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ABSTRACT

There has been little research into how organizations modify their identities in response to the various ethical and cultural changes that occur in wider society. This qualitative investigation of recent museum approaches to handling human remains is situated within a critique of “museum identity” dynamics in history, archaeological, and science museums in the UK public sector. The theoretical framework encapsulates various paradoxes inherent in museum response strategies to such identity challenges. This study reveals the discursive practices museums use to legitimate and privilege their historical identities, while simultaneously engaging with different alternative identities in processes defined here as “organizational sensitivization.” These involve either amalgamating identity challenges or diffusing them, usually by means of open dialogue. Those challenges perceived to be identity threats are marginalized by the museums to protect their articulated identities through engagement in self-legitimization processes. This can leave museums with paradoxically unresolved tensions and identity ambiguities.

Keywords: ethics, human remains, museum, paradox, organizational identity, organizational sensitivization

INTRODUCTION

No ancient Egyptians were harmed in the making of this exhibition. The curators are at such pains to point this out... through the British Museum's new mummies show and accompanying catalogue. Their focus is on eight of the 120 mummies in the BM collection, their aim to analyse in unprecedented detail what lies beneath the coffins and bandages. Yet they stress they've acted not invasively but with the latest techniques of digital research. "The museum," we are told, "is committed to caring for human remains with respect and dignity.'" (Smart, 2014)

The changing dynamics through which museums articulate their organizational identities are focused on. This is accomplished by examining a sensitive, ethical issue, the handling of human remains. The aim is to explore the changing practices and evolving objectives, management and structures of museums as hybrid organizations. Hybridization involves a merger of public and private sector features by seeking 'the best of both worlds: public accountability and private efficiency' (Kopell, 2006, p 1). Identity modifying processes are seen in terms of how this affects organizational responses to external identity threats (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), such as dealing with human remains in their possession. This study leads us to increased understanding of how organizations respond to identity challenges also by adopting 'a paradoxical perspective to understand the inherent tensions in hybrid identity organizations' (Smith & Lewis, 2011, p 397).

The delicate issue of human remains has caused UK public museums, among others, to debate, probe and defend their functions and identities. Until recently the emphasis was on their custodial and educational roles of preserving and representing historical events and objects. The latter focus on human remains by science, archaeological and history museums remains to the present, although it now also involves commercial activities and

the idea of ‘culture incorporate’ (Retanus, 2002). The overt display of human remains, in order to attract the public, has led these public museums to re-examine their ethical approaches and codes in light of changed public understandings. This may also have been partly inspired by the novel ideas generated in modern art museums, and their innovative ways of dealing with human remains. Thus, contemporary artists can use them deliberately to challenge social taboos. This relates to changes in ethics and cultural challenges faced by other service organizations such as universities and hospitals. They are set in a dynamic process of *in situ* identity (re)creation in periods of rapidly shifting ethical and cultural attitudes as part of a ‘moral flux’ in the wider society (Hendry, 2004).

Extant research on organizational identity threats tends to center on specific professional groups, individual case studies and internal dynamics (Gioia *et al.*, 2010; Glynn, 2000; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). There is a dearth of research on how changes in external ethical and cultural contexts, and related struggles over meanings and resources, affect identity articulations in organizations such as museums. Previous research has revealed hybrid, multiple, inconsistent, organizational identities (Albert & Whetten, 1985); and strategies for coping simultaneously, albeit with competing, identities (Fiol, Pratt & O’Connor, 2009; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). However, paradox approaches to interpreting changes in organization identity (Fiol, 2002) show how an organization’s key values are challenged by its multiple identities. This can be seen in changes in identity “plurality” (number) and “synergy” (relationships) (Pratt & Foreman, 2000). New identities present challenges, often seen as threats or obstacles to change, though at times also opportunities (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). They deal in different ways with paradoxical contradictions (Fiol, 2002; Whetten, 2006), like multiple stakeholder needs (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Smith and

Lewis (2011) review ‘paradox’ approaches to hybrid, multiple, organizational identities, and the related challenges, tensions and response strategies for their management. They highlight the research on organizational social ‘situatedness’ (e.g. Ashforth *et al.*, 2010; Gioia *et al.*, 1994; 2000; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Hatch & Schultz, 2002), which throws a light on the various paradoxes of organizational identity changes (Smith & Lewis, 2011).

Public museums handling historical, archaeological and scientific artifacts were chosen as a research focus, as their responses have been seen to involve either amalgamating or diffusing external threats to their valued identities by adopting dialogic communication strategies (Hatch, 2006). This involves processes that are termed here as ‘organizational sensitivization’, whereby challenges are interpreted and threats identified. It is a response strategy to organizational identity challenges emanating from emergent socio-cultural frameworks, such as the increasingly respectful attitudes being shown to different cultural approaches to death. These involve social exchanges between organization and society through micro-level individual and macro-level institutional processes. Social actors such as staff moving between the organization and the outside society illustrate the former, and our changing ethical standards reflected in new legislation the latter. Openness involves dialogue and recognition of different standpoints, in contrast to a closing-off from outside influences and little ability to recognize other viewpoints. Yet the recognition of different ethical and cultural standpoints can also lead paradoxically to identity ambiguities and unresolved tensions. A retreat from threats results in their marginalization, a reluctance to engage overtly, and self-legitimizing strategies to protect historically-rooted identities.

‘Framework’ analysis was the main method used in this research to analyze selected UK industry, organization and policy documentation (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). It involved

data immersion, thematic coding, charting, mapping and interpretation, supported by a first-hand familiarity with the UK museum sector. Analysis of data sources revealed how these were used to communicate, influence and control identities. Examination of textual practices allowed insight into how organizational identities were either actively modified or sustained. It enabled access to industry views, dilemmas and debates, and museum policy makers' concerns. Collectively, they document discursive representations of the standpoints and shared understandings of museum custodians/advocates. They reveal the responses to identity challenges and perceived threat. If the subject of moral ambivalence relates to death, symbolized by bodily remains, this process is of heightened dissonance.

This article first of all, contributes to the literature by adding theoretical and empirical depth to paradox analyses that have explored how organizations cope with simultaneous, multiple demands (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Lewis, 2011). The present research develops theories of organizational identity by illustrating how historical, ethical and cultural forces combine with internal priorities to shape public museums' changing articulations. Secondly, it makes a further contribution by detailing their various response strategies as part of an observed process of 'organizational sensitization' that results in paradoxical outcomes. Thirdly, it does so through careful document analysis and data synthesis that map out the different paradox shifts in identity which are taking place in the museum's multiple identity articulations. It thereby contributes to the literature on public museums and other non-profit focused organizations, and especially those handling human remains.

ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY AND ITS THREATS: THE MUSEUM

Organizational identity challenges are explored, followed by an examination of historical influences on museum identities. Ethically sensitive issues relating to human remains in

UK publicly-owned history, archaeological and science museums are then focused on in terms of their creation of identity ambivalence and negotiations around identity issues.

Organizational Identity Challenges

‘Organizational identity’ is used to encapsulate core organizational values, central tenets, shared beliefs and what is distinctive and enduring in an organization over a sustained period of time (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Martin *et al.*, 1993). Organizational identity is fluid, modified in exchanges between internal and external actors. It is characterized not only by external perceptions of organization image (Sutton & Callahan, 1987), but by members’ definitions and interpretations of organizational characteristics (Brown *et al.*, 2006; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton *et al.*, 1994; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996), including cross-sector status comparison (Elsbach, 1994; Kramer, 1993). Effort to change priorities may be to protect/ shape organizational status, rank, distinctiveness and values (Elsbach, 2003; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). Organizational legitimacy and identity are interwoven with its social standing (Long & Driscoll, 2008). Discursive practices privilege valued identity norms, marginalizing those regarded as threatening alternatives (Foucault, 1980).

Challenges to organizational identity may arise both internally and from external groups or pressures, instigating processes of dialogue and negotiations around its norms and ethos. This may involve a critical issue, key moment or incident (Blatt *et al.*, 2006), when a shift change or identity fragmentation occurs due to competing views about it (Brown, 2001; Elsbach, 1999; Humphreys & Brown, 2002). Change may be instigated for organizational survival (Corley *et al.*, 2006), or resisted with a resolute adherence to identity norms and codes. There may be nostalgia for a golden age (Gabriel, 1993) with strategies pursued to protect, maintain or engrain existing identities. This leads to positive

identification and association with the past, reaffirming existing status, self-worth, purpose, and even power (Davis, 1979). Such efforts to negate identity threats lead to the silencing of alternative identity traits (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Macalpine & Marsh, 2005). Failure to engage with new accounts perceived as threatening can betray hegemonic resistance (Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Clegg *et al.*, 2006), and a strategy for self-legitimation, protection and affirmation (Clegg *et al.*, 2007). Nevertheless, paradoxically even then, moves toward consensus through dialogue can still take place, as identity develops from some degree of collective consistency, albeit also with negotiated or even contested understandings. The paradoxical nature of responses to identity challenges is shown by the case of museums.

Identity as Historically Influenced: Modernity and Museums as Cultural Icons

Theories of modernity tend to frame accounts of the history of museums (Walsh, 1992; Bennett, 1995). As repositories of items worth preserving (Urry, 1996), public memory institutions (Reading, 2003) or neutered reproductions of the past (McCrone *et al.*, 1995), museums traditionally order the past for present consumption. Enlightenment thinking led museums to respond to demands to document societal progress from past to present to future. The first 15th and 16th century European museums (Walsh, 1992) were symbolic of aristocrat wealth and status. By the 19th century they came to have public service and education purposes. A powerful ideological tool for Western concepts of civilization, the museum then developed to house taxonomies of items, to boast knowledge and discovery and communicate conceptions of order, time, progress and history determined by curators as experts. Museums ordered experience by storing, labeling and documenting (Foucault, 1970). Disciplines like anthropology and archaeology arose to place societies in systems

of linear progression. Rationalizing the past (Walsh, 1992), museums reflected the meta-project of modernity, with society placing its trust in curators as experts (Giddens, 1991). There followed a rise in consumption from the 1980s, with consequences for museums in “engaging the visitor through entertainment and information” (Rectanus, 2002, p. 210).

The burgeoning importance of entertainment posed acute challenges to the traditional museum which was seen as a fossil of bygone eras if resistant to change. It had to provide ‘infotainment’ (McCrone et al., 1995), ephemeral images of the past as in entertainment parks that neither possess nor aspire to genuine artifacts and authority. Museums became venues for entertainment to attract visitors, and venues for sponsorship to target business corporations. Museums, as sites of education and storehouses of treasures, are custodians of cultural identity and heritage. Yet, in contemporary society, their resources led them to develop a ‘culture incorporate’ aspect as part of their identity (Rectanus, 2002; 2006). It involves an entertainer role and associated identity of the corporation’s cultural wing (Rectanus, 2002). Museums may thereby seek to be like corporations. They also may seek corporate sponsorship, raising money for continued existence often through shows and exhibitions. Thus, alongside the entertainer identity, incorporation became part of the museum’s identity, with its economic opportunities a threat to more traditional identities.

The focus here on the museum’s handling of human remains is adopted to make sense of this period of flux, involving a paradoxical mixture of sensitivity and curiosity about such objects (Aries, 1974; Ashworth & Hartman, 2005; Lennon & Foley, 2000; Lisle, 2004; Seaton, 1996; 2002). They combine with cultural forces to reflect dilemmas inherent in the museum’s identity articulation (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005; Miles, 2002). Handling human remains for the museum, as illustrated in the quotation at the beginning of the

paper, reflects the contemporary state of unease about death. Human remains ‘embody’ potentially threatening identity challenges that can undermine the museum’s distinctive historical identity and the public’s view of it (Albert *et al.*, 2000; Ashforth *et al.*, 2008).

Identity Dissonance and Moral Dilemmas: Museums and the Appetite for Death

As opposed to a long-standing interest in death in the arts and sciences, research neglects its ambivalent effect on organizational identity. Little attention is paid to its impact, even when exploring the meanings of organizational artifacts emblematic of human mortality or spirituality. Organizations acquire, store, and use as props, artifacts of socio-historical value to wider society. Yet, they may be seen as sacred relics reflecting human mortality and spirituality. This is often ignored as it brings forth taboos, uncomfortable subjects for our contemporary society (Bauman, 1992; Smith, 2006; Walker, 1991). Museums store such artifacts relating to the residues of the dead, including human remains, which evoke memories, myths and emotions (Hallam & Hockey, 2001). In museum collections (see Table 1), they also satisfy an avid public interest in death and the macabre. This interest is explored by social theorists, such as Urry (1990) who uses post-structuralist insight to make sense of the phenomenon. Aided by Foucault’s (1973) concept of ‘the gaze’, Urry sees it as voyeuristic surveillance, dehumanizing disassociation of the physical body from individuality, humanity and identity. Walter (1994) also sees it as a ritual act, and Rojek (1993) as a form of commodity fetishism, with pilgrimage to places of ‘fatal attraction’, such as science, history and archaeological museums. Visits bind us to ceremonial acts of remembrance, as with war or genocide museums. It can involve a fascination with death, with ‘thanatourism’ (Seaton, 1996), ‘dark tourism’ (Lennon & Foley, 2000), and ‘atrocities heritage’ (Ashworth & Hartmann, 2005). Hewitt (1998) highlights the problematic nature

of the fascination with death in his concept of ‘disaster pornography’, resembling Gorer’s ‘pornography of death’ (1965, p. 169). This postulates how death has become the ‘taboo’ subject that sex once was, with a macabre seductive appeal of the forbidden around it.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The Research Context: UK Public Science, History and Archaeology Museums

UK public museums have a long history, with collections amassed over many years. Their antecedents go back to the Ashmolean, the first public museum that was opened in 1683, and the British Museum created in 1753 by an Act of Parliament to celebrate the British Empire. Debates in policy and industry circles about the ethics of owning historic archaeological heritage and repatriating ‘sensitive’ artifacts to indigenous peoples, have been taken up in the media, as in the following extract about books bound in human skin:

There is an ethical question. Many museum collections contain body parts, and in recent years some of these items have been returned to the countries they originally came from. This includes mummified Maori heads returned to New Zealand, and bones and other body parts repatriated to Australia and North America. This could raise questions about why these books bound in human skin continue to be seen as curiosities that often remain on public display. (BBC, 2014)

UK museums are increasingly affected by such social concerns of public policy. Debates on issues of bio-archaeological ethics, display versus the repatriation of human remains, indicate identity dissonance reflecting shifts in cultural/ ethical values. These rupture the museum’s identity as an elite icon that safeguards world heritage. It relates to discussions of archaeological ethics and treatment of the dead. In 1986, at the World Archaeological Congress in the UK, emphasis shifted from defining museums as guardians of cultural

heritage, as the ethnic group interests of Britain's once colonized peoples became more prominent. The UK museum's traditional role and authority was then visibly challenged.

The article taps into museum discourses on human remains, influenced by recent changes to UK ethical/ cultural values. It asks the questions: 'What are the manifest identities of the contemporary public museum and how are they evolving and responding to change?' and 'How are these identities affected by the use of human remains as artifacts?' This is a timely analysis as museums, like other organizations, such as hospitals and universities, must respond to public authority, funding agency and consumer demands. Addressing the questions, the research examines museum approaches to the issue. An analysis of how museums make sense of and communicate this issue is emblematic of social construction approaches to identity challenges when safeguarding threatened organizational identities.

METHOD

From a discursive perspective, identity is an ongoing process developed through language and communication (du Gay, 1996; Phillips & Di Domenico, 2009). Adoption of this view of identity influenced the research design and methods. The latter embraced the micro-level form of texts, with analysis of existing documentary data and their contexts. This approach has the epistemological basis that organizations are socially constructed by dialogue (Ford, 1999). Identity changes attempt to deal with past constructions, present iterations and future expectations, to harmonize complexities/ ambiguities (Frosh, 1991).

Data Sources

The inductive, qualitative methodology involved textual data analysis of hundreds of pages from documents e.g. industry/ policy and museum guidance materials. The data

sample consisted of key policy and practitioner documents, professional codes of ethics and other guidance material on ‘human remains’ in UK museums. This comprised eight core industry reports/ guidelines plus eleven additional museum-specific documents (see Table 2). They are seen as major indicative authoritative materials, but not as exhaustive.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The researcher’s long-standing academic interest in museums and sector knowledge led to this research. Reflective notes in a diary had been kept to develop emerging theoretical ideas. The issue of human remains in museums seemed to be a tangible contemporary, contentious issue generating much debate and discussion about museum responsibility and ethics. It also encapsulated wider issues of identity evolution and self-reflection on the museum’s role in society. Reliability of the text selection, analysis and interpretation was enhanced by context familiarity and the purposeful selection of documents. It formed a key part of ‘Framework Analysis’ (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994), which integrates existing, available information in the text analysis to contextualize layers of meaning. While not claiming interpretations ultimately represent *de facto* standpoints, they are indeed based on views clearly expressed in publicly available documents. This is important as they are public articulations by museums and related bodies negotiating their position in society. Although the potential for a crisis of representation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) is fully acknowledged in presenting the experience of the ‘Other’, this unavoidable feature is compensated for by a systematic data analysis approach. It is also argued that reliability of interpretations is provided through researcher appreciation of context and transparency of data and methods (Di Domenico & Phillips, 2009; Hatch, 1996; Putnam, 1996).

Analysis

As with most inductive, theory-building research (Eisenhardt, 1989), recursive movement between data and emerging ideas took place. ‘Framework’ analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994), used in fields such as applied policy research (Pope et al., 2000; Srivastava & Thomson, 2009), facilitated iterative interpretation, with data categories being analyzed in a loop-like way to create, sort and refine themes. Interpretations of identity from the selected documents involved clear researcher knowledge and understanding to root texts in their framing discursive acts. It involved searches for textual patterns; their functions in particular discursive contexts; and traces of contextual influences and social discourses (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The goal was to make sense of the data by categorizing it into reduced elements, retaining context and richness of raw evidence with ‘thick description’ (Geertz, 1973). The collated documents were interpreted and conceptually categorized by inductively integrating theory and data. The qualitative analysis used coding, thematic comparative textual analyses, and pattern searches in the range of texts.

The merits of ‘Framework Analysis’ are that it is an effective tool for the comprehensive, systematic reduction and thematic interpretation of data; it retains contexts of identified discourses; it allows for applying an overall theoretical tenet to discourses embedded in socio-historical context(s); and it gives explicit practical steps to sort, code and interpret data. Essentially a form of thematic analysis, data categorization and interpretation, it involved two broad stages: (1) data immersion/ familiarization and thematic coding; and (2) charting, mapping and interpretation (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). The first involved immersion in the data set and development of initial emergent themes that were refined and collapsed for structural development of the meta-codes and sub-codes. The second stage involved indexing, applying thematic coding structure to the data set, and charting,

mapping and interpretation. The labeling of the broad stages was for transparency and not to suggest highly distinct activities or analytic processes that were just linear in direction.

‘Framework analysis’: Stage 1 - Data immersion/ familiarization and thematic coding

Data immersion was by detailed, repetitive reading of texts. These were classified, sorted and reduced by labeling data categories into initial loose themes emerging from the literature and documents, to allow data summary/ synthesis. Sub-themes, encapsulating raw data segments, were then clustered and grouped. Table 3 shows this data synthesis, interpretation, and break-down of coding process. Analysis is illustrated by the emergent thematic coding structure, codes and identity discourses. The refined themes emerged as follows:

- The museum as a custodian (i.e. elite protector of artifacts for future generations);
- The museum as an educator (i.e. status and role as a learned organization);
- The museum as an ethical mediator (i.e. engaging/consulting on prevailing ethical views); and
- The museum as an entertainer and ‘culture incorporate’ (i.e. the commercial imperative).

The data were grouped into two key identity groupings, ‘historically-dominant articulations’, and ‘emergent articulations’ that increased in discursive significance. The ‘custodian’ and ‘educator’ discourses that the museum has always promoted were evident in the former articulations. The ‘ethical mediator’ and ‘entertainer/culture incorporate’ clearly emerged as distinct from those of the ‘education’ and ‘custodianship’ traditions.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

‘Framework analysis’: Stage 2 – charting, mapping and interpretation

The final analysis stages were data charting, mapping and interpretation with the aid of literature and concepts. Interpretation matrices were used to interpret the reduced coded data to infer meaning from underlying patterns, offer explanations and aid development of theory. These matrices developed iteratively following the thematic coding (Table 4).

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Identity Articulations, Tensions and Contestations

The analysis revealed that these UK museums had experienced an identity crisis resulting from increasing tensions surrounding differing opinions about their roles and functions. These are evident in terms of the pivotal issue of human remains and how they should be dealt with. The dilemma posed is the difficulty in reconciling museum responsibilities:

- i. respect for the diversity of beliefs about the importance of remains of ancestors, and the way in which they should be treated; [and] ii. respect for the scientific value of human remains, for the spirit of scientific enquiry which leads institutions to hold and care for remains, and for the benefits which such enquiry may produce for humanity (UK Department for Culture Media and Sport, 2004, p. 23).

The first aim is the holistic ‘respect for the diversity of beliefs’ in a multicultural society; the second is the historically-dominant ‘custodian’ and ‘educator’. The identities co-exist, paradoxically pulling in opposite directions. The appropriate disposing of human remains must be combined with the museum’s educator role as learned conservator of heritage. Such combinations were seen to be numerous in the analyzed documents, exemplified by the following:

Human remains [are held] for the purposes of **research**, public and specialist **education** (University College London, 2007, p. 3)

A full record of treatment applied to the remains (e.g. washing and sieving of cremations) will be retained as part of the archive associated with any human remains (The Royal Pavilion and Museums Brighton and Hove, 2006, p. 8).

‘Ethical mediator’ is tied to notions of inclusion, consultation and balancing interests. It reflects dialectical and paradoxical, cross-boundary articulations, creating unsettling museum identity re-configurations. It provides space for civil, cultural, religious, spiritual and political minority rights in a discourse of ‘being ethical’, reflecting dominant societal views, and a participatory, consultative model for decisions on acquisition, display and disposal of human remains as artifacts. This indicates a blurring of knowledge boundaries and power shifts to alternative discourses on ethical, religious, and spiritual foundations (see Table 3). The ‘ethical mediator’ identity articulation is exemplified in the following:

The museum will be proactive in the possible repatriation and reburial of human remains with indigenous originating communities and enter into full consultation with appropriate claimants, named individuals and next of kin (University of Manchester, 2007, p. 11).

However, the statement is tempered by another later in the same document demonstrating competing interests in museum human remains collections. It shows that their attempts to serve the ethical and cultural interests of the public and indigenous communities can be in conflict with the historically-dominant articulations of ‘custodian’ and ‘educator’:

Claims for repatriation and reburial will be considered on a case by case basis...the Museum will monitor use of human remains with regards to teaching, learning, research and display (University of Manchester, 2007, p. 11).

The role of ‘ethical mediator’, returning human remains for repatriation and reburial may be considered threatening to the museum’s traditional identities of ‘custodianship’ and ‘education’, but less so than for the business model and ‘entertainer/ culture incorporate’ identity of the museum. The display of human remains attracts many visitors who present many economic opportunities for the museum along with associated identity threats. Indeed, the identity of museums as ‘entertainers/ culture incorporate’, places of enjoyment and commercial activities, was openly discussed by museum personnel. This contrasts with the documentary evidence where these get little attention compared to the other identity articulations. Only cursory mention of human remains as interesting or holding curiosity value was found. It was notable by its limited coverage and absence in documents, clearly demonstrating its marginalization compared to the ‘ethical mediator’ articulation. There was an unwillingness to embrace the discourse officially as part of an externally-facing image and explicit museum identity. The coded sub-theme was scarce in documentary texts, being evoked with generic phrases such as the “curiosity value of human remains”. Such responses are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Discursive Response Strategies to Identity Challenges

The results revealed clear response strategies to challenges perceived as potential identity ‘threats’. Table 5 shows the evident discursive response strategies to the identity threats (emergent articulations) facing the museum of ‘ethical mediator’ and ‘entertainer/culture incorporate’, as highlighted by human remains collections as catalysts.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Discursive response strategy to articulation of ‘ethical mediator’

The evident discursive response strategy to the articulation of ‘ethical mediator’ is one of sustained, extended dialogue and engagement (Table 5). It purports to appreciate ethical views in wider society against using human remains as artifacts. The data implies a high level identity threat, leading to possible permanent loss of human remains collections. When engaging in discussion on using human remains as artifacts, the museum’s stance lies between dominant and emerging articulations, thus creating tensions. The threat is not dissolved, but rather embraced to ensure preservation of the historically-dominant identities of custodian and educator. The following quotation illustrates qualifiers made about potential claims to retrieve items from British Museum collections, defending the museum’s authority through the historically-dominant discourse of elite custodian, while minimizing its potential loss. A note of defiance is detected in the following statement:

...the museum will continue to acquire human remains ...[we] consider that the public interest is strongly in favour of the retention in the collection of human remains that have been modified for a purpose other than mortuary disposal (e.g. made into a Tibetan Buddhist thighbone trumpet) and will not accept claims for transfer in respect of them. Nor...will the Trustees normally accept a claim for human remains that consist only of human teeth, hair or nails (British Museum Policy on Human Remains, 2006, pp. 3-5).

Thus, there is an evident discursive struggle detected in the texts, with a tension between preserving sensitive items of human remains and repatriating them on moral or religious grounds. The importance of preserving sensitive heritage is arguably very emotive, exposing deeply held values about the museum’s historic role as a cultural authority. The danger of removing items is seen as a threat to the museum’s [historic] role. The notion

of the museum's role in preserving human remains implies a 'historic moral high ground' exemplified by the following statement that reflects a long-standing museum discourse:

Human remains [are held] for.... the **better understanding of humanity** (University College London, 2007, p. 3)

This statement is a defense against changes to its overall identity, role and image. The 'historic moral high ground' view underlies decisions about retaining human remains for the good of humanity, rather than repatriating them. This reflects the utilitarian doctrine of 'the greatest good for the greatest number' that can at times conflict with the 'ethical mediator' articulation, where the latter attempts to mediate different ethical views on the disposal of human remains, including the utilitarian one. They oppose each other to the extent that the 'ethical mediator' stance is more inclusive of all ethical perspectives whereas the utilitarian stance offers a clear ethical solution. The ethical mediator shows more acceptance of the ethical paradoxes involved, and more shifting value judgments on what is seen as ethical, although this in turn gives rise to a further paradox. Thus, 'respect for culturally diverse beliefs' of groups in an increasingly multi-cultural society, and their different ethical perspectives, along with an acceptance of the paradoxical positioning of various viewpoints, is coming to take ethical precedence over general majority interests.

Furthermore, the museum cannot divorce its role in terms of ethical responsibilities, not only from an acknowledgement of the external climate, but also the reality that museums must rely (albeit uneasily) on continued patronage, visitor numbers and public funds. A recent, contemporary example is that efforts are being made by many museums to make collections more appealing and accessible by means like digitization, making images and

documents available online. However, the inherent paradox is that to alter the museum's traditional structure, and reduce the need to visit, potentially runs the risk of endangering, or at least altering, its economic viability. The effects of external forces of change on the articulation of perceived identity threats are paradoxical, but also powerful and pervasive.

Discursive response strategy to articulation of 'entertainer/culture incorporate'

Compared to the 'ethical mediator' articulation, the evident discursive response strategy to the 'entertainer/ culture incorporate' articulation was to devote less attention to it by techniques such as ignoring it or downplaying its importance when mentioned. This is an attempt to reduce the significance of entertainment, commercialization and incorporation, placing them in the background of current debates and not engaging overtly with them.

That said, there is an explicit acknowledgement that 'museums develop by initiating and responding to change' (Museums Association, 2008; 2012, p.21). This overarching basis of change in the external environment was found to frame an awareness of the museum's need to remain sustainable and financially viable. Thus, for example, and in a similar vein, although not isolating the issue of human remains specifically, the Museums Association Ethics Guidelines (2008; 2012) highlight the need to 'make prudent use of resources' and 'maintain the financial viability of the museum' (p. 21). Indeed, during many of the visits to public museums conducted by the researcher visual markers were observed that recognize and give a nod to the presence of 'culture incorporate' (Rectanus, 2002). These include plaques or notices put on display in public areas acknowledging with thanks the sponsorship or corporate donations received. The 'entertainer/culture incorporate' identity is thus present and yet from the analysis was found to be given less attention and recognition than other museum identities. This creates an acute and evident

paradox for the museum's expressions of identity. 'Entertainer/culture incorporate' is regarded as a necessary, albeit uncomfortable, part of the museum's contemporary role and multifaceted identities. It is argued that this identity is acknowledged as it can help provide finances and cross-subsidize other preferred activities such as 'education' and 'curatorship', denoted as more honorable. Yet it is simultaneously feared as this emergent identity articulation is also a threat with two paradoxical sides. It can support and sustain or alternatively erode or compromise these other activities such that embracing it too far might even 'bring the museum into disrepute' (Museums Association, 2008; 2012, p.21).

Thus, where entertainment and commercial activities are acknowledged, the contextual discursive frame of improving education, research and outreach is used as a historically-dominant articulation. Acceptance of trading activities and corporate sponsorship are seen as legitimate only insofar as its historically-dominant identities in education and curatorship are not compromised. This is expressed in the following quote, where a fear of a possible attack on museum 'integrity' by a mismanaged corporate specter is evident:

Accept financial support from commercial organisations and other outside sources provided that it does not compromise the integrity of the museum...avoid undue influence on museum activities...Establish principles to inform trading and commercial activities ...Do not allow trading and commercial activities to bring the museum into disrepute ... (Museums Association, 2008; 2012, p. 21).

Museums are notably silent about any monetary value of human remains or their display. Rather than admitting the possibility that human remains provide a form of entertainment for visitors and lucrative commercial spin-offs, it is only conceded as allowing museums

to reach a wider audience to ‘educate’, ‘inform’ and ‘inspire’. The notion of museums as venues for entertainment and commerce receives only comparatively brief or implicit, reference in the collated documentary evidence. A rare mention highlights public value and interest in human remains in collections as part of the rationale for their retention:

Human remains ... constitute an important part of the Collection: from Lindow Man, an ancient inhabitant of Britain, who may have been ritually murdered and his body then deposited in a bog in Cheshire, to the ancient mummies from Egypt, consistently voted among the Museum’s most popular exhibits. Visitor surveys show that most Museum visitors are comfortable with, and expect to see, human remains as an element of Museum displays. The success of the British Museum film *Mummy: The Inside Story* (2005) demonstrates the public’s abiding interest in past lives, deaths and mortuary practices (British Museum Policy on Human Remains, 2006, p. 3).

Museum admission about the public’s appetite to view human remains acknowledges exhibit popularity, curiosity and morbid fascination. However, no commercial benefit for the museum of their entertainment value is highlighted. Indeed, entertainment for its own sake is notably absent, as is mention of the commercial consequences of such successful visitor interest in marketing/revenue opportunities. Instead, the argument progresses to an emphasis on links to study and education of their apparent appeal and continued utility:

...the Collection should be protected, because it provides an opportunity to look at the diversity of human ideas about death and the human body across cultures of vastly different times and places...Human remains...illuminate other objects in the Collection (British Museum Policy on Human Remains, 2006, p. 3).

References to entertainment were made only in the context of the historically-dominant ‘educator’ identity articulation as in a statement about the museum’s need to “encourage

people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment” (Museums Association, 2008; 2012, p. 18). This document advises that it must be balanced with the need to “consider restricting access to certain specified items, particularly those of ceremonial or religious importance, where unrestricted access may cause offence or distress to actual or cultural descendants” (Museums Association 2008; 2012, p. 18). The evident discursive response strategy to extant threats of the ‘entertainer’ and ‘culture incorporate’ articulation is one of silence or limited attention (Table 5), implying that a low threat level is perceived, with no loss of human remains in collections. By discursive techniques of exclusion and back-grounding, this voice is rendered mute, less credible in debates, and thereby impotent insofar as ground-level identity conceptions are concerned. By not engaging with this discourse in lengthy column inches as with other discourses, it emphasizes its practicality in terms of income generation, and so intellectual inferiority. This is interesting given the layman’s fascination with human remains as curios. It leads one to surmise that the threat is still significant, potentially more than is apparent from the data. Embracing it would effectively create an explicit blurring of boundaries between museum and theme park through providing ‘infotainment’ which museums wish to avoid. By ignoring it in this way, and only considering it explicitly when linked to more desirable identity attributes such as education, UK museums clearly demarcate their identity as inherently valuable to society, unique in contribution, and not predominantly commercially-driven. They emphasize their role in society as linked inextricably to their historically-dominant articulations of guardianship and education. This creates a paradox as they also wish to downplay their role as elite organizations with a colonial heritage. To emphasize this would threaten the power they hold and all the reverence they are paid.

‘Organizational sensitivization’

These findings led to the development of the concept of ‘organizational sensitivization’, defined as a permeable process reflecting the organization’s collective, discursive, often paradoxical, response strategy to identity challenges. These are highlighted here in the museum’s changing ethical views about using human remains. Discussions about them act as catalysts for processes of identity modification, leading to disruption and a crisis of existing identities, or the paradoxical existence of opposing, even conflicting identities. The concept is concerned with changes initiated in organization identity in terms of more macro-level contextual exchanges in its social situatedness (i.e. its sensitivity to ethical and cultural trends and influences). Thus, ‘organizational sensitivization’ is a process of dynamic, iterative, often paradoxical, exchange and interchange between the organization and the external influences initiating identity modification. In the museum’s case, this study shows that, while this process occurs, discursive practices legitimate and privilege articulated, [historical] identity norms, marginalizing more threatening alternatives.

The term ‘sensitivization’ was previously used by Wittlin (1949) in relation to museums, but only in terms of intellectual and emotional sensitivization in education and enjoyment of the aesthetic qualities of the objects offered by museums as bastions of ‘high-culture’.

No justification seems to exist for a distinction between “education” and “enjoyment” as two separate functions of a museum, especially in connection with objects of aesthetic qualities which are sources of general education contributing to intellectual and emotional sensitivization (Wittlin, 1949, p. 190)

In the present case the focus is on the ‘sensitivization’ of the museum as an organization, although this also involves changes that have taken place in the museum in terms of its

role as educator and provider of enjoyment. The focus covers not only the intellectual but also the ethical/ cultural views that have changed in society concerning museum use of human remains. These acted as a catalyst initiating heated discussions in UK museums, disrupting previously held views. The museum's 'organizational sensitivization' in terms of the human remains in their care, recalls Foucault's description: "And this revelation in turn involved as its field of origin and of manifestation of truth the discursive space of the corpse" (1973, p. 242). As in the clinic, through the discursive spacialization of artifacts relating to the dead, including human remains in their possession, museums have become 'sensitized' to ethical, cultural and knowledge constructions that are being brought to them from external society (Foucault, 1989). In recent years in the UK, 'organizational sensitivization', in terms of the use and the methods of disposal used for human remains, has also been observed as affecting other organizations such as hospitals and crematoria.

The model in Figure 1 depicts the 'organizational sensitivization' process. It signifies an orientation towards challenges/ threats perceived to be culturally and ethically *sensitive* in nature. It also explains the museum's observed responses to key identity threats. Figure 1 shows the four identity articulations emerging from the empirical analysis ('custodian'; 'educator'; 'ethical mediator'; 'entertainer'/ culture incorporate') are categorized as either fluid and emergent, increasingly highlighted by macro-level ethical and cultural views, or embedded, historically dominant and organizationally reinforced. The model depicts how response strategies affirm or create distance from observed identity articulations. In the research, these emerge as on a continuum from 'silence' through to 'limited attention/ recognition' to 'explicit dialogue/ engagement'. These responses are mapped against the level of acceptability (from 'low' to 'high') resulting from affirming these articulations.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The discursive boundary surrounding identity articulations differs (see Figure 1). The articulations of ‘custodian’, ‘educator’ and ‘ethical mediator’ are discursively dealt with through evident official dialogue, giving them explicit affirmation. In contrast, the ‘entertainer/ culture incorporate’ articulation is discursively responded to by distancing it through silence or limited attention and a lack of official recognition. The discursive boundaries are purposely labeled as ‘permeable’ as response strategies alter and evolve in relation to changes in macro-level ethical and cultural views. UK public historical, archaeological and science museums willingly adapt their organizational identity in terms of sensitive ethical and cultural material such as human remains, but only at the periphery of the ‘entertainment’/ ‘culture incorporate’ identity debate. Museums adapt in so far as they provide interpretations that they hope appeal, and attract increased visitor numbers. They are unwilling to engage completely with ‘entertainment’/ ‘culture incorporate’. It is feared as potentially having the power to dilute their elite status and public standing (Elsbach, 2003; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). They must safeguard their social power, influence and continuity. Resisting this emphasis is rational, reflecting museum tradition, character, conventions and qualities, for which they continue to be respected and revered.

This model as shown in Figure 1 contributes to our understanding of organizational identity change, or lack of change, in response to organizational challenges/ threats and organizational responses to them. It shows how ‘organizational sensitivization’ occurs through open dialogue, although discursive practices legitimate and privilege articulated [historical] identity norms and marginalize alternatives perceived to be threatening

(Foucault, 1980). Identity threats are: 1) amalgamated and diffused via open dialogue; and/ or 2) marginalized or ignored via silence or ‘backgrounding’ with a refusal to overtly engage with the threat. ‘Open dialogue’ or ‘backgrounding’ are used depending on the context, type of identity challenge/ threat and which strategy seems appropriate in terms of protecting the organization’s core values and identity. The danger of efforts to negate perceived identity threats is that organizations try to silence, ignore or background the commercial imperative as an alternative or less desirable identity trait (Bowen & Blackmon, 2003; Macalpine & Marsh, 2005). Due to external pressures emanating from the current macro-cultural context, open dialogue is often used as an ‘organizational sensitivization’ tool to negotiate often contested ethical and cultural understandings. Yet, while opening up space for one identity challenge, there is a paradoxical failure to engage with others seen as threats, betraying hegemonic acts of resistance (Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Clegg *et al.*, 2006), strategies for self-legitimation, identity protection and survival.

CONCLUSION

This article presents an analysis of UK public science, historical and archaeological museums in identity crisis (Frosh, 1991). A key role of museums is to create social value by safeguarding and providing access to historical artifacts and related symbolic heritage. This is still at the heart of their socio-historically shaped identities, rooted in principles of scholarly progress, rationality, civic education, heritage, ‘high-culture’ and the arts. However, their identities have been undergoing changes, involving responses to pressures from the wider society where the demands of entertainment and commerce are at the fore.

The empirically-informed analysis developed in this paper also makes a key theoretical contribution that enriches the literature on identity in general, and especially on identity challenges, often seen as threats, and organizational responses to them. These have been mapped out in the case of the museum as having taken a paradoxical turn where the organization's various identity articulations co-exist. Their responses result in outcomes which are shown in Table 5. Thus, even when requiring opposing responses to identified dilemmas, dominant and emergent identity articulations appear to be running in parallel. It approaches a type of almost Orwellian 'doublethink', reflected in museum discourses in attempts to balance contradictory ethical approaches to the handling of human remains.

The study contributes to the literature on museums by revealing how public museums are places where we can see how organizational identities are being actively modified and reconfigured. This is of interest by illustrating how museums deal with the sensitive issue of handling human remains in a changing environment, where the commercial imperative of 'culture incorporate' is coming more to the fore, even for not-for-profit organizations. Thus the research can also inform the literature about other similar types of organizations dealing with human remains such as labs, hospital clinics, funeral parlors and mortuaries.

The study also makes a further key contribution by detailing museum response strategies as part of a process of 'organizational sensitization.' This is described here by exploring museum discourses. 'Organizational sensitization' processes are depicted as involving 'open dialogue' and/ or 'backgrounding', depending on context. They can also be related to both. They involve a layering process with museums being observed as developing a paradoxical amalgam of multiple co-existing overt and covert identities (Smith & Lewis,

2011). As an organizational signifier with the paradoxical potential of both reaffirming and unsettling established identities (Smith & Lewis, 2011), the focus on human remains is significant. ‘Sensitive’ objects link the present to the past while reminding us of death and mortality for all individuals, institutions and societies. As powerfully emotive tools, ‘sensitive’ objects can evoke experiences of grief, remembrance, fascination and curiosity among those who view them. If a brutal death occurred, bones and other artifacts may ‘speak’ of suffering and the darker aspects of human emotions and actions. Their ethical undertones move organizations to bring into play ‘organizational sensitization’ processes, as objects such as human remains are seen as going far beyond education, guardianship or entertainment. They unsettle the museum’s comfortable equilibrium, forcing it to deal with issues other than classification and ordering. It faces tasks of not only objective, scientific classifications, but others concerning complex values placed on symbols of human mortality and spirituality. As well as being important socio-historical artifacts, such materials hold evolving meanings for society and those vested with responsibility for their charge. Discussions of this issue for museum stakeholders are like negotiating through a ‘moral maze’ (Jackall, 1988) or a period of ‘moral flux’ (Hendry, 2004) with a struggle for meaning played out around the museum’s identity signifiers.

Articulations identified in the empirical analysis as ‘historically-dominant’ or ‘emergent’ competed for fixation of meaning with the museum as subject signifier (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996). Each possesses specific discourses and identities to effect stable systems of meanings in line with that particular articulation. Public museums are experiencing key moments of disruption, of epistemological crisis, from these competing articulations. They relate to changes in prevailing ethical/cultural norms and values to which museums

have become 'organizationally sensitized'. These articulations have existed in diluted form for a long time, but the notion of 'being ethical' is an identity threat to historically-dominant articulations of the museum as 'custodian' (elite protector) and 'educator' (learned organization) that had also achieved high levels of sedimentation (Sholle, 1988).

One of the newly emerging identity articulations - museum as 'ethical mediator' - reflects present ethical values in UK 'educated' society, more in sympathy now than before with the beliefs and cultures of various indigenous peoples and immigrant cultural groups. It counters sedimentation by asking unasked questions and expanding the discourse (Sholle, 1988). The role of ethical mediator involving, for example, returning human remains for repatriation may be threatening to the museum's traditional identities of 'custodianship' and 'education'. It is less threatening to these identities than to their business model, as human remains attract visitors who present museums with many economic opportunities. The 'entertainer' identity is linked to 'culture incorporate.' Both embody threats to their traditional identities. This is why it is a significant finding that the identity threat posed by the duality of being both an 'entertainer' and 'culture incorporate' is often resisted by the museum. These identities are both seen as carrying a commercial imperative that is tacitly accepted only as either a generator of surplus revenue to ensure survival or at best used to emphasize and reinforce the alternative more privileged articulation of 'educator'.

Comparatively very little discussion takes place in official documentation about the commercial value of human remains. This is despite the fact that such artifacts can be shown to attract large numbers of paying visitors. The strategy used to counteract this threat is one of limited attention through marginalization. Such 'backgrounding' of this

articulation is significant. It prevents an open identity challenge that might endanger the museum's elite status. Arguably embracing the articulation of the museum as 'entertainer'/'culture incorporate' more explicitly is also unnecessary in the prevailing ethical and cultural climate. This is because museums are still invested with a distinctive identity as bastions of modernity, despite occasional use of exhibitions or displays that can bear some resemblance to theme parks or visitor centers, encapsulating the 'entertainer' role more explicitly. Furthermore, museums can themselves be regarded as historical and cultural shrines with curators charged with the care of collections, in effect their 'priests'. This poses challenges to the continuity of museum identity as the notion of culture is continuously reconstituted and renegotiated, with meaning shifts taking place over time and place. The articulations of 'entertainer' and 'culture incorporate' are regarded as inferior, and thus to be distanced. It is seen as eminently desirable and even necessary to perpetuate the dominant identity associations of the three alternative articulations (i.e. 'custodian'; 'educator'; 'ethical mediator'). This is even the case where adoption of 'ethical mediator' as an emergent articulation can lead to loss of collections. This reflects the effect of wider cultural and ethical changes, epitomized by such contested objects as human remains in museums.

The empirical analysis through the concept of 'organizational sensitization' shows how organizational identities are essentially a malleable, paradoxical amalgam of discursive responses through ongoing, fluid (re)constructions, continuously subject to negotiation, challenge and renegotiation. Organizations with shared identity preferences, pressured to alter their versions, can present collective articulations against threats. Pronouncements on preferred organizational identity are responses to guard historically-rooted identity

articulations, while they simultaneously engage in other, often competing, dialogues. Such survival strategies yet still take account of dominant ethical and cultural discourses.

The study's empirical and theoretical insights not only can enrich other research studies on identity, but more precisely can support their taking a paradox approach to researching hybrid identity organizations which have multiple, often inconsistent, identities. It helps us understand their inherent tensions and the strategies for simultaneously managing the tensions embedded in their competing identities. Although choosing between identities may be helpful in the short-term, the paradox approach that is supported by this research (e.g. Cameron, 1986; Smith & Lewis, 2011) emphasises that long-term sustainability requires balancing the divergent demands from opposing identities. This type of analysis could be used to explore similar contexts such as genocide and disaster memorials or art exhibitions that use human remains when utilised for entertainment to challenge taboos. The latter can feed into debates around the value of high and low art. It is thus proposed that an inductively-derived model of 'organizational sensitization' can be a useful point of departure if extrapolated to such types of hybrid organizations with multiple identities, involved in mediating changing ethical and cultural mores from wider society. Thus the role of ethical mediator may be found to be relatively unthreatening. On the other hand, the entertainer identity may be perceived to be almost the opposite of ethical mediation for, as it incorporates economic opportunities, it may represent more of an identity threat. These findings could also apply to similar types of museums and art galleries that are challenged by the commercial values placed on art or cultural objects (Retanus, 2002); or to other non-business institutions, such as universities, labs, hospitals, care homes and crematoria, where the expected 'higher ideals' are seen to be compromised by their

commercial, in contrast to service or caring, approaches. However, it must be stated, as a research limitation, that it is not possible to generalize the study's research findings to these other settings, although researchers may see similar patterns if they investigate these like settings. They can explore how the key players may behave toward particular stakeholders when faced with the commercial imperative. Different types of organizations may face this challenge based on their use of human remains, from modern art museums and galleries to university labs, human tissue banks, crematoria and abortion clinics. Thus, although the present findings cannot be generalized, it must be pointed out that there are possible avenues for further research that can take these findings further.

By so doing, we can compare research findings about these organizations with what has emerged from our analysis of UK publicly-owned museums. Some of these organizations may be compared to museums in terms of their standing as cultural icons. They generally also possess some organizational homogeneity of purpose (e.g. libraries, art galleries, theatres, hospitals etc.). This is particularly pertinent where organizations are increasingly dealing with ethically sensitive objects, events and discourses. It also highlights the need to explore further the role of 'ethical mediator'. In pursuing clear ethical goals, some organizations, such as environmental or species protection organizations, may adopt such ethical aims and objectives to the extent that, when pursued successfully, they result in destroying themselves. Having achieved their purposes, they are in fact no longer needed. Thus an organization dedicated to protecting a species of life-form from extinction can face an identity crisis if the life-form becomes no longer in danger of extinction as a result of their efforts. Others, with again clear ethical goals to pursue, may find that the organization's identity cannot remain static or sustained by remaining in its previous

guise. This could be, for example, where a charity, ‘not-for-profit’ or social enterprise is successful in achieving its stated social mission by immunizing a population, changing an outdated law or introducing a new one. Alternatively it may discover it is unachievable.

However, the specific focus in this paper has been on how the museum as an organization deals with the dead in the form of their human remains. In the light of the findings, these other organizations, such as hospitals, forensic laboratories, morgues and funeral parlors, can be researched in the ways that they have adapted not only their practices, but also their historically-rooted identities, to take more account of changing ethical and cultural views in society. If relevant, this can include, as in this example, their use of human remains and human tissue. Such research could help us to understand better these processes of ‘organizational sensitization’, and responses to identity challenges, often seen as threats. What is of interest are the links to social change of the attempts to balance organizational identities that are manifested in organizations in periods of ethical and cultural flux, as well as of economic insecurity and political uncertainty, as in the present.

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TABLE 1
Excerpts of Documented Collections Showing Examples of Human Remains in Some Major UK Museums*

Museum	Description of human remains	Other relevant details
Science Museum, London	Gall bladder, stuffed with rice, from an executed Chinese criminal.	Accession number - A642965 Provenance – China
Science Museum, London	Skull with mandible and lower leg bones (tibia and fibula), mature human, showing effects of leprosy, from a medieval Danish cemetery, reputedly c.1350.	Accession Number - A635012 Provenance - Denmark
British Museum, London	Preserved human head, complete, with skin, teeth and hair remaining. C.1800 AD.	Registration number – As1884,0321.1 Provenance – Borneo
British Museum, London	Human mummy (child). Pre-Hispanic. Could be 1000+ years.	Registration number – Am1832,1208.1 Provenance – Chile
Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford	Libation cup made of human skull-cap. The Tibetan skull bowl is used in tantric Buddhist rituals to make sacrificial offerings to protective deities. Skulls and other bones (such as the human thigh bone used to make trumpets) were usually acquired from the bodies of those who had died in unusual circumstances such as victims of accident, disease or murder.	Registration number – 1890.34.1. Provenance – Asia, Tibet.
Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford	Human heart in a lead case. Said to have come from a crypt of the oldest church in Cork. Date unknown, but before 1863.	Registration number – 1884.57.18. Provenance – Europe, Ireland, County Cork, Cork.

*Sources: Science Museum, 2007; British Museum, 2008; Pitt Rivers, 2009

TABLE 2
Selected Data Documents Collated for Analysis on the Issue of Human Remains in UK Museums

Core industry, policy and practitioner reports	Doc. #	Reference Source Details
	1	Museums Association – Code of Ethics for Museums. Jan. 2008 (updated Dec. 2012)
	2	DCMS (Dept. for Culture, Media and Sport) Report of the Working Group on Human Remains Nov. 2003 (updated Feb. 2007)
	3	DCMS (Dept. for Culture, Media and Sport) Care of Historic Human Remains Consultation Paper July 2004
		DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums (Best Practice Document) 2005
	4	MGC (Museums and Galleries Commission) guidelines Restitution and Repatriation 2000
	5	The Museum Ethnographers Group Professional Guidelines Concerning the Storage, Display, Interpretation and Return of Human Remains in Ethnographical Collections in United Kingdom Museums 1994
	6	Section 47, 2004 Human Tissue Act & Human Tissue Authority (HTA), 2006, Public Display Code of Practice.
	7	Church of England and English Heritage, 2005, Guidance for best practice for treatment of human remains excavated from Christian burial grounds in England
Additional museum-specific documents	8	Historic Scotland, The Treatment of Human Remains, Historic Scotland Operational Policy Paper 1997
	9	The British Museum Policy on Human Remains 2006
	10	University of Manchester Policy on Human Remains 2007
	11	Museum of London, Human Remains Policy, 2006
	12	Natural History Museum, London, Policy on Human Remains, 2006
	13	Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, Human Remains in the Pitt Rivers Museum, 2009
	14	Policy for the Care of Human Remains in Museum of London Collections 2006
	15	Policy, Principles and Procedures for the Care and Treatment of Human Remains at UCL 2007
	16	Wellcome Trust Policy on Care of Human Remains in Museums and Galleries (covers the Science Museum)
	17	Royal Pavilion and Museums, Brighton and Hove Policy for the Care and Treatment of Human Remains 2006
	18	The Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery Collections Policies and Procedures, 2004
	19	Leicester City Museums Service, The Curation, Care and Use of Human Remains in Leicester City Museums Service, 2006

TABLE 3
Data Synthesis Table of Thematic Index - Break-Down of Identity Articulation Codes and Relationships between Levels of Analysis
Derived from Documentary Evidence

Overarching Identity Articulations	Constituent Identity Articulations	Key Issues and Sub-Themes Identified on Human Remains as Artifacts
(1) Historically-dominant articulations	(1a) Custodian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scientific importance of human remains in museum collections; - Potential loss to science, through burial or cremation, of very important research material; - Potential future value of remains even where they are not currently the subject of research; - Public benefit derived from research into human remains in museum collections; - Preservation of human remains as historically-significant and to benefit future generations.
	(1b) Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study of human remains contributing to advancement of scientific knowledge; - Human remains as teaching tools.
(2) Emergent articulations	(2a) Ethical mediator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feelings about human remains by originating community/descendants (including repatriation); - Original collecting practices (e.g. 19th century) acquired from indigenous peoples by unethical means (e.g. duress, deceit, unlawful removal) due to power dynamics in colonial situations; - Consent in dealing with acquisitions, storage and claims for repatriation of human remains; - Regaining control of human remains by indigenous peoples as part of a larger process of asserting cultural vitality and self-determination by communities in the post-colonial era; - ‘Custody’ of human remains (i.e. whether with genealogical/cultural descendants or museums); - Legal definitions and restrictions about human remains (e.g. property rights, statutory restraints on disposal, de-accession/removal of human remains from collections, the Human Tissue Bill); - Need for law to be changed/clarified, to be less ambiguous and allow the parties more dialogue; - Age of the human remains in question (i.e. recent versus ancient remains); - Extent of display and manner of interpretation of human remains in museum collections.
	(2b) Entertainer/ ‘culture incorporate’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Curiosity or ‘Infotainment’ value of human remains - Uniqueness of human remains - Visitor ‘pulling power’ of human remains - Intrigue and spectacle of human remains - Artifacts of human remains that generate interest by tapping into public imagination, history, fiction, popular culture, fascination with death, disaster, murder or beliefs regarding an afterlife - Opportunities for marketing/ other lucrative commercial spin-off activities/ commercial sponsorship

TABLE 4
Four Evident Identity Articulations of the Museum

Articulation	Historically-dominant articulations		Emergent articulations	
	Custodian	Educator	Ethical mediator	Entertainer/ ‘culture incorporate’
Nodal points (discourses)	Elite protector. Preservation of artifacts for future generations and scientific endeavor.	Educational facility. Purpose, authority and status as an elite learned organization and bastion of knowledge.	Inclusion and consultation. Serves and seeks to balance interests of various stakeholders.	Commercial imperative: ‘Edutainment’.
Epistemological foundation	(Western) Positivist science – particularly late modern.	Pedagogy – knowledge sharing and education.	Holism - dialectic, cross-boundary articulations: co-presence of modern and anti-modern doctrines – increased space for civil, cultural, religious/ spiritual and political minority rights.	Capitalism – enterprise and economic sustainability.
Dominant attributes	Curatorship, conservation, restoration, research, documentation, storage facility of cultural heritage for the benefit of current and future generations.	Educating the public about cultural heritage and historical/ archaeological attributes of artifacts.	‘Being ethical’: participatory and consultative model for decisions on the acquisition, display and disposal of artifacts.	Alternative site of enjoyment/ entertainment. Commercial activity for revenue generation for organizational survival.
Ethos	Committed to analysis of the past and present, elite character, emphasis on history/ heritage, traditional structure.	Committed to knowledge sharing/ dissemination. Multiple strategies to enhance access to and interpretation of collections.	Attempts to be inclusive: Reflects dominant societal consensus of the day. Tries to take account of interests and sensitivities from wide variety of stakeholders.	Commercial imperative: Development and emphasis of museum ‘brand’.

TABLE 5**Evident Discursive Response Strategies to Identity Challenges/Threats of Emergent Articulations: the Use of Human Remains**

Articulation	Ethical Mediator	Entertainer/'culture incorporate'
Identity Challenge/Threat	Cultural and ethical views in wider society that counter the use of human remains as artifacts	Entertainment/ commercial value of human remains.
Level of Threat	High – could lead to permanent loss of human remains in collections.	Low – would not lead to loss of human remains in collections.
Discursive Response Strategy	Dialogue	Silence/ limited attention (i.e. techniques of exclusion and/or backgrounding)
Nature of Discursive Response Strategy	Open and frank discussion about the politics of human remains as artifacts.	Refusal to engage explicitly with this articulation in an attempt to render it of limited importance or value.
Outcome(s)	Adoption of a paradoxical stance that lies between the oppositions created between the dominant and emerging identity articulations. It thereby creates further tensions and paradoxes between them. This then results in the threat not being dissolved in an attempt to ensure the preservation of the historical identities of elite custodian and educator. The state of paradox is thereby continuously reinforced.	Creates distance with this articulation in an attempt to diminish the power of the threat to the dominant historical identities of elite custodian and educator. However, the necessity of responding to the powerful and pervasive pressures from external forces results in the paradoxical co-existence of the dominant and emergent articulations in a continued state of equilibrium in an attempt to achieve oppositional stasis.

Figure 1: Key

FIGURE 1
Model of Organizational Sensitization Depicting Identity Challenges/Threats and Responses by Museums