The circle of life: Rhetoric of identification in Steve Jobs' Stanford speech

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ABSTRACT

We sought to understand from a rhetorical perspective the sources of the runaway popularity of Steve Jobs' Stanford commencement speech. Our analysis shows the rhetorical sophistication of this speech in terms of mutually reinforcing use of established dynamics, canons, and devices of rhetoric. We find however that these aspects of classical rhetoric are imbued with and reinforced by Burkeian identification processes that permeate the speech. We contend that an important aspect of leaders' rhetorical competence, and an enabler for constructing evocative, impactful rhetoric is the skillful employment of processes of identification.

1. Introduction

Verbal communication is the cornerstone of managerial work. Mintzberg's (1971: 100) studies have shown that "managers spend a surprisingly large amount of time in horizontal and lateral communication". The linguistic turn in social science research (Deetz, 2003) has also shown that communication is not only functional, but socially constructs meaning through the framing, labeling and typifications it provides (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Heracleous, 2011). Scholars have noted that one of the main roles of leaders is to shape social reality for others through skillful use of language (Smircich & Morgan, 1982), often accomplished through their rhetorical competence (Hartog & Verburg, 1997; Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994). Leaders, via their rhetoric, shape and reinforce shared values, promote a common organizational identity, and frame issues in particular ways as relevant to various stakeholders in order to build legitimacy (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) or accomplish change (Mueller et al., 2003).

Studies of organizational leaders have used concepts from classical rhetoric to understand how leaders can influence and inspire followers (Conger, 1991) or adjust their rhetoric to different audiences while keeping certain themes constant (Heracleous & Klaering, 2014). Despite studies of organizational leaders' rhetorical competence however (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Hartog & Verburg, 1997), there are still gaps in our knowledge of how leaders employ rhetoric in particular situations (Conger, 1991, 1999; Heracleous & Klaering, 2014).

In our own project we were interested in whether classical rhetoric can explain a leader's exceptional rhetorical performance, or whether there are related aspects that we have not yet appreciated. This is the initial question that oriented our research of Apple Inc.'s former CEO Steve Jobs' influential Stanford commencement speech (Stanford University, 2005). As our research progressed, we noticed that Jobs' speech employs multi-dimensional processes of identification; not simply as a rhetorical strategy but as a structuring force that permeates the entire speech. We therefore decided to focus our study on the role of rhetorical identification within a broader classical rhetorical analysis.

In this paper we therefore analyze the employment of rhetoric by Jobs, an influential technology leader (Harvey, 2001; Sharma & Grant, 2011), in his Stanford commencement speech. This speech was uploaded on Stanford's YouTube channel in March 2008 and by April 2017 has been viewed over 26 million times. On TED's website it has been viewed over 8.5 million times. There several million additional views elsewhere on the internet, and many years later the appeal of the speech remains undiminished (Gallo, 2015). The internet has enabled Jobs' audience to be global, far beyond the Stanford students that witnessed it. When we refer to the "audience" in our analysis, we mean both the primary audience at the Stanford commencement ceremony, as well as the secondary audience that has watched the speech online. Given Jobs' overall reputation as a legendary Silicon Valley entrepreneur (Isaacson, 2012), understanding what makes this speech special can help to shed light not just on Jobs' remarkable rhetorical ability, but also on the fundamental link between leadership and rhetorical competence.

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2. Leadership, rhetorical competence and identification

2.1. Leadership and rhetorical competence

Leaders shape reality for others by "framing experience in a way that provides a viable basis for action" (Smircich & Morgan, 1982: 258). Effective leaders can simplify ambiguous, complex messages into discrete, relevant meanings that can provide a substantive and memorable point of reference to the audience; often through the use of storytelling, framing, and metaphor (Conger, 1991; Heracleous & Klaering, 2014; Sharma & Grant, 2011). Through the use of rhetoric, leaders can mobilize meaning, articulate and define what has previously remained implicit, and elaborate, confront or consolidate existing wisdom (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996; Peters, 1978; Pondy, 1976).

Central strands of leadership theory recognise the importance of leaders' rhetorical competence. Charismatic leadership theories (Conger & Kanungo, 1987, 1998; House, 1977) as well as related transformational leadership theories (Bass, 1996; Bass & Avolio, 1994) for example acknowledge the abilities of charismatic leaders to influence followers through their oratorical skills (Hartog & Verburg, 1997; House & Shamir, 1993; Shamir et al., 1994; Willner, 1984). Authentic leaders (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007; Shamir & Eilam, 2005) reflect on their own life stories, draw meanings and values, and communicate these to others as the basis of their leadership effectiveness and authenticity. Effective leaders are adept at framing and delivering a vision to followers (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999).

Steve Jobs is often viewed in both the academic literature (Emrich, Brower, Feldman, & Garland, 2001; Heracleous & Klaering, 2014; Sharma & Grant, 2011) as well as popular media, as a legendary leader with "effective rhetorical skills and powers of persuasion" (Gallo, 2015; Harvey, 2001: 254). He is seen as a highly admired leader (Marques, 2013) who possesses the power to "bend reality" for those around him (Isaacson, 2012: 97).

We thus decided to research Jobs' Stanford speech as a revelatory case (Yin, 2009) of leadership rhetorical competence. Our initial analysis of this speech indicated that Jobs employed an overall storytelling frame, emotional appeals, enthymemes, root metaphors and central themes in compelling ways. It gradually became clear however that classical rhetoric, although highly applicable, would perhaps not fully explain the immense popularity and evocativeness of the speech. The analysis indicated signs of a process of identification, a fundamental rhetorical feature in Burke's (1950, 1951) "new rhetoric." Identification was a structural feature (Heracleous & Hendry, 2000), underlying and permeating Jobs' entire speech. Our research question was thus refined as: *What is the role of identification, in the context of classical rhetorical devices, in leaders' rhetorical competence?*

2.2. Enthymemes, stories and metaphor

An enthymeme is a rhetorical structure of argumentation that is partially expressed, since at least one of the premises remains an implicit, taken-for-granted assumption (Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, & Jacobs, 1997). In other words an enthymeme is a truncated narrative argument, whereby the audience supplies the implicit, unstated premises. For example, if person A says "I'm going to the market", and person B says "you'd better take an umbrella with you", the implicit premises are "I think it's going to rain today" and "an umbrella can protect you from the rain". These premises are not uttered by person A but are nevertheless understood and assumed by person B because of the two individuals' shared situational and cultural context, and *identification* of listener with rhetor (McAdon, 2003; Walton & Macagno, 2006). Enthymemes are thus contextually rather than universally true

or false, as their rationality is context-specific (Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996). This is as opposed to syllogisms in logic, whose evaluation criteria include universal truth. Enthymemes can be potent means of persuasion, as they actively engage the audience to complete the argument on the basis of pre-existing, shared cultural beliefs, whilst simultaneously offering interpretive flexibility (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001; Sillince, 1999).

Enthymemes are often expressed through storytelling. Stories are endemic to organizations, employed by actors in various, shifting forms to make sense of situations and pursue their aims (Boje, 1991). Stories can engage individuals at an emotional level, safeguard and transmit cultural values, and effectively develop leadership competencies (Ready, 2002). Similarly to enthymemes, stories do not depend on formal logic for their validity but on plausibility within the conditioned rationality of particular contexts; what Weick and Browning (1996), drawing from Fisher (1985), referred to as narrative rationality. Rhetorical examples offered in the form of personal stories or anecdotes can personalize a topic and make the oratory appear more topical to the audience, facilitating *identification* with the rhetor. By reflecting on personal life stories, leaders develop unique perspectives and values that support their authentic leadership (George et al., 2007; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Stories are most compelling when they invoke meanings with "deep cultural roots, and as a result, elicit stronger emotions" (Conger, 1991: 41); a basic strategy of *identification* referred to as "common ground" by Cheney (1983).

Central themes are typically embedded within enthymemes and stories, and can be framed metaphorically. In classical rhetoric the aim of central themes is to contribute to persuasion (Aristotle, 1991) and inspiration (Cicero, 1942) whereas in Burke's "new rhetoric" the emphasis lies on *identification* between rhetor and audience (Burke, 1950, 1951). We purposefully refer to Burke's (1950, 1951) new rhetoric in order to situate our argument more concisely, since the broad distinctions between classical and new rhetoric have been the subject of ongoing debates (Lunsford & Ede, 1984; Thomas, 2007) that are beyond the scope of this paper.

We see metaphor as integral to thought and action (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a; Turnage, 2013), in accordance with a constructionist view (Black, 1979). Metaphors can "capture and illustrate an experience of reality by appealing simultaneously to the various senses of the listener" (Conger, 1991). Metaphors can express emotional messages that lie beyond conscious awareness (Srivastva & Barrett, 1988), and engage the audience's imagination, intellect and values through posing an invitation to make semantic leaps (Cornelissen, Kafouros, & Lock, 2005).

The locus of metaphor is not language per se, but rather the conceptualisation of one domain in terms of another (Lakoff, 1993). Metaphors can both sustain current ways of seeing, or re-frame situations by offering alternative source domains for interpreting a given target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a; Turnage, 2013). The blending of ontological and epistemic correspondences between source and target domains (Lakoff, 1990) can lead to novel meanings which grant metaphors their potency in terms of sensemaking (Morgan, 1980, 1983).

2.3. Rhetorical identification

Despite Burke (1950) popularising the concept of identification as the key to persuasion, this idea derives from classical rhetoric (Day, 1960). Burke (1950) himself recognizes his debt to classical thought in how he defines rhetoric, in the voluminous space he allocates in his "rhetoric of motives" to classical terms, and in his discussion of the lineage of the concept of identification.

We already alluded above to the role of identification as a rhetorical function. For Burke, identification is the defining feature of his new

rhetoric: "The key term for the old rhetoric was 'persuasion' and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key term for the 'new' rhetoric would be 'identification,' which can include a partially 'unconscious' factor in appeal" (Burke, 1951: 203). Burke (1950) explained that identification is based on a perceived similarity of interests or perspectives between actors that makes them "consubstantial" (pp. 20–21). In this he draws upon the concept of substance from "old philosophies" where it was seen as an act, with agents developing shared "sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial" (p. 21).

Burke notes that one means of creating identification is based on classical Aristotelian rhetoric, where the rhetor seeks to understand the beliefs and favorable character traits of the audience, so that the rhetor can align the oratory to these characteristics (Burke, 1950: 38). Yet this is only one of the ways identification can be pursued, what Cheney (1983) describes as the "common ground" technique (p. 148). Cheney (1983) further draws on Burke (1950, 1972) to outline "identification through antithesis," based on uniting the audience against a common enemy; and evoking the "assumed or transcendent 'we'" whereby through the use of particular pronouns the rhetor skillfully represents the audience as being in the same boat and as having common interests.

Burke's (1950) concept of identification has been generative in rhetorical studies, prompting rhetoricians to explore the variety of ways in which identification may be employed in various settings including social organizations (e.g. Chaput, Brummans, & Cooren, 2011; Cheney, 1983; Nelson, 2009; Quigley, 1998). Such studies have shown for example that identification can be built through particular types of communication events, can operate subconsciously and through self-persuasion, can be developed via ongoing, routinised social and communicative processes, and can accrue to individuals seen as role models by the audience.

Burke's focus on identification as a key component of rhetoric, and his analysis of its multiple facets therefore offers us rich resources for understanding its operations in particular contexts, such as in our analysis of Jobs' speech. In what follows we conduct a classical rhetorical analysis of the speech, interspersed with an analysis of the various dimensions of identification processes operating in that setting.

3. Rhetorical analysis: the Stanford commencement speech

3.1. The context of Jobs' speech

In June 2005, Steve Jobs delivered an inspirational commencement speech to graduates at Stanford University.[1] Jobs had re-joined Apple in February 1997 as interim CEO (1997–2000) and then CEO (2000 to 2011), after having been ousted in 1985. Jobs re-focused Apple's product line and R&D projects, leading to the introduction of various new models of Apple's desktop computer such as the Power Book and iMac. In October 2001, the iPod was introduced, which became a phenomenal commercial success for Apple as the leading portable digital music player. By June 2005, Apple's stock price had grown over 4 times since the introduction of the iPod, and had started an upward slide that would in time make Apple Inc. the most valuable company in the world, having a market capitalization of US$736 bn by April 2017. Apple's fortunes were on a high when Jobs delivered this speech, after a near-death experience in the years during Jobs' ousting. Apple subsequently reached success levels few would have anticipated at the time.

As noted above rhetorical competence is a fundamental skill of leaders, particularly in terms of influencing and inspiring others (Conger, 1991; Heracleous & Klaering, 2014; Pondy, 1976). Leadership speeches are an apt occasion for displaying and exercising this competence, for example in situations of crisis management or organizational change (Oliveira & Murphy, 2009; Roos, 2013). Speeches put leaders on centre stage, and offer a unique opportunity for employing rhetoric that can shape the audience's social reality (Smircich & Morgan, 1982).

Jobs' charismatic ability to influence others has been described as his "reality distortion field" (Isaacson, 2012: 97). His reputation as an extremely demanding, often autocratic leader alludes to the dark side of charisma (Chamorro-Premuzic, 2012; Conger, 1989). It is possible for charismatic leaders to abuse their influence and manipulate others for personal gain; or to exercise undue power on organizations towards destructive strategic decisions. These actions would have negative consequences for their leadership effectiveness (Judge, Piccolo & Kosalka, 2009), with corresponding effects on organizational performance (Conger, 1990). Despite these possibilities, if Jobs' leadership effectiveness is to be judged through Apple's performance over the years and the contributions Apple has made towards reshaping industries and delivering groundbreaking products, then Jobs' charisma has had overwhelmingly positive effects.

Given Jobs' already established reputation as an entrepreneurial, even legendary leader with technological foresight, and the fact that Apple Inc.'s headquarters and the Stanford campus where the speech took place are close to each other in Silicon Valley, it is reasonable to assume that the audience attributed high levels of *ethos* to Jobs. *Ethos*, alongside *logos* and *pathos*, is a key mode of persuasion (Aristotle, 1991; Haskins, 2004). *Ethos* relates to a speaker's credibility, trustworthiness and authority in the eyes of the audience, based on perceived competence, virtue and goodwill (Noel, 1999). *Logos* refers to reasoning or logical argument. It may be expressed in the form of examples or enthymemes, and could be abductive, providing interpretations or conclusions that require a cognitive leap. *Pathos* appeals to the emotions of the audience through evocative rhetorical devices.

Turning our attention from classical rhetorical concepts to Burke's (1950, 1951) new rhetoric, in this situational context the audience would likely be receptive to processes of *identification*. This is due to the audience's co-location in Silicon Valley with Jobs, their familiarity with him as the legendary founder of Apple and as a transformational leader in the technology industry, as well as the pervasiveness of Apple products and the likelihood that the vast majority of the audience would have owned at least one Apple product. This context is an apt operationalization of the "common ground" means of identification (Burke, 1950; Cheney, 1983), where there is an implicit commonality between the rhetor and the audience. In this case the rhetor does not mention any of those elements, yet they are an inescapable part of the situation.

3.2. Jobs' opening statements

In the opening paragraph Jobs marks the importance of the event by stating "I am honored to be with you today for your commencement from one of the finest universities in the world" (2–3). Jobs' opening statement recognizes and honors the important, once-in-a-lifetime event that his audience are participating in. In doing so he establishes rapport with the audience, which smoothes the process of identification as individuals are more likely to identify with characters they have positive evaluations and emotions towards (Burke, 1951), such as in this case admiration for Jobs.

He displays humility and introduces a touch of irony by stating that he "never graduated from college" (3) and that this event is the "closest I've ever gotten to a college graduation" (3–4). Jobs' statement that

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[1] The transcript of this speech is included in the accompanying Data in Brief article (Heracleous & Klaering, 2017). The numbers in brackets in the analysis that follows refer to the lines in the transcript of Steve Jobs' speech, as provided in this accompanying material.

he never graduated from College presents a double *antithesis*, Burke's (1950) second means of identification (in addition to the "common ground" approach noted above). The first antithetical aspect is the light-hearted juxtaposition between the fact that Jobs never graduated from College, versus the audience who are graduating as he speaks. We might call this a *denotational antithesis*, an explicitly expressed fact. The second antithetical aspect is the implicit desire of the graduants to be successful as they enter employment, having worked hard at gaining a degree. Yet one of the most successful individuals in industry does not have a degree because he never graduated. Jobs shines a light on this tension, and uses it to open his speech. This tension creates a puzzle in the mind of the audience and raises their intellectual and emotional engagement with what comes next. We might call this a *connotational antithesis*, the associations evoked by what is said.

The *enthymeme* below illustrates Jobs' opening argument (a glossary of the rhetorical terms used in this analysis can be found in the Appendix) (Table 1).

This is the starting point for Jobs engaging the audience through displaying informality, openness, honesty and humility, and heightening the audience's receptivity to his subsequent messages. These are character traits associated with virtue (Aristotle, 1991), a conjunction that aids processes of identification in the audience's mind. Jobs provides the "solution" to the puzzle he has set up, the key message of his speech, that if you follow your heart, no matter what life throws at you, you will succeed. He employs a storytelling approach throughout his three-act speech.

Jobs both highlights and simultaneously underplays the stories he shares through an *isocolon*: "that's it. No big deal. Just three stories" (4–5). In so doing he highlights the simplicity of his message in a way that later enhances its evocative power. Jobs gives memorable titles to the three stories: "connecting the dots" (6), "love and loss" (54) and "death" (90). The themes of the stories (as parts of the rhetorical device of a *three-part-list*), are linked within a narrative logic and rhythm which represents a three-act autobiography, a chronology of his life.

These are intimate and personal stories, unlikely to have been heard before by this audience. Through the use of these stories, Jobs makes himself vulnerable to his audience, by sharing from the heart. The topics are likely to be relevant to all individuals on a fundamental, meaningful, emotional level. This is another instance of implicit "common ground" between speaker and audience that helps to foster a meaningful identification between them.

Jobs' choice of themes simultaneously activates the third means of identification (in addition to common ground and antithesis), the creation of an "assumed or transcendent we" (Cheney, 1983: 148), by subconsciously alluding to a sense of shared destiny. As Burke (1950: 35) notes "the rhetorical motive, through the resources of identification, can operate without conscious direction by any particular agent". Thus, Jobs may not even consciously employ this particular "assumed and

transcendent we" strategy of identification, but nevertheless a second-order analysis of his rhetoric indicates its presence.

3.3. The first story: connecting the dots

In this story, Jobs talks about his birth, adoption, dropping out of college, and founding Apple. The title "connecting the dots" connotes the ability to associate one event with another, so as to be able to see the bigger picture. He highlights the necessity of seeing beyond the obvious and understanding the true nature of things (consistent with later spiritual references in his speech). The underlying theme of "connecting the dots" is "understanding", which draws from the structural root metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980b). Specifically, the constituent metaphor is SEEING IS CONNECTING THE DOTS, therefore UNDERSTANDING IS CONNECTING THE DOTS. This conveys the core message of the first story, that there is a purpose to the travails of life; and that in hindsight, when connecting the dots, they push you towards following your heart.

Jobs refers to how his past experiences, and contemplating the past, helped to provide meaning later on. He repeats the orientational metaphors "looking forward" (47, 49) and "looking backwards" (48, 49–50), which represent an *antiwork*, the juxtaposition of two contrasting phrases in a parallel sentence structure. He concludes the first story by re-stating the message: "Again, you can't connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking backwards." (49–50). The central theme and underlying message of the first story are as presented in Table 2.

Jobs confronts the audience with a puzzle at the outset of the first story. He employs *hypophora* by asking the rhetorical question "So why did I drop out?" (8). The question focuses the audience's attention on the puzzle they are to solve by interpreting the meaning of the stories. Jobs' answer is the need to follow one's heart. Jobs challenges the audience themselves to "connect the dots" by linking his past experiences to his subsequent decisions and inviting the audience to see the patterns. Jobs repeatedly uses *antiwork* in conjunction with *polyptoton* to stress the importance of his early withdrawal from Reed College, by stating that he "dropped out" (6, 7, 8, 23, 25, 35, 45) of University in order to "drop in" (7, 26, 42, 45–46) to more interesting subjects.

Table 1
Emergent puzzle in the form of an enthymeme.

Enthymeme structure	Narrative premises and conclusion	
P1 + P2 + P3	P1	Steve Jobs never graduated from college
	P2	Most successful leaders earned a college degree
	P3	Jobs is a successful industry leader
C1	C1	Jobs is special; he is either the exception or did something different to most leaders
Emergent puzzle	Puzzle	How did Jobs become so successful without having earned a college degree?

Table 2
Central theme of first story.

Central theme & core message	Steve Jobs' narrative
Connecting the dots	It was pretty scary at the time, but looking back it was one of the best decisions I've ever made (24–25)
We need to see beyond the obvious. Connecting the dots helps us see that life's setbacks ultimately enable us to follow our heart.	But ten years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me (40–41)
	Of course it was impossible to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backwards ten years later (47–48)
	Again, you can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future (49–50)
	Because believing that the dots will connect down the road, will give you the confidence to follow your heart (51–52)
	I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me (71–72)

He employs an inverse *parallelism* with the audience in noting that "my mother has never graduated from college and my father had never graduated from high school" (15–16), referring to his adoptive parents; even though his biological parents were University graduates. He *amplifies* the impact of his own decision to drop out by stating that doing so "was pretty scary at the time, but looking back it was one of the best decisions I have ever made" (24–25). By sharing contextual information about his adoptive parents, he begins to build a narrative, moving the speech away from simply logical validity towards narrative validity thereby enhancing engagement of the audience.

Jobs sets the scene for the remainder of the speech by stating that he concentrated on classes of interest, rather than classes he had to attend. He uses *anaphora* ("I learnt *about…*") within a climatic three-part-list: "I learnt about serif and san serif typefaces, about varying the amount of space between different letter combinations, about what makes great typography great" (36–38). He then sets up a Mac/Windows duality (a socially constructed *antiwork*) and so identifies a common enemy, simultaneously using humor to *amplify* the message that "Windows just copied the Mac" (44). By narratively aligning the Mac with art and beauty in noting that "we designed it all into the Mac" (41–42) and "it was the first computer with beautiful typography" (42), he conveys connotations of Windows as an ugly copy of the Mac. He constructs identification with the audience by virtue of a common enemy, the implicit notion of "us against Windows". The reference to Windows is a classic case of the "antithetical" approach to *identification*; the speaker constructs themselves and the audience as consubstantial by virtue of an assumed common enemy, Microsoft.

Jobs refers to Eastern spirituality which is consistent with his own experience, having visited the "Hare Krishna temple" (30 − 31), pursued spiritual insights in India and been a vegan for most of his life. Listing four evocative terms, he prompts the audience to "trust in something – your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever" (51–52), and clarifies that it does not matter what you believe in, as long as you believe. The idea of having "faith" and using related terms such as "hope" (40, 116) and "trust" (24, 50, 51), together with reference to the temple and the use of mystical terms such as "destiny" (51) or "karma" (51), helps Jobs present himself as a spiritual being. Repeated use of the word "truly" (86, 99, 128) implies that there is a true, primary purpose in living life, and that it is essential to fulfil this purpose for oneself. The underlying question to the audience therefore is: "are you content with the way you are choosing to live your life?" In the last paragraph of the first story, Jobs introduces the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, which reappears throughout the remainder of the speech (Table 3).

So far we have seen in operation all three strategies of identification: "common ground", antithesis, and the "transcendent we". The

Table 3
Life is a journey metaphor.

Metaphor	Steve Jobs' narrative
Life is a journey	Because believing that the dots will connect down the road will give you the confidence to follow your heart, even when it leads you off the well-worn path, and that will make all the difference (51–53)
	I was a very public failure and I even thought about running away from the Valley (66–67)
	And yet death is the destination we all share (118–119)
	Steward and his team put out several issues of the 'Whole Earth Catalog', and then, when it had run its course, they put out a final issue (136–137)
	On the back of the cover of their final issue was a photograph of an early morning country road, that kind you might find yourself hitchhiking on, if you were so adventurous (137–139)

common ground approach is the most prominent one in this speech, given several shared attributes of rhetor and audience, including co-location in Silicon Valley and shared knowledge and interest in the technology industry. Beyond these attributes however, Jobs has displayed several traits that the audience would find favorable, a further extension of the common ground strategy. As Aristotle (1991) explained, it is not hard to praise Athenians among Athenians, given the perception of shared virtue; shown by character traits such as "justice, courage, self-control, poise or presence … broad-mindedness, liberality, gentleness, prudence and wisdom" (Burke, 1950: 55). In his first story Jobs displayed his tireless search for truth, the courage to follow his heart, the wisdom to connect the dots and see the bigger picture, the resilience to land on his feet after dropping out of College, and the discriminating mind to select classes of interest that would later prove instrumental to Apple products.

3.4. The second story: love and loss

Jobs begins his second story by saying "I was lucky – I found what I loved to do early in life" (55), presenting himself as a role model for his central message of following one's heart. He describes how "Woz and I started Apple in my parents' garage" (55–56), "worked hard, and in 10 years Apple had grown from just the two of us in a garage into a \$2 billion company" (56–7). Jobs recounts a situation highly relevant to his audience (another means of identification), being graduants who will pursue careers and possibly become entrepreneurs like he did decades ago. Reference to the "garage" points towards the mythical birthplace of several legendary Silicon Valley companies and underpins the subsidiary importance of resources, as opposed to ideas that can be turned into reality through passion and commitment.

Jobs then halts the growth and development narrative by abruptly stating "and then I got fired" (58). The significance of this event is *amplified* by stating that he "just turned 30" (58), when he was in the prime of his life and rather young to experience redundancy. Jobs introduces an idea that would probably have crossed the minds of many in his audience; "how can you get fired from a company you started?" (59). This question functions as an *aporia*, a question displaying perplexity in order to then make a certain point through the answer. He repeatedly uses an informal, visual-oriented word for describing his redundancy: "I got fired" (58), further intensifying the message. He uses this term four times in the speech, leaving no doubt about how he felt when asked by the board to leave Apple. He makes use of *commoratio* by repeating that "at 30, I was out" (62). He employs *pathos*, noting that "what had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating. I didn't really know what to do for a few months" (63–64). He portrays the feeling of loss as followed by a period of grief, describing it as traumatic, painful and scarring. He *amplifies* the importance of the event through terms such as "devastating" (64), "public failure" (68) and "rejected" (70). Drawing from a relationship metaphor, these terms are often used to describe a harsh relationship break-up, a divorce or a sudden death of one's partner.

Jobs presents his heartfelt sense of embarrassment or failure as an entrepreneurial role model: "I felt that I had let the previous generation of entrepreneurs down - that I had dropped the baton as it was being passed to me … I even thought of running away from the valley" (65–68). Jobs here explicitly identifies with a revered breed of people in Silicon Valley: entrepreneurs, who against the odds and with supreme determination create new products and new markets, and change how people use technology. This is the same breed that the graduants would likely admire and identify with; therefore Jobs here builds identification with the audience via positive reference to a shared role model.

After Jobs' embarrassment at feeling like he was letting the previous generation of entrepreneurs down, there was light at the end of the tunnel. Referring back to the "love" theme, Jobs recounts "I'd been rejected, but I was still in love. And so I decided to start over." (70). Jobs here continues to display virtuous qualities noted in the old rhetoric; resilience, courage, following one's heart, therefore amplifying the identification with those virtues mentioned at the start of the speech. Since "follow your heart" is the main message of the speech, "love" becomes a central theme, pervading the entire speech, as shown in Table 4.

Metaphorical entailments are associations with a word or a phrase that help the audience arrive at their own inferences, a process Lakoff and Turner (1989:120) refer to as the "inferential capacity of metaphor". Various entailments of the WORK IS LOVE metaphor (drawing from Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a, 1980b) are shown in Table 5.

Jobs employs several root *metaphors* that in addition to adding an implicit image dimension to the arguments (*enargeia*), facilitate identification with the audience in terms of being within the *endoxa*, shared and taken for granted cultural understandings, underlied by shared experience. This is an implicit form of the "common ground" form of identification; the rhetor does not explicitly draw attention to the endoxa as a form of common ground, but they are there, operating on the subconscious mind of the audience, as Burke (1951: 203) noted. These metaphors involve internal as well as external systematicity and are part of an embodied, coherent system of interpretation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a, 1980b) (Table 6).

Jobs utilises a juxtaposition of *antiwork* combined with *hyperbole* to make the point that, in retrospect, his redundancy had a positive impact on his life: "I didn't see it then, but it turned out that getting fired from Apple was the best thing that could have ever happened to me" (71–72). This is a form of *commoratio*, reiterating the key point of his first story, that is, that the dots can only be connected with hindsight and that seeming obstacles ultimately can help us follow our heart. Throughout the speech Jobs employs visual metaphors, for example in this case by using the term "see" (71) as opposed to a term such as "understand". Jobs elaborates using *antiwork* saying that "the heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again … it freed me to enter one of the most creative periods of my life" (72–74).

Jobs encourages the audience not to lose faith after setbacks, using a medicinal metaphor: "It was awful tasting medicine, but I guess the patient needed it. Sometimes life is gonna hit you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith" (81–83). He concludes the second story through

Table 4
Love metaphors in Jobs' speech.

Metaphor	Steve Jobs' narrative
Life is love	…get one good meal a week at the Hare Krishna temple. I loved it (31)
	My second story is about love and loss (54)
	…and fell in love with amazing woman who would become my wife (75)
Love is a guiding force	But something slowly began to dawn on me – I still loved what I did (67–68)
	I'd been rejected, but I was still in love. And so I decided to start over (67)
	I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did (82–83)
Work is love	I was lucky – I found what I loved to do early in life (55)
	You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers (83–84)
	And the only way to do great work is to love what you do (85–86)
	…as with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on (86–88)

Table 5
Entailments of Work is Love metaphor.

Entailments of WORK IS LOVE metaphor	Steve Jobs' narrative
Requires commitment	If you haven't found it yet, keep looking (86). I didn't have a dorm room so I slept on the floor in friends' rooms, I returned coke bottles for the five 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. I loved it (28–31)
Requires trust	Because believing that the dots will connect down the road, will give you the confidence to follow your heart, even when it leads you off the well-worn path (51–53)
Requires dedication	I decided to take a calligraphy class to learn how to do this (35–36)
Requires patience	As with all matters of the heart, you know when you'll find it (86–87)
Can be painful	What had been the focus of my entire adult life was gone, and it was devastating (63)
Is aesthetic	It was beautiful, historical, artistically subtle in a way that science can't capture, and I found it fascinating (38–39)
Involves creativity	It freed me to enter one of the most creative periods in my life (72–73)
Is important	You've got to find what you love (83)
Creates reality	We designed it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful typography (40–42) We just released our finest creation – the Macintosh a year earlier (57–58)
Is motivating	I'm convinced that the only thing that kept me going was that I loved what I did (82–83)
Is honorable	I felt that I had let the previous generation of entrepreneurs down – that I had dropped the baton as it was being passed to me. I met with David Packard and Bob Noyce and tried to apologize for screwing up so badly. I was a very public failure and I even thought about running away from the Valley (64–67)

Table 6
Root metaphors in Jobs' speech.

Metaphor	Steve Jobs' narrative
Good is up/bad is down	I felt that I had let the previous generation of entrepreneurs down – that I had dropped the baton as it was being passed to me (64–65)
	We worked hard, and in ten years Apple had grown from just the two of us in a garage into a $2 billion company with over 4000 employees (56–57)
	But something slowly began to dawn on me – I still loved what I did (67–68)
	The heaviness of being successful was replaced by the lightness of being a beginner again, less sure about everything (71–72)
Good is in/bad is out	If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts (42–44)
	But then our visions of the future began to diverge and eventually we had a falling out (61)
	So at 30 I was out. And very publicly out (62–63)
	Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice (125–126)

pathos-oriented argumentation, returning to the theme of love, and the importance of doing what one loves. "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" (83–84).

3.5. The third story: death

Jobs begins by quoting a phrase that encompasses the key message of this story, that our time on earth is precious and should be used wisely: "if you live each day as if it was your last, someday you'll most certainly be right" (91–92). He employs *commoratio* and *hypophora* by

conveying the same message in different words, by stating and then answering a rhetorical question: "if today were the last day of my life, would I wanna do what I'm about to do now? And whenever the answer has been 'no' for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something" (93–95).

He then uses his experience of having lived through a life-threatening illness as a storyline to convey his personal life philosophy, which again revolves around the "love" theme in terms of following one's heart. He emphasizes the message by using *anaphora* ("remembering that" repeated at the start of each statement): "Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. … Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart" (96–101). Jobs reminds the audience that a confrontation with death obliterates "almost everything" (96), but the promptings of the heart. He frames death as a "tool" (96), as a means of accomplishing something and gaining perspective, such as making "the big choices in life" (97). He employs a *three-part-list* to describe successively more potent feelings in terms of the discomfort of experiencing them, combined with *anaphora* (repeating "all" at the start of each item) to emphasize the potency of death in terms of putting things in perspective: "all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure" (97–98). Subsequently, Jobs personalizes the message and engages the audience's emotions (*pathos*) by reminding them of the certainty of their own death. He again draws from the metaphor of LIFE IS A JOURNEY, and enhances identification with the audience, by framing death as a "destination we all share" (120).

Jobs then recounts his experience of the day he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He uses *hyperbole* ("I didn't even know what a pancreas was", 103) an exaggerated statement to communicate that the diagnosis came as a shock. He recounts: "my doctor advised me to go home and get my affairs in order, which is doctor's code for 'prepare to die'" (105–6). He emphasizes the severity of the situation by repeating the underlying point as a *three-part-list* combining *commoratio* (repeating the message in different words), *anaphora* (starting each item with "it means") and *climax* (statements gradually increasing in intensity): "It means to try to tell your kids everything you thought you'd have the next ten years to tell them in just a few months. It means to make sure everything is buttoned up so that it will be as easy as possible for your family. It means to say your goodbyes" (106–109). Jobs' experience with death helped him reframe death from just a "useful, but purely intellectual concept" (118) to a prevalent, ever-present reality that can place life's tough decisions in perspective.

Going against the seemingly pessimistic tone of the third story up to that point, Jobs then declares that "death is very likely the single best invention of life" (121). The effect of this statement is heightened through the use of *antiwork* at three levels. First, the juxtaposition of opposing ideas within the sentence (death/life). Second, the juxtaposition of the positive framing of death in this sentence in conjunction with the negative framing of death in prior statements. Third, the juxtaposition of death as a taboo, unpleasant topic connoting finality, with a pleasant, joyful occasion connoting the start of graduants' career life.

Jobs employs *logos* to frame death positively as "life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new" (121 − 122). He continues employing the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor together with a temporal dimension: "right now the new is you, but not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away" (122 − 123). The underlying message is that time on earth is precious and should be used wisely by following one's heart. Jobs implicitly uses the TIME IS MONEY metaphor, within a *three-part list* and *anaphora* (repetition of "don't …"): "your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's

life. Don't be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice" (125–127).

Jobs' explicit and pointed advice to the audience, derived from his own experiences and accumulated wisdom, and his status as a role model, creates a double form of identification. The first form is that he is already admired by the audience. As Burke (1951: 204) notes "matters of prestige (in the old style, 'wonder,') or … 'admiration') figure in the ultimate resources of 'identification.'" The second, synergistic form is that the person the audience admires now offers them his accumulated wisdom, and direct advice for leading their own life. Further, the discussion of themes of life, death and rebirth is what Sambonmatsu (1971: 37) calls "images of transformation" as potent resources for substantive identification.

Jobs' reference to The Whole Earth Catalog, "one of the bibles of my generation" (131) resurfaces the spirituality theme. He describes the "farewell message" (141) of its "final issue" (138), by employing the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor: "an early morning country road, the kind you might find yourself hitchhiking on, if you were so adventurous" (139–140). His final message, repeated three times and expressed as an imperative, is: "Stay hungry. Stay foolish" (141–144). The words are metaphorical, to connote the desire to accomplish new things, in creative, unusual ways. Doing this is a way to display "the courage to follow your heart and intuition" (127–128). Highlighting identification with the audience, Jobs closes by saying that he always wished that for himself, and now, as the audience graduates, he wishes it for them.

The persuasive force of enthymemes is enhanced when the ideas presented are consistent with already accepted social beliefs (*endoxa*). Following one's heart, the main message of the speech, is an already accepted ideal, which enhances the efficacy of the argumentation. The message is expressed in enthymematic form as shown in Table 7.

The whole speech is underlied by the central theme of the "circle of life", at different levels. At a broad level, the three stories present a logical progression from birth to life experiences to death. At a deeper level, Jobs experiences a symbolic death when he recounts how the couple that was supposed to adopt him "decided at the last minute that they really wanted a girl" (12 − 13). This is followed by a symbolic rebirth when another couple on a waiting list responded positively when they were asked whether they wanted to adopt him. Jobs' dropping out of university was a symbolic death, followed by a symbolic rebirth when he started following his interests with the calligraphy class. Apple was born in his parents' garage, "grew" to a "$2 billion company" (57), but then Jobs symbolically died when he was made redundant. Jobs experiences a symbolic rebirth when he realises that he still loved what he did, and started NeXT. Jobs experienced a symbolic death (which very nearly became real) when he was diagnosed with incurable pancreatic cancer, and then a symbolic rebirth when it was discovered that his cancer was curable. The Whole Earth Catalog was brought

Table 7
Main message in enthymematic form.

Enthymeme structure	Narrative premises and conclusions	
P1 + P2	P1	We are all going to die; death is inevitable
	P2	We are naked, we have nothing to lose
C1 → P1'	C1 – P1'	Therefore we might as well follow our heart
+P2' + P3'	P2'	Setbacks in hindsight are part of the journey
	P3'	We should have faith in following our heart
C2	C2	We can do so by staying hungry and foolish

to life (symbolic birth) and then had run its course (symbolic death). Since death is "life's change agent" (121) that "clears out the old to make way for the new" (122), the cycle is both completed and restarted. The audience is the new, but "not too long from now" (122–123) will be the old. The *antiwork* juxtaposition of death and rebirth underlies the thin narrative line between them. The unavoidable reality of death is a recurring feature in the speech, both explicitly and implicitly, a shared condition that underlies identification of Jobs and the audience.

Table 8 outlines the main elements of Jobs' rhetoric.

4. Discussion and conclusion

Our analysis of the Stanford commencement speech reveals Jobs' employment of rhetoric at a level of detail that helps us appreciate the sophistication of his rhetorical competence; and offers insights to the nature of his so-called "reality distortion field" (Isaacson, 2012: 97). In terms of the classical dynamics of rhetoric, Jobs can be seen as a high *ethos* leader who also engages his audience through emotional appeals or *pathos*, as well as narrative logic or *logos*. These are processes that are central to leaders' ability to shape social reality, by providing appealing and engaging narratives and versions of reality to their audience (Heracleous, 2011; Kotchemidova, 2010). The degree of *ethos* attributed to Jobs by the audience enables him to adopt an open, personal, relaxed style, despite the formal setting of a commencement ceremony. This reinforces the perceived authenticity of the speaker, and makes the audience more receptive to the significant processes of identification operating in the speech (Burke, 1951).

Jobs frames his speech through an overall storytelling approach, and employs central themes, metaphors, techniques of repetition and strategies of *amplification*. The stories derive from Jobs' own life, but also relate to fundamental concerns of personal relevance to all human beings: birth, sensemaking (connecting the dots), love and loss, death and rebirth. The stories Jobs tell are harbingers of fundamental life lessons that he, as a high ethos leader who speaks from the heart, shares with the audience. This deep personal relevance builds identifi-

cation beyond merely an implied common ground, towards a "transcendent we" (Cheney, 1983). Further, the themes of life, death and rebirth are examples of impactful "images of transformation" that act as potent resources for substantive identification (Sambonmatsu, 1971).

In terms of canons of rhetoric, the overall *arrangement* of the speech is based on the "circle of life" theme, which lends an aesthetic quality, a symmetry and a coherent narrative logic (Fisher, 1985). The root metaphor "life is a journey," repeatedly apparent in the speech, accords with and reinforces the "circle of life" theme and the narrative coherence. Jobs employs orientational metaphors (looking forward/looking backwards, good is up/bad is down), that are fundamental to human, embodied experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a) and thus derive from, and reinforce, a shared doxa. Both the circle of life structure of the speech and the use of embodied metaphors fundamental to human nature are conducive to identification by locating the speech in a shared space of deep concerns that apply to all human beings.

The central message of "follow your heart", also manifesting as the theme of "love" in the speech, is one that strikes an emotional chord (*pathos*) with the audience, itself a potent means of audience identification as well as impactful in the process of social construction of reality (Kotchemidova, 2010). The *invention* or source of the stories is Jobs' own life, reinforcing the credibility and authenticity of both Jobs and of the messages he shares. Personal reflection on one's life stories with a view to gaining insights into one's outlook and guiding principles as a leader has been found to be a formative developmental process with which effective leaders engage. Shamir and Eilam (2005) for example argue that the process of leaders reflecting and interpreting their life stories can provide self-knowledge, a personal perspective and a true North-type guidance to their actions. Further, George et al. (2007: 130) found that "authentic leaders … frame their life stories in ways that allow them to … develop self-awareness from their experiences. Authentic leaders act on that awareness by practicing their values and principles, sometimes at substantial risk to themselves". Steve Jobs' Stanford speech can be seen as an exemplar of this process, building further identification with an admired, high-ethos leader who shares his deep personal insights with the audience.

Jobs' speech exhibits many of the features of the speeches of charismatic leaders. Shamir et al. (1994) found that such speeches contain references to collective history and identity, followers' worth and efficacy, identification with the audience, references to values and the future, and references to hope and faith. Jobs' speech displays several of these elements, such as identification with the audience, references to values, the future, as well as hope and faith. Mio, Riggio, Levin, and Reese (2005) found that charismatic leaders use almost twice as many metaphors than non-charismatic leaders. As we showed, metaphors were a central aspect of Jobs' Stanford speech. However, there is much more to the rhetorical sophistication of Jobs' speech, as demonstrated by our analysis. Classical elements of rhetoric are well employed in Jobs' speech, but we contend that the speech's power is gained from the conjunction of classical rhetoric with powerful, pervasive processes of identification.

Our analysis shows how processes of identification are ever-present, interwoven with rhetorical devices in Jobs' rhetorical performance. By rhetorical devices we mean such use of language as anaphora, hyperbole or isocolon, that can be employed to accomplish ends such as identification. We view identification between rhetor and audience as an effect of the use of rhetorical devices. Burke (1950: 46) was familiar with such intermingling: "there is no chance of our keeping apart the meanings of persuasion, identification ('consubstantiality') and communication (the nature of rhetoric as 'addressed')". These identification processes are not discreet and momentary, but interconnected and longitudinal. The same statement can be at once a rhetorical device as well as a multi-dimensional means of identification, simultaneously

Table 8
Key elements of Steve Jobs' rhetoric: classical rhetoric and identification.

Rhetorical elements	Manifestation in Steve Jobs' speech
Identification	Shared context (spatial context, technology industry, Jobs as role model)
	Common ground (implicit form) of endoxa (shared beliefs), cycle of life
	Antithesis (examples referring to common enemy)
	Inverse antithesis (positive framing of shared role models)
	Self-presentation as possessing character traits seen as virtuous by audience
Means of persuasion	Ethos: Jobs seen as a legendary silicon valley entrepreneur
	Logos: Speech is based on narrative logic that is clearly and evocatively expressed and in accordance with accepted belief or endoxa
	Pathos: Central themes of stories (birth, life, death) are fundamental to human experience and engage the emotions
Canons	Invention: Jobs' own life experience, elements of which were not previously revealed aids credibility and identification
	Arrangement: The "circle of life" structure of the speech lends an aesthetic quality and a coherent narrative logic
	Style: Informal, conversational, characterized by skillful framing and rhetorical crafting
Devices	Enthymemes: The core enthymeme offers a simple, impactful, fundamental message with far reaching implications
	Examples: The three stories act as extended examples with which the audience can identify
	Metaphors: Employment of root metaphors (on life, love) and orientational metaphors that are fundamental aspects of human experience

drawing on common ground, the "transcendent we" and potent images of transformation. Subsequent statements can extend and reinforce these kinds of identification or initiate new ones.

Burke (1972) described explicit identification processes, where the speaker mentions common areas between them and the audience with the obvious intent to identify and persuade, as dull. What we found in Jobs' speech are multi-faceted, subtle, implicit identification processes that permeate his speech as a structural feature (Heracleous & Hendry, 2000), working synergistically with devices of classical rhetoric. Burke (1972: 28) noted that "the major power of identification derives from situations in which it goes unnoticed." Jobs' speech may be so evocative precisely because the identification processes at work are subtle and implicit, unnoticed by the conscious mind, and operating under the radar.

Our analysis leads us to conclude that our understanding of leaders' rhetorical competence may neglect a fundamental dimension unless we can appreciate the vital operations of processes of identification in conjunction with the functions of classical rhetoric.

Uncited references

Bligh and Hess, 2007
Etzioni, 1961
Weber, 1947

Appendix A. Glossary of rhetorical terms[2]

Anaphora   repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses or verses

Antiwork   conjoining contrasting ideas in close proximity

Aporia   expressing doubt, perplexity or uncertainty in order to make a certain point

Climax   a gradual increase in intensity of meaning with words arranged in ascending order of importance

Commoratio emphasizing an important point by repeating it several times in different words

Enargeia   visually powerful, vivid description

Endoxa   an already accepted, shared social belief

Ethos   persuasive appeal based on the character or credibility of the rhetor

Enthymeme rhetorical structures of argumentation that draw from premises already held by the audience in particular social contexts

Hyperbole an extravagant statement or the use of exaggerated terms for the purpose of emphasis or heightened effect

Hypophora asking a question and immediately commenting upon it

Isocolon   a succession of phrases of approximately equal length and corresponding structure

Logos   persuasive appeal by logical demonstration (argumentation)

Metaphor   framing A in terms of B, assertion of identity between two domains

Pathos   persuasive appeal to the audience's emotions

Polyptoton repetition of words from the same root but with different endings

Appendix B. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.05.011.

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[2] The definitions in this glossary are based on Lanham (1991).

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