PROMOTING TRANSFORMATION IN LISTENERS THROUGH THE UTILIZATION OF STRATEGIC PUBLIC SPEAKING

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Abstract

This thesis identifies how transformational speakers, through the art of public speaking, are able to communicate in a way that enables transformation within the listener. Public speaking is essential for influencing an audience; therefore it is imperative to explore and identify the most effective communication strategies and techniques for delivering transformational speeches to empower and deeply impact listeners. The thesis analyzes Steve Jobs’s 2005 Stanford Commencement speech to understand how transformational leaders deliver transformational speeches to a given audience, and to further study how speakers utilize the social penetration theory to build a connection with the audience to create a more powerful and compelling message. Social penetration theory is the process of developing relationships through interpersonal communication. There are four major stages that move the relationship from superficial, non-intimate levels to deeper, more intimate ones: orientation, exploratory affective stage, affective stage, and stable stage. A Neo-Aristotelian rhetorical analysis was used to identify three key principles, context, rhetor, and oration. These three principles were addressed by applying the five canons of rhetoric. The strategies that should be utilized, from Jobs’s oration, to enable transformation within audiences are: authenticity, vulnerability, and patience. Authenticity and openness allowed Jobs to gain the trust of his audience members, which allowed his message to create impact and transformation within the audience. Through implementing transformational public speaking techniques orators are able to create and deliver an oration that creates impact, action, and transformation.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Significance of Analysis

The significance of this thesis is to generate a better understanding of how transformational speakers, through the art of public speaking, are able to communicate in a way that enables transformation within the listener. The majority of human life is spent communicating and some of that communication occurs in the form of public speaking. Public speaking is a powerful and persuasive form of communication that occurs within various social environments, and because public speaking is essential for influencing an audience it is imperative to find the most effective communication approaches for delivering transformational speeches to empower and deeply impact listeners.

Statement of the Problem

“Those who are able to inspire give people a sense of purpose or belonging that has little to with any external incentive or benefit to be gained. Those who truly lead are able to create a following of people who act not because they were swayed, but because they were inspired” (Sinek, 2009, p. 6). Inspiring transformation within individuals is no easy task and requires moving through the stages of social penetration to develop a deep connection and trust between follower and leader. The problem is how can public speakers progress through the stages of social penetration to enable transformation within the listener within a period of an oration? The common mistake that public speakers make is talking at the crowd and creating an I-it relationship, instead of an I-thou relationship, which destroys any hope of having a transforming impact. This thesis addresses the strategies applied during an oration that allows the orator to progress
through the various stages of the social penetration theory to create a transforming oration that resonates, motivates, and promotes transformation within the listener through building an authentic relationship with the audience.

**Definition of Terms**

1. Transformational Leadership – Is leadership that cuts to the heart and draws in followers to be inspired, to follow, and to create action for change that the leader would like to see in the world through empowerment.

2. Social Penetration Theory – Is the theory that relationships develop through various social stages, beginning with superficial, non-intimate relationship levels and moving to a deeper, more intimate one.

3. I-it Relationship – Is a relationship where individuals treat others as means to an end, which creates detachment and separateness.

4. I – Thou Relationship – Is a relationship where individuals perceive in union and engage in dialogue to include the whole being of the individual.

**Organization of Remaining Chapters**

This thesis has been organized into five chapters. Chapter two provides the philosophical and theoretical basis that shapes the framework for this analysis, followed by a literature review of the research presented on the current topic presented, and concluding by offering a research question to explore and answer. Chapter three specifies the scope of the study and the methods used for collecting and analyzing the data. Chapter four is the results of the analysis, and a discussion of
the findings in relation to the research question. Chapter five discusses the limitations of the analysis, advises on future areas of study, and concludes with a summary and key takeaways.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Philosophical Basis

Martin Buber’s ethical philosophy refers to this bond as a relationship formed through dialogue called the I-Thou relationship (Griffin, 1994). A speaker that merely recites a monologue will never enable transformation within their listeners because it is, what Martin Buber referred to as, the I-It relationship (Griffin, 1994). An I-It relationship is destructive and impedes on the ability of an individual to influence others, this is because the speaker treats their listeners as a thing rather than treating them as a valued human.

An oration built around the I-Thou relationship values the listener and is focused on the other by means of authenticity. This authenticity and focus on others is central to enabling transformation within an audience. If orators are to succeed in portraying their true authentic self with the goal of enabling transformation than they must focus on “being”, rather than “seeming” (Griffin, 1994, p. 466-467). By focusing on “being”, truth will emerge because of “the spontaneous transparency of self with others” (Griffin, 1994, p. 466). Therefore, it is vital for transformational oration to create an I-Thou relationship where truth emerges through authentic transparency.

Theoretical Basis

What does it take to produce an impactful oration, one that cuts to the heart and draws in the audience to be inspired, to follow, and to create action for change? Bass (1985) calls this type of leadership, transformational. A transformational leader is one who has the ability to communicate effectively through speech and action to bring about the change they would like to see in the world, this change occurs through the process of
empowering others. Bass (1985) identifies three major characteristics of transformational leaders, “they may be charismatic to their followers and thus inspire them; they may meet the emotional needs of each follower; and/or they may intellectually stimulate each follower” (p. 21). For any effective transformational leader, these qualities are essential to an effective and transforming oration because leaders, who display these traits, empower and inspire followers to exceed beyond their own personal expectations to reach beyond the realm of possibility (Burns, 2003).

Palmer (2004) claims our current culture is out of sync with our true self. This disconnect we experience is a direct cause of a world “that discourages us from paying attention to the soul or true self - and when we fail to pay attention, we end up living soulless lives” (pp. 34-35). This is a vital key for reaching the individual and creating a transformational experience. If a transformational oration is to occur, the speaker must lead the follower down the path of discovery to create an authentic transforming realization of the self. Through the speaker’s leadership and communication, the follower must be empowered to reach self-actualization for themselves. This self-actualization motivates and “engages the full person of the follower” to ultimately come together to cultivate and work towards a common goal (Burns, 1978, p. 4).

To persuade/empower self-actualization within followers, a deep trust and level of vulnerability must exist within follower and leader relationship, or in the case of this thesis the speaker and listener. In order for transformation to occur within followers/listeners, a relationship must be created and it has to be based on trust; otherwise the speaker's message will not resonate on a level that enables self-actualization (Palmer 2004). Really, this relationship consists of one nonverbal party
being captivated by an individual's rhetoric; however, there still needs to be a relationship built between both parties for impact and resonance to occur.

The relationship this thesis attests is that the social penetration theory, even though verbal communication doesn’t occur between both speaker and listener, both parties are traveling through the stages together. Altman and Taylor (1973) claim, social penetration occurs through different stages: orientation, exploratory affective stage, affective stage, and stable stage, these stages follow linearly and sequentially for relational development. As progression through the stages increases self-disclosure also increases (Miller, 2005). The orientation stage is the stage of least vulnerability, and is usually identified as lighthearted conversation, that includes very little, if any, new knowledge about either involved party. The second stage, the exploratory affective stage, is the process of exploring the other. This a time where both parties begin to expose a portion of themselves to the other, and it encompasses topics and beliefs that are usually agreed upon by both parties. The next and most vulnerable stage, the affective stage, is where both parties have established a deep trust for the other, and both parties feel safe and secure in openly revealing deep secrets about themselves to the other. Finally, the stable stage, during this stage a link has been formed between both parties and each know the ins and outs of one another. The link allows a connection to be formed on an emotional level, whereby one can understand the feelings of the other just by simply analyzing their nonverbal cues (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Progression through these stages ultimately creates a deep connection and reciprocal bond between both parties.

A speaker must build an oration that creates a reciprocal bond, between themselves and the listener, which will allow them to break through the stages of social
penetration to build the trust necessary to enable transformation. Even though the audience is not participating in active dialogue, which is the traditional understanding of how individuals advance through the different stages, the audience is still progressing through the stages because they are building an internal intimate relationship with the speaker (Chornet-Roses, 2010). As the speaker orates, they progress deeper into the stages and they begin to open up and welcome others into the secrets and vulnerabilities of their life. This self-disclosure undoubtedly increases the breadth and depth of the bond that is created between the audience and presenter (Miller, 2005).

**Transformation Occurs Through Relationships**

Boster (2006) illustrates this non-mutual communicative interaction still brings about social change/transformation, regardless if the message was accepted or rejected. The claim is:

Comprehension coupled with acceptance is belief: the cognitive acceptance of a proposition of fact. This acceptance, however fleeting, may create a belief where none existed previously. It may modify or reinforce an existing belief. Nevertheless, this exchanged information changes beliefs in some manner. Therefore, any message to which one is exposed inevitably results in belief change. (p. 183)

The effectiveness and acceptance of the external message is dependent on building trust. This trust must be established through the course of a speaker's presentation to instill the intended message within the follower.
Kouzes and Posner (2007) further exemplify the importance of building a relationship based on trust to enable and empower transformation:

It’s the quality of this relationship that matters most when we’re engaged in getting extraordinary things done. A leader-constituent relationship that’s characterized by fear and distrust will never, ever produce anything of lasting value. A relationship characterized by mutual respect and confidence will overcome the greatest adversities and leave a legacy of significance. (p. 24)

For this very reason it is essential to focus on authenticity and trust when preparing and delivering an oration. The stages of social penetration lay the foundation/layout for how any form of communication should be delivered. Individuals, who begin with a deep disclosure right at the start, risk making their listeners uncomfortable and ultimately losing the ability to create an impact. Delivery is an art, one that must follow a carefully construed methodological road map. A road map that must blossom as a sunflower, where the speaker takes great care to respect the shell that guards the inner soul of each audience member. This is done, by beginning with lighthearted stories that are non-invasive, but welcoming. As the respect is built, the audience begins to open the shell of the soul, ever so slightly, to allow the orator to pierce a little deeper. Eventually the audience fully blossoms and becomes fully unguarded, at which point the presenter can reach the deepest and darkest corners of the human soul. It is at this point when resonance, impact, and transformation can occur.
Palmer (2004) describes this group setting, where the blossoming of the human soul can occur and transformation can ensue, as a circle of trust. For a circle of trust to exist, the leader must take special care not to move through the stages of social penetration prematurely because “nothing makes the soul flee faster than being told it must sing for its supper” (p. 78). Palmer is saying, when followers/listeners feel pressures to conform “the soul is quick to feel the shocks” (p. 78). For an audience to feel as if they are in a safe place, pressures must carefully be avoided if the speaker is ever to get the intended message embedded within the soul. “When the space between us is made safe for the soul by truthful speaking and receptive listening, we are able to speak truth in a particularly powerful form—a form that goes deeper than our opinions, ideas, and beliefs” (Palmer, 2004, p. 122).

When the space is made safe it is the leader’s job to determine how they will influence their followers. Sinek (2009) states, “there are only two ways to influence human behavior: you can manipulate it or you can inspire it” (p. 17). As the presenter advances deeper into the presentation and are able to gain the trust of their listeners, they are better able to inspire. Ivic and Green (2012) as students we are all taught the basics of delivering a speech, so “since any person has the capacity to perform the role as a speaker, they have the capacity to invent and deliver transformational presentations” (p. 65). Additionally, they define the purpose of a transformational presentation “as the performance of a credible, logical, and passionate speech that is grounded in the past experiences of a speaker who is oriented toward making an impact on the futures” (p. 65). They believe, ultimately all people have the capacity to change the world through competent and charismatic speech.
If all individuals have the ability to deliver a transformational speech, then what skills are necessary for them to be successful in breaking through the walls of social penetration and creating an impactful oration? To illustrate this, Ivic and Green (2012) point to the multitude of personas that a speaker exhibits during the duration of their “performance” (p. 66). They point to Steve Jobs and his charismatic ability to create captivating presentations during his keynote addresses, and suggest that presenters should take on the following personas, similar to that of Steve Jobs, to cultivate a transformational performance. The initial persona an orator exhibits is the “role, identity, or character”, which is created “through his or her rhetoric to achieve a particular communication goal” (Ivic & Green, 2012, p. 66). Black (1970) claims this first persona emerges through the course of the performance, which cultivates and substantiates the identity of the speaker. Ivic and Green (2012) claim the first persona of the speaker is used to captivate and aspire the audience toward the vision of a common future. The captivation and aspiration that is created through the first persona leads to the second persona, which Black (1970) calls, “the audience-to-be” (p. 66). Black describes this second persona as “verbal tokens”, which build an interactive relationship between the audience and the speaker. This interactive relationship inspires the audience to “interact with their world in the way that the speaker has offered through his or her performance” (Ivic & Green, 2012, p. 66).

The second persona, “audience-to-be”, Jensen et al (2010) also calls this persona a “transcendent persona” because of the ability of the speaker to inspire the audience through their past experiences, where they were able to overcome adversity, even though the odds were stacked against them. Jensen uses Amelia Earhart as a primary example for
this transcendent persona. Earhart was the first woman to have ever flown over the Atlantic Ocean, by herself. Most people, at the time, did not believe that women were capable of such a feat, but Amelia transcended and proved, in spite of popular belief, that women are fully capable of flying over the Atlantic Ocean. Because Amelia Earhart successfully flew over the Atlantic Ocean and her “presentation of herself as a boundary breaker” inspired other women to overcome and pursue their dreams, regardless of the social and cultural beliefs that existed (Jensen et al., 2010, p.12). Another person who illustrates this persona is Roger Bannister. Prior to 1954, people believed that it was impossible to run a mile in less than four minutes, but nowadays it seems to be a standard among high performing athletes, why? In 1954 Roger Bannister ran the mile in 3:59.4 minutes, and broke the four-minute barrier. This caused a paradigm shift because Bannister proved that it was possible to break the four-minute barrier, which transformed the way people envisioned this impossible feat and has led to numerous runners breaking this four-minute barrier. These two examples illustrate the impact that speakers must have on their audience to empower them to become transformational. The transformational experience is feasible and fully attainable when the listeners believe within themselves that it is possible, and the speaker’s personal experiences and stories provide the proof that it is possible. Jensen et al. (2010) proclaims, it is not only famous individuals that have the ability to demonstrate a transcended persona, “as long as he or she justifies why his or her past action has successfully transcended, and therefore transformed the speaker’s world” (p. 12). The ability to cultivate transformation within an audience requires moving through the various stages of the Social Penetration Theory, to build trust and create
impact. The ability to orate in a way that brings listeners in is shown through the speaker’s performance and ability to take on the varying personas, which symbolize the transformative capabilities of overcoming the experiences of adversities. If an oration can utilize the key qualities described above, then “any person has the capacity to ‘change the world’ based on the capacity to speak” (Ivic & Green, 2012, p. 66).

**Rational**

Public speaking is a powerful and persuasive form of communication and very little has been done to study the effects that transformational public speaking has on empowering and deeply impacting the listener. This thesis’s rational is to have a better understanding on the process of developing and delivering a transformational oration. Specifically, this analysis seeks to understand how transformational speakers are able to progress through the stages of social penetration to open the hearts of the audience to receive the speaker’s message in a way that creates impact and transformation.

**Research Question**

This analysis seeks to analyze and observe how transforming speakers utilize the five stages of the social penetration theory to deliver/communicate powerful and inspiring speeches, which enable transformation within the audience. This rhetorical analysis will utilize a Neo-Aristotelian approach to closely examine and analyze the techniques and methods used by an individual identified as a transformational orator.

RQ1: How do transforming speakers deliver/communicate a transformational speech in a way that resonates, motivates, and promotes action within their audience?
Chapter 3: Scope and Methodology

Scope of Work

The socio-psychological tradition and transformational leadership sparked interest in constructing a study that analyzes how transformational leaders deliver speeches to any given audience, and to further study how the speakers utilize the social penetration theory to build a connection with the audience to create a more powerful and compelling message. Bass (1985) identifies three major characteristics of transformational leaders, “they may be charismatic to their followers and thus inspire them; they may meet the emotional needs of each follower and/or they may intellectually stimulate followers” (p. 21). Based on previous research and Bass’s (1985) research, it is vital to conduct more extensive analysis and research on speeches, to better equip transformational speakers with more efficient and effective strategies for developing speeches that motivate and enable transformation within the listener.

Time and deadline of study has the greatest impact on the scope of work for this examination. Analyzing a single oration allows for a deeper and more in-depth analysis of the orator, to determine the communication strategies that are most effective in creating a deep connection with the listener and the communication strategies that are most likely to empower transformation within the listener. The scope of this rhetoric will be analyzing one orators’ speech: Steve Jobs. This speaker will suffice in illustrating effective communication strategies that utilized the social penetration theory to deliver and aspire transformation within the individual listener. Reducing the scope of analysis allows for a more detailed examination of the communication strategies utilized by transformational leaders during public speaking.
Methodology

This analysis utilizes a qualitative research method to answer the research question posed in this thesis. The qualitative research method that was employed was based on a Neo-Aristotelian rhetoric analysis. The rhetoric is grounded on these three key principles, the context, the rhetor, and the oration. To further examine the phenomenon of oration transformation, these three principles are addressed by applying the five canons of rhetoric.

The five canons of rhetoric include: (1) Invention; (2) Organization; (3) Style; (4) Memory; (5) delivery of the message (Griffin, 1994, p.281). Invention is the first stage, and arguably the most important stage. This stage consists of developing and revising the oration to create the greatest impact on the targeted audience. The organization or arrangement stage is the how the oration is structured. The organization stage is particularly important when attempting to breakthrough the stages of social penetration in the span of rhetoric. Style is how ideas and arguments are presented through words. Style is also how the orator attracts listeners. Attracting listeners is not only based on style, but also on how well the orator knows their oration. This stage is referred to memory and is based on one’s ability to memorize their speech. It is more believable when a speaker speaks from memory instead of reading their speech, as this projects authenticity. The final stage is referred to as the delivery and concerned with the mechanics of the oration. As style is concerned with word usage, delivery is focused on the small but major impacts during the delivery of an oration: body language; hand gestures; and voice variations.
The rhetorical analysis consists of analyzing the oration of Steve Jobs through the social media outlet *Ted Talks*. This allowed for in-depth examination of the oration because of the replaying capabilities of a video recording, which allowed for small details of the orator’s mannerisms, motions, and styles to be identified.

**Analysis**

The Neo-Aristotelian rhetorical analysis examined how the speaker progressed through the four stages of the social penetration theory by applying the five canons of rhetoric. The five canons of rhetoric were utilized to implicate the orator’s presentational skills, which indicated how they were able to effectively progress through the four levels of social penetration to create a transformational bond with the audience.

For the oration, utilizing the Neo-Aristotelian rhetorical analysis was most appropriate for determining the effectiveness of the presentation. Each canon was vital in creating a transformational oration because when utilized correctly, the orator was able to create a connection with their audience members, which allowed for a deep authentic relationship to be formed. The selected orator was analyzed within a traditional paradigm; Jobs is an expert within his field of study and delivered an oration intended for individuals outside of his scope of work. Steve Jobs’s oration was concerned with how individuals could be living their lives to create impact, meaning, and connection with others. This oration falls loosely under morality and ethics, which fits within the scope of traditional Neo-Aristotelian method. The analysis of the filmed oration documents the iterations of the canons within the speech.

**Ethical Consideration**
Because the researcher is making inferences while conducting the analysis it is important to note that analysis alone cannot be used as sound findings, due to personal biases that the researcher may be unaware of. Special care was taken to be sure that personal biases were not a factor in the analysis’s findings.
Chapter 4: The Rhetorical Analysis

Context

The context for Jobs’s oration was targeted for the groups of whom he was speaking to, but the oration reached a greater audience than may have been originally planned.

Steve Jobs was the co-founder and former CEO of Apple Computers. Jobs left Apple when he had a falling out with John Sculley, whom he had hired to run the company with him. They had a disagreement in vision and the board’s decision to side with John Sculley ended in Jobs being fired from Apple (Sterling, 2012). Jobs, during his time away from Apple, went on to start two new companies that became huge successes: Pixar and NeXT. NeXT in the late 90’s was bought by Apple and Jobs returned with it. In January 2000 he again took the title of CEO at Apple until he died in 2011 (Sterling, 2012). The success of Jobs’s multibillion-dollar businesses, due greatly to his vision and leadership, made him an ideal candidate to give Stanford University’s 2005 commencement speech. The intended audience was Stanford University’s graduating class of 2005, where he hoped to provide insight into how to live before you die, based on the failure and successes of his own life. The heavy subject of the speech was being addressed during a time of enjoyment and celebration, and needed to be handled with extreme care if it was to have the impact and transformation that Jobs intended for.

The oration being examined poses very intimate subject matters, which will collide with the complications of the social penetration theory. To have an impactful and well-received message the oration must strategically progress through the various stages
of the social penetration theory within a short period of time, and must utilize the five cannons of rhetoric to do so.

**Invention**

The first cannon, invention, was key in Jobs’s development of his oration. Jobs honed in on his past to tell the story of where he came from and how those dots connected with the unforeseen future. Jobs sets the stage by making his speech sound simple and easy, “Today I want to tell you three stories from my life. That’s it. No big deal. Just three stories.” This setup was purposefully done, and created ease within the audience, which opens the door for trust. This was the start of introducing the orientation stage of the social penetration theory.

Jobs carried on by starting with a story of his past, one that most within the audience would have at least heard some version of, how he dropped out of college. He framed the story with dropping out of Reed College, but remaining for another 18 months as a drop-in before he really quit. This casual start to the story moves the audience into the exploratory affective stage because like so many other successful individuals (Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Oprah, etc.), Jobs dropped out of college and went on to become a huge and well-known success.

Jobs’s invention of his rhetoric progresses fairly quickly through the stages of the social penetration theory. Within the first two minutes, he had already progressed into the affective stage with the audience and began speaking on a personal and a very intimate topic, his family. This is significant because “for many years Jobs was reluctant to discuss his family background in public,” and refused in interviews to go into it (Naughton, 2011). This shows the openness that Jobs was entrusting the audience with,
which allowed for a mutual trust to be formed. Jobs described his birth as one of rejection by his biological mother and the acceptance by his adoptive parents. Jobs progressed by further explaining how his parents promised his biological mother that he would someday go to college. While at college he empathetically realized his parents were spending their life savings to send him to a college where he had no idea what he wanted to do in life, so he dropped out. This story really explains the motive behind Jobs dropping out, it wasn’t because of Apple, but because of the love he had for his parents. This story, told to a stadium full of graduate students, created an empathetic connection between them and Jobs because a majority of the students could relate to their parents spending a lump sum of money to pay for their college tuition. Jobs furthers this connection when he compares the tuition of Reed College to Stanford’s tuition, “I naively chose a college that was almost as expensive as Stanford, and all of my working-class parents’ savings were being spent on my college tuition.” I believe Jobs purposefully interjected Stanford’s name into this story to allow the audience to relate and connect their story on a deeper level to his.

Jobs furthers this connection when he guides the graduates on a journey through his life of being a drop-out, where he started taking classes that interest him because he was no longer obligated to take the required courses. He said dropping out was scary at the time, but “looking back it was one of the best decisions I ever made.” He continues with,

It wasn’t all romantic. I didn’t have a dorm room, so I slept on the floor in friends’ rooms, I returned coke bottles for the 5 cent deposits to buy food with, and I would walk the
seven miles across town every Sunday night to get one
good meal a week at the Hare Krishna Temple.
The context of this sentence is important because the students are in a fragile time of their lives. While the students are excited about graduating into adulthood, it also means stepping into the unknown. Hearing a story from someone as successful as Steve Jobs, who had also stepped into the realm of the unknown, despite the difficult times, still came out okay. This created a deeper connection between Jobs and his audience because they believed in the person they were hearing, they could relate to the feeling and they opened themselves up even more to learn how to overcome the unknown that lay before them.

The mention of the unknown struck a chord throughout the audience of fear, but Jobs follows this fear with inspiration to spark transformation, “Much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on.” Jobs gives the example of a calligraphy course he had dropped into because it seemed fascinating to him at the time. The course had no “hope of any practical application” in his life then, but “10 years later” when he was designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back. He integrated the multitude of typefaces and proportionally spaced fonts all into the Mac, he then inserted humor to ease the audience from reaching full vulnerability too soon, “since Windows just copied the Mac, it’s likely no personal computer would have them.” Jobs ends his first story by urging the audience to embrace the unknown and have faith in the future because,

You have to trust the dots will somehow connect in your future. You have to trust in something – your gut, destiny,
life, karma, whatever. This approach has never let me
down, and it has made all the difference in my life.

Ending the story as he did, allowed for Jobs to begin his next story, love and loss,
in a way, which would allow him to plunge deeper into the affective stage. Within the
story of love and loss, Jobs discusses the importance of doing something one loves. He
found his love at a young age, after dropping out of college he started Apple, and in ten
years it grew to a “billion-dollar company”. Again, Jobs experienced hardships when he
was fired from Apple because of a disagreement he had with the board and Schulley, “our
board of directors sided with him. So at 30 I was out. And very publicly out. What had
been the focus of my entire life was gone, and it was devastating.” Jobs describes his
failures as a hurdle, one that was difficult at the time, but he “still loved” what he did, so
he started over. He couldn’t see it then, but looking back “getting fired from Apple was
the best thing that could have happened to” him. It allowed for him to enter into the most
creative time of his life, where he started two companies, NeXT and Pixar. This story is
vital because it brings the audience into the stable stage of the social penetration theory.
Jobs told the story of his family shortly after the start of his oration, which he had hidden
from the public view for many years. This allowed for him to be comfortable and open
with his audience. This is an important point because the two most important and
transformational messages he conveys are found in these final two stories. He ends the
second story with the message that failure is going to happen, but it does not mean that
you are a failure:

Sometimes life is going to hit you with a brick. Don’t lose
faith. I’m convinced that the only thing that kept me going
was that I loved what I did. You’ve got to find what you
love. And that is as true for work as it is for your lovers…
The only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you
haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all
matters of the heart, you’ll know it when you find it.

Jobs’s final story is death, the most vulnerable story of all and the subject that the
majority shy away from. His use of the story allowed for him to draw the audience in
even closer because many audience members may have had some experience with death,
whether that be the loss of a friend, family member, or love one, it would allow for
resonation. Creating a story around death allowed for Jobs to illustrate the importance of
living a transformational and purposeful life. He begins his final story with a quote that
he once heard, “If you live each day as if it was your last, some day you’ll most certainly
be right.” He continues with:

I have looked myself in the mirror every morning and
asked myself: ‘If today were the last day of my life, would
I want to do what I am about to do today?’ And whenever
the answer has been ‘no’ for too many days in a row, I
know I need to change something… Remembering I’ll be
dead soon is the most important tool I’ve ever encountered
to help me make the big choices in life.

He is ultimately conveying the need to be self-transforming, something that doesn’t
happen just once, but is a continuous process throughout life.
The importance of this self-transforming ability is brought to life when Jobs tells the audience that he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He creates a room of empathy by bringing the story to life and making it applicable to everyone who could hear, by using words such as “yours” and “you”:

My doctor advised me to go home and get my affairs in order, which is doctor’s code for ‘prepare to die.’ It means to try and tell your kids everything you thought you’d have the next ten years to tell them in just a few months… It means to say your goodbyes.

He then tells the crowd, his cancer was a rare type that could be cured with surgery, and that he was now fine. This took the audience through an emotional rollercoaster because of the relationship that developed throughout the oration, it allowed for the audience to feel empathy towards Jobs. This can clearly be seen and heard by the silence that fell over the crowd during this final story. This vulnerable story allows for Jobs to reach into the audience and cut the heart deep.

The deep cut paves the way for Jobs’s final message,

Right now the new is you, but some day not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away. Sorry to be so dramatic, but it is quite true. Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma… Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your inner voice. And, most important,
have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you want to become.

This final story gave Jobs the final key to creating a transformational oration. He had progressed through the four stages of the social penetration theory, and in the stable stage he was able to openly convey a message about death, a subject that is deemed off limits by society, to create and enable transformation within his audience.

Jobs closes his oration with one final directional quote, “Stay hungry. Stay foolish” which, after the heavy story of death, reminds the audience of how Jobs became so successful, by staying hungry and staying foolish.

Organization

Jobs’s arrangement of his discourse is very intentional. The arrangement allowed him to progress effortlessly through the stages of the social penetration theory, to create and enable transformation. He begins his oration in the orientation stage by introducing himself with a fact: he never graduated from college, a fact that everybody was familiar with, which made it casual. He moved into the exploratory stage, while he began telling the story of his family. He started by telling the audience he had dropped out of Reed College, but remained as a drop-in for another 18 months. At the moment he introduces the topic of his family he began to move into the affective stage, where he reveals a story to the audience that no one else had heard. This openness created a mutual trust between Jobs and the Audience because the audience had already had a preconceived notion of Steve Jobs because of the press and social media, which allowed them to feel as if they had known him already. The familiarity allowed Jobs to progress quickly through the first
two stages of the social penetration theory and dive into the third stage at an expedited speed.

As Jobs progressed into his second story about love, he too progressed into the stable stage of social penetration. Here he was able to speak openly about his falling out with Apple and his continued pursuit for innovation and creativity. By progressing through the first three stages fairly quickly, and allowing for the second story to be told within the Stable stage allowed Jobs to prep the audience for his third and final story, death. The placement of this story is significant because it is the one with possibility for greatest impact. Death is the one certainty that everyone in the audience shares with Jobs and with each other. This unlocked a direct path to the heart of each audience member, to enable transformation and to take hold of their lives because “some day not too long from now, [they] will gradually become the old and be cleared away.”

**Style**

Jobs used a personal story telling style to deliver his oration, “Today I want to tell you three stories from my life.” The use of story telling allowed Jobs to step outside of his celebrity role and to make a deep connection with his audience. The ability of the speaker to step outside of the celebrity role is vital for a transformative speech because the audience must be able to relate and see themselves in the orator’s shoes; otherwise there is a boundary/separation that will exist between them. This connection, created through story telling, gave Jobs the ability to move through the various stages of the social penetration theory by relating to his audience to draw them in, then cutting down the preconceived notions that existed of him by welcoming the audience to hear his
untold upbringing, and then cutting to the heart by instilling the realization through his personal struggle with death that the time of an individual “is limited, so don’t waste it.”

The most powerful message that Jobs conveyed was “time is limited”, but Jobs used story telling to interject multiple life messages throughout his three stories, “can’t connect the dots looking backwards”, “love what you do”, and “time is limited”. Jobs’s style supplemented and guided his invention to create a transformational oration.

**Delivery**

The delivery style of Jobs’s oration promoted his mission of moving through the various stages of social penetration to enable transformation within the audience. This is illustrated through his ability to create empathy, inspiration, and transformation within his audience. He conveyed his story in a way that allowed him to appear as an old wise man, and because of his past experiences allowed him connect with the graduates. The use of an empathetic tone while telling the hardships, and then the use of an inspirational tone of how he overcame his hardships: “If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts.” The delivery of his final message within each of his stories is done with a transforming tone, he uses the words “you” and “your” to address the audience as whole, but also on an individual level to provide guidance and wisdom:

**You** can’t connect the dots looking forward **you** can only connect them looking backward… **You** got to find what you love… If **you** haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle… **Your** time is limited, so don’t waste it living
someone else’s life… And, most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition.

Jobs effectively delivers his oration and is able to stir the emotions of empathy, inspiration, and transformation. This ultimately crumbled the audiences’ protected walls of vulnerability and allowed for true transformation to resonate and occur.

**Memory**

Jobs’s commencement oration, unlike his product and Apple innovation announcements, where he effortlessly spoke for an hour without referring to any presentation notes, his commencement oration was the announcement of life and how to live it. As such, it appeared very important to Jobs not to miss any part of his story, so that he could invent a transforming impression on his audience. Throughout his oration he would glance down at his notes and pause to prepare and confirm that he had not missed any important points. Writing down his oration may also symbolize his openness to express the stories that he was reluctant to tell for many years, and may have provided another relatable characteristic with his audience. A relatable characteristic because Jobs never appeared to glance at notes during any prior presentation or interview given, and although his oration was done beautifully it still conveyed the nervousness he had with being vulnerable with an audience.

**How To Know Transformation Occurred?**

While it would not be possible within the time frame of this study to locate each of the individuals, who were present that day and determine if transformation had occur, but it is possible to see Jobs’s oration reached a bigger audience than the 2005 graduating class of Stanford University. On YouTube, “a forum for people to connect, inform, and
inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform,” Jobs’s commencement has been viewed 8,694,087 times (“About YouTube”, 2015). Further, Jobs’s video was also uploaded to Ted Talks, “a nonprofit devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks,” where it has been viewed 8,207,589. It can be seen through the power in numbers the impact Jobs’s oration had throughout the world.

CBS news interviewed a few of the 2005 graduates who heard the commencement speech, to determine the impact Jobs had on them. Amy Halvorsen, 2005 Stanford Graduate, felt like “loser” because she was graduating with no job, but Jobs’s story of his failure provided comfort for Halvorsen, “His speech made me really comforted. He was like, ‘You’ll find your own path – you don’t need to live someone else’s life” (Blackstone, 2011). Halvorsen is working in film production, but she desires to be the host of her own show one day, and she plans to do this by living by the message of Jobs, “That’s what I want to do even though it might be a little foolish. It is, after all, what Steve Jobs told her to do on graduation day” (Blackstone, 2011).

Discussion

The ability of a transformational leader to resonate, motivate, and promote transformation within the audience requires the utilization of the social penetration theory and a strategically developed oration based around the five canons of rhetoric, defined by Griffin (1994). Jobs was able to reach into the depths of his audience members’ hearts through his transformational story telling.

Through story telling, Jobs had to be careful to follow methodologically and sequentially through the stages of the social penetration theory; otherwise his audience members would have been made vulnerable too quickly and would have consequently
rejected any message Jobs intended to convey. Jobs’s utilization of story telling allowed
him to gain the trust of his audience through his use of words, and through the built trust
he was able to reveal the most vulnerable portions of his life to his audience.

The test of how Jobs’s message would be received was dependent on his first
story, where he became vulnerable and his most secured secret about his family was
exposed. During this first story he had entered into the affective stage, which allowed for
his future messages to be well received because as Jobs was becoming more and more
vulnerable, so was the his audience. The audience was becoming vulnerable because they
were able to draw connections within their own life that were in correlation with Jobs’s
story. This connection was very intentional and was a direct effect of Jobs’s ability to
construct his oration on the foundation of the five canons of rhetoric: invention,
organization, style, memorization, and delivery of the oration.

By strategically utilizing the five canons of rhetoric, the significance of his three
life messages, “you can’t connect the dots looking forward”, “love what you do”, and
“time is limited, so don’t waste it”, was apparent in the resonance and transformation that
occurred within the hearts’ of his audience. The apparent transformation cannot be
measured at the time the oration was given, but “looking backwards” it is apparent the
effect Jobs’s commencement speech had on an audience far greater than what filled
Stanford University’s stadium. Jobs’s oration has been viewed over 16,901,676 million
times on social media outlets, and continues to grow daily. Graduates who were there to
bare witness to Jobs’s oration recounted the transformation that occurred within them
during and after the commencement speech.
The strategies that should be utilized, from Jobs’s oration, to enable transformation within audiences are: authenticity, vulnerability, and patience. Authenticity and openness allowed Jobs to gain the trust of his audience members. The ability to be vulnerable broke down the barriers and for the progression through the social penetration stages to occur. Finally, patience allowed Jobs to ease his way into the hearts of his audience to truly enable transformation and create a lasting impression.
Chapter 5: Summaries and Conclusion

Limitations

Sample size, due to time constraints, was the greatest limitation on the rhetorical analysis. This is because of the inability to analyze and evaluate multiple orations. Widening the scope would provide a stronger basis for the findings, and would allow further conclusions to be drawn on the strategies that are most effective in creating a deep connection with the listener and the strategies that are most likely to enable transformation within the listener.

Additionally, examining only one speaker does not allow additional transformational strategies, which Jobs may not have used, to be identified and examined. Identifying additional strategies may add supplementary value and strength to the current findings on enabling transformation through an oration.

Future Recommendation

Future research should widen the scope of analysis to include transformational speakers that may not be widely known, to determine if fame affects the ability of a speaker to be transformational. Additionally, it would be noteworthy to determine if there are any gender differences in how the orators speak, and if gender affects how the audience receives their message. These future recommendations will provide more value and rich data.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to understand how transformational leaders are able to progress through the stages of the social penetration process to create and deliver transforming public orations that resonate, motivate, and empower action within the listener. To study
this phenomenon, the current study used a Neo-Aristotelian rhetorical analysis to analyze Steve Jobs’s Commencement Speech to Stanford’s graduating class of 2005. The analysis was built and developed around the five cannons of rhetoric to identify the techniques and strategies employed by Jobs to create a transforming oration.

The analysis identified authenticity, vulnerability, and patience as the key traits throughout Jobs’s speech that allowed for a transformational oration to emerge. These traits were seen throughout the five cannons of rhetoric, which ultimately allowed Jobs to quickly advance through the four stages of social penetration to create a deep connection between him and his audience to create a lasting impact.

These findings align with other research on transformational leaders. Transformational leaders are individuals that cut to the heart and draw in their followers to be inspired, to follow, and to create action for change through empowerment (Burns, 2003). Jobs inspired his audience and inspired/still inspires listeners outside his original intended audience.

The analysis of Jobs’s Commencement Speech unveils a new realm of study and paves the way for future studies to further analyze leader’s public speaking strategies and techniques that enable transformation. This will strengthen the current findings and illustrate the importance and need to develop and implement transforming techniques to persuade and empower followers.
References


