estimated 8.9 percent that are for girls only, and a final 7.4 percent which are boys' schools (NAIS, 2000). As a reader, I rebel at employing this minute population of students as a comparison to all of the other young men in America. This seems more than acclaim built on faulty reasoning, and ventures into the realm of misleading information. Ostensibly an academic establishment in which boys are educated for entrance to elite colleges, University School has less to do with academic accomplishments than it has with acculturation into the upper echelons of the larger social

body. In claiming the superiority of the all male environment by way of this college entrance argument, Ruhlman has conflated gender with privilege in American society in such a unreflective manner that the entire text of Boys Themselves becomes problematic. That Ruhlman finds this fusion of data and the environment of University School so mundane makes me a skeptical reader of the characters and events he creates as well.

The Case of Cornelius Riordan

Ruhlman also plays with the more conventional criteria of educational effectiveness. Although the text is sprinkled with references to research based "proofs" (BT, p. 355) of value for boys' schools related to "cognitive and social outcomes" (BT, p. 8), Boys Themselves treads lightly on the traditional variables found in academic studies. Although this author cannot mention a meal in the student cafeteria without listing its courses, research variables in this text are described vaguely as "outcomes" or "academic outcomes" (BT, p. 354). This absence is particularly noticeable in the presentation of school effectiveness researcher Cornelius Riordan. In contrast to the almost stenographic detail of the experiences described in Boys Themselves, Riordan's work and opinions are offered to a reader in a curiously allegorical manner. This compelling digression around Riordan stands out as a complication to decode in the ostensibly objective reportage about boys' schools in this text.

Although Riordan's work is reviewed at some length in Boys Themselves, the text offers a rough, sometimes awkward, description of Riordan and his research; full of odd points of traction. As mentioned earlier, my literature review has documented very little research supporting benefits to boys who attend single sex schools. My own reading of Riordan's work does not suggest any benefits either, and these null findings are duly reported in Boys Themselves. At points in the text Riordan is quoted as saying,

I estimate that white males in single sex schools in the regular sample score lower than their peers in mixed sex schools, after controlling

for initial ability and home background... (BT, p. 349).

There's really very little difference in outcomes between those males attending single sex and those males attending coeducational schools (BT, p. 354).

On the strength of statements like these, an informal reader might find Riordan's inclusion in Boys Themselves a brave and inclusive act by the author. However, Ruhlman's method gradually becomes clear. By re-orienting Riordan from an impersonal researcher to the central character in "a detective story" (BT, p. 346), his research is devalued into the realm of illustration, on the same level of worth as the author's opinions. Riordan's physical description is offered in extensive detail ("curly brown hair lightened by gray", BT, p. 346), and his working methods are itemized as if he were a member of the larger school story. We are told that "he sits at his desk and pores over statistical data from large scale surveys, comparing and controlling for countless variables. Numbers only. Plus point one differential, Negative point one differential" (BT, p. 347). But this portrait becomes even more interesting as it slides into a series of non-sequiturs about the researcher's capabilities. These range from "Riordan doesn't do actual fieldwork" (BT, p. 347), to "that is really a mistake on my part" (BT, p.354), and "in his book, Girls and Boys in School he remained extremely cautious to the point, he later felt, of error. He had sold boys' schools slightly short" (BT, p. 353). The most compelling expression about Riordan is the clumsiest. What am I as reader to make of an apparent snub to all researchers like, "anyone who works with numbers knows that they can be made to perform remarkable tricks, and educational researchers are trained to make them behave (BT, p.347)?

This presentation of Riordan appears in Boys Themselves in order to make research that won't cooperate slip under the surface of editorializing by both men. Riordan is ultimately framed for the reader of this text as equivocating on research that doesn't support boys' schools, when he is interpreted as describing "that null(results) did not

mean negative, it simply meant that there was no advantage either way" (BT, p. 347). He is also directly quoted in saying "single gender schools work. They work for girls and boys. Women and men, whites and nonwhites" (BT, p. 355). The rhetorical flourish at the heart of this exercise comes in a fascinating paragraph on the proceeding page, when Riordan is repositioned as a supporter of socio-economic and gender advantage in society. Ruhlman claims, "furthermore, he would eventually postulate, the benefits of gender and social bias that white boys now enjoy exceed even the benefits of single sex education". This is followed by Ruhlman's Swiftian modest proposal; "by this reasoning-and its all but impossible to prove-as we work to diminish the racial and gender prejudices embedded in our society, white boys just like everybody else will increasingly be shown benefit from the single sex environment" (BT, p. 354). As a reader, I find that this re-writing of Riordan and his research through the joining of data, characters, and events conveys a persuasive and ideological purpose behind Boys Themselves. Due to this author's writing skills, he is able to lead me as reader through paragraphs of disarming description, provide me with a theoretical analysis based on diversion, disparage his subject's profession, and still keep me reading.

All of this sophistry aside, it is when Boys Themselves promotes boys' schools as a shelter from "anti male sentiment" (BT, p. 356) that the driftings and insertions into the text become authentic, and therefore powerful. When the text speaks out as a plea for boys' schools as a "great form" that is "blinking out of existence" (BT, p. 343), the emotional core of this text reaches out to me as a reader from within the data based driftings. Although he disassociates himself in his role as Narrator from Richard Hawley, Ruhlman employs the headmaster as an eloquent expert to explore the belief and ideal of "boyhood" as "something more durable than...more real even, than male adulthood" (BT, p. 375). The Narrator shows that Hawley's actions and principles have serious consequences for students and staff, but the refuge offered by a state of being stronger than "the anti-heroic age" (BT, p. 360) is too appealing for author Ruhlman to resist.

Boys Themselves describes boys' schools as "punch drunk from years of anti-male sentiment, wander(ing) around lost, trying to figure out what had happened and why they

didn't have any friends... (BT, p. 356). Both Ruhlman and Hawley appear to feel "punch drunk" (BT, p. 356) too, like the institution they want to protect. As noted earlier, many of Hawley's statements are an unsettling combination of scientific didacticism and a black/white conception of masculinity. Hawley organizes the female half of the human race as "alien" (BT, p. 20) and then equates female and feminist. He disparages feminism as the location of those anti-"chivalric" energies (BT, p. 359) his civilization has created. For Ruhlman, Hawley offers a cure to the "antiheroic age...that does not like or trust boys and men enough" because "boys' schools at their best" are "an antidote to much of what has gone wrong with Western culture" (BT, p.360). Even though the Narrator takes a gentle jab at Hawley as "having just dispatched the anti-male feminists and delivered another thrust of his lance to contemporary culture..." (BT, p. 359), the author of this text clearly believes that Hawley is a "boys' school guru" (BT, p. 13), who can lead a reading public to their mutual cause of traditional social organization based on power and economic status.

The culture of University School is described in Boys Themselves as providing this sought after structure. As Ruhlman notes, "there was hardly any serious talk of gender at all, which may simply be because the all boyness at this school is simply everywhere and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. It would be like fish attempting a serious analysis of the pros and cons of water" (BT, p. 172). Ruhlman is finally candid in describing his personal feelings of alienation when he worries that:

masculinity could somehow be fashioned , that its components could, every five years or so, be picked apart, scrutinized, then popped back together like so many Lego blocks to form a shape that would match whatever mores happened to be in vogue that day (BT, p.18).

The "breached norms" (Bruner, 1996, p. 131) that contemporary society contends with, where "everything we ever thought is open for examination" (Brawer, cited in Rosenfeld, 1998) are very uncomfortable for Ruhlman. Hawley tells him, "boyhood is real, it stays in the man and keeps staying there" (BT, p. 375). With the comfort of belief

Ruhlman is able to assure to me as a reader that "when he said this, I knew instantly that it was true" (BT, p. 375).

In this chapter, I have bracketed the apparently objective explications that appear in tandem with this story about teachers and students. I arrive at this portion of the text as a wary reader, suspecting that my interpretation of the adjacent school story is modified by these driftings. I assume these essays are digressions from the tale, perhaps created by Ruhlman's journalistic impulse to provide a reader with his sources. I challenge myself to be an open minded reader, even though I feel constrained to choose a seat in the audience that places me either for or against boys' schools. I also chafe at Ruhlman's polarized definition of gender.

Although I question whether these digressions deserved their own status as a narrative, I conclude that they are not separate from the main story at all, but are inherent to the process of narrative comprehension in the text. The decoding the information provided by Ruhlman and his selected experts in these digressions forces me to consider the larger cultural context of this story. Furthermore, I am confronted by the selection of a voice as skewed as Ravitch's, and I'm perplexed by Ruhlman's process of reading Riordan's research, interviewing him, and re-writing the resulting material in a selective manner. On the other hand, I gain an empathy for both Hawley and Ruhlman, and their longing for life as it has always been for wealthy, male, Americans. What's more, I note that the carefully constructed character of the Narrator designed to allow Ruhlman reticence within Boys Themselves becomes blurred during these segments. However, the way that gender becomes a code word for politics, and status definitely shapes my impressions of the "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) that surround these explications. I have become an even more skeptical reader of the characters and events presented in Boys Themselves.

Carter's (1993) proposition of narrative as a "theory of something" (p. 9) may to offer an understanding of the persuasive connections between data, characters, and events in these portions of the text. When speaking of gender as a ideological category of social crisis, this blending of argument and description reveals a potent ideological purpose behind Boys Themselves.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

I began this thesis with two directive questions, which I have entwined around a deep reading of Boys Themselves. My first question; "what is gained and what is lost in narrative?" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130) has assisted me in situating the social and theoretical elements of this text within a field of contrasting discourses. My second question, "what are the beliefs or needs that shape this narrative?" is an offshoot of Carter's assertion that "narrative is a theory of something" (1993, p. 9). Considering the beliefs and needs underlying such theorization has allowed me to delve into the motivations and purposes of Ruhlman the researcher and writer. My reader's regard for this analysis will depend a great deal on what sort of questions he or she seeks to answer, as I've not sought universal conclusions from the special case of Boys Themselves as much as pursued an "understanding of understanding" (Phelan & Rabinowitz, 1994, p. 2).

All the same, there are general presuppositions at work in this document. I have predicating my questions on a belief that many educational researchers have participated in the "linguistic turn" (Derrida, 1978, p. xiv), and now collect stories of schooling in order to represent them as "narratives of experience" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991, p. 121). And, although my ear has been attuned to language and story elements such as character, verisimilitude, emphasis, and tension, this examination is prefaced on an attempt to engage with these aspects of literary criticism as they relate to human existence-"lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27). In this way, I have also tried to show that there is consequence in presenting the lives of individuals (including researchers) through narrative forms. Lastly, I have set out to show that there are unstated propositions at work below the operations of this narrative, which are tied to the nature of the text itself.

Clearly, much of the attention Boys Themselves has received rests on the premise that it is a well told story about crucial issues. In this document, I have taken the story's relevance as a given and concentrated on its telling. Indeed, my paramount concern has

been on how Ruhlman tells the story, how he constructs his own narrative, and why after close reading I remain unpersuaded by Boys Themselves.

I have employed the tools of interpretive analysis to reach both inside and outside Ruhlman's ideological and narrative horizons; to listen carefully to his story as well as question it strenuously. In asking, "what are the beliefs or needs that shape this narrative?" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130) I have reviewed the claims Ruhlman implicitly makes for his narrative through the relationships between data, interpretations, and the story level of the text. At this juncture, I contend that Ruhlman's story doesn't engender the beliefs he promotes, but I mitigate this evaluation through considering the role of motivation in his construction of this narrative.

What is Lost in this Narrative

According to its author, Boys Themselves has a simple theme-boys' schools deserve to exist because they provide a worthy segment of society with a means to shelter their way of life. As I have suggested throughout this document, such a horizon connects to an index of beliefs about social change, economic status, and gender. The following passages particularly resonate with the beliefs on which Boys Themselves is constructed:

Beginning in the late 1970's and growing steadily, research has described clear advantages of single sex education over coeducation in both cognitive and social outcomes (BT, p. 8)

She is a teacher and a scholar who has taken the recent politicizing of the Western canon seriously, and found it tiresome (BT, p. 34)

her husband makes a comfortable living as an interventional radiologist, so she doesn't have to work at all. Yet her colleagues have watched her parlay this part time schedule into a full time job (BT, p. 33).

the Esquire features and many of the men's issues books all seemed founded on the same premise: that masculinity could somehow be fashioned, that its components could, every five years or so, be picked apart, scrutinized, then popped back together like so many Lego blocks to form a shape that would match whatever mores happened to be in vogue that day (BT, p. 18).

Hawley seemed a sort of reverse image Kurtz, dispatching soulful messages from a reverse image wilderness (BT, p.18)

This re-reading of Ruhlman's statements emphasizes the tight connection between reportage, research findings, characterization, and editorialization in Boys Themselves. Although the text professes to offer a variability of interpretations on these principles through the voices of participants, it actually works to leverage interpretation by claiming that these assessments follow directly from authority outside of the text. Such universals as, "both positions could not be right" (BT, p. 10), and this is "a time of despair in American education" (BT, p. 21), point to a predetermined view of the world that is not created by the "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) within the story. That Ruhlman holds these beliefs is unsurprising. However, he incorporates them into Boys Themselves in a manner that simplifies complicated issues, disregards crucial counter-evidence, and avoids political, social, and economic trends. Because of his predilections, Ruhlman infers that that these findings, editorializing, and characterizations are given, not chosen, according to self-evident truths from the world at large. Ruhlman's commonsensical assertions about ambiguity and uncertainty determine that there are no alternate interpretations. Attached to Ruhlman's beliefs is a particular need; that I will read the narrative without considering that I might choose or reject his indisputable stance.

What is Gained in this Narrative

The process of careful reading I have undertaken in this thesis reveals that despite Ruhlman's beliefs and needs, there are many alternative interpretations possible for Boys Themselves. Based on the same observations provided about participants, the same research data, and the same reportage contained in this text itself, I have created my own version of this story and its discourse. Exposing the gap between observation and characterization of individuals, and casting an eye on this author's underlying ideological beliefs dissolves this narrative's "theory"; the necessity of private boys' schools. Ironically, both the author and the Narrator have provided me with the rhetorical tools (such as emphasis, verisimilitude, and tension) which expose the process of narrativization within the text and force me as reader to seek another "order of meaning" (White, 1980, p. 5). This opportunity to create my own interpretation of Boys Themselves is what I believe is "gained" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130) in this narrative.

By focusing on the interpretive implications of Boys Themselves, I have placed an emphasis on a "theory of something" (Carter, 1993, p. 9) as an aspect of author motivation in this text. Seeing Carter's assertion in this way allows another estimation of what is "good" in this narrative. According to Lincoln and Guba, "truth claims" (1985, p. 184) in educational narratives are socially negotiated. Based on this constructivist thinking, texts such Boys Themselves are always consequential, insofar as they are presented within a social context in a meaningful way.

Character in this Narrative

Ruhlman's telling of Boys Themselves implies other ramifications for his motivations, as his arrangement of persuasive elements are primary feature of the way that this narrative works. As I have stressed in my discussion of Nancy, Hawley, and the Narrator, there are questionable aspects of the representation of "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) in this text. In his re-voicing of participants, Ruhlman elasticizes

conversations, abridges events, and mocks and manipulates life stories when he casts individuals as symbolic characters. His narrative's development is formed on thematic functions of the characters developed from these observations and conversations. As a result, this narrative performs as Ruhlman intended only when I am willing to regard each voice as a representative collage of others who think and act in the same way. The positive criteria of narrative mentioned in chapter one of this document included respectful, non-objectifying portrayals of participants, but the rhetorical techniques of narrative have not offered such authenticity to the people of University School. As such, the reconstruction of individual stories as a rhetorical strategy in Boys Themselves is wanting, because Ruhlman fails to respect the intersection of individual stories of schooling and the larger cultural narrative he introduces about boys' schools. If Cornelius Riordan (the quantitative educational researcher so heavily cited by Ruhlman) had composed Boys Themselves, I may well have found his data presentation less "artful" (Barone, 1995, p. 67) or "compelling" (Barone, 1992, p. 21) than these stories of Nancy, Hawley, and the Narrator. Nevertheless, I don't envision Riordan ever consciously subsuming his data to create a more exciting report. The translation of participants into characters in this text foregrounds the largest "loss" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130) in this narrative to the cause of rhetorical beguilement.

Accessibility and Genre in this Narrative

The motivation for such dubious portrayals may well be rooted in Ruhlman's ideological goals, but I posit that the rhetorical strategies that shape "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 27) in this text are also due to considerations of accessibility through style and genre. Examining Boys Themselves has provided an object lesson in the possibilities and pitfalls of accessibility in a narrative text. In chapter one, I proposed that narrative approaches to educational inquiry can destabilize boundaries between stories about education and the society these stories are told to. As I mentioned in chapter two, "the right to know" is a fundamental feature of our present society, and as such educational policy

and practice are legitimate topics for popular discourse. After determining that an educational narrative is an instructive, "nonfictional educational story" (Barone, 1992, p. 17), I have pondered whether Boys Themselves performs functions of enlightenment and/or entertainment, and found that genre blurring colours rhetorical issues such as accessibility with cultural considerations.

I accept Boys Themselves as a popular book, which is not a evaluation of either it's techniques or goals. The story of University School is well-told, with dramatic portrayals and exciting events unfolding at a rapid pace. As such it is a text which, for good and bad, straddles the boundaries between what is "interesting" (Kidder, cited in Othis, 1998, p.1) and what is of "critical significance" (Barone, 1995, p. 64). Accepting this description, there is a great need for a text such as Boys Themselves to organize complex concepts, depict theoretical positions, and especially to expose people and institutions with "tact" (van Manen, 1990, p. 11).

A possible "gain" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130) of this narrative is its intriguing mixture of homely accessibility and intricacy of content; which permits any reader to become a judge. Much theoretical writing about narrative research espouses the idea that reality is a construct of the observer/writer, participant and reader (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; van Manen, 1990). Countless other readers have followed the Narrator through his year at University School, perhaps puzzling over Nancy's radical re-telling, and catching their breath at Hawley's comparison to Conrad's Kurtz in the same way I did. However, there is a possible "loss" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130) attached to this constitution and evaluation of reality through texts. For a reader who is exposed to a number of narratives about schooling, Ruhlman's volume is liable to be sifted and positioned thoughtfully. It is disquieting to contemplate Boys Themselves as any reader's only exposure to stories of schooling.

Although I have described Boys Themselves as popular, a careful reading of this text need not automatically lead to restricting its genre. Ruhlman does describe himself as a journalist; and he follows many conventions of this mode, including using participants' real names, and a dependence on the testimony of experts. However, Boys Themselves,

perhaps intentionally, defies categorization. As this analysis has illustrated, there is also much of this text that partakes of the literary, especially in regard to postmodern reflexivity, as well as characterization and emplotment. And if Ruhlman has consciously combined the techniques and styles of fiction writing and journalism to produce a report of findings, he can take comfort in Denzin's description of a research document with "thick description" as one that, "does more than record what a person is doing. It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings..." (Denzin, 1989, p. 83).

When seeking a text to study, I couldn't distinguish between Savage Inequalities (Kozol, 1991), In School (Dryden, 1995), Boys Themselves, or an article in Reader's Digest, as all told stories about individuals in schools. This quandary highlights another facet of narrative accessibility; the acceptance of a multitude of authors for educational stories. Earlier I called on Lyotard, who describes a "crisis of legitimacy" when narrative texts, although they "define what has the right to be said and done in the culture...are legitimated by the simple fact that they do what they do" (Lyotard, cited in Rorty, 1991, p. 164). In my reading of Boys Themselves, my judgments followed a lengthy interrogation of the text. The author's personal vision defined the legitimacy of this story, and the compelling manner in which this narrative performed its reasoning seemed at times overwhelming. Whether such opaqueness is a "loss" or "gain" for this narrative again depends on the questions a reader is willing or able to ask.

If anyone can read a narrative with educational intent, does it follow that anyone write one? The ambiguity in Boys Themselves points to the difficulty of reading along with a "fish" who is making "a serious analysis of the pros and cons of water" (BT, p. 172). Whether this text is described as new/literary journalism, an ethnography, or an educational narrative, its central feature is the re-creation and re-experiencing of events and incidents as a personal story. In Boys Themselves, the self-awareness of the "researcher as instrument" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 187) also blurs into author motivation, based on beliefs and needs. In chapter two, I introduced the "foxy character" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 76) who

inhabits a type of story known as a "confessional tale" (p. 75). Confessional tales are more about the personal experiences of the observer than those observed, and they seek to titillate, captivate, then convince the reader of this version of events through compelling revelations. Van Maanen's characterization of the confessional tale links rhetorical concerns to the motivations of those who represent "lived experience" (van Maanen, 1990, p. 27). Without pigeonholing Boys Themselves as a textual type, I believe it that my interpretive inquiry has shown that Ruhlman is a confessor. Both the way Boys Themselves is told and the content of this story illustrate that the author is focused on "making sense of experiences" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130) rather than presenting research findings. Within the subjectivity and rhetorical strategies that assist him in providing "quick jolts to the imagination" (Van Maanen, 1988, pp. 105-106), is a telling of Ruhlman's secrets—a confession of his beliefs, needs, and motivations. Viewing Ruhlman as a confessional writer rather than as a journalist, novelist, or researcher permits him to blur more than just his genre and his job title. A confessional tale offers this author both authenticity and recourse to his beliefs and needs.

As I mentioned in chapter one, the growth of narrative as a research mode has been partially in response to doubts about whether research can (or ought) to attempt value neutrality. As a confessional text Boys Themselves offers the "accessibility" and the "compellingness" that Barone puts forward as partial criteria for "judging the professional worth of educational stories". He also adds a third criteria, "moral persuasiveness", and says that "all three will be present in a good, popular narrative" (Barone, 1992, p. 21).

Throughout this thesis I have connected rhetorical elements of literary criticism such as verisimilitude, tension, and emphasis to Phelan's (1996) judgment about representations presented by, and the intentions inferred by, this author. In this way, I have foreshadowed ethical criteria by assessing motives and actions within the story in response to "breached norms" (Bruner, 1996, p. 131). Boys Themselves certainly calls for restrictions in the "cultural conversation" (Keroes, 1999, p. 89), and plays with individuals' life stories. I have challenged these purposes for Boys Themselves. As reader I have extended this judging into imagining (through arm wrestling and more exalted means) ethical

conversations at the discourse level with Ruhlman directly. But here I must stop short of imposing a moral or obligation on either this text or the people of University School. To align this text (or any text) as a purveyor of either general goodness or a specific category of morality seems a retreat into the origins of hermeneutics rather than an acknowledgment of a narrative's "gains" (Bruner, 1996, p. 130). In my identity as reader of Boys Themselves, I have learned to look in to a text for the human experience, and to read with "tact" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 11).

Every well-told story teaches something
(Ricoeur, 1991, p. 427).

Personal Interlude:
Who is the Reader?

As I present a personal perspective on my thesis experience, I remember it as a process of knitting together contradictions. Who do I tell about? The phrase "researcher as instrument" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 187) kept rising to the surface as I negotiated my relationship with this thesis and the document it unravels. It all seemed so simple at the beginning.

As I began to write chapter two of Narrative Goes to School, I realized that were a number of other social identities entwined with my freshly minted researcher self. Although I had been provided with a myriad of textual and real life examples of this conundrum, I was unprepared for the mountain of "shoulds" and "can'ts" that I harboured. Notwithstanding the repeated warnings from authors such as Connelly and Clandinin that all threads of research are ultimately personal (1986), I sought a way to distance myself from opinion, and formulate a position strictly based of a close consideration the text.

This was an significant struggle, not the least because I chose to work with a text that disturbed me. "This text should be read as more than happy tale of a happy school", I muttered. "This can't be considered an educational narrative", I protested. As I continued reading and writing I was convinced that my identity as researcher was shaped by the personal and ideological positions I assumed before the onset of this interpretive inquiry.

In the end, it was through my own subjective experience of reading that I found the heart of this thesis; when I recreated my research position through my role as reader. This seemed a natural way to be a "better" researcher, since the role of reader has been one of my foremost social identities. Ever since I begged my way into the adult section of the library at an early age, I've been defined as the one who reads. I consumed the Joseph Wambaugh shelved next to the Virginia Woolf with equal gusto, and I've enjoyed the benefits of such an appetite in most aspects of life. Reading has sheltered and supported me, but I know this identity can insulate and isolate as well. In creating a persona of reader

for this thesis, I had to move beyond being simply a consumer of hard books and "isms" into an interpreter with my own voice.

A discussion of reading can dwell in such a theoretical realm; centring on subjectivity, intention, and motives for interpretation. I did begin with a consumption of the many models of reader extant, from Bloom's obedient apprentice to the adventures of Barthes, Derrida, Iser and Fish. In particular I have been influenced in my thinking for this thesis by Eco's "model reader" (1992, p. 64) who straddles the line between author focused and text focused approaches. However, once I had created a middle figure of myself as reader, she forced me to step beyond these theoretical gambits, and pay attention to my knitting. I had envisioned that my reader persona would be the conduit of theories and experts. Instead, I had to refine my earlier way of reading into an interpretive tool. As reader, I unearthed the twists of the text itself through the processes of reading, thinking, writing, and rewriting. Each demanded levels of creative attention that were simultaneously separate and integrated.

I had known on an intuitive level that the act of reading is more than an absorption of what is on the page. I believed that reading is also writing, in that reading produces new and different meanings for each reader, and even within a single reader at different times. In many ways my reader was a plurality too; a mixture of the pleasure seeking consumer, the rhetorical device created to function as a textual operator, and a researcher instrument producing the thesis product.

As reader, I became active in the practice of interpretation. My reader persona gave me insight into the relationship between observer and full participant in creation of Boys Themselves, and my commentary ironically echoes the complex questions of representation, interpretation, and reflection found in this text. Looking back on the the work of this thesis, I can see that one interpretation of my reader echoes Ruhlman's Narrator, with both of us aiming for a distancing from our own perceptions and beliefs in order to enter into the "lived experience" (van Manen, 1990, pg. 27) of another. In playing out the intentions, motivations, and goals of Ruhlman, I must acknowledge that how any text is used is almost entirely up to the reader. Certainly, my purposes as reader were at

least as important as the author's intentions in the creation of this document.

My approach to interpretation resulted in a reader who insisted on a particularity about her encounters with Boys Themselves. This self-consciousness—an exhibition of my own cultural context—demonstrates to me that all inquiry is informed by a specific set of intellectual circumstances and personal desires; but that this context can be enabling rather than debilitating.

When Reading Becomes Writing

The imagining and writing of this thesis was rooted in the qualitative research process. As I discovered, the writing of a non-linear interpretive inquiry is itself non-linear and complex. My readers did not have a sense of the whole from the beginning; the essence did not crystallize until the final pages. This discovery is a truism of qualitative research, but it was not until I stopped organizing and returned to reading that I discovered my own voice, a voice that was reflected in a more compelling writing style. Once I acknowledged both the contextual core and the rhetorical outcomes of this self-consciousness through my reader persona I was able to make my reading become writing. Just like Ruhlman, I was driven by a paradox. I learned how to convert the experience of observation into interpretation and writing directly from the source of my discomfort—this text itself.

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