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PUBLIC RELATIONS PARADOX ON DISPLAY:  
A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF THE AUTONOMY-DEPENDENCY  
PARADOX AT A UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the paradox of autonomy and dependence that is inherent in organization-public relationships. Using a comparative case study methodology the Brigham Young University Museum of Art's handling of exhibitions that included nude artworks in 1997 and 2004 as examples. The value of this study is that it illustrates how paradoxical tensions can influence the decision-making process in organizations, as well as the ways in which organizations can manage their own behavior and communication in spite of natural tendencies to manage and control stakeholders and publics.

## INTRODUCTION

In October 1997, the Brigham Young University (BYU) Museum of Art, located in Provo, Utah, presented a touring art exhibition titled *The Hands of Rodin: A Tribute to B. Gerald Cantor*. This exhibit featured 54 bronze and plaster sculptures highlighting Auguste Rodin's mastery of portraying the human hand ("Past Exhibitions," n.d.). Museum press materials extolled Rodin's artistic prowess, acknowledging him as "the finest sculptor since Michelangelo" (Winters, 1997, ¶ 1). However, when the exhibition opened at the museum, four sculptures remained in their shipping crates. Among them were three nude works, including *The Kiss*, one of Rodin's most famous works. The decision to not exhibit these sculptures led to accusations of censorship from BYU students, the local community, journalists, and museum professionals from around the globe (see Kamman, 2006). However, Campbell Gray, the BYU art museum's director, "insisted that censorship had not occurred" (Kamman, 2006, p. 85), a position that was supported by some local community members, who were predominantly members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Seven years after the Rodin controversy, the BYU Museum of Art hosted a traveling exhibition from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, about the artistic contributions of the ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations. The exhibition, titled *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World: Egypt, Greece, Rome*, sought to educate visitors about the way these cultures influenced each other and continue to influence Western civilization. Once again, museum officials faced a decision about displaying

nude works of art. While there were a few nude works in this exhibition, a marble statue of a male torso caused the most concern because many elementary school children were expected to see the exhibit on field trips. In the end, the museum exhibited all of the nude works but mediated the impact of the pieces by contextualizing them within the display. Museum officials also worked closely with the two groups that were most affected by the decision: the university administration and the Utah State Office of Education. At the end of the exhibition's yearlong run in Provo, museum officials were surprised that they did not receive one complaint about the works.

These two incidents expose the paradox that art museums face when making decisions that have consequences on multiple stakeholders. If museum leaders make decisions out of dependence on governing bodies or visitors, they will likely face protests from an art community seeking to protect the art museum as an institution of high culture. If museum officials feel they are at liberty to collect and exhibit artworks that are too avant garde for the communities they represent, they will likely face the prospect of community outcry and possible public sanction (e.g., MacDonald, 1992; Zolberg, 1994).

The museum experience epitomizes the autonomy-dependency paradox that affects the relationship between many types of organizations and their publics. Paradoxes are difficult to recognize and often create anxiety and tension, often times causing organizational leaders to make decisions that can damage relationships with stakeholders. Paradoxical tensions also have caused public relations scholars to define the practice in terms of either/or dichotomies, forcing practitioners and organizational

leaders to decide if their communication efforts will be symmetrical or asymmetrical, one-way or two-way, proactive or reactive, socially responsible or self-interested (Rawlins & Stoker, 2007, July). Nevertheless, understanding the nature of paradoxes and applying divergent thinking can help communication professionals more easily navigate these tensions (Cameron & Quinn, 1988b).

The purpose of this study is to explore the autonomy-dependency paradox in organization-public relationships by analyzing and comparing the two cases presented above. This study evaluates how the management literature on paradox can bring greater depth and understanding to public relations theories about organization-public relationships. Additionally, this study explores the ways in which structuration theory and the growing literature on authenticity can guide public relations practitioners in effectively managing organizational behavior and communication in the face of the centripetal and centrifugal tensions of the autonomy-dependency paradox.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *The Paradoxical Frame*

After a review of the existing paradox literature, Lewis (2000) defined a paradox as “contradictory yet interrelated elements—elements that seem logical in isolation but absurd and irrational when appearing simultaneously” (p. 760). Paradoxes have become important in organizational science because scholars have noted that organizations are inherently paradoxical (Cameron & Quinn, 1988a). Ford and Backoff (1988) explained that in the act of organizing, “distinctions are drawn that are oppositional in tendency: differentiation and integration, collectivity and individuality, stability and change,

uniformity and complexity, morphostasis, the maintenance of structure, and morphogenesis, creation of new structure” (p. 82). Rapid technological change, globalization, and increased diversity in the workforce are responsible for creating paradoxes that force managers to “increase efficiency and foster creativity, build individualistic teams, and think globally while acting locally” (Lewis, 2000, p. 760).

Paradoxes represent divergent rather than convergent problems (Cameron & Quinn, 1988a). Convergent problems are solvable. Answers to convergent problems tend to converge into a single accepted solution. Paradoxes are divergent problems because they do not have one single accepted solution. In fact, the more paradoxes are studied, the more the solutions tend to diverge, or become more contradictory. However, the promise of the paradox is that the process of “wrestling with divergent problems” will lead to greater breakthroughs and insights than solving a convergent problem (Cameron & Quinn, 1988a, p. 6).

The simultaneous presence of mutually exclusive opposites causes paradoxical tension (Vince & Broussine, 1996). Paradoxical tension has the potential to lead organizations to breakthroughs and insights, but these tensions can also cause organizations to become trapped in reinforcing cycles that “perpetuate and exacerbate” the tensions caused by the paradox (Lewis, 2000, p. 763). Convergent thinking often leads to a reinforcing cycle by making either/or distinctions—choosing one pole of the paradox while ignoring or rejecting the other (Cameron & Quinn, 1988b). These either/or choices are often defensive routines established by organizations to deal with potential embarrassment or threat posed by paradoxical tensions (Argyris, 1988).

Managing paradox involves “exploring, rather than suppressing, tensions” (Lewis, 2000, p. 764). Vince and Broussine (1996) argued that the only way to derive benefit from a paradox is to embrace it rather than try to resolve it: “Staying with the paradox makes it possible to discover a link between opposing forces and opens up the framework that gives meaning to the apparent contradictions” (p. 4). Handy (1994) suggested that managing paradox in the sense of trying to plan for or control it is itself paradoxical. He argued that the management of paradox should be thought of in terms of coping—the original meaning of the word *management*.

Organizations need to develop the ability to think paradoxically in order to transcend a paradox (Lewis, 2000). Paradoxical thinking leads to critical self-reflection that may help managers “reframe their assumptions, learn from existing tensions, and develop a more complicated repertoire of understandings and behaviors that better reflects organizational intricacies” (Lewis, 2000, p. 764). Organizational scholars have identified four methods of dealing with paradox: acceptance, confrontation, compromise, and transcendence (da Cunha, Clegg & de Cunha, 2007; Lewis, 2000). These strategies permit organizations to move beyond the either/or distinctions that lead to reinforcing cycles by enabling them to look at paradox from a both/and perspective (Ford & Backoff, 1988). Acceptance assumes that organizations are aware of the paradox and have learned to live with it (Cameron & Quinn, 1988a; da Cunha et al., 2007; Lewis, 2000; van de Ven & Poole, 1988). Confrontation is a strategy that calls for organizational members to discuss paradoxical tensions in order to “subject their ways of thinking to critique, thereby raising their chances of escaping paralysis” (Lewis, 2000,

p. 764). Compromising to paradoxical tensions can take the form of a contingency approach “where the organization chooses the right mix of opposites” (da Cunha et al., 2007, p. 14). Transcendence involves looking at paradox from new perspectives (Rothenburg, 1979; Poole & van de Ven, 1989; da Cunha et al., 2007).

### *Paradox in Organization-Public Relationships*

The focus on relationships between organizations and publics as the unit of analysis in public relations provides a natural starting point to identify paradoxes. The most obvious paradox that affects the organization-public relationship paradigm is embedded in the very nature of relationships: two parties becoming dependent on each other for the fulfillment of individual needs while, at the same time, trying to influence each other to achieve their individual goals (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Murphy, 1991).

Using a relational dialectic framework, Hung (2007) described how these opposing relational forces draw partners together and push them apart. This paradox has been referred to as interdependence by organizational management researchers, public relations scholars, and social exchange theorists (Canary & Zelle, 2000; Gollner, 1984; Grunig, Grunig, & Ehling, 1992; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Provan, 1982), and is a key component to the organization-public relational dynamic (Hung, 2007). Grunig et al. (1992) explained that “building relationships—managing interdependence—is the substance of public relations” (p. 69).

The approach advocated by public relations scholars to manage interdependence is based on social exchange and resource dependency theories (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Grunig et al., 1992; Hung, 2005; Ledingham, Bruning, & Wilson, 1999).



Because these theories provide convergent solutions to the autonomy-dependence paradox inherent in organizational-public relationships, they can lead to defensive mechanisms that could potentially damage relationships or to the establishment of meaningless quid pro quo relationships (Stoker & Tusinski, 2006).

Social exchange theory holds that relationships involve the voluntary exchange of resources to accomplish individual goals through cooperation and reciprocity (Oliver, 1990; Broom et al., 1997; Lawler & Thye, 1999; Ledingham et al., 1999; Leichty, 2005). Oliver (1990) explained that partners enter into relationships for the benefits of balance, harmony, and mutual support even though the relationship may result in diminished decision-making autonomy or added management costs. However, social exchange theory does not remove the source of paradoxical tensions. For instance, Lawler and Thye (1999) observed that “*self-interest* and *interdependence* are central properties of social exchange” (p. 217, emphasis in original). Therefore, when paradoxical tensions are low, partners are more likely to form relationships for mutual benefit. In contrast, when tensions between autonomy and dependence are high, the relationships can become social traps where both sides punish themselves by trying to undermine each other (Macy, 1991).

Resource dependence theory highlights the interdependence between organizations and their external environments (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Organizations can interact with their environments either by seeking balance and coordination or by exercising organizational power to exert control (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). According to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), the typical organizational response is to increase

coordination. However, sometimes organizations attempt to use their power to dominate or control their environments (Aldrich, 1976; Broom et al., 1997; Cook, 1977; Emerson, 1962; Leichty, 2005; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Control can become an important goal for organizations because it offers the promise of decision-making autonomy that allows organizations to manage their environments and avoid uncertainty (Aldrich, 1976; Oliver, 1990; Schermerhorn, 1975).

The ideas of cooperation and coordination proposed in these theories have inspired public relations theorists to advocate for mutually beneficial relationships that are established and maintained through two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2006; Hon & Grunig, 1999). However, scholars have noted that this normative theory is difficult to implement in practice (Holtzhausen, Petersen, & Tindall, 2003; Leichty, 1997; Leitch & Neilson, 2001; Murphy & Dee, 1992). Additionally, the literature on relationship management seems to advocate a management style that seeks to ensure stability by exerting influence on external environments, reflecting a paradigm of control and autonomy (Blewett, 1993; Ledingham, 2006; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). The ongoing debate about the utility of the two-way symmetrical model underscores the need for public relations theory that provides divergent solutions to the paradoxical tensions that make the practice of the two-way symmetrical model difficult in practice.

### *Structuration Theory*

Researchers have found Anthony Giddens' structuration theory useful in understanding and managing paradox (Harter, 2000; Poole & van de Ven, 1989), in part

because it transcends the dichotomy of structural functionalism and interpretivism (Durham, 2005; Edgar, 2007; Falkheimer, 2007; Miller, 2000). Structuration theory attempts to achieve a balance between human agency and structure by reconceptualizing this dualism as a duality: the duality of structure (Krone, Schrodtt, & Kirby, 2005). The duality of structure explains that social structures are “the medium of human agency as well as the outcome of human agency” (Falkheimer, 2009, p. 108). According to Rawlins and Stoker (2002), the duality of structure explains how the structures that constrain or enable human action are produced and reproduced through the actions and interactions of individuals. Therefore, from a structuration perspective, human action is both enabled and constrained by social structures (Krone et al., 2005).

Giddens defined structure as “an internal construct composed of an agent’s memory” (Rawlins & Stoker, 2002, p. 271). These structures can be related to the expectations that relational partners have of each other (Coombs, 2000; Ledingham, 2006). In structuration theory, individuals have autonomy either to act in accordance with their knowledge of previously learned social norms (Banks & Riley, 1993; Witmer, 2006) or to act in ways that create new social structures (Banks & Riley, 1993; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002). Additionally, structuration theory posits that individuals are capable of actions based in self-reflection and motivated by individual goals as well as actions based on habitual routines that are generally taken for granted (Banks & Riley, 1993; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002). Rawlins and Stoker (2002) explained that self-reflexive action represents an individual’s ability to understand and explain the logic and reason of his or her actions.

Banks and Riley (1993) noted that social structures consist of rules and resources that are “formed, codified, memorialized, and concretized” through interactions that occur over time (p. 176). Socially constructed rules are behavioral recipes that provide the definitions of what certain behaviors mean and which behaviors are appropriate in certain circumstances (Harrison, 1994). Structuration theory identifies two types of rule structures: structures of signification, which are created and reproduced through communication and interpretation, and structures of legitimation, which represent relational norms that are legitimized through interaction (Harrison, 1994; Loyal, 2003). Organizations can foster structures of legitimation—or the ethical, legal, and cultural norms of social structures—through structures of signification, or communication (Rawlins & Stoker, 2002). Achieving legitimacy in a relationship “depends upon the morality of what the organization says and does in relationship to the norms that have guided its communications and actions in the past” (Rawlins & Stoker, 2002, p. 273). This type of interaction is capable of producing and reproducing new and lasting relational structures (Rawlins & Stoker, 2002).

A structuration approach to organization-public relationships embraces the tensions of the autonomy-dependency paradox. This divergent approach provides a framework for public relations practitioners to embrace paradoxical tensions rather than suppress them by explaining how organizations are participants in, rather than managers of, the creation and perpetuation of relationship structures. Durham (2005) noted that structuration theory can assist organizations in reconceptualizing relationships with publics: “Rather than being defined as distinct parts of a power

imbalance, institutions and those they would affect are bound to each other within a common social context” (p. 34). Falkheimer (2007) proposed that viewing public relations through the lens of structuration theory means that practitioners should see communication as a process of developing shared meanings and sense making, where organizational members mutually construct a social reality.

These ideas led Rawlins and Stoker (2002) to assert that organizations cannot unilaterally change their environments because the structures that govern the environment are co-created and reproduced through interaction. Because of the duality of structure, an organization’s sense of self and position in the environment is known only through interaction with an organization’s stakeholders. As a result, organizations should be aware of how their actions will impact their stakeholders, and accept their duty to behave in a way that is respectful of their relational partners’ agency. To achieve this kind of self-consciousness and respect, organizations must come to a knowledge of themselves that goes beyond an awareness of their relative social position by achieving an understanding of how organizational actions affect and are affected by the actions other groups in society.

### *Authenticity*

Trilling (1997) suggested that attempts to manage one’s image can lead to insincerity, or the incongruence between expression of feeling and an individual’s true feelings, and suggested that true sincerity can be found in authenticity. By definition, an individual or an organization attains authenticity by being “true to one’s own personality, spirit, or character” (authenticity, 2011). Molleda (2010) proposed that

authenticity requires faithfulness to core corporate values and a congruence of action and communication. Gilmore and Pine (2007) proposed two standards of authenticity: (1) being true to your own self, and (2) being who you say you are to others.

Based on philosophical observations by Heidegger, Erickson (1995) noted that authenticity is not an either/or experience. People are somewhere between completely authentic and completely inauthentic because of the “complex, changing, and inconsistent” behaviors enacted by individuals (Erickson, 1995, p. 122). Additionally, individuals become more authentic when they realize they are partners who must cooperate with other individual agents in the social construction of reality, because the authentic self both shapes and is shaped by social exchanges with others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Erickson, 1995).

Leaders seeking to guide organizations toward authenticity must develop positive psychological capital, positive moral perspectives, and heightened levels of self-awareness, and must practice disciplined self-regulation to align their values with their intentions and actions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Leaders with positive moral perspectives should follow “an ethical and transparent decision making process whereby authentic leaders develop and draw upon reserves of moral capacity, efficacy, courage, and resiliency to address ethical issues and achieve authentic and sustained moral actions” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 324). According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), self-awareness is a constant struggle to understand organizational values, identity, and goals. Additionally, self-regulation is a process of self-control that involves organizations in the alignment of their values with their intentions and actions. This process is

composed of three different stages that lead to organizational authenticity: “(a) setting internal (either existing or newly formulated) standards, (b) assessing discrepancies between these standards and actual or expected outcomes, and (c) identifying intended actions for reconciling these discrepancies” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 325).

As an organization becomes more authentic about its true endeavors and motivations, organizational stakeholders can decide if they are aligned with such purposes and want to be associated with the organization. If stakeholders do not share the values espoused by the organization, they may choose to look elsewhere to fulfill their impulse to be part of an authentic collective (Lindholm, 2008). Therefore, authenticity works hand-in-hand with structuration theory in providing a divergent approach to the autonomy-dependency paradox, an approach that focuses on managing organizational behavior and communication rather than managing the behavior and communication of publics.

### *Research Questions*

The case studies presented in this research investigate how organizational decision makers at the BYU Museum of Art experienced the tensions of the autonomy-dependence paradox, how they reacted to these paradoxical tensions, and how they managed their behavior and communication in relation to their stakeholders and publics as a result of those tensions. Five research questions are considered in this study:

RQ1: Did organizational decision makers recognize the paradox and/or the elements contributing to the paradox?

RQ2: How did organizational decision makers experience the tensions of the paradox?

RQ3: How did organizational decision makers view the organization's relationships with its publics?

RQ4: Did organizational decision makers believe they stayed true to the values and mission of the organization in their decision making?

RQ5: Did organizational decision makers believe their communication with their publics was aligned with their decision making?

## METHODOLOGY

A case study methodology was selected to conduct this research because of the complex nature of studying paradox. Cameron and Quinn (1988b) explained that the purpose of their research about organizational paradox was not to develop a "set of specific, testable hypotheses explaining paradox," but to use a paradoxical framework as a "stimulus for asking new and richer questions" (p. 289). Case studies are effective in answering explanatory "how" and "why" questions "about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin, 1984, p. 20).

In this study, the influence of paradoxical tensions on organizational decision-making was studied in the context of the Brigham Young University Museum of Art. The two cases compared in this study were the Brigham Young University Museum of Art's *Hands of Rodin* exhibition in 1997 and *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World: Egypt, Greece, Rome* exhibition in 2004. Analysis compared the cases to identify the methods used by the museum to negotiate the paradox in both cases and to understand what the museum learned from the first case that was applied to the second.

Data were gathered through 14 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with current (at the time of this writing) and former employees of the BYU Museum of Art. Most interviews began by asking participants what they remembered about the discussions



and events related to the nude artworks in both of the exhibitions considered in this research. Additional questions were then asked to focus the interviewee on specific areas of interest to this study (see Appendix A for interview guide). All interviews were recorded on a digital audio recorder and transcribed using Express Scribe software to ensure that the interview data considered in the analysis were complete, as well as to enhance the reliability of the data analysis. Transcripts of the interviews were content analyzed to identify the paradoxes, tensions, relationships, pressures, and inconsistencies discussed by each participant.

Data were also gathered from archival documents from the museum that included meeting minutes, internal memoranda, exhibition contracts, exhibition object lists, and exhibition-related materials produced by the museum or the exhibition organizers. Additional data were gathered from news media sources. The museum had an archive of much of this media coverage, but to ensure completeness of the record, searches were performed on Lexis Nexis and ProQuest. Microfilm records housed at BYU's Harold B. Lee Library were also used to find those media sources not contained in the online databases.

In order to increase the trustworthiness of the research, six interviewees received a copy of the completed case studies to check them for accuracy and researcher bias in a process called member checking (Yin, 2009). In order to increase the dependability of this research, in-text citations in the case study section establish a chain of evidence to give readers access to the same information available to the researcher and to reveal the multiple sources used to construct the case studies.

## CASE STUDIES

The first case study examines Brigham Young University's decision to withhold four nude Rodin sculptures from a traveling exhibition of the French sculptor's work in October 1997. The second case study evaluates the BYU Museum of Art's decision to exhibit a handful of nude works in an exhibition on the ancient cultures of Egypt, Greece, and Rome. The cases were developed using secondary sources, such as newspaper articles and reports, and primary sources in the form of interviews and organizational documents.

*The Hands of Rodin: A Tribute to B. Gerald Cantor*

Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, was founded in 1903 on the principle that secular learning would be fused with the religious teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After more than 100 years, the mission of the school remains largely the same (Walch, 2003). The Museum of Art officially opened on the BYU campus in October 1993. At the time, it was the largest museum facility between Denver, Colorado, and San Francisco, California, containing more than a dozen art galleries and state-of-the-art storage facilities (Reese, 1993). Shortly after the opening, administrators at the museum heard about the traveling Rodin exhibition organized by the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Foundation and sought to bring the exhibition to Utah. The exhibition was of enough significance that it would be traveling to other major U.S. venues.

Before the scheduled opening of the exhibition in Provo, the university, the Cantor Foundation, and the museum experienced changes in leadership. The university's Board of Trustees appointed Merrill J. Bateman, the presiding bishop of the

LDS Church, as the 11th president of the university in November 1995 (McEntee, 1995; O'Brien, 1995). Eight months later, B. Gerald Cantor passed away in Los Angeles, California, leaving his wife, Iris, to assume the leadership responsibilities of the foundation (Pace, 1996). Then in November 1996, the university appointed Campbell Gray as the new director of the art museum (Gagon, 1997). Gray possessed the right qualifications for managing a university art museum, but was somewhat unfamiliar with the uniqueness of BYU and the cultural dynamics of the local community.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1996, officials at the Cantor Foundation decided to honor B. Gerald Cantor by supplementing the exhibition with more spectacular works from Cantor's collection, including the iconic sculpture *The Kiss*. With the opening of the exhibition approaching, museum administrators began a serious review of the objects in the exhibition. After carefully looking at images of the works, museum officials were concerned about the possibility of a negative reaction from the community to a few of the nude works because museum personnel had received complaints about less provocative works in the past.

In fact, issues of nudity and pornography had also come to a boiling point in the surrounding community during this time period. In 1996, criminal pornography charges were filed against the owners of a local movie rental chain (Miller, 1996b; Romboy, 1996b), concerned residents formed an anti-pornography group that included local church leaders and city officials (Romboy, 1996a), and parents from the community gathered 2,500 signatures on a petition to oppose what they called "pornographic materials and concern about loosening public morals" (Miller, 1996a, ¶ 9).

Not wanting the university leadership to be surprised by unanticipated complaints from the community about the Rodin exhibition—let alone an organized community protest, museum administrators decided the best way to mitigate this problem was to involve the new university president. Museum administrators sent images of the works in the Rodin exhibition to the new president for review prior to the exhibition opening.

During this same time period, museum employees had been sending out regular updates to the local media to generate excitement for the exhibition. When word came back from the university president that he was uncomfortable with some of the works, communication with the media abruptly stopped. Museum officials assumed that internal discussions would be resolved rather quickly, that the exhibition would go on, and that communication with the media would resume. However, the discussions lasted two months. Because of the abrupt silence, it soon became apparent to the media that something was going on, and reporters began to ask questions that museum officials could not answer. The lack of response from the museum sparked the media's curiosity about what was happening with the exhibition.

When the works arrived, the group of university administrators and museum officials who were involved in the discussions about the potentially problematic nude works went to see them at the museum. Ultimately this group made the decision not to exhibit three of the nude figures. On Friday, October 24, 1997, three days before the exhibition was scheduled to open, university and museum officials were ready to make their decision public. It was only at this point that museum administrators called the

Cantor Foundation to inform them of the decision (Wertheimer & Brandwynne, 1997).

On Sunday, October 26, 1997, three stories about the Rodin exhibition ran in local newspapers: one in the *Salt Lake Tribune* and two in the *Daily Herald*, Provo's community newspaper. On Monday, October 27, 1997, the opening day of the exhibition, the local newspaper story about the decision was rewritten by the *Salt Lake Tribune* ("BYU bans," 1997) and distributed by the Associated Press (AP). This article appeared in the *Seattle Times* ("Across the nation," 1997) and the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Wanat, 1997), as well as on the AP ("Nudes from Rodin," 1997) and CNN ("University censors," 1997a) websites. The first few paragraphs of many of these articles made specific mention that the university was excluding one of the most famous works, *The Kiss*, by one of the most important sculptors of all time. The articles also featured a quote from the museum director attempting to explain the reasoning behind the decision: "We have felt that the nature of those works are such that the viewer will be concentrating on them in a way that is not good for us" (Van Benthuisen, 1997, ¶ 5).

On Tuesday, October 28, 1997, seven more articles were printed in local and national newspapers about the university's decision. Versions of the AP story ran in the *New York Times* ("Footlights," 1997) and *USA Today* ("BYU officials," 1997). By Wednesday, October 29, 1997, the story about the university's decision to withhold sculptures from the exhibition was getting more national exposure and was beginning to receive increased global attention. Two days later more than 200 BYU students staged a protest in front of the main administration building on campus (Carter, 1997a). During the remaining three months of the exhibition, portions of the AP story continued to

appear in newspapers across the United States and in other countries.

Shortly after the Rodin controversy was first reported in the news media, letters from passionate writers on both sides of the Rodin issue began to pour into the editorial offices of Utah's region and local newspapers. These letters continued to be printed for the remaining three months of the exhibition. Additionally, museum personnel received numerous letters, phone calls, and e-mails either applauding the decision to stand up for the standards of the LDS Church or condemning the decision and insulting the people who made it.

Thursday, November 14, 1997, essentially signaled the end of the media coverage of the Rodin decision. President Bateman held a question and answer session with students in which he specifically answered questions about the Rodin decision ("BYU President," 1997; Carter, 1997b). The president took responsibility for making the decision and acknowledged making a mistake in "failing to issue a formal statement about why the statues were being excluded" (Carter, 1997b, ¶ 8). The president explained that the values of the larger community, and not just the university student body, had to be taken into consideration because of the large number of schoolchildren who visit the museum every year ("BYU President," 1997; Carter, 1997b). Finally, he promised that the university would avoid future controversies by not contracting to show exhibits that may contain questionable material.

In the years following the Rodin controversy, under the guidance of the museum's new director, the staff created a new vision for the museum that would try to incorporate the spiritual and academic aims of the university.

*Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World: Egypt, Greece, Rome*

Sometime between December 2001 and January 2002, museum officials learned about an opportunity to host a traveling exhibition from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, composed of artifacts from the three most influential civilizations of the ancient world: Egypt, Greece, and Rome (Thompson, 2004; *Art of the Ancient*, 1999). The exhibition was curated with the intent to demonstrate how these three civilizations “influenced one another throughout their histories” (*Art of the Ancient*, 1999, p. 17) and how they continue to influence the modern world (BYU Museum of Art, 2004).

In the spring of 2003, museum officials began to evaluate the exhibition to determine whether or not to take the show (Lambert, 2003b; Thompson, 2004). One of the issues staff members were concerned about during this evaluation period was that a few works in the Greek section of the exhibition were nudes (Lambert, 2003a). Staff members were not surprised that there were nude works in this section of the exhibition; in fact, most staff members expected these kinds of works to be included in an exhibition about the ancient world.

Early on, museum officials decided that this exhibition was consistent with the retooled academic mission of the museum, and that instead of a broad marketing campaign for the show, museum personnel would focus their resources on the groups most likely to benefit from the academic discourse of the exhibition: university students and middle-school students in grades 6 through 9. Museum staff members working on the exhibition felt strongly that these particular nude works were integral to the exhibition because the accurate and proportional depiction of the human form was an

important cultural and artistic contribution of classical Greece.

Despite the strong desire to show these works, staff members were still worried about the potential problems associated with elementary-school-aged children exploring a gallery with nude works of art, particularly the sculpture of the male torso. They were also concerned about not creating another Rodin-like controversy for the university.

Before the contract for the exhibition was signed, museum officials determined that they needed to get support for their decision from the Utah State Office of Education and the university administration. The museum educator assigned to work with the public schools made a phone call to the arts coordinator at the Utah State Office of Education to let this person know about the nude works that would be a part of the exhibition and to get feedback on the decision. Museum staff members also worked closely with university administrators to get their support for showing the nude works. The proposal from the museum was not automatically accepted by the university. Despite all the museum's proposed efforts to mitigate the problem, university leaders were still concerned that there would be a negative response to these works. However, university leaders felt that museum officials had done about as much as they could to mitigate and minimize the potential for problems with these works and agreed to support the museum's decision.

In June 2003, museum staff members working on the exhibition held a team meeting to discuss the language that would be used to address concerns about the nudes in the exhibition (Lambert, 2003c). In addition to crafting the language they would use to talk about their decision, museum staff members working on the exhibition thought



about ways to contextualize these works within the gallery so visitors could understand the reasons they were included. With support in place from the public school system and the university, museum administrators proceeded with the legal negotiations, officially contracting to exhibit the show in November 2003, seven months before it was scheduled to open (Lambert, 2003d).

After the exhibition opened on June 4, 2004, a large number of school groups began to schedule tours, and museum staff members debated whether or not to alert teachers about the nude works before they brought their classes. In the end, staff members decided to address any questions that teachers asked; however, they decided not to make a big deal of the nude works because they had the support of the State Office of Education.

All museum communication with the media was focused on the educational discourse of the exhibition. The exhibition received significant coverage that included many color images of the major works in the show in Utah's two major daily newspapers, as well as Provo's community newspaper (Clark, 2004)—and no mention was made of the nude works. All of the news stories published by local media outlets featured positive reviews of the exhibition and the educational programming that accompanied it.

## DISCUSSION

### *Recognizing Paradox*

The case studies presented in this research demonstrate that Museum of Art employees felt the tensions caused by the autonomy-dependency paradox. The research

also shows that these tensions had an effect on organizational decision-making and communication. Additionally, these case studies reveal that the BYU Museum of Art experiences the autonomy-dependency paradox on two distinct but closely related levels, increasing the tension when both levels of the paradox are manifest. The first level of the paradox is common to all art museums and is embedded within art museum culture and practice. The autonomy-dependency paradox at this level is manifest when art museums are forced to reconcile their historical mission of showing the public artworks that museum professionals think the public needs to see with the need to show the public artworks that the public wants to see. In other words, the central question of this level of the paradox is “who or what agency defines and determines a museum’s offerings” (Kotler & Kotler, 1998, p. 30), the autonomy of the museum or its dependence on the market?

The second level of the paradox exists specifically for the BYU Museum of Art because the museum is part of Brigham Young University. At this level the paradox has a direct correlation with the university’s struggle to integrate secular academic pursuits with the religious principles and values of the LDS Church. This level of the paradox is manifest when museum decisions could be seen as compromising the spiritual and religious mission of the university. The central question of this level of the paradox asks whether the academic mission of the university, which would allow the museum a great deal of autonomy, or the religious mission of the university, which would cause the museum to be more dependent on religious criteria, “defines and determines [the] museum’s offerings” (Kotler & Kotler, 1998, p. 30). This second level of the paradox may

be the most important level for the museum because it reflects the essence of Brigham Young University, of which the museum is a part. A BYU official addressing concerns over academic freedom at the university explained that “BYU intends to remain true to its intellectual and spiritual mission. If we abandoned our mission, there would be no reason for us to exist” (Carter, 1997a, ¶ 6–8).

Museum officials used different paradox management strategies in the two cases reviewed in this study, providing additional insight into their level of understanding of the paradox. One interpretation of the events leading up to the university’s decision about the Rodin sculptures is that museum officials adopted a defensive mechanism to deal with the potential embarrassment or threat posed by the paradoxical tensions of the Rodin situation (see Argyris, 1988). When museum officials decided to approach the university administration, they were seeking the administration’s support and assistance in dealing with what they saw as a potential negative reaction from the community. It could be argued that the museum’s decision to go along with the university’s decision, even though some members of the museum staff felt that some of the works should not be excluded, was evidence of first-order thinking characteristic of defensive mechanisms, which are primarily used “to preserve the fundamentals of the existing order of things by changing the non-fundamentals” (Esterhuyse, 2003, p. 2). By going along with the university’s decision, the museum would be seen institutionally as a team player and not be sanctioned for stepping out of line with the university.

Another interpretation of the events leading to the university’s decision about the Rodin sculptures is that museum officials adopted a compromise approach to deal with

the paradox. According to da Cunha et al. (2007), compromising to ease paradoxical tensions can take the form of a contingency approach “where the organization chooses the right mix of opposites” (p. 14). Van de Ven and Poole (1988) described this strategy as taking the “role of time into account” because “one horn of the paradox is assumed to hold at one time and the other at a different time” (p. 24). Museum officials enjoyed considerable autonomy in their ability to determine the museum’s exhibition program up to the point that museum officials realized that the Rodin exhibition they agreed to exhibit might cause problems for the university and the community. Because museum officials were under the impression that the exhibition had been approved institutionally, they felt like they were being responsible in inviting the university president to the opening of the exhibition to assist the museum in quelling any negative response from the public. Once the university president decided that some of these works were more problematic than museum officials thought they were, museum officials abandoned the autonomy horn of the paradox in favor of the dependency horn, subjecting themselves and their decision making to the university to ensure the moral and religious integrity of the institution. After the controversy was over, museum officials returned to the autonomy horn of the paradox, selecting and exhibiting exhibitions without much intervention from the university. In fact, many museum staff members felt their support of the university’s decision resulted in increased trust in their decision making.

The museum’s decision to support the university in the Rodin decision did not propel the museum into a self-destructive reinforcing cycle. On the contrary, by the time

museum officials began dealing with the nudity issue in the *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* exhibition, they had learned to recognize the paradox and live within the limits of their autonomy. Being aware of the paradox and learning to live with it constitutes the paradox management strategy of acceptance (da Cunha et al., 2007; Lewis, 2000; van de Ven & Poole, 1988). Van de Ven and Poole (1988) argued that acceptance is a good first step in dealing with paradox because individuals and organizations “acknowledge that things need not be consistent; that seemingly opposed viewpoints can inform one another” (p. 23). This strategy allowed museum decision makers to exercise autonomy in deciding to exhibit the nude works, which they felt were an integral part of the exhibition, while at the same time acknowledging that they needed to secure support from the stakeholders that would be affected by their decision. As a result of the university’s increased trust in the museum, and the perceived broad autonomy of the museum that resulted from both the *Hands of Rodin* and the *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* exhibitions, museum officials seemed to be flirting with a strategy for transcendence of the paradox, namely that increased organizational autonomy is directly related to increased recognition of organizational dependence. This is the same counterintuitive principle explained by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) and Grunig et al. (1992): An organization gains autonomy to pursue its goals by surrendering some of its own autonomy in establishing and maintaining stable, long-term relationships with its publics.

#### *Understanding Relationship Structure and Agency*

The case studies presented in this research demonstrate how structuration theory

can be applied to help organizations manage their responses to tensions produced the autonomy-dependency paradox. The *Hands of Rodin* case study illustrates the problems that result from a limited understanding of the structuration process (Giddens, 1984). The museum did not understand the relational structures it had co-created over time and with its publics and failed to acknowledge the agency of these groups to affect those structures. This case study also underscores the danger organizations face when they engage in routine action—assuming that because certain actions have been successful in the past that those actions will continue to be successful in the future. *The Art of the Mediterranean World* case study demonstrates the ability of organizations to work within the parameters of existing relational structures while recognizing the agency of publics to achieve structural change that is mutually accepted by all relational partners. This case study also shows the importance of reflexive action, or the ability to understand and explain the logic and reason of organizational actions.

The *Hands of Rodin* case study shows that museum officials did not understand the relational structures they had co-created with stakeholder groups when they initially made the decision to host the Rodin exhibition. This case study also demonstrates that museum officials did not recognize the agency of the stakeholder groups that would be affected by this decision. Because museum officials did not understand these relational structures or recognize the agency of stakeholders to affect the structures, the actual outcome of their decisions was unexpected. Many of the museum personnel interviewed for the case study expressed surprise at the reactions of various stakeholder groups both to the initial decision to host the exhibition and the subsequent decision to withhold the

four works from the exhibition.

While museum officials seemed perplexed by the contentious outcome of the situation, it appears that the medium of the museum's interaction and the outcomes of it were, in fact, the same, as predicted by Giddens (1984). The museum's actions in contracting for the Rodin exhibition were based on misunderstanding—both of the museum's reasons for wanting to bring the exhibition to BYU and of stakeholder expectations about the appropriateness of certain works. Because misunderstanding was the medium of interaction initiated by the museum, the outcome of this interaction was also misunderstanding—misunderstanding with the university administration, the Cantor Foundation, BYU students, professional peers, and members of the community. Three main factors contributed to the museum's miscalculation of relational structural and the agency of affected stakeholder groups: (1) the museum was a new institution that was still forming relationships with stakeholders; (2) the still-forming relational structures enabling and constraining the museum were subjected to radical change just prior to the Rodin exhibition; and (3) museum officials were not reflexive about their actions, relying instead on routine actions established before the structural changes occurred.

The cooperation between museum officials and university administrators before the Rodin exhibition opened at the museum illustrate how two groups can experience congruent, or legitimate, change that is mutually constructed by two parties. The resulting decision was also a legitimation of existing relational structures for some members of the community. Members of this public wrote letters to the editor defending

the museum, the university, and the decision to withhold the Rodin sculptures. For example, one letter writer asked, “what is wrong with a private, religious institution deciding to display only artwork which is in harmony with the teachings of the religion that sponsors it?” (Ball, 1997, ¶ 1). Members of this group also sent letters of support and phoned museum personnel to applaud them for standing up for standards of the LDS Church. For this group the decision did not need any explanation. The decision was consistent with the ethical, legal, cultural, and in this case in particular, religious norms to which they expected the university to adhere.

Conversely, museum officials felt that their relationships were damaged with the groups that did not agree with the university’s Rodin decision, including members of the community, as well as professional and academic peers who have the ability to veto loans of artworks and exhibitions. Some of these organizations felt that the museum had stepped far outside the bounds of professional museum practice, expressing surprise and disappointment, and accusing museum officials and university leaders of censorship. These accusations were surprising to members of the museum staff.

Museum and university officials failed to recognize the agency of these stakeholder groups. Before the Rodin decision was made, museum officials and university administrators did not consult with any of the groups that reacted negatively when the decision was announced. Most notably absent from the decision discussion was the Cantor Foundation, who was told about the university’s final decision three days before the exhibition opened. These groups did not have priority in the initial discussion between university and museum officials about what to do with the Rodin works in



question. The power balancing mechanisms used by the dissenting groups consisted of protests covered by the media, and opinion pieces and letters to the editor in the local newspapers. For example, the organizer of the student protest explained to the media that the main reason for the protest was that students were not consulted about the decision. He noted that “had students been included in the decision . . . we wouldn’t have this protest” (Carter, 1997a, ¶ 13).

After the Rodin controversy ended, it was apparent that museum officials had learned something about the relationship structures that had been created and reproduced with these groups as a result of their interactions during the controversy. From the moment museum officials learned about the possibility of bringing the *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* exhibition to BYU, they were engaged in reflexive action. Before museum officials signed the contract to bring this exhibition to the university, they actively sought out the stakeholders who would be affected by their decision and discussed the matter of the nude works with them. The result of these discussions was that all of the relevant stakeholders came to agree that these were the types of works that the museum should be exhibiting. Once again, the medium and the outcome were the same. Museum officials were sure of their actions, they better understood the potential reaction of their stakeholders, and they approached the issue of exhibiting the nude works with openness, transparency, and dialog. The outcome of this interaction was an open and transparent response from the museum’s stakeholders and positive response to the resulting exhibition from the media and museum visitors.

After some internal debate, museum personnel determined that the nude works

were an integral part of the exhibition. They also determined that the nude works were consistent with the museum's new mission and the university's religious mission. After making this evaluation, museum personnel began the process of figuring out how to work within their existing relational structures to achieve legitimation for this decision through open and transparent communication and dialog. Museum officials did not try to force their decision on stakeholders by attempting to exercise control through relational resources. Rather, they acknowledged the agency of these groups to draw their own conclusions about the museum's decision. Museum officials expressed a "deep desire to remain respectful to the feelings of our audience" and made a serious effort to "examine the issues surrounding the appropriateness of making them [the nude works] available to our visitors" (Thompson, 2003, ¶ 2).

Additionally, the museum's positive engagement with stakeholders to create and reproduce relational structures since Rodin has seemed to heal some of the museum's relationships with a few of the stakeholder groups that became defensive during the Rodin controversy. According to museum staff members, there had not been trouble borrowing works or contracting for exhibitions with other art institutions. Museum staff members reported that they had attended many professional conferences and had not been treated poorly by peers. And the museum's director was eventually accepted into the most prestigious association for art museum directors in North America. A few staff members commented that the museum's consistent program of "dynamic, adventurous, provocative, stimulating exhibitions" had built up relationships with a number of these groups over time. However, some staff member also noted that there are some groups

“whose views are never going to change.”

### *Achieving Authenticity*

When museum officials achieved a deeper sense of organizational self-awareness and understood the need for self-regulation, they were able to stay in the paradox, exploring its tensions rather than attempting to suppress them. This enabled museum officials to manage the museum’s behavior and communication in relation to those tensions rather than resorting to defensive mechanisms that exacerbate paradoxical tensions for the museum’s publics. Additionally, these case studies reveal that self-awareness and authenticity are fundamentally linked to paradox. In these cases, the museum had to understand and reconcile three different layers of its identity to become self-aware: (1) what it means to be an art museum; (2) what it means to be a university art museum; and (3) what it means to be a university art museum operated by the LDS Church. The simultaneous interaction of these three different identities is the origin of both levels of the autonomy-dependency paradox experienced by the museum. The interaction of the first two layers of the museum’s identity defines the first level of the paradox, and the interaction of the second two layers defines the second level of the paradox. Therefore, the paradoxes of museum vs. market and academy vs. religion are embedded into the very fabric of the museum’s existence and are integral components of the museum’s identity.

The *Hands of Rodin* case study demonstrates that museum officials struggled with self-awareness. Museum officials were not organizationally self-aware because they had not yet come to understand the unique contextual factors that defined the

museum's existence. One of those contextual factors was the autonomy-dependency paradox. In the first few years of the museum's existence, museum officials responded to the first level of the autonomy-dependency paradox by favoring market-dependence over museum autonomy. Museum officials hoped that an exhibition featuring a well-known artist who had created iconic works of art would be an exciting opportunity for the surrounding community. At the same time, museum staff members were also interested in the educational value the exhibition could provide for the students and professors on campus, who would have a rare opportunity to learn from these works in person rather than just studying them in a book. These two motivations for agreeing to host the exhibition demonstrate that museum officials were struggling to reconcile the first two levels of organizational self-awareness.

As previously explained, museum officials also struggled with the second level of the autonomy-dependency paradox, which has its roots in the third layer of the museum's identity: the university's affiliation with the LDS Church. Museum staff members were aware that the museum was expected to uphold the same standards of the LDS Church as the rest of the university. They also knew from experience that nude works of art were problematic for some museum visitors who thought an LDS university shouldn't exhibit nude artworks. However, museum officials wanted to show works of art that they thought were important, and they felt that problems with nudity in this exhibition could be overcome because of the iconic nature of the works. One staff member summed up the museum's attempts to deal with these paradoxical tensions by noting that these works were pushing the edge of what could be shown at the museum,

even though these works were considered masterpieces.

Public explanations of why the museum decided to withhold the sculptures reflected this lack of self-awareness to some of its publics. These explanations were inconsistent with the expectations these groups had of what an art museum should be—the first and second layers of the museum’s identity. Museum officials tried to explain that they withheld the works out of respect for conservative community members. However, the most inauthentic of these statements reported in the media carried an air of paternity and condescension that were in conflict with the purpose of the museum: to connect and engage with visitors in a way that encourages appreciation of others and their ideas. This inconsistency between the explanations and the true nature of the art museum experience was a key factor in the negative response of some stakeholders and publics to the decision. While some publics felt the museum’s explanations of the Rodin decision were inauthentic, others thought the decision and the explanations were completely authentic. The decision and the subsequent explanations were consistent with the expectations these latter groups had of what an art museum on the campus of an LDS Church-owned university should be—the third layer of the museum’s identity. While museum officials mostly talked about concern for museum visitors, university officials explained that the decision was made to uphold the standards of the LDS Church. On a few occasions, a university spokesman emphasized that BYU was “a peculiar place with a peculiar set of old-fashioned values” (“Four Rodin,” 1997, ¶ 7).

The *Hands of Rodin* case study also revealed that museum officials struggled

with self-regulation. Museum officials did not self-regulate because they had not yet set internal standards against which they could assess discrepancies between their standards and the expected outcomes of their decisions. Because museum officials had not figured out how to reconcile the three layers of their identity, it was hard for them to set a standard against which to judge the decision to bring the Rodin exhibition to the museum. The outcome of the case study demonstrates that the third layer of the museum's identity was the most crucial in setting a standard against which to judge the decision; however, museum officials appear to have seriously considered only the first two layers of the museum's identity in initially judging the appropriateness of their decision.

The second case study clearly demonstrates that museum officials had become more self-aware of the three layers of the museum's identity. Early in the evaluation of the exhibition, museum officials determined that the nude works in the show were not of the same order as the sensual, provocative works that caused the Rodin controversy. Staff members explained that classical sculpture has a certain air of conservatism because of its age and history of cultural acceptance. They felt that not showing these sculptures would be inconsistent with the mission of the museum and the educational message of the exhibition.

Once museum officials determined that these works were in line with the mission of the museum, now in line with the mission and values of the university, they proceeded to engage stakeholder groups in the decision in open and transparent dialogue that allowed for potential scrutiny regarding their reasons for the decision. This

seems to indicate that museum officials were comfortable enough with the two levels of the paradox at this point that they could help other groups navigate through its tensions. Museum visitors from campus and the community did not seem to see inconsistencies in this decision either, since there were no complaints about the works, even though there was ample time in the year-long run of the exhibition for someone to complain. As shown in the *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* case study, organizations become more authentic when they realize they are partners who must engage other agents in the social construction of reality, because the authentic self both shapes and is shaped by social exchanges with others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Erickson, 1995).

Based on their experiences in the Rodin exhibition and their new understanding of the mission of the museum, museum officials had set internal standards by the time of the *Art of the Ancient Mediterranean World* exhibition. While evaluating the exhibition, they exercised self-control discussing the discrepancies between museum standards and the outcomes of potential decisions, which were influenced by paradoxical tensions. Ultimately, as a result of this process, they identified a way to reconcile internal museum standards with external behavior.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the autonomy-dependency paradox in organization-public relationships. The case studies presented in this research demonstrate that this paradox is fundamental to understanding the relationship between organizations and publics. When managers fail to recognize that their organization is dependent on publics to achieve organizational goals, paradoxical

tensions can drive decision-making and communication. As demonstrated in this study, reactive decisions to paradoxical tensions are more likely to result in negative reinforcing cycles that exacerbate the tensions for the organization and, potentially, for its publics. Decisions based on these defensive reactions to paradoxical tension can damage relationships. As a result, public relations practitioners should become proficient at managing paradox. This perspective requires practitioners to recognize the paradoxes that define organization-public relationships, understand the conditions that could exacerbate paradoxical tensions, and assist organizational leaders in managing responses when tensions are high. Additionally, managing paradox may require counterintuitive thinking, such as the notion that organizations gain autonomy by surrendering some autonomy (e.g., Grunig et al., 1992; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978).

This study demonstrated that structuration theory and authenticity can serve a useful framework that can enable public relations practitioners and organizational leaders to more effectively manage the behavior and communication of the organization in the face of paradoxical tensions. Adopting a structuration perspective can help organizational leaders think divergently about the autonomy-dependency paradox. This perspective can assist decision makers in realizing they are dependent on the relationship structures that have been co-created and will be reproduced by interactions with stakeholders and publics (Erickson, 1995; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002), and in recognizing that stakeholders and publics can influence the relational structure through their agency (Eagly, 2005; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002; Stoker & Tusinski, 2006). As such, the case studies support the relationship management notion that organization-public



relationships are defined by interdependence, or the opposing forces of autonomy and dependence, and that the constant tension between the two poles of this paradox influence the decision making of the relational partners. Organizational acknowledgment of the agency of stakeholders and publics is a key step in moving organizations deeper into paradoxical tension, where true breakthroughs can be achieved and reinforcing cycles can be avoided.

Finally, this study showed that organizations that consider their authenticity can more effectively negotiate paradoxical tensions by managing organizational responses to those tensions rather than attempting to manage the behavior of their publics. This perspective also can assist organizations in thinking paradoxically by encouraging organizations to become self-aware (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002) and to use their knowledge of relational structures along with their understanding of their authentic selves to self-regulate (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Eagly, 2005; Rawlins & Stoker, 2002; Rawlins & Stoker, 2007, March; Stoker & Tusinski, 2006). However, self-awareness is not a destination point, but an emerging process that is influenced by the paradoxical tensions that define organizations and their relationships with publics. As organizations become self-aware, they have a better ability to self-regulate their behavior and communication, allowing them to find solutions that are in harmony with the tensions rather than succumbing to them.

Even though organizations may become self-aware and develop the ability to self-regulate, there may be publics that decide that the organization no longer shares their values and may look elsewhere to fulfill their impulse to be part of an authentic

collective. This is not an indication that the organization is no longer trustworthy. It is an indication that the organization is not holding anything back. The organization has become the embodiment of its authentic self, which has allowed the stakeholder group or public to decide whether to continue or sever the relationship. In this situation, organizations can adopt the conflict management strategy identified in the organization-public relationship literature of agreeing to disagree (Hon & Grunig, 1999) instead of trying to force a relationship with an uninterested party. However, organizations should always leave the door open for reconciliation with these publics should they decide to align themselves with the organization in the future.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions:

RQ1. Did museum decision makers recognize the paradox and/or the elements contributing to the paradox?

1. When did you first realize that there was a potential problem with the nude artworks in the exhibition?
2. Why did you think it was going to be a problem?
3. Who did you think it was going to be a problem for?
4. What did you think their reaction would be? Why?
5. How would you describe the situation the museum was in because of these artworks?

RQ2. How did museum decision makers experience the tensions of the paradox?

1. Do you remember what it felt like to be in this situation? Can you describe it for me?
2. Were there pressures on the museum to behave a certain way?
3. Where did those pressures come from?
4. How influential on the museum were they?

RQ3. How did organizational decision makers view the organization's relationships with its publics?

1. Once the decision about the artworks was made, how did you expect the museum's various publics/stakeholders to react?
2. Why did you feel they would react this way?
3. How did the publics'/stakeholders' actual reactions to the decision about the artworks affect your view of the museum's relationships with them?

RQ4. Did organizational decision makers believe they stayed true to the values and mission of the organization in their decision making?

1. Do you feel that the decision about the artworks was consistent with the mission and values of the museum? Why do you feel that way?
2. Is there anything that could have been done to ensure that this decision was consistent with the mission of the museum and its values?

RQ5. Did organizational decision makers believe their communication with their publics was aligned with their decision making?

1. Do you feel that the way the decision about the artworks was communicated to the museum's publics/stakeholders was consistent with the reasons the decision was made? Why do you feel that way?
2. Is there anything that could have been done to improve communication about this decision with the museum's publics/stakeholders?

## APPENDIX B

**Interview Participants**

<b>Interview #</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>	<b>Exhibition</b>	<b>Sex</b>
Interview 1	January 16, 2009	Rodin	F
Interview 2*	January 16, 2009	Rodin	F
Interview 3*	January 23, 2009	Rodin	M
Interview 4*	January 23, 2009	Rodin	M
Interview 5	February 4, 2009	Mediterranean	F
Interview 6	February 5, 2009	Mediterranean	M
Interview 7	February 6, 2009	Mediterranean	F
Interview 8**	February 10, 2009	Mediterranean	M
Interview 9**	February 13, 2009	Mediterranean	F
Interview 10**	February 18, 2009	Mediterranean	M
Interview 11	February 19, 2009	Mediterranean	F
Interview 12	February 20, 2009	Mediterranean	F
Interview 13	February 23, 2009	Rodin	M
Interview 14	March 12, 2009	Rodin	F

\* Rodin interviewees who were also interviewed for Mediterranean exhibition

\* Mediterranean interviewees who were also interviewed for Rodin exhibition