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Reading the TED talk genre: Contradictions and pedagogical pleasures in spreading ideas about management

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ABSTRACT

Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) talks have become a powerful way of communicating management ideas to global audiences. This raises questions about how management educators should engage with TED talks. This paper uses literary theory to understand TED talks as a distinct genre in order to explore how students ‘read’ TED talks and the pleasures that they gain from this. Based on an analysis of TED talks, books about TED talks, focus groups and interviews with management students, we identify three contradictions in the genre: (i) freedom to learn (ii) authenticity of speakers and texts, and (iii) emotional connection as a source of pleasure. The kind of reading pleasure that TED talks encourage is characterized by *plaisir*, an easygoing enjoyment which does not challenge readers’ assumptions and supports surface learning. This is contrasted with *jouissance*, a pleasure that produces disturbance and leaves the subject altered. We suggest that management educators can work to enable students to become critical, reflexive readers who understand the importance of these new genres in producing meaning. By exposing the contradictory nature of reading TED talks, we contribute to understanding the storied nature of scientific knowledge and the role of power in communicating ideas about management.

KEYWORDS: On-line learning, pedagogy, politics of knowledge, management education, use of film in teaching, undergraduate business education, critical management studies

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) talks have become a powerful way of spreading ideas about management to global audiences. Popular talks feature high profile business leaders such as current Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and Unilever boss Harish Manwani, while others feature university professors including Nirmalya Kumar of London Business School and Amy Cuddy of Harvard. The TED talk website currently hosts around 2500 ‘short, powerful talks’ (18 minutes or less) and the organization describes itself as a ‘a clearing house of free knowledge from the world’s most inspired thinkers’¹. Talks are available for public use under a Creative Commons licence and are viewed at a rate of 1.5 million times a day (Gallo, 2014), over a billion online views overall (Sugimoto, Thelwall, Lariviere, Tsou, Mongeon & Macaluso, 2013). The popularity of TED talks is suggested to be related to the way they package and present scientific knowledge in an entertaining way (Sugimoto et al., 2013).

At a time when business school expansion and managerialism (Harley, 2018) is giving rise to increasingly consumerist student-teacher relationships (Parker & Jary, 1995; McWilliam, 1999), the use of TED talks in the management classroom may be driven by a desire to temporarily mediate the pressures of teaching by giving students a ‘wow factor’ (Veen & Vrakking, 2006). However, the use of ‘edutainment’ has a potential darker side and can promote surface rather than deep learning (Billsberry, 2014). In order to evaluate the impact of TED talks on management education, we need to better understand how management students read these texts and the pleasures they gain from this. This paper uses concepts from literary theory to address this research question.

¹ www.ted.com [accessed 1 March 2018]

Use of literary theory among management education scholars is growing (Montiel, Antolin-Lopez & Gallo, 2018). This work draws on sociolinguistic educational theory which suggests that understanding ‘how texts come into being, how they are constituted, how they are reproduced in reading or hearing, and assimilated, why certain texts become generated, and why others are impossible’ are central questions for educators (Kress, 1985: 5). It recognizes the role of institutions and social groupings in developing systematic ways of talking that define and delimit how a topic is spoken about and what it is possible to say. The role of educators then is to enable students to become ‘particular kinds of readers [and to] construct for them reading positions *vis-à-vis* a very large set of texts, those of the culture as a whole’ (Kress, 1985: 18; see also Barthes, 1990).

We begin by demonstrating the importance of literary concepts, such as genre, as a way of understanding the conventions that make meaning possible. This helps to determine who is authorized to speak and what they are permitted to say. To understand the process whereby meanings are produced within genres, we distinguish between the *site of the producer*, the *site of the text* and the *site of the reader*. After summarizing our methods, we use focus group and interview data to identify three contradictions in management students’ accounts of how they read TED talks: : (i) freedom to learn (ii) authenticity of speakers and texts, and (iii) emotional connection as a source of pleasure. We explain the popularity of TED talks among management students by introducing the concept of pleasure, as it relates to reading (Barthes, 1976) and learning (McWilliam, 1999). We conclude by emphasising the importance of literary analysis in management education as a way of developing the critical consciousness that is needed in order to evaluate scientific knowledge claims conveyed by entertaining texts.

UNDERSTANDING GENRES AND AUDIENCES

The term 'text' originates from literary theory and refers to written works such as books. However, use of the term has extended into media analysis where it applies to non-linguistic works, including film and television shows. Groups of texts that share stylistic features are collectively referred to as a genre (Mittell, 2001; Frow, 2006).

Readers respond to genre conventions (Iser, 1995) by drawing on their cultural knowledge. The existence and maintenance of a genre relies on 'intertextuality', as similarities between texts allow readers to interpret them in relation to others. Genre recognition is based on initial cues which set readers' expectations and frame how they engage with a text. For example, the genre of movies known as Westerns is recognizable through stylistic conventions including music, typography and symbols (e.g. cowboys and horses, Colt .45 guns, Stetson hats, sweeping landscapes). Yet the nature of genre classifications is inherently unstable. Hence new texts, like 'spaghetti Westerns' or science fiction Westerns, reshape perceptions of the genre.

Genres 'create effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility' and 'shape our understanding of the world' (Frow, 2006: 18-19). For example, Westerns rely on simple morality tales, such as the story of a lone individual avenging wrongdoing. This narrative promotes an ideology of personal rather than institutional justice and invites moral judgement. By being 'bound up with the exercise of power' (Frow, 2006: 2), genres enable construction of 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1991) through 'the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within society' and the structuring of power relations (Foucault, 1984: 101). Texts are thus 'doubly determined' by the meaning of discourses that appear within them and the constraints of the genre in which they appear (Kress, 1985: 20). This invites consideration of the rules

that determine how genres are produced, and the conventions which frame what can be said, when and by whom.

Genre also draws attention to the author as a producer of cultural meaning in relation to a text. Popular culture tends to privilege the author as the originator and source of meaning in relation to a given text. For Foucault (1984) and Barthes (1977), an author is understood as an ideological construction, the purpose of which is to enable interpretation of a group of texts. This perspective on the author draws attention to the complexities of ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’ meaning within texts (Hall, 1980) and the role of readers in decoding messages in the way the producer intends them to be understood (Ruddock, 1991). Readers are guided by ‘reading strategies and interpretive conventions’ which they acquire as members of a particular ‘interpretive community’ (Radway, 1984: 11).

The concept of the *ideal reader* refers to a situation where a reader accepts the invitation of a producer to adopt the encoded values, beliefs and attitudes contained in the text and collaborates with the author to create meaning (Hall, 1980; Scott, 1994). The ideology of the text thus appears unproblematic and natural to them. However, some texts are more *writerly* than others, providing less familiarity and containing gaps the reader has to fill (Barthes, 1976, 1990). These texts invite more active, critical readings. In contrast, *readerly* texts are more traditional and predictable, conforming to readers’ expectations and providing limited opportunity for open readings.

A key role for educators is to encourage exploration of the ideological underpinnings of texts and how they condition reader responses (Kress, 1985). This involves encouraging learners to question what or who is silenced within the text. Cultivating these skills

gives rise to a *resistant reader* who is equipped with a ‘critical consciousness’ (Freire, 1970) through which they can more effectively evaluate messages contained within texts. This conceptual framework provides the basis for analysis of TED talks as a collection of stylistically similar texts which position the reader in particular ways.

METHODS

The communication of ideas about management via TED talks can be understood as a ‘circuit’ (Hall, 1997) comprised of three interrelated sites of meaning: the *site of the text* (audio and video-recorded talks); the *site of the producer* (the TED Foundation, local event organizers, and speakers); and *the site of the reader* (live and online audiences) [see Figure 1]. This enables exploration of the structural features of the TED talk genre and how audiences engage with it. As critical, interpretive researchers (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000) we sought to understand the role of power in shaping how knowledge is produced. Discourses, as ‘systems of meaning arising out of the organisation of social institutions’ (Kress, 1985: 31, see also Foucault, 1991), are important in enabling the circulation of ideas and utterances in particular moments and ensuring that they are seen as valid. This invites exploration of ‘clearly definable rules’ (Foucault, 1991: 63) that determine what can be said and by whom. Our research therefore considers meaning making as a contested process where audiences may resist producers’ attempts to impose ideological meaning.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Focusing on the *site of the text*, we identified the structural features of the genre (Frow, 2006). We began by watching a wide range of TED talks and gathering information about speakers. Next, we narrowed our focus to four TED talks and one TEDx talk,

based on relevance to management, popularity index (number of viewers) and frequency mentioned by students interviewed². We watched these talks individually several times, closely read talk transcripts and gathered supplementary data from TED producers, event organizers and speakers. We took detailed notes which we subsequently shared. We also interviewed a UK university TEDx event organizer and drew on the experiences of Author 2 who gave a TEDx talk in 2014.

The second part of our analysis focused on the *producer* who regulates the texts and shapes conventions that frame readers' engagement with the genre. We began by closely reading three bestselling, popular books, one by TED founder, Chris Anderson (2016) and two by leading TED speaker and author, Carmine Gallo (2014, 2016). These texts were coded and analyzed thematically to generate insight into the producers' perspective. In addition to the three books that form the basis of our analysis of the producer, a number of other documentary sources, i.e. news articles, YouTube videos and commentaries, were used to contextualize our findings³.

Analysis of the *site of the reader* focused on management students as an interpretive community (Radway, 1984). Our purposive sample of 13 respondents was comprised of undergraduate final year management students whom we interviewed either as part of a focus group or individually. These students are part of the generation referred to as

² Students did not distinguish between TED and TEDx talks. (Licensing differences between the two are noted later in the paper).

³ Sample articles include: Kotkin, J. 2014. 'Silicon valley's giants are just gilded tycoons in techno-utopian clothes', *The Daily Beast* <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/04/25/silicon-valley-s-giants-are-just-gilded-age-tycoons-in-techno-utopian-clothes.html>; Wallace, B. 2012. 'How TED talks started a movement', *New York Magazine* <http://nymag.com/news/features/ted-conferences-2012-3/> [both accessed 1 March 2018] ; Benjamin Bratton, 'We need to talk about TED', *The Guardian*, 30 Dec. 2013 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/30/we-need-to-talk-about-ted> [accessed 28 August 2018]; Julie Bindel, 'Why I'd never do a TED talk (and it's not just because they're named after a man)', *The Guardian*, 23 July 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/23/ted-talk-smugness-presenters-embarrassing> [accessed 28 August 2018].

‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001) because they have grown up with digital technologies enabled by the Internet and engage with them in adept and naturalistic ways (Proserpio & Gioia, 2007). It is claimed that digital natives learn differently from previous generations and have different educational expectations (Thomas, 2011).

A challenge posed by this study relates to the private, individual nature of audience engagement with TED talks, for example via smartphone or computer. To overcome the difficulty of studying how audiences engage with the genre, we used focus groups to explore how audiences co-constructed meaning relationally. Our sample comprised two UK focus groups involving a total of ten students, three individual student interviews in New Zealand, and an interview with a management educator who uses TED talks extensively⁴. The findings thus reflect the culture-specific nature of this student sample, and the educational location where the data was collected. Interviews lasted between 40-120 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim. An interview schedule was used to ensure consistency. Questions related to patterns and frequency of viewing/listening behavior, evaluation of the message (credibility of the speaker, claims/arguments made), and reader responses (emotional as well as cognitive). Our analytical approach was iterative, tracking between the literature and data to develop a coherent explanation of patterns observed. We sought to remain open to the possibility of being surprised by the data, rather than using it to confirm preunderstandings (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007). We took notes and engaged in conversations with each other, working reflexively with the data and considering how our insider subject positions, as management educators, was likely to influence our interpretations

⁴ Ethical rules at Author 3’s university prevent research involving students while they are taking classes. This meant we were unable to organize focus groups in New Zealand but we individually interviewed a small number of students once classes had ended.

(Cunliffe, 2003). For example, in the early stages of the project our personal scepticism about TED talks was challenged by the emotional explanations given by students for reading them. This prompted us to try to better understand the pleasures that students gain from TED talks.

We tailored our analytical approach to each site of meaning [Figure 1]. We began by focusing on structural features of the genre (Frow, 2006). First, we looked at the *formal features* of texts, including vocabulary and structural elements that characterize the genre, such as talk length. Second, we considered the *thematic structure* of texts which draw on ‘a set of highly conventional topics or *topoi* [and project] a schematic but coherent and plausible world from these materials’ (Frow, 2006: 9). Third, we explored *situation of address*, comprising assumptions about what kind of person is speaking and the basis of truth claims, including authority, emotional tone and moral force. Fourth, we considered the *structure of implication* which invokes and presupposes relevant background knowledge ‘and in so doing sets up a certain complicity with the reader’ (Frow, 2006: 9). Fifth, we considered *rhetorical function* - how texts are structured in order to demonstrate authority, credibility and plausibility. This highlighted the importance of stories, spoken or written accounts of events and contexts that speakers tell about themselves, in TED talks. These stories are characterized by temporal sequence and have a clear beginning, middle and end. By encouraging audiences to engage in empathetic relationships with storytellers and characters (Gabriel, 2000), stories have performative power, i.e. they help to constitute social reality by creating meaning. We therefore identified stories in the texts and recorded details of characters, plot and message. Finally, we analysed the *setting*, symbolic features that provide a regulative frame and help to differentiate the genre from others.

Analysis of interview data was thematic (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). We looked for patterns and repetitions in interview transcripts and assigned them codes such as ‘story’, ‘enjoyment’, ‘entertainment’, ‘emotion’, ‘learning’ and ‘science’. By coding terms used by interviewees, we generated a smaller number of overarching themes that contributed towards our emergent theoretical framework, e.g. ‘accessibility’, ‘emotional connection’ and ‘authenticity’. We now analyse the sites of producer and text, before considering management students as readers.

PRODUCING THE TED TALK GENRE

TED talk producers determine ‘the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts’ (Foucault, 1984: 114). By seeking to control how the genre is produced, producers are not simply the authors of *ideas* but founders of a particular way of speaking. The success of the genre relies on promoting an ideology that informs how audiences decide whether or not ideas are true. To understand how the genre is structured, we begin by analysing how TED talks are organized. TED is a non-profit foundation established in 1984, funded by advertising and members. Initially a one-off speaking event, by 1990 it had developed into a four-day annual conference in California with 50 speakers (Gallo, 2014). The TED foundation was bought in 2001 by technology magazine publisher, Chris Anderson who turned it into an online dissemination platform with subtitles in over 100 languages. In 2009, the foundation started granting licences to third parties to organize local TEDx events. To date, there have been more than 15,000 TEDx events in nearly 170 countries⁵. These are regulated under licence by the TED Foundation⁶. Live audience attendance is limited to 100 for

⁵ <https://www.ted.com/participate/organize-a-local-tedx-event/before-you-start/what-is-a-tedx-event> [accessed 26 March 2018]

⁶ As illustrated by a recent controversy in Belgium where speaker and stage artist Deborah De Robertis, was dragged off the stage for ‘violating the agreement’ made with local organizers.

the first event organized by the licence-holder with the possibility of applying for a licence to host a larger event subsequently, if the organizer attends an official TED conference (at a cost of approximately 7,500 US dollars).

Around a fifth of TEDx events are hosted by universities and organised by administrative or academic faculty or students⁷. TED talks delivered by academics are on average watched more frequently (Sugimoto & Thelwell, 2013). Hosting TEDx events has become popular in universities as a marketing strategy to promote the brand and engage potential students. This is driven by competition, as one organizer explained, ‘it was the Vice Chancellor’s idea... [because] so many other universities are doing this’. At the same time, the organizers were told by the TED Foundation that it was a ‘requirement’ for the event to be ‘student-centered’ and to ‘seem like it’s led by the student[s]’. The response to these events can be immediate: ‘once we announced that we had got a license, it sort of exploded really. Our Facebook page got... 500 likes over a weekend... there’s a great deal of interest [from the students]. I think the name does carry a great deal of weight’.

TED talks are immediately recognizable. The genre serves as a means of classification that enables texts to be grouped together and differentiated from others. Structural features of the genre, such as talk duration, are explicitly specified by producers (Gallo, 2014; Anderson, 2016). Visual recognition is enabled by symbolic features such as a darkened stage, circular red carpet and the TED logo. Posture and manner of the speaker is typically informal, without a podium or obvious microphone.

<https://mashable.com/2018/03/06/tedx-censorship-drags-presenter-off-stage/#7ccpiKRtcsq3> [accessed 26 March 2018]

⁷ Over 2,900 <https://www.ted.com/participate/organize-a-local-tedx-event/before-you-start/event-types/university-event-type> [accessed 1 March 2016] and personal communication, TED Foundation [3 June 2016]

Mode of address is directed towards a live studio audience. The genre is further characterised by informal language which is claimed to enhance comprehension and establish audience proximity. Emotional language is used to establish a personal connection to the speaker (Di Carlo, 2014). A typical thematic structure involves taking an existing idea and turning it into something surprising or new⁸ [see Table 1].

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

A further feature of the genre that is emphasized by producers is storytelling. The TED website states the organization is ‘in the business of telling stories’. Gallo (2014) cites the ‘power of narrative’ as the driving force behind the success of TED. Anderson (2016: xi) claims the Internet has ‘amplified the power of authors’ to tell a story to the whole world. Storytelling is suggested to be a way of communicating authenticity, which is what makes TED talks ‘great’. Cohen⁹ also suggests that talks provide ‘emotiveness’, evoking ‘contagious emotions... to bring a lump to (the audience’s) throat or butterflies in the stomach’. A story is best if it is personal, yet ‘not too personal’; she likens them to ‘a secular sermon’. Similar guidance is given in TED’s official ‘Ten Commandments’, i.e. the second commandment reads ‘show the real you... be vulnerable...’ This ‘real’ self can then ‘shine’ on the TED stage¹⁰.

TED talks are characterized by validation language that makes the speaker’s point of view appear attractive (Mittell, 2001). Credibility is achieved by naming high status universities (e.g. ‘economists from MIT and LSE’) and referring to the speaker’s own

⁸Chris Anderson, 2013, ‘What makes a great talk, great’
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbbvUZOLTQY> [accessed 1 June 2016]

⁹June Cohen, 2010, ‘What makes a great TED talk’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVDfWfUSBIM>
[accessed 1 June 2016]

¹⁰ TEDx Speaker Guide [accessed by authors]

research and academic/professional credentials. At the same time, speakers are critical of academic research, suggesting it is not as useful as ‘real-life’ (personal or business) experience. Consistent with this, speakers are advised to avoid technical language or ‘jargon’, as this is suggested to be alienating and risks losing the audience (Gallo, 2014; Anderson, 2016).

Much research cited in the TED talks [see Table 1] is based on behavioral neuroscience, behavioral and evolutionary psychology. In management studies, the popularity of neuroscience as a way of understanding organizational behaviour is claimed to be related to a desire for novelty. It often has relatively low statistical power and can contain invalid data due to discrepant analytical strategies or imprecise theoretical statements (Lindebaum, 2016; Button, Ioannidis, Mokrysz, Nosek, Flint, Robinson & Munafo, 2013). While research findings arising from these studies tend to be presented in TED talks as ‘objectively true’ (Lindebaum, 2016: 543), their reliability is sometimes questioned. For example, Cuddy’s TED talk [Table 1], was suggested to have been based on flawed scientific findings. Cuddy’s collaborator suggests the initial research was ‘seriously flawed’, while a study published in 2015 involving four times as many experimental subjects as the original study did not find the hormonal or behavioural effects claimed by Cuddy (Ranehill, Dreber, Johannesson, Leiber, Sul & Weber, 2015). Critics claimed these effects were the result of ‘cherry-picking data’ or ‘p-hacking’¹¹, suggesting this was one of the ‘latest examples of scientific overreach... an exemplar of how the media and scientists reinforce each other’s worst tendencies towards overhyping tentative results’¹². Cuddy was subjected to aggressive, public critique of

¹¹ Morris, D. 2016. ‘Power poses’ researcher Dana Carney now says effects are undeniably false’ <http://fortune.com/2016/10/02/power-poses-research-false/> [accessed 13 June 2016]

¹² Gelman, A., & Fung, K. 2016. ‘The power of the “Power pose”’ http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2016/01/amy_cuddy_s_power_pose_research_is_the_latest_example_of_scientific_overreach.html [accessed 1 June 2016]

her academic work and intellectual credibility, fuelled by social media, following her TED talk. This was suggested to have contributed towards her decision to leave her tenure-track job at Harvard in 2016¹³.

Cuddy's case illustrates the 'cult' of the author (Barthes 1971) who is required to construct a narrative as the 'genius' whose work is informed by their life. Barthes argues that such positioning of the author figure is always fictional, distorting by shifting the focus from the story to the person. These practices position the text as sacred, having a fixed meaning, and the TED speaker as an 'Author-God' (p.146). This encourages a 'learning-as-inspiration' approach to pedagogy which positions students as followers or disciples and the teacher as guru. Because of the power difference that characterizes this relationship, the teacher (or speaker) is 'continually in danger of "crucifixion"' (Torrance, 1975: 453, cited in McWilliam, 1999: 48), especially when the teacher's ability to perform miracles fails. While Cuddy was initially presented as the author, in Barthes' (1971) terms, she was increasingly unable to control the meaning of the text. Her 'crucifixion' as a guru was also related to gendered norms surrounding pedagogical authority, as 'female teachers are the objects of special scrutiny' (McWilliam, 1999: 116).

TED producers suggest informality is key to making TED talks successful (Gallo, 2014). Yet nearly all the speakers in Table 1 used PowerPoint or equivalent technology, projected from a large screen that dominated the stage. The official TEDx Speaker Guide specifies that slides should exhibit mainly photos, graphs or infographics 'with as

¹³ See 'When the revolution came for Amy Cuddy'. *New York Times Magazine*, October 18, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/18/magazine/when-the-revolution-came-for-amy-cuddy.html> [accessed 16 Feb. 2018]

little text as possible'. These visual images are used to generate emotion alongside the rationality provided by the speaker's words (Bell & Davison, 2013). This practice is consistent with 'a society of spectacle, where much knowledge and information assume the form of visual representations' (Gabriel, 2008: 256). However, PowerPoint discourages 'critical, creative and active' audience responses by forcing 'linearity of argumentation' and limiting improvisation (p.255). Consequently, its pervasive use appears to contradict TED producers' claims to informality.

A further feature of the genre concerns scripting and rehearsal. Gallo (2014) and Anderson (2016) suggest successful TED talks depend on memorising a script, rehearsal and word-for-word recital. This was experienced first-hand by Author 2 when preparing her TEDx talk. She was supported by a professional coach, given detailed instructions on body language and verbal delivery and asked to participate in multiple rehearsals. The strength of the genre is further illustrated by the existence of parodies which draw attention to structural features and use them as source of humour. However, producers insist that this illustrates what makes a good TED talk.¹⁴ At the same time, producers suggest 'there is no one way' to give a 'great' TED talk by applying 'a single formula' because 'audiences see through it in an instant and feel manipulated' (Anderson, 2016: x). Taken together, these structural features provide the basis for a clearly recognizable and 'endlessly replicable' (Radway, 1984: 23) genre.

TED talks are seen as 'an intellectual fount' for discussing 'weighty topics, including issues of scientific concern' (Tsou, Thelwall, Mongeon & Sugimoto, 2014: 2). They are promoted as a way of popularizing scientific findings in an era when the Internet is 'the

¹⁴ Such as <http://blog.ted.com/11-of-the-funniest-ted-talk-spoofs-and-what-speakers-can-learn-from-them/> [accessed 1 June 2016]

main source of information for learning about specific scientific issues' (p. 1). Yet TED talks are less 'critical assessment' and more 'enthusiastic sales pitches', as the genre caters to 'rock star scientists' rather than those whose research may be more innovative or profound (p. 2). If students unquestioningly accept evidence that is presented to them and do not have a forum through which to challenge it, a dangerous 'illusion of having learned' can be created (Billsberry, 2014: 155). Without a space where the purported scientific evidence of TED talks can be discussed, knowledge claims put forward by experts and authority figures remain unquestioned, even if these claims are supportive of powerful interests. The next section explores these contradictions further through analysing why students read TED talks, and the pleasures they gain from this.

READING TED TALKS: CONTRADICTIONS OF THE GENRE

By comparing our analysis of management students as TED talk readers with the genre conventions and the intentions of the producer we identify three contradictions : (i) freedom to learn (ii) authenticity of speakers and texts, and (iii) emotional connection as a source of pleasure.

Freedom to learn

Through iterative analysis of management student's accounts of how and why they read TED talks we identify a pattern related to a desire for accessibility or 'freedom to learn'. TED talks are described as 'light', 'a good way to pass the time', even while on 'holiday sunbathing'. Another stated, 'I watch them for leisure really' (I3). They also highlighted the blurred boundary between education and entertainment: one student said that she watches TED talks 'particularly for entertainment but then I end up getting something out of them... I always know there's going to be a really neat message somewhere in there' (I3). When asked about the use of TED in the classroom, students

described it as ‘a nice break from lecture[s]’ especially for those who are more ‘visual learners’ (I3). Similarly, the management educator we interviewed saw them as ‘a really useful resource’, ‘an entertainment package’ which enables students to ‘listen harder and remember a bit more’.

Students view TED talks as a quick and easy way to learn new skills or knowledge, e.g. memory techniques, learning a language. One student described them as ‘fast knowledge’: ‘instead of [spending weeks] reading a book, you can just get a snapshot...’ (RC/F2). They are ‘bite sized pieces’ of information which are easy to digest (RE/F1)¹⁵. Capturing attention early is crucial in deciding whether to read a text in its entirety. As is typical of the ‘digital native’ generation, students ‘zoom in’ and out (Askehave & Nielsen, 2005), skipping through texts that do not immediately capture their attention. They then sometimes ‘Google’ for more information, including published research related to talks. As this pattern suggests, while they are ‘capable of playing with technology’, students did not always have ‘the knowledge to adequately determine the relevance or truth of what they found’ (Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010: 1238).

Students expressed confidence that they would find something of interest in TED talks: there is ‘something for everyone ... you just have to find it’ (RD/F1). They enjoyed sharing talks with others, e.g. via social media, and emphasize the serendipitous nature of this process, describing being ‘drawn into TED’ via online searches or recommendations from friends or lecturers. One explained: ‘it’s the ideal way of spreading because it just catches someone else and someone else’ (RF/F1). This

¹⁵ ‘R’ = Respondent and ‘F’ = Focus Group, hence Respondent E, Focus group 1

freedom to ‘forage’ (Askehave & Nielsen, 2005), moving between ‘texts’ and making connections between them, is characteristic of the pleasure students associate with TED talks. Some showed a willingness to become *ideal readers*, working with the producer to accept encoded values, beliefs and attitudes contained in the text and collaborating in the production of meaning, for example by reading TED talks shared by prospective employers on LinkedIn. The ‘endlessly replicable’ (Radway, 1984: 23) nature of the genre was also alluded to by students who described TED talks as ‘addictive’ (RC/F2), creating a perpetual desire to repeat the experience.

Accessibility is enabled by being able to watch or listen to TED talks while doing everyday tasks, e.g. commuting on the bus, walking, doing housework, or eating lunch at a desk. This provides students with a high degree of individual choice over what and when they were able to learn. One explained: ‘if you are not learning something then you can just turn it off’ (RA/F2); another noted ‘if I don’t like the message that’s coming through I just don’t listen to it’ (I3). This was contrasted with the perceived restrictions of ‘normal lectures’, where students describe themselves as ‘forced’, ‘trapped’ and ‘manipulated’, as the following quotes illustrate:

I just don’t expect my lectures to be anywhere near as interesting as TED talks’
(RD/F2).

I don’t know if you’ve sat through a two-hour lecture... It’s horrible...
sometimes you can just fall asleep and it can be irrelevant. (RA/F1)

We have been taught this narrative that education is boring; all the way through school has been boring for me... places like TED on YouTube... can be really fun... the market dictate[s] this formula of how you sell people ideas. (RC/F1).

TED talks thus encourage a pedagogy based on the idea of the individual learner as a consumer of ideas who must be free to choose what, when and how they learn. 'Selling ideas' is seen as an activity enabled by the neoliberal free 'market' (Parker & Jary, 1995). Yet while they value the freedom to learn enabled by the genre, the students rarely opposed the meaning of these easily consumed texts. This is because TED talks conform to their expectations, are not open to diverse readings and reinforce the reader's passive position. They can therefore be understood as readerly texts (Barthes, 1976, 1990) where meaning is fixed and predetermined and reading is characterized by familiarity.

This is problematic because freedom to learn relies on moving beyond a 'banking model of education', which promotes surface learning and creates passive learners who are ill-equipped to identify or question power relations (Freire, 1970). The TED talk genre encourages surface learning, based on imparting knowledge as a factual resource, rather than deep learning which results in reflexivity, meaning-creation and critical reasoning. This 'spoon-feeding' approach to learning encourages learner passivity (Raelin, 2009: 407) and fails to cultivate the 'habits of mind' that provide students with 'a sense of agency' (Dehler & Welsh, 2014: 879). Rather than viewing educational spaces as 'an opportunity for intersubjectivity, a space where the meeting of individuals with free will allows for the mutual creation of freedom' (Yue, 2011: 133), the TED talk genre creates a space for learning where free will is reduced to passive consumption.

Authenticity of speakers and texts

The second contradiction we identify relates to authenticity. In management education it has been argued that authenticity comes from educators and students having a concept

of self as ‘in-the-making’ rather than fixed (Yue, 2011). We use authenticity here to explore students’ perceptions of the sincerity of speakers and of texts ‘as “genuine”, “real” or “true”’ (Lehman, O’Connor, Kovacs & Newman, 2018: 1). Storytelling is important in constructing an impression of authenticity and creating a successful brand (Beverland, 2008). Guthey and Jackson (2005) show how leader authenticity relies on conveying a visual impression, in the form of a photographic portrait, that enables a connection to be made with audiences. These authors suggest the significance of authenticity is amplified in cultures where individuals are addressed primarily as consumers where notions of self, identity and personhood have become increasingly fragmented. Bell and Leonard (2018) draw attention to the role of audiences in evaluating authenticity of a story and the intentions of the storyteller, especially in digital spaces where identities can be manipulated more easily than in face-to-face interaction. In such contexts there is increasing pressure to craft an authentic identity, yet paradoxically, authenticity becomes increasingly elusive.

Students displayed awareness of the constructed nature of authenticity within the TED talk genre. They observed that talks are scripted or ‘curated’ and speakers ‘groomed’ or ‘coached’. Students also recognised the role of the Internet, including social media and search engine algorithms, in guiding them towards certain talks. However, this did not stop them from emphasizing the authenticity of TED talks, as one remarked, ‘they just seem to be so real. Like it’s not... actually scripted’ (RA/F1). Dealing with the elusiveness of authenticity within the genre therefore involves deciding what ‘is fake and [what] is a really good fake’ (RG/F1). Students associated this elusiveness with a context where commercial values (often seen as the antithesis of authenticity) undermine one’s ability to convey a ‘genuine’ selfhood. One stated, ‘I think [the] main purpose [of TED talks] is to try and sell knowledge’ (RF/F1), commenting that speakers

are ‘selling ideas through books and stuff and then promoting them’. This was viewed by one student as a process of ‘taking a load of people... [who] think they’re right and trying to get everyone to agree with them’. Another commented : ‘it would be a lot more authentic I think if we knew that they were... sponsoring people that can’t afford to go or paying people that may not be able to participate’ (I2). As these quotes highlight, authenticity provides a further source of contradiction within the TED talk genre.

A further contradiction arises when students compared TED talks with ‘traditional’ lectures and TED speakers with management educators. They contrasted TED speakers with management educators, portraying the latter as less inspiring and interesting and suggesting that TED talks ‘spoke to them in ways that their courses did not’ (RA/F1). Conversely, students expressed the view that a speaker who held a PhD or university position could be better trusted to convey ideas that are ‘true’; ‘[although] a TED talk by an academic might not be as fun and easy going, it feels like what they say is worth more than one person’s experience’. One student noted: ‘sometimes statistics can be misleading’ and it is important either to be able to decipher ‘the truth’ or to trust the speaker (RF/F1). Perceptions of authenticity are especially important in evaluating scientific claims. Yet the students are largely passive readers, falling back on academic signifiers of expertise such as the status of the university cited by the speaker. Occasionally they sought to resolve this contradiction by working with educators to evaluate the authenticity of the text: ‘[for me] ideal’ learning involves watching a TED talk and then having a teacher who is ‘able to decipher it for me and challenge me’ (I3).

In sum, contrary to producers’ claims of naturalness, the TED talk genre relies on the deliberate construction of authenticity. To achieve this, the speaker is objectified and

treated as a ‘guru’ or a ‘genius’ (Foucault, 1984: 119), ‘an object to be manipulated’ (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011: 1431), rather than as a ‘critically reflexive practitioner’ and a ‘human being in relation to [themselves]’ (Cunliffe, 2016: 743). Both speaker and reader (teacher and student) thus become ‘fixed entities’, stuck in time, objectified, without interaction or freedom. We suggest that this does not enable the ‘living relationship’ which is fundamental to cultivating ethically responsible managers who are equipped to deal ‘with complex political and economic demands and constraints’ (Cunliffe, 2016: 744).

Emotional connection as a source of pleasure

A final contradiction emerges from students’ accounts of the importance of an emotional connection between the reader and producer of a text. Students commented on ‘how engaging and passionate [TED speakers] are’ (RC/F2), stating: ‘you can see how people put emotion and all of themselves into this talk and [are] trying to deliver 100 percent’ (RB/F1). Reading TED talks generates empathy towards the speaker and invites an emotional response from the audience. This suggests that TED talks provide a source of emotional nurturance (Radway, 1984). Students described how ‘they lift me up a little bit’ (RB/F1) and noted that they have taken TED talks ‘to heart and [used] a lot of them on a daily basis’ (RA/F1). One claimed that a talk on increasing memory powers had ‘completely changed [her] and [her] brother’s life... he uses it all the time’ (RB/F1). Another student went back to the Cuddy talk many times, especially when he had a big presentation coming up: ‘you can reference [the talk] and think “how was she doing it?”... I get tips from that’ (RG/F1).

Emotional connection is also connected to storytelling. Stories are important in making TED talks memorable, helping students to feel immersed and remember the message.

Speakers' personal stories were often mentioned as the point of connection, providing access to universal human experiences of moral conflict, failure and confusion. Students described feeling a 'personal connection' to the storyteller, noting this made speakers appear more 'human... because... we want to be inspired... [given] energy' (I1)¹⁶. These storytelling texts were perceived to be 'more relevant' to everyday life than university education. One student drew a contrast between 'storytellers and academics' (RG/F1), claiming that academics 'haven't actually got practical experience. They sit in a classroom and they do their research, they talk to people but haven't been out there on the frontline'. This makes TED speakers appear more 'genuine' to students. Another student likened TED talks to 'performance art' where speakers 'start strongly and have a poetic ending, or something with a message and the story is built throughout... I don't like that in anything else but I like it in TED talks; it feels like a whole neat little package and beside it you have the whole story that you could quite happily go and watch again' (RE/F1).

Students associated reading TED talks with a change in perspective or worldview, or personal transformation. One explained, 'I felt so empowered [by Sheryl Sandberg's talk]... It affected me so much I bought her book afterwards'; another claimed that TED talks 'changed my life' (RF/F1). TED talks can also provide temporary escape from the anxieties associated with university learning, as the following highlights:

I watch this particular video when I am feeling down... And when I am lacking motivation [to study]... when I think... 'Oh my God I'm going to do like nothing after university!' Then I watch that video and it makes me feel better

¹⁶ I = Interview, hence Interview 1

about the situation I am currently in... So it's quite motivational in that sense. I come back to it. (RA/F1)

As these quotes highlight, students experience stories as a source of transformation in their everyday lives. They are thus similar to the genre of self-help texts. Self-help encourages individuals to find ways of coping with their problems and improving their situation by establishing an emotional connection between the author and the reader (McGee, 2005). These texts 'adopt an informal, conversational tone towards the reader, acting as a friend rather than a professional expert and conveying inspirational ideas and images by telling parable-like stories (Bate & Self, 1983; Hochschild, 1994)' (Kenny & Bell, 2011: 164). Both the TED talk and self-help genres promote a neoliberal ideology which places responsibility on the individual and overlooks structural conditions that can prevent people from realising their full potential (McGee, 2005). Although students claim that the emotional nurturance gained from the talks enabled personal transformation and change in their worldview, this did not encompass the questioning that is genuinely needed to enable wider social transformation in Freire's (1970) terms. However, by exploring the similarities between these two genres and encouraging exploration of the ideological underpinnings of texts, including how they seek to manipulate reader responses, we suggest it is possible for management students to become more resistant readers.

DISCUSSION: THE CRITICAL POTENTIAL OF PEDAGOGICAL PLEASURE

We have used concepts from literary theory to explore TED talks as a distinct genre and to position students as readers of these texts. The concept of genre enables understanding of the rules that determine how meaning is made by producing and reading texts. Genre reading skills are thus relevant to understanding other texts that are

popular in management education such as film (Bell, 2008), television shows (Gioia & Brass, 1986), novels and plays (Martin, Edwards & Sayers, 2018). Our findings suggest that, despite contradictions in the TED talk genre, students experience an emotional connection to TED talks and see them as a source of pleasure. We now turn to the concept of pedagogical pleasure as a way of further interpreting these findings. Barthes (1976) distinguishes between two kinds of reading pleasure, *plaisir* and *jouissance*. *Plaisir* is the easygoing enjoyment of texts that is experienced when encountering readerly texts which confirm, and hence leave unchanged, one's own perspectives. Readerly texts reinforce cultural assumptions and are linked to 'a *comfortable* practice of reading' (Barthes, 1976: 14, emphasis in original). We suggest that *plaisir* encourages surface learning because, while the content may be new, the ideological schema is repeated in a way which ensures the meaning remains the same (Barthes, 1976).

This can be contrasted with *jouissance* 'the more intense pleasure-bliss that occurs when the text opens up hitherto unknown vistas, and as a consequence leaves the subject altered' (Hughes, 2011: 622). Such texts unsettle the reader's historical, cultural and psychological assumptions and produce disturbance (Barthes, 1976). These more writerly, open and indeterminate, texts offer 'a significant moment of change in an intellectual trajectory... [that] has the capacity for transgressive potential' (Hughes, 2011: 628). *Jouissance* is thus associated with deep learning, where students critically engage with the cultural unconscious in a way which involves questioning the status-quo. This kind of pedagogical pleasure is inherently disruptive and potentially liberatory (Freire, 1970).

McWilliam (1999) suggests there are cultural rules which shape what can legitimately be experienced as pleasurable, by teachers as well as students, in educational contexts.

Following Foucault, she asserts that pedagogical pleasure is learned through ‘precise forms of training’ and ‘the discursive organization of disciplinary texts and prescriptive stories about pedagogical engagements of the right and wrong sort’ (McWilliam, 1999: 17). Building on McWilliam, Swan (2005) argues that pleasure provides a better basis for conceptualizing management learning than the popular notion of learner-centredness. The ‘focus in contemporary pedagogy is on the student... as a customer... this pedagogy is imagined to make teaching more learner-centred’ (p. 325). Swan argues that the concept of pleasure potentially puts teachers ‘back in the frame’ and helps students to learn about the importance of bodies and emotions in organizing and managing (p. 330). As these scholars highlight, pleasure is socially embedded and linked to relations of dominance and cultural power.

Our analysis has shown that management students often act as ‘ideal’ readers of TED talks, without questioning the ways in which the genre is ‘bound up with the exercise of power’. This relies on accepting the knowledge claims in the text and collaborating with the author to create meaning. The pedagogical experience of reading TED talks provides management students with a source of *plaisir* which is ‘a conservative pleasure’ that is ‘comfortable and comforting’ (Ott, 2004: 198). As readerly texts, TED talks are easily consumed, providing what Bratton¹⁷ describes as a ‘feel good’, easy to swallow ‘without chewing’ pleasure that ‘dumbs us down’. However, the cultivation of an alternative understanding of pleasure in management education characterized by *jouissance* can, we suggest, act as a ‘source of destabilization’ (Hughes, 2011: 624) to

¹⁷ Benjamin Bratton, ‘We need to talk about TED’, *The Guardian*, 30 Dec. 2013 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/30/we-need-to-talk-about-ted> [accessed 28 August 2018]

enable development of resistant reading skills through which students and educators can better discern how scientific knowledge is produced and communicated.

The spread of science is based on storytelling which conditions its 'episteme', or what does and does not count as scientific knowledge in a particular moment (Roof, 2007). Storytelling can animate complex concepts through the operation of analogies and narratives which transliterate complexity into simplicity. It is thus foundational to the spread of ideas about management. However, the storytelling that characterises the TED talk genre privileges a particular kind of scientific knowledge that is popularly presumed to be objective and free from bias. By referring to positivist, experimental research, primarily in behavioral neuroscience and behavioral and evolutionary psychology, the genre attempts to silence alternative ways of producing knowledge. Telling the same story over and over again in the same way thus limits the capacity of management scholarship to critique its own philosophical assumptions and generate new and useful knowledge.

Our contribution to management learning is threefold. First, by exposing the structures and rules which determine how TED talks are produced, and the conventions which frame what can be said, when and by whom, we have shown how the TED talk genre is bound up with the exercise of power. Second, by introducing literary theory, including concepts of genre, texts and readers into management education, we have argued that students can better appreciate the storied nature of scientific knowledge about management and can become more able to evaluate knowledge claims that are made. This relies on moving beyond the 'banking model of education' which TED talks promote. Third, we have introduced and used the concept of pedagogical pleasure to explore the role of desire in motivating management learners. By moving from *plaisir*

to *jouissance*, we suggest that educators can work with desire, rather than against it, in order to facilitate more critical, reflective kinds of pedagogical pleasure. We therefore encourage management educators to develop ways of engaging with genres that aid, rather than inhibit, critical pedagogy.

In considering these findings it is important to note that genres are not static but continually reinvented. Critical, reflective readings of TED talks can help students to become more resistant readers of other texts and to become textual producers themselves. For example, filmmaking assignments can be used to enable students to apply their understanding of genres in ways which subvert and creatively reinvent them. This can produce more fluid texts that contain multiple voices, rather a single author engaging in one-way communication with a passive audience (Schultz & Quinn, 2014). By enabling students to reflexively acknowledge and problematize popular and entertaining ways of producing and consuming knowledge, rather than passively consuming them, educators can help them to avoid the ‘hegemony of simplification’ (Beck, 1994: 231) which the TED talk genre encourages.

Implications

Two implications arise from these findings. First, understanding how genres make meaning and produce pleasure is especially important in the digital era, where there is concern about ‘fake news’ and ‘alternative facts’, because it enables appreciation of the importance of power in making scientific claims possible and credible in a given moment. Using the TED talk genre as the basis for dialogical rather than individualized learning, students can learn how to read and analyse cultural texts in a way which is cognizant of the producer’s intentions, intended effects on audiences, and the power interests that texts are intended to serve. This relies on: (i) preparing and making space

for reflection in the classroom; (ii) stimulating critical thinking through dialogue, especially in relation to power issues; (iii) unsettling comfortable viewpoints through critical appraisal of established texts; and (iv) supporting the development of different perspectives through ideological exploration (Hibbert, 2012). Through this it becomes possible to shift from passive consumption of TED talks as one-way didactic learning, towards more critically reflexive and writerly kinds of reading that enable *jouissance*. This relies on ‘questioning what we, and others, might be taking for granted - what is being said and not said - and examining the impact this has or might have’ (Cunliffe, 2016: 741). Management students can thereby become more resistant readers who are able to critically evaluate producers’ claims to authenticity. This can enable them to evaluate scientific knowledge claims in their everyday, professional lives, as well as in educational contexts.

A second implication stems from the popularity and global reach of the TED talk genre and its role in shaping perceptions of educational effectiveness in universities and in managerial practice. Some universities offer training to academics so they can use the TED talk genre to communicate research findings to practitioner audiences. TED talk coaches¹⁸ provide services to managers so that they can learn how to apply the rules of the genre. The normalization of TED talks as an effective educational method is further reinforced by intertextual linkages between the TED talk genre and online educational videos such as ‘School of Life’¹⁹. Consequently, the TED talk genre has become an archetypal model of a ‘good talk’ in a way which promotes sameness and decreases diversity. This could influence student expectations of university learning, for example

¹⁸ See for example <https://www.mimidonaldson.com/ted-talk-coach/>
<https://www.gingerpublicspeaking.com/courses/ted-style-talk-presentation-skills> [accessed 10.05.19]

¹⁹ <https://www.theschooloflife.com/> [accessed 10.05.19]

making them less willing to listen to lectures lasting more than an hour or increasing their preference for on-screen learning over face-to-face teaching. We suggest that critical, reflexive engagement with the genre is essential in order to avoid this.

CONCLUSION

Concepts from literary theory enable exploration of TED talks as a distinct genre that legitimates and perpetuates certain ways of spreading ideas about management. By analysing the conventions of the genre and focusing on producers' intentions and intended effects on audiences, this article has shown the importance of power in shaping the TED talk genre through the presence of 'clearly definable rules' (Foucault, 1991: 63) that discursively regulate what can be said, how and by whom. It has also generated insight into the role of management student audiences in creating meaning as readers of these texts. We have identified three contradictions in the genre. The first relates to the desire for freedom to learn, which students identify as a reason for reading TED talks, even if the genre invites surface learning rather than critical consciousness. Second, we have drawn attention to the constructed nature of authenticity within the genre and highlighted its importance in evaluating scientific claims made by TED talk speakers. Third, we have emphasized the importance of emotional connection as a source of pleasure. This enables consideration of the intertextual relationships between the TED talk genre and other genres, such as self-help, which rely on transformation stories and promote an ideology that overlooks structural conditions which constrain individuals' ability to change or learn.

The reliance of the TED talk genre on storytelling privileges a particular way of thinking about scientific knowledge, as objective, neutral and unbiased. This disciplines students into a particular way of thinking about management ideas and learning. They

are encouraged to be ideal, rather than resistant readers of the TED talk genre, passively reading these easily consumed texts which generate *plaisir* (Barthes, 1976), a kind of pleasure that leaves unchanged the reader's world view and promotes surface learning. This can lead to a perpetual desire to repeat the experience (Radway, 1984). We have instead proposed possibilities for more transgressive pedagogical pleasure through reading these texts, opening up possibilities for the *jouissance* (Barthes, 1976) enabled by resistant readings which produce disturbance and leave the subject altered. By encouraging students to develop greater critical consciousness in their readings of TED talks, we suggest they can better appreciate the storied nature of *all* management knowledge. The concept of genre helps students to critically evaluate the ideologies of idea producers and to engage more reflectively with the scientific truth claims that they encounter by reading texts in everyday life and education.

FIGURE 1: THREE SITES OF MEANING AND DATA SOURCES

TABLE 1: STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF THE TED TALK GENRE

Speaker, title, date recorded	Amy Cuddy ‘Your body language shapes who you are’ (2012)	Daniel Pink ‘The puzzle of motivation’ (2009)	Simon Sinek ‘Why good leaders make you feel safe’ (2014)	Shawn Achor ‘The happy secret to better work’ (2011)*	Brene Brown ‘The power of vulnerability’ (2010)
URL	https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are	https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation	https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_why_good_leaders_make_you_feel_safe	https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work	https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability
Number of views Popularity* *Source = TED website <i>‘The most popular talks of all time’</i> https://www.ted.com/playlists/171/the_most_popular_talks_of_all_time	32,814,825 views 2 nd	15,465,871 views 9 th	4,537,930 views 3 rd	12,989,507 views 17 th *TEDx talk recorded Bloomington USA, but listed on TED website as one of most popular	28,681,981 views 4 th
Formal features Length Visual aids Images Use of validation language Reference to speaker qualifications	20:55 PowerPoint slides Yes References own research <i>‘I teach in a competitive business school’</i>	18:32 PowerPoint slides Yes References elite academic researchers, e.g. ‘economists from MIT, Carnegie Mellon and LSE... 11 Nobel Laureates...’ <i>‘I’m a lawyer...I’m an American...’</i>	11:55 Writes on board Yes Empirical examples from innovative firms, e.g. NexJump None	12:20 PowerPoint slides Yes References neuroscience, e.g. how the brain processes information, references to dopamine, etc. <i>‘I went to Harvard’</i>	20:19 PowerPoint slides Yes References own research, especially neurobiological evidence <i>‘PhD in social work’</i>

Language used to establish audience proximity	Informal (even if invoking scientific ‘facts’)	Informal, e.g. <i>‘kicked their butt’</i> ; <i>‘makes me crazy’</i>	Informal, e.g. <i>‘if I don’t’</i> follow rules, <i>‘I lose my job’</i>	Informal, e.g. <i>‘we try to erase the weirdo’</i>	Informal, e.g. <i>‘we try to make the messy topics not messy’</i>
Thematic structure Conventional topic turned into something surprising/‘new’	Body language: <i>‘You can fake it til you become it’</i>	Motivation: <i>‘If-then rewards destroy creativity’</i> ; <i>‘lazy ideology of sticks and carrots’</i> ; need intrinsic drive	Leadership: <i>‘A great leader is like a parent’</i> ; <i>‘heart counts not body counts’</i> ; leadership is a choice not a rank	Happiness at work: <i>‘What is important is how our brains process information’</i> ; <i>‘happiness leads to success at work, not the other way around’</i>	Vulnerability: <i>‘Vulnerability is authenticity and this leads to love’</i> , <i>‘belongingness and creativity’</i> ; <i>‘should not seek to numb’</i>
Situation of address Speaking (identity) position	Expert researcher from elite business school	Lawyer, American	Assumes role of teacher, especially when writing on the board	Graduated from and teaches at Harvard, conducts psychological research, an author	Researcher, academic, PhD in social work
Emotional tone	Passionate, tears in eyes towards end	Passionate	Intensely passionate	Speaks quickly, uses humor, conveys passion	Passionate, self-deprecating humor; approachable
Moral force	Science and emotion	Science and emotion	Science and emotion	Science and emotion	Science and emotion
Basis of ‘truth’ claims	Research and empirical evidence; positioned in opposition to academic knowledge	Research and empirical evidence; positioned in opposition to academic knowledge	Research and empirical evidence; positioned in opposition to academic knowledge	Research and empirical evidence; positioned in opposition to academic knowledge	Research and empirical evidence; positioned in opposition to academic knowledge
Stories as structure of implication (to establish an emotional connection with the reader)	Personal story of growing up with reference to an accident	Personal story of ‘indiscretion’ in going to	Story about the army; personal story about boarding a plane	Personal story of playing with his sister when 7-years old	Personal story of ‘insecurity’, fear of being a ‘boring researcher’, having

		Law School and not doing well there			a breakdown and seeing a therapist
Rhetorical function What does the talk set out to achieve? Sources of credibility	Empower reader through <i>'power posing'</i> (Asks audience to try a small experiment (changing body pose)) Research and expertise of speaker; what we experience in daily life	Persuade reader <i>'not to do more of the wrong things'</i> ; need for a <i>'whole new approach in organizations'</i> Research (e.g. Nobel Laureates) but also what we already know empirically: <i>'science confirms what we know in our hearts'</i> ; critique of conventional business practice – <i>'mismatch between what science knows and what business does'</i>	Change reader's understanding of leadership by showing it to be based primarily on emotion Science and anecdotes; implicit critique of conventional wisdom	Empower reader to <i>'train their brain'</i> to think positive Research and expertise of speaker; implicit critique of conventional academic research as <i>'fake data'</i> , <i>'errors mess up my data'</i>	Challenge reader's understanding of vulnerability by showing how it can be a positive route to creativity Research conducted by speaker
Setting Symbolic features	Stage (red TED logo and dark background), red circular carpet	Stage, red carpet, dark background decorated with bookshelves/books and old typewriter, globe and steel structure representing solar system	Stage (red TED logo), small table next to a white board-easel for writing	Stage (red TEDx logo - Bloomington, red lighting), red kilim	Stage, small round table with red tablecloth and flower vase (TED logo and carpet not visible, dark background), large screen for visual display

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