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Reputation Management in the Salvation Army

A Narrative Study

Stuart Middleton
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Leading theorists of the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm have argued that corporate reputation is an intangible resource for organizations. Despite this, there remains precious little research that documents how organizations manage their corporate reputations. This article presents a case study of Australia's most successful charity, The Salvation Army, and asks how it maintained an exemplary reputation despite allegations of sexual, mental, and physical abuse from children in its care during the period from the 1950s to 1970s? A strategy of narrative deconstruction is employed to make the argument that there are powerful underlying themes in The Salvation Army's narrative that protect the organization from reputational attack. It is argued that this narrative approach opens a new avenue for studying and understanding corporate reputations. A model of reputation management in The Salvation Army is developed from this analysis.

Keywords: reputation management; deconstruction; narrative

When the children were sent to a Salvation Army (Salvos) home, we used to say, "Thank God for the Salvos," because we thought they were going to be treated better than in the state homes. I was wrong . . . [My client] went to that place [Salvation Army children's home] at a young and tender age, under the age of eight, he was actually put across a desk . . . He described the desk to me, the grains of the desk. And an attempt was made to penetrate him—to rape him. Before that, he'd received a caning, and then he was succoured and . . . if comforted . . . then placed across the desk. And that sort of thing happened a number of times, and it always happened in that very sadistic context.

Mark Blows, Professional Psychologist (Australian Broadcasting Corporation [ABC], 2003)

Reputation management represents a key area of corporate concern. Identified as an intangible resource by Hall (1992, 1993) and Barney (1986), corporate reputation has found a natural home in literature of the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm. For the purposes of this article, corporate reputation is defined as collective beliefs that exist in the organizational field about a firm's identity and prominence (Rao, 1994). It is based on interpretations of the strategic actions and choices undertaken by the firm, which are founded in the shared beliefs and values the firm develops internally—otherwise known as its organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

The difficulty of imitating and trading corporate reputations, as well as the complex social processes through which they are constructed, mean reputation is widely considered to be a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Dierickx & Cool, 1989). It has therefore been linked with a wide variety of positive organizational attributes, such as enabling the firm to charge premium prices (Milgrom & Roberts, 1986), attract better applicants (Stigler, 1962), attract investors and enhance the competitive ability of firms (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990), and increase the appropriability of returns from innovation (Gemser & Wijnberg, 2001). Hence, corporate reputations, and the way in which they are managed, represent an ongoing concern for scholars of organization science.

This article focuses on corporate reputation management in The Salvation Army (Salvos) in Australia. As demonstrated in the opening quote from Mark Blows, this is an organization that has endured significant reputational crises, not least the allegations of mental, physical, and sexual abuse from wards of Salvation Army homes in Australia from 1950 to 1980 (ABC, 2003). However, evidence shows that its corporate reputation

has remained resilient to attack. In the 2004-2005 financial year, The Salvation Army received almost $A112 million in donations, with increased private donations from all Australian states and territories, and a near doubling of financial support from Australian governments on 2001-2002 levels to $A205 million (The Salvation Army, 2005). Indeed, the organization is acknowledged as Australia's number one charity fund-raiser (Brook, 2002; O'Keefe & Partners, 2001). This is perhaps most evident in a Newspoll Survey (2002) that found that when respondents in Australia's most populous cities of Sydney and Melbourne were asked to identify the charity to whom they would most likely donate $20, The Salvation Army was supported by 37% of people. This made the Salvos the most popular Australian charity, well-ahead of rivals such as the Cancer Council (20%), Red Cross (14%), the Smith Family (7%), and the Blind Society (7%). The management of this reputation is the focus of the research.

Using an understanding of reputation management as the discursive management of meaning, this article employs a strategy of deconstruction to examine The Salvation Army's narrative, and illustrate the array of reputational building blocks it employs. This work is then summarized and presented in a model of reputation management. At the heart of this model lies an implicit understanding that organizational narrative is a key artifact of corporate reputation, and that its study represents an effective method for illuminating processes of reputation management in organizations. The purpose of this article is therefore to answer the question "how is corporate reputation successfully managed in The Salvation Army in Australia despite serious allegations against them?"

An Overview of the Literature: Reputation Management as the Discursive Management of Meaning

The RBV framework has proved useful for contributors to the subject of corporate reputation. Understanding reputation as an intangible resource has allowed scholars to treat the concept as a coherent subject with its own identifiable taxonomy (Hall, 1993), as well as articulate a range of reputational benefits, including the ability to minimize vulnerability to stakeholder action, claim status as a welcome member of the world community, gain competitive advantage, and gain financial profit (Fombrun, 1998). Implicit in the notion of reputation as an intangible resource is the belief that it can be managed. However, to date there appears little consensus as

to how corporate reputations are best managed. Indeed, there is a school of thought that questions the ability of firms to manage their own reputations at all, a theme most commonly referred to in the literature as the "reputation management dilemma." The dilemma is outlined by Rindova (in Whetten & Godfrey, 1998, p. 59), who claims "on the one hand, they [reputations] are considered assets that are owned and managed by firms; on the other hand, they are perceptions of observers—perceptions over which firms have relatively limited control".

Reputation management is important because of the key role external stakeholders play in conferring or withholding resources from the firm (Rindova & Fombrun, 1999). Hence, reputation is an important factor in legitimizing the organization in the eyes of its stakeholders, and the firm leverages its reputation to acquire resources and ensure survival (Rao, 1994). In such circumstances, stakeholders represent a source of volatility for the organization in that they pick winners and losers in the industrial context. For the purposes of this article, it is argued that one way in which organizations manage their reputation is through discursively managing meaning for its key stakeholders, and therefore The Salvation Army's reputation management is analyzed through the reputational themes communicated in its organizational narrative.

Narrative has been shown to have many functions for an organization, including to socialize new employees (Brown, 1985), to solve problems (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1976), to legitimate power relationships (Mumby, 1987; Witten, 1993), to enhance bonding and organizational identification (Kreps, 1989), and to reduce uncertainty (Brown, 1990). Most important, in the context of this research, organizations have also been demonstrated to enact narratives such that organizational meaning can be managed. An example of this comes from Boje (1995) who demonstrates the strength of stories at Disney Corporation, which mythologize Walt Disney as the inventor of animation production, and the creator of Mickey Mouse. This has proved a powerful signalling tool, both for the firm's own employees, and its external stakeholders over almost 70 years. In this sense, narrative has been a decisive tool in shaping the firm's corporate reputation. Hence, reputation management in The Salvation Army will be examined through narrative analysis.

Narrative analysis represents a valuable means of studying reputation management. Recent debate in organization studies has sought to emphasize narrative as a prominent tool in an organization's strategic inventory (Barry & Elmes, 1997; Hardy, Palmer, & Phillips, 2000), and narrative studies have thus been used to add a new lens to the organizational studies literature (Boje, 1995;

Hatch, 1994; O'Connor, 1995). Narrative is recognized as a means by which organizations convey meaning to stakeholders. Discourse, as represented in both text and voice, is both socially constituted and socially constitutive, "as it produces objects of knowledge, social identities, and relationships between people" (Hardy et al., 2000, p. 1231). Indeed, Barry and Elmes (1997) have presented an argument that the power of strategy lies in narrative. Hence, organizations will label actions as "strategic" (as opposed to "financial" or "operational" for e.g.) and highlight and link these actions in certain ways to "convince others that this is the way things have happened" (Barry & Elmes, 1997, p. 433). In this interpretation, narrative becomes an important strategic tool for organizations, and one I argue is capable of illuminating issues of reputation management.

Management of the Narrative

The Salvation Army has long taken a considered approach to the management of the messages it sends key internal and external audiences, and the management of its narrative is no exception. Winston (1999) has noted the extraordinary lengths to which The Salvation Army has historically gone in order to adapt facets of popular culture in presenting its message. These, include Army parades through hostile territory in defiance of symbolic boundaries, the strategic use of costumes to symbolize the commitment to conquer, and the use of entertainment to spread religious messages (Winston, 1999). Indeed, the Salvation Army has used a multitude of techniques, including parades, lectures, vaudeville, slide shows, films, radio, and television to present its faith and charitable works to the world.

Australia's Salvation Army has also used many means to promote its activities. Major James Barker's arrival in September 1882 to assume control of The Salvation Army in Australia saw the adoption of cutting-edge technologies to sell its message. Barker had himself been a journalist before becoming a Salvationist and aware that the Army's founder, William Booth, was planning an Australian tour, he launched the motion picture Limelight Department in 1890 (Bolton, 1980, p. 63). On December 26, 1891, the first show *In Darkest England, and Way Out* premiered in South Melbourne and proved a successful fund-raiser (Linsell, 1997, p. 59), and subsequently the Salvos produced much of Australia's oldest film footage. More recent publicity efforts through the annual Red Shield Appeal and its "Thank God for the Salvos" theme have seen the Salvos establish the impression in the minds of the Australian public that it has done a marvelous job in the provision of welfare (Linsell, 1997).

Management of the narrative presented in this study was no less fastidious from The Salvation Army. There were two Salvationists overseeing the project. Interviewees were handpicked by the Salvationists, and they carefully vetted interview questions. Newspaper articles often came from Salvation Army press releases, and books were authored by Salvationists. Opposing voices were therefore extremely difficult to access. In the end, the narrative which I have constructed in this research is the result of a carefully managed process from The Salvation Army, an organization that has consistently demonstrated a desire to symbolically control its messages. The sources of data used in the collection of the case material with its bias toward "friendly" Salvation Army figures included eight semistructured interviews with Salvationists, seven structured interviews with Corporations who donated to the Salvos, three semistructured interviews with non-Salvationists who volunteered or worked for the Salvos, 81 newspaper articles sourced from a database search for the period 1993-2005, and seven Salvationist-authored book publications.

It should also be noted that The Salvation Army's narrative is qualitatively different from those of other religious institutions in that they have remained committed to elevating welfare work to a level of importance equal to that of evangelical work. This is reflected in their mission to "preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and meet human needs in his name without discrimination" (Salvation Army, 2008). The result is a narrative based on dual themes of evangelism and provision of welfare. In contrast, the narrative of the Catholic Church demonstrates that religious matters bear overriding importance. Amankwah (2007, p. 263) defines the narrative of the Catholic Church as: "to liberate human beings from unjust tendencies and nurture them with the word of God by confirming them in the Spirit so that they would be strengthened to take up their various Christian missions."

Although these Christian missions may admittedly be charitable, the fact that this is not explicit in the narrative marks a decided point of difference for The Salvation Army, and this affects its subsequent reputation. The Salvos' narrative is substantially differentiated by their endeavors to meet human needs in God's name without discrimination. The motivating effect of this dual narrative theme is borne out in statistics, which show that Salvationists answer the call to provide welfare assistance in incredible numbers. Of approximately 180,000 adherents worldwide, the Salvos provided emergency relief to 3.95 million people, with general relief provided

to a further 15.6 million people across the globe (The Salvation Army, 2008).

The Strategy of Deconstruction

For the purposes of this article, what I am interested in examining is the material involvement of the writers of Salvation Army narrative in constructing meaning—a process of reflection (Cooper, 1989). The writer brings preconceptions and ideas to any form of writing. Derrida (1978, pp. 196-231) metaphorically compares this to a Magic Writing Pad, whereby writing is effected by pressing a stylus onto a celluloid surface, which allows the darker colored base to show through against the lighter colored paper. This writing can easily be erased, but the waxed base still bears the imprint of the stylus. To Derrida, the waxed base represents the tracks of experience that facilitate the direction of writing. This means there are underlying themes and contexts at play in texts, and these go well beyond the visible word. To uncover these requires deconstructive reading. Derrida (in Caputo, 1997, p. 31) says,

> The very meaning and mission of deconstruction is to show that things—texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs, and practices of whatever size and sort you need—do not have definable meanings and determinable missions, that they are always more than any mission would impose, that they exceed the boundaries they currently occupy.

The task therefore is to uncover the multiple meanings and relationships that are embodied in text (Boje, 1995), to explore beyond boundaries that the text currently occupies.

Analysis of this managed narrative was then performed using narrative deconstruction to uncover the discursive reputation management practices at play. However, as Culler (1983) notes, deconstruction is variously presented as a philosophical position, a political or intellectual strategy, and a mode of reading. This makes the notion complex to explore. The acclaimed founder of deconstruction Jacques Derrida did not prescribe a method of deconstruction, as this would place strictures of method that may prevent different interpretations from arising. Therefore, to undertake deconstructive reading of The Salvation Army narrative, Boje's (2001) strategy of deconstruction was used as a guideline. Although Boje (2001, p. 20) "freely admit(s) these are my own reconstructions of Derrida," they represent a useful means of analyzing the power structures at play in The Salvation Army's narrative. These are intended by Boje (2001) to be indicative means of deconstructive reading only, but I use each as I believe they represent a useful way of arriving at the heart of issues of reputation management. Preceding this deconstructive turn is an overview of significant stories emerging from the narrative of The Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army Narrative

Several researchers (Caruana, 1997; Rindova & Kotha, 2001) make mention of the importance of "original reputation"—a type of reputation which can be linked to founding story. The Salvation Army narrative is heavily based around stories of the founder William Booth who founded the Army's precursor, known as the East London Christian Mission in 1865. A tall dark-haired man (Linsell, 1997) with ruthless energy and passionate evangelism (Bolton, 1980), The Salvation Army is inextricably linked to his vision (Green, *in* The Salvation Army, 1999). Born on April 10, 1829, and dying on the August 20, 1912, he enjoyed a long life. Originally a Methodist preacher, Booth's life changed when he married Catherine Mumford in London on June 16, 1855 (The Salvation Army, 2002). Catherine was both a gifted preacher and writer (Linsell, 1997) and although she was frail in body, she was strong in will (Bolton, 1980). With William and Catherine Booth in charge, Bolton (1980, p. 29) describes the Christian Mission as being like no other religious institution—being committed to equality of the genders, fiercely teetotal, and puritan in ethics.

William Booth's decision to form the East London Christian Mission was based on what he saw in the slums of East London—dirt, rats, disease, and homelessness (Linsell, 1997). As he walked home one night in July 1865, he was troubled by what he had seen in this area, and when he arrived home he told his wife of his feelings—declaring, "I feel I ought at every cost to stop and preach to these East End multitudes" (Bolton, 1980, p. 29). Catherine replied, "well, we have trusted the Lord once for our support and we can trust him again" (Bolton, 1980, p. 29). Thus Booth erected an old tent in a disused cemetery and used it to dispense hot soup and bread (Bolton, 1980)—this story sharing imagery with Jesus feeding the hungry masses with loaves and fish. The name Salvation Army then came from a meeting in 1878, when a draft document at a conference referred to the Mission as the "Volunteer Army." "William Booth crossed the room, placed his pen and wrote the word 'Salvation.'" "I am not a volunteer, I am a conscript" exclaimed Booth

(Linsell, 1997, p. 2). A military structure was adopted, with William Booth the autocratic General, and Catherine Booth the Army Mother (Bolton, 1980).

Salvation Army narrative continues to acknowledge William and Catherine Booth as essential to religious practice in The Salvation Army today. Retired Commissioner Leslie Rusher, when discussing the history of the Melbourne citadel in which he grew up claims, "as a youngster I did not realize I was in the presence of invincible men and women who had come through fierce persecution to establish corps such as this" (in Cleary, 1993, p. 103). As Cleary (1993, pp.133-134) notes, "Booth and his Army of volunteers are alive."

The Salvation Army has been successful in establishing a presence in more than 103 countries, and the narrative accounts a thriving presence in Australia. The founding of The Salvation Army in Australia is attributed to a meeting between two men at an evangelical gathering in Adelaide in May 1880. John Gore and Edward Saunders had both been members of The Salvation Army in London, but had left to work as gangers on the South Australian railways in the late 1870s (Linsell, 1997). On completion of the meeting Saunders and Gore sought each other out, and such was their excitement that they headed out that evening to hold an open-air meeting in Light Square—the rendezvous of "thieves, rogues, and vagabonds" (Dale, 1952, p. 2).

An overarching theme of the narrative is that The Salvation Army is a popular organization with the Australian community. Linsell (1997, p. 43) believes that one of the major reasons for the credibility of The Salvation Army in Australia "is the Salvos' involvement with the Australian Infantry Forces." Indeed, stories of the Salvation Army and their involvement with Australian troops appear very important to constructing an understanding of the institution's reputation, even the Red Shield, the widely recognized symbol of the Salvos in Australia, was established on the World War I battlefields of France (Linsell, 1997, p. 44). The Salvation Army has been involved in every war Australia has participated in from the Boer War to peacekeeping in Cambodia in 1993 (Linsell, 1997) and maintains strong links with the defence forces.

One of the stories told more fondly by Salvationists of their wartime involvement is that of Will McKenzie in World War I. Linsell (1997) praises McKenzie for "his bravery, his love and service for his mates, his undying spirit of optimism, his disregard for authority, even his Greek 'God-like' physical appearance" (p. 47). Sent away on a boat with the 4th Battalion to Egypt, McKenzie was initially spurned by the troops when he attempted to start

communal singing. However, they warmed to him, and joined in with the songs (Bolton, 1980, p. 213). When the battalion reached Egypt, McKenzie even engaged in training and marched with the troops (Linsell, 1987, p. 47), however, the battlefields of Gallipoli were where McKenzie demonstrated great courage. He would gather the troops in for prayer before they went into battle, and when the men went forward to fight—so too would McKenzie go with them. "I've preached with you and I've prayed with you," he said, "do you think I'm afraid to die with you?" (*in* Bolton, 1980, p. 213). Stories of McKenzie's courage are numerous.

> Under shell-fire he brought out the wounded, prayed with the dying and buried the dead. He filled sand-bags with the identity discs and pay-books of the fallen so that a record could be kept and information sent to their relatives. After his arduous days, he wrote late into the night sending last messages to parents and wives back in Australia. And, as he wrote, every word wrenched the big, gentle man who had children of his own. (Bolton, 1980, p. 213)

After following Australian troops onto the French battlefields later in the war, McKenzie was recalled by The Salvation Army to Australia in 1917. His public popularity was demonstrated by the 6,000 strong crowd that greeted him at Melbourne's Exhibition Building (Dale, 1952).

Modern day Salvationists are also incorporated into the narrative. An example is Major Joyce Harmer, who provided support to convicted killer Kathleen Folbigg. A woman with no blood relatives, an estranged husband, and shunned by her adopted family, the charges against Folbigg were serious—she was accused of having murdered her own four young children over a period of years. Folbigg's defence lawyer contacted Joyce Harmer in 2002 because they believed Kathleen Folbigg needed support during the trial. Joyce Harmer accepted this request for help.

During breaks in court proceedings Harmer and Folbigg would have lunch together. At first they would go out to a café across from the law court, but the media throng quickly subsumed them. Therefore Harmer bought takeaway food or made sandwiches for Folbigg's lunch. Folbigg needed Harmer's support and she would do all she could to provide it, even Folbigg's ex-husband accepted the situation. However, Harmer is reported as privately shedding tears for the four Folbigg children and the way their lives were ended. She would still assist

Folbigg though because her faith led her to believe that "let they who are without sin cast the first stone."

An appreciative Kathleen Folbigg described Harmer's daily efforts to guide her through the media pack thus:

> Joyce guided me, protected me, and never once hesitated. The foremost impression came when the media behaved as they usually do. When the scent of blood is in the water. And who is walking proudly, head held high and parting the sea as she walks through? Quite the sight—five feet nothing and the appearance of a lovely little lady that wouldn't hurt a fly. I followed suit quite readily. That is Joyce, teaching in a sublime non-aggressive manner. You don't even realise you've learned something. Her kindness of heart and soul is never ending, and no-one seems beyond her touch. She reminded me of a pilgrim with strong messages but a soft style. (Henderson, 2005, p. 264)

Deconstructing the Narrative

Derrida (1972, pp. 56-57) says,

> In a traditional philosophical opposition we have not a peaceful coexistence of facing terms but a violent hierarchy. One of the terms dominates the other, occupies the commanding position. To deconstruct the opposition is above all, at a particular moment, to reverse the hierarchy.

Hence, narratives create binary opposites such as male–female and young–old (Boje, 2001), in which one term will be privileged, whereas the other will be marginalised, repressed, or even excluded. In doing this, a narrative sells a central vision, or propaganda. It is this propaganda that is central to the power of the narrative, and therefore useful to understanding reputation management.

From the moment in 1878 when William Booth crossed a room in London and replaced the words "Volunteer Army" with "Salvation Army" (Bolton, 1980), the duality was created. Salvation Army narratives are based on a dichotomy of salvation–damnation—salvation for those who believe in the Lord, and damnation for those who choose not to. However, there is further dichotomy in the narrative, as based on an "us" (Salvationists) and "them" (others) nature of discussion. The distinction is predicated on an understanding that Salvos have found the Lord and will be saved, whereas others have rejected the Lord and will be damned. Official Salvation Army documentation declares all humanity is "totally depraved" in that every aspect of every person is affected by sin (The

Salvation Army, 2006). Salvationists, however, believe they have a chance to escape this depravity through their relationship with God. Hence, the central dichotomy of the narrative is that there are saved believers (Salvationists), and damned nonbelievers (others).

The effects of this dichotomy on the text are important, in that they provide an understanding of Salvationists as the "real and the good," whereas others become the "unreal and the bad" (Boje, 2001, p. 24). In reinterpreting this hierarchy, we can see Salvationists as heroes and martyrs, whereas nonbelievers are portrayed as fallen people, whose character may be called into question. This is a significantly powerful theme. The narrative serves to privilege those on the path to salvation, and glorify characteristics it associates with those who will be saved. Virtuous acts are held up in the narrative to be praiseworthy, and vice is deplored. William and Catherine Booth, Will McKenzie, and modern Salvationists such as Joyce Harmer, are all depicted as men and women who have gone far above and beyond societal expectations to help their fellow human beings. Their heroism flows through to their characteristics in the narrative, so we see William Booth portrayed as a tall dark-haired man (Linsell, 1997) with ruthless energy and passionate evangelism (Bolton, 1980). Catherine Booth was both a gifted preacher and writer (Linsell, 1997), although frail in body, she was strong in will (Bolton, 1980). War hero McKenzie was praised for "his bravery, his love and service for his mates, his undying spirit of optimism, his disregard for authority, even his Greek 'God-like' physical appearance" (Linsell, 1997, p. 47). And despite being described as "five feet nothing," Joyce Harmer would walk proudly with her head held high, parting the sea of media as she went through while protecting a woman who was charged with murdering her children (Henderson, 2005, p. 264).

In contrast, many of the nonbelievers encountered in the Salvation Army narrative are those who have required assistance from the Salvos. These include criminals, alcoholics, drug addicts, the hungry, and the unemployed, as well as people such as homeless children and single mothers for whom society has developed broadly negative stereotypes. These people are characterized as "fallen" in the narrative, an especially powerful depiction in that it means we are loath to trust them, or treat what they have to say as credible. Because the narrative only provides a dichotomous choice, if we choose not to trust the damned nonbeliever because they are fallen, then we must choose to trust the saved believers as purveyors of the ultimate truth. Salvationists in the narrative are truthful and righteous because they have chosen to lead a virtuous life. Hence, the saved believer is the only

person capable of providing credible information in the narrative of The Salvation Army.

Hearing the rebel voices or those who do not represent the dominant Salvationist side of the story is a further way of interrogating the narrative. When Martin (1990) undertook such a step in the case of a gender study on an organisation, she was able to demonstrate that the organizational text privileged the male over the female, so that there were certain tasks only a man was capable of performing. To undertake similar analysis, the story of the Salvationist Will McKenzie in World War I is told, and then retold with the hierarchy subverted, such that the saved believer (McKenzie) becomes a damned nonbeliever. The idea is that this will uncover further power in The Salvation Army narrative.

> Under shell-fire he brought out the wounded, prayed with the dying and buried the dead. He filled sand-bags with the identity discs and pay-books of the fallen so that a record could be kept and information sent to their relatives. After his arduous days, he wrote late into the night sending last messages to parents and wives back in Australia. And, as he wrote, every word wrenched the big, gentle man who had children of his own' (Bolton, 1980, p. 213).

As a member of The Salvation Army, the dichotomy in the narrative sells Will McKenzie to the audience as a "saved believer." Hence, the power of this duality is that every time the word "he" or "his" is presented in the text, we are provided with the notion of a saved believer and its connotations of righteousness and truth. This understanding serves as the context for examining the latent power in this narrative. Suppose that instead of having a saved believer like Will McKenzie helping the troops on the battlefield, the deeds were instead performed by a faithless person. What is the effect of subverting the privileged duality? To explore this question it is necessary to rewrite the narrative—leaving the wording exactly the same, save for inserting the words "damned non-believer" where the text currently alludes to a saved believer (i.e., where the text says "he" or "his"). Thus, the text now reads as follows:

> Under shell-fire the damned non-believer brought out the wounded, prayed with the dying and buried the dead. He filled sand-bags with the identity discs and paybooks of the fallen so that a record could be kept and information sent to their relatives. After his arduous days, the damned non-believer wrote late into the night sending last messages to parents

and wives back in Australia. And as he wrote, every word wrenched the big, gentle man who had children of his own.

When probing this story we can begin to see that it is not possible for the nonbeliever to have undertaken these tasks with the same level of care as the Salvationist. The main clue is in the first sentence when it says that the damned nonbeliever prayed with the dying. Why would a nonbeliever pray with the dying, and more particularly, to whom or what would this person actually be praying? This is a task in which that person is highly unlikely to engage because it is philosophically at odds with the person's own faithlessness. Hence, it is an action only for Salvationists. This section of the narrative also identifies burial of the dead. Whereas non-Christians may also undertake burial for good reasons, it assumes especial importance in the Christian tradition as it symbolically facilitates the movement of the soul to the spiritual kingdom. Power in the narrative therefore comes from identification of Salvationists as being privileged in their capability to perform tasks. Salvationists are capable of burying the dead to move the soul toward God. They are also capable of praying with soldiers, because they have a God to whom they can pray. In this, we see the narrative as entrenching a privileged notion of the Salvationist as a saved believer, which in turn allows Salvationists to perform deeds impossible for others.

The fourth phase of the narrative deconstruction strategy is to tell the other side of the story. Where are the repressed voices not heard in The Salvation Army narrative? In *The Homies* documentary (ABC, 2003), nine victims of Salvation Army abuse were identified and interviewed. These were just some of the tens of thousands of boys and girls from broken homes around Australia who were dispatched to institutional homes in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. These can make for harrowing reading. A convicted paedophile argues his behaviour stems from the sexual abuse he received from a Salvation Army Officer at age 9. A girl claims she was placed into solitary confinement for 5½ months, and another girl claims she was regularly sodomised by a Salvo in 1966. Some of these stories from the documentary are presented below in Table 1. In themselves, they are evidence of discursive management in the official Salvation Army narrative because the organization deliberately excludes such accounts.

The fifth step in Boje's (2001) strategy of deconstruction is to deny the plot. Using what has been written during Phases 1, 2, 3, and 4 of narrative deconstruction, how can we encapsulate the plot or moral of the constructed

Table 1
Allegations From *The Homies* (2003) Documentary

Person	Story
Man in Shadow (not identified in the documentary for legal reasons)	The Man in Shadow was a convicted child abuser. In 1994, he had been arrested for sexually assaulting several young adolescents. He was jailed for 4½ years and underwent a sexual offenders therapy program. He claimed to be unable to be anywhere around 13- to 14-year-olds. He said, "to be truthful, I cannot look at a 13- or 14-year-old and not think 'I wouldn't mind that.'" The Man in Shadow claimed that his behaviour was a result of abuse he had received during his time in institutional care. He claimed to have been abused by other boys, and also an Officer of The Salvation Army from the time he was 9 years old. "I remember I started enjoying some of the stuff that was happening to me when I was 13. So my mind locked in on 13-year-olds and I couldn't get out of that . . . that thought."
Mark Blows (psychiatrist)	'When the children were sent to a Salvation Army home, we used to say, "Thank God for the Salvos," because we thought they were going to be treated better than in the state homes. I was wrong. This story really shocked me. Very soon after he [the client] went to that place at a young and tender age, under the age of 8, he was actually put across a desk . . . He described the desk to me, the grains of the desk. And an attempt was made to penetrate him—to rape him. Before that, he had received a caning, and then he was succoured and . . . if comforted . . . then placed across the desk. And that sort of thing happened a number of times, and it always happened in that very sadistic context.
Wally McLeod	All boys would be marched into the recreation room. The boy or boys that were in trouble would be called out into the centre. They would be made drop their trousers and underpants, bent over with hands touching the toes and they would be given anything up to 10 or 15 of the cane or the strap. And if you left that position, you got extra.
Barry Maslen	While this particular officer was on night duty, he used to come into the dormitory and . . . he used to pick different boys, but when he chose me, he would sit beside the bed and he would rub my leg, eventually working it up, his hand up underneath my pyjama trousers, and fondle my penis. And then he would ask me if I would like a cup of hot Milo or some biscuits or lollies—which is something that was never, ever given to us, and, of course I said yes. And then once we got to his room, he started fondling me again I was sodomised and I had oral sex performed on me. And that is how I acquired the name of one of that particular officer's bum boys.

Salvation Army narrative? An understanding has been presented that claims the narrative privileges saved believers at the expense of damned nonbelievers. At the same time, these saved believers are endowed with heroic characteristics, strong enough to make sacrifices in building their relationship with God, and compassionate enough to relieve suffering of humans who do not believe. Those to whom assistance is offered by The Salvation Army are characterized as fallen individuals, and this association renders their accounts unbelievable. Furthermore, the narrative makes it all but impossible for damned nonbelievers to undertake social work with a level of care and compassion comparable with that of The Salvation Army. Under these circumstances the moral of the narrative is that only Salvationists are capable of doing good and being truthful.

If we deny this plot then we can see why careful management of reputation by The Salvation Army is integral to its competitive advantage in the Australian welfare industry. Consider what happens if the damned nonbelievers are capable of doing good and being truthful, and the saved believers are capable of evil deeds, neglect, and lying? What this does is to undermine the legitimacy of The Salvation Army. It erodes legitimacy because there are suddenly many other people or organizations capable of providing welfare relief to individuals. Furthermore, by denying the plot, the legitimacy of the Salvos is undermined because the damned nonbelievers gain an air of authority in expressing negative sentiments during reputational crises such as those represented in *The Homies*. In the competitive situation that exists in the Australian welfare industry, The Salvation Army may then not be the provider of choice because it is capable of evil deeds and neglect in its provision of social welfare. Hence, The Salvation Army loses its competitive advantage in the charity industry.

In the sixth phase of deconstruction, Boje (2001) asks the narratologist to find exception to the moral of the story, as this can further illustrate power in the narrative. In the case of The Salvation Army narrative, an obvious exception is the status of corporate donors. Whereas nonbelievers are treated as damned by the textual dichotomy, corporate donors are treated with greater deference given their important role in sponsoring Salvation Army activities. This demonstrates that the narrative can be flexible depending on the nonbeliever's circumstances—especially

their relationship to The Salvation Army. The credibility of corporate donors is enhanced, to the point where the reader is asked to believe what they have to say. For example, global food company Kraft are used as credible witnesses in the managed narrative when the company says they are

> Aware of the fine work the Salvos have been doing in drought affected rural communities across Australia and choose [to donate to] the Salvos because of their commitment to helping all Australians in need, which is aligned to the "Kraft Cares" philosophy. (The Salvation Army, 2003)

In this seventh phase of analysis it is important to consider groups who have been silenced in the narrative. This is vital to deconstructing a narrative because silence can be indicative of a group which has been coerced, or one for whom the only way to express resistance is through keeping its own counsel (Boje, 2001). Hence, it is important to search for groups on whose behalf The Salvation Army appears to have spoken in the narrative. A key group that can be identified as fitting this description are the Australian servicemen of World Wars I and II. Whereas Linsell (1997) and others attribute the superior reputation of The Salvation Army to their involvement with the Australian Infantry Forces, at no stage is the voice of an Australian soldier directly heard in the narrative. It is therefore left to a Salvationist such as Bolton (1980) to declare that the soldiers of World War I soon warmed to The Salvation Army's Will McKenzie and joined in his songs of worship. Likewise, Salvationist author Linsell (1997) claims that the bravery of the Salvos branded them with the imprint of the ANZAC (Australia New Zealand Army Corps). However, at no stage does the narrative directly attribute similar statements to personnel from the Armed Services.

This further demonstrates the successful management of The Salvation Army narrative. Many Salvationists argue their organization's reputation was borne as a result of their efforts in World Wars I and II. However in this narrative, there is no direct communication from the diggers themselves, and yet the narrative draws accolades and makes positive claims about The Salvation Army on their behalf.

Resituating the Story

The final step in Boje's (2001) strategy of deconstruction is to resituate the story. This places the onus on

the researcher to move the narrative beyond its dualisms, excluded voices, and singular viewpoint. The first seven points contribute to this objective by stripping the narrative of its power, but what have these seven strategies of deconstruction informed us about The Salvation Army's narrative and the impact this has on its reputation management?

It is argued that the narrative is based on a central dichotomy that characterizes Salvationists as saved believers and casts all others as damned nonbelievers. In privileging Salvationists, the narrative elevates virtue over vice, and serves to portray the Salvos as heroes in undertaking their virtuous practices. In doing this, the Salvos assume characteristics of compassion, warmth, and empathy. The nonbelievers are characterized as fallen individuals with addictions, broken relationships, and impoverished livelihoods.

Further power in the narrative was witnessed when it was demonstrated that damned nonbelievers could not undertake duties of compassionate assistance to the levels provided by Salvationists such as Will McKenzie or Joyce Harmer. This further legitimises the role of The Salvation Army in the provision of social welfare, and serves to create a competitive advantage for the organization within the charity industry. In listening to the marginalized and repressed voices of the abused children from *The Homies*, we are able to further uncover power in the narrative. The characterization of Salvationists as kind, caring, and compassionate people armed with the truth is balanced by characterization of damned nonbelievers as fallen characters, trapped by sin and their own untrustworthiness. This is clearly a false dichotomy, as evidenced by the allegations of *The Homies*, however it is presented in the narrative as an immutable truth, further demonstrating the unobtrusive power in the narrative.

The moral of the story is that Salvationists are only capable of doing good and being truthful. The nature of a dichotomy means that what are inherent characteristics to the privileged must be found in opposite measures in the marginalized group. Hence, if the Salvos are good and truthful, then the damned nonbelievers must be opposite, that is they must be bad and untruthful. This is a very strong characteristic of the narrative because it serves to undermine the accounts of *The Homies*. Only if we deny the plot of the narrative can we start to see the allegations raised during the course of the documentary as credible insights into life in Salvation Army institutional homes. If the plot remains in place, then it scarcely seems possible that saved believers in The Salvation Army would be capable of the alleged horrific deeds.

Exceptions to the moral of the narrative are identifiable in the manner in which non-Salvationists (damned nonbelievers) sympathetic to the cause of The Salvation Army are treated. Testimonies from these people are elevated above those of other nonbelievers, and as such their credibility rises. This demonstrates flexibility in the narrative in that it is able to accommodate nonbelievers who show support for Salvation Army initiatives. Finally, power in the narrative can also be demonstrated in that it speaks for members of Australia's Armed Forces during World Wars I and II. Although the argument is made that the reputation of The Salvation Army was established on the battlefields with Australian troops during these wars, a closer reading of the narrative indicates that not one of these troops can be heard directly through the text. As such, we can see coercion at play in that the narrative speaks for groups that have in fact failed to directly contribute to the narrative.

A Theoretical Model of Reputation Management

The above discussion can now be portrayed in a diagram to give a theoretical overview of reputation management in The Salvation Army (see Figure 1). In the first step, labeled deflection, the external stakeholders vigilantly watch the actions of The Salvation Army—actions in which the narrative frames an understanding that the Salvationist must undertake good humanitarian deeds so that they may enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The narrative also ensures stakeholders are presented with corporate images of hard working, honest, charitable people, complemented by resources to enhance their outstanding efforts.

This emphasis on charity is a key feature of the narrative. By elevating charitable works to a level equal with evangelical works in the narrative, The Salvation Army shifts the prism by which they are viewed by stakeholders. Welfare is a fundamental underlying feature of modern society. As Myles and Quadagno (2002, p. 37) argue "welfare states are the inevitable product of large economic forces beyond the control of policymakers and publics that compel a common response." In this sense, all members of society have an interest in a functioning welfare system, and it is through this lens of self-interest that external groups of stakeholders view The Salvation Army. Therefore, the narrative serves to act as a "mirror" that deflects the vigilant attention of the key stakeholders, similar to the way in which organization texts have been shown to deflect attention of the reader away from
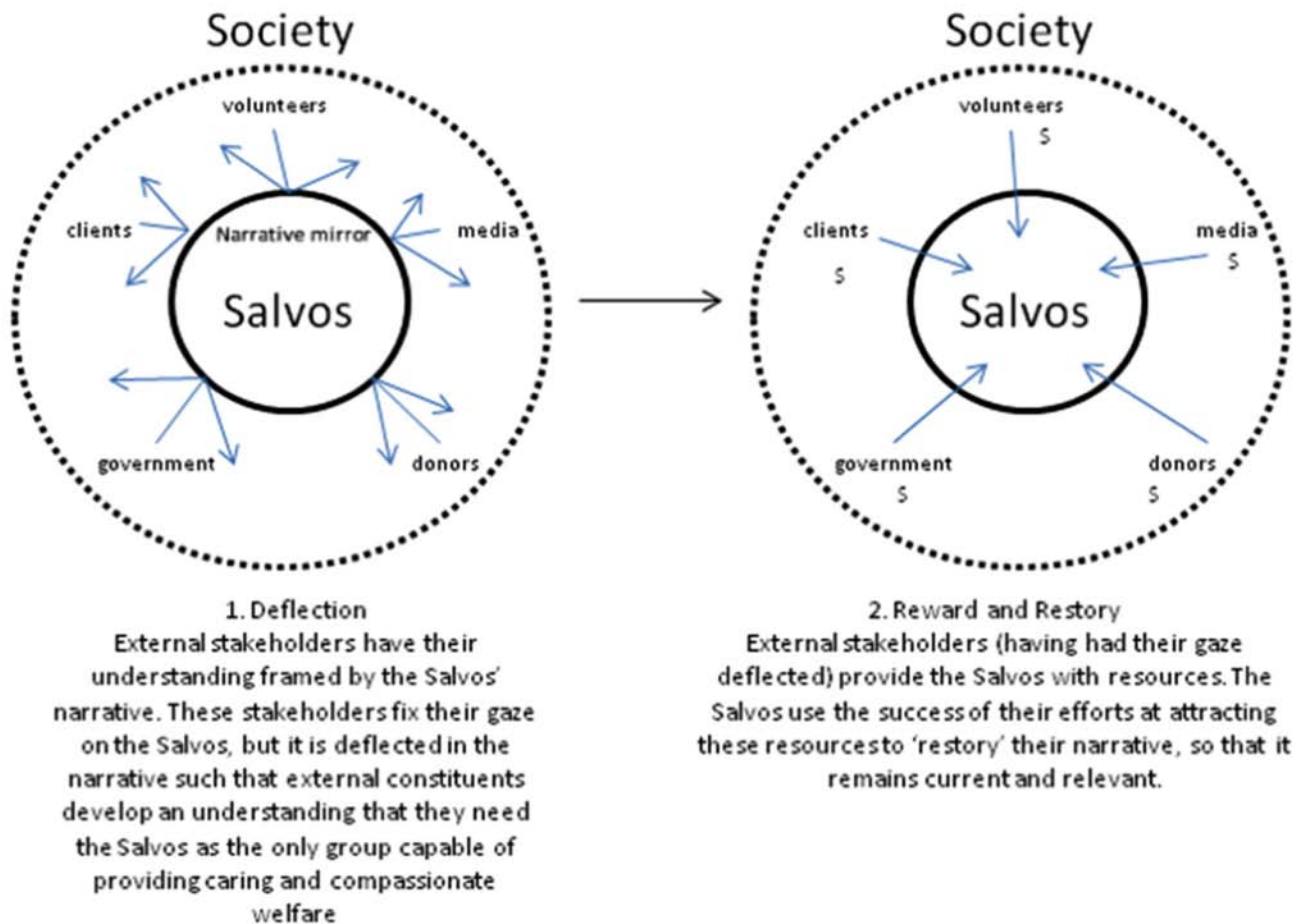
contradictions and sell a persuasive vision (Czarniawska, 1997; Kilduff, 1993).

Therefore stakeholders view Salvationists through a different prism to that of primarily evangelical organizations such as the Catholic Church. By associating The Salvation Army so closely with charity, the narrative portrays Salvationists as essential members of a functioning society, a link of monumental importance to all stakeholders. This is significant, as Rindova and Fombrun (1999) have discovered that constituents will engage with firms in the aim of furthering their own objectives. In essence, the narrative defines the Salvos in the eyes of key stakeholders as a fundamentally charitable organization as opposed to a fundamentally religious organization.

This deflection of attention, or "narrative mirror" aspect to The Salvation Army's narrative, is central to understanding how The Salvation Army was able to maintain an outstanding reputation despite the serious allegations against them. In this sense, we can consider narrative from a similar perspective to MacIntyre (1981) who conceives social life as enacted narrative. As Czarniawska (1997) argues, people understand their own lives by putting them into narrative form, and they do the same when they try to understand the lives of others. The metaphorical narrative mirror of The Salvation Army deflects the attention of external stakeholders by the portrayal of the organization as a welfare institution that is only capable of doing and being good. In this sense then, the stakeholders need The Salvation Army as this is the organization primarily capable of undertaking supremely difficult welfare tasks.

Then, in Step 2 of the model, The Salvationists receive rewards from their stakeholders and begin to restory their narrative. At this stage, external stakeholders are likely to construct the understanding that they need The Salvation Army because only the Salvos can undertake the breadth of work they do in such a positive fashion. Hence, these stakeholders provide resources to the Salvos. In this particular study, stakeholders have been demonstrated as believing this central piece of propaganda in the narrative as seen in the record levels of resources that have flowed to The Salvation Army in recent years (The Salvation Army, 2003). The Salvos use this resource flow, and other interpretations of the success of the narrative to determine its overall content. Stories that are judged to have contributed to successful outcomes can then be fed back into the narrative in a managed process so that The Salvation Army can "restory" and keep its relevance. A good example is the efforts of Joyce Harmer during the trial of Kathleen Folbigg. Joyce's story has

Figure 1
A Model of Reputation Management in The Salvation Army

Society

volunteers

clients   Narrative mirror   media

Salvos

government   donors

1. Deflection
External stakeholders have their understanding framed by the Salvos' narrative. These stakeholders fix their gaze on the Salvos, but it is deflected in the narrative such that external constituents develop an understanding that they need the Salvos as the only group capable of providing caring and compassionate welfare

Society

volunteers
$

clients   media
$ $

Salvos

government   donors
$ $

2. Reward and Restory
External stakeholders (having had their gaze deflected) provide the Salvos with resources. The Salvos use the success of their efforts at attracting these resources to 'restory' their narrative, so that it remains current and relevant.

been worked into the narrative to demonstrate that The Salvation Army has an understanding of those who require salvation, regardless of their personal circumstances. This process is depicted in Figure 1.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that we may potentially derive new understandings of issues surrounding reputation management by using studies of narrative. By adopting an understanding of reputation management as the discursive management of meaning, we are able to understand narrative as communicating reputation management themes. Therefore, narrative analysis allows us to build understanding of how the Salvos were able to successfully manage their reputation despite the nature of very serious allegations against them.

This work extends reputation literature by providing a model of reputation management in The Salvation Army. Although corporate reputation has been acknowledged in the literature as an intangible resource (Hall, 1993), to date there has been little understanding of how it is managed. The deconstructive reading of The Salvation Army narrative as presented in this study demonstrates that the Salvos' narrative presents an organization based equally on evangelism and charitable works to its stakeholders. Salvationists are compelled toward outstanding charity by their own beliefs that this will open the doors of heaven, and stakeholders perceive a need for the Salvos based on their own imperatives for a functioning welfare system. By this process of deflecting the gaze of external stakeholders, The Salvation Army cements a positive corporate reputation, and protects it from reputational attack. Rewards from stakeholders in the form of resource flows then indicate the overall effectiveness of

the narrative, and The Salvation Army is then able to restory the narrative by incorporating new stories.

Narrative study of other organizations may also prove illustrative to our studies of reputation management. Although this study has concentrated on factors in the narrative that have preserved The Salvation Army's reputation during times of reputational crisis, narrative study may also enlighten our understanding of other aspects of reputation management. A particular suggestion is that it may prove useful to consider the way in which organizations restory their narrative to increase resource flows from external stakeholders, given reputation is argued to be a key intangible resource (Hall, 1992, 1993). Overall however, the way in which The Salvation Army has used narrative to manage reputation presents a useful means of understanding its efforts to flourish in the charity industry despite the reputational crisis of *The Homies* documentary.

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