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### The last judgement: exploring intellectual leadership in higher education through academic obituaries

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## The last judgement: exploring intellectual leadership in higher education through academic obituaries

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The literature on leadership in higher education is focused mainly on senior academic leaders with managerial roles. It largely excludes informal and distributed forms of intellectual leadership offered by full professors among others. This article explores the concept of intellectual leadership using academic obituaries. A total of 63 obituaries were collected from *Times Higher Education* published between 2008 and 2010. These identify the importance of personal characteristics and academic achievements in the formation of reputation. Four elements of intellectual leadership are suggested, linked to academic obituaries: a passion for transformation, possessing a balance of personal virtues, a commitment to service, and overcoming adversity. Despite the limitations of obituaries, it is argued that they provide a valuable and under-utilised ‘last judgement’ on intellectual leadership.

**Keywords:** intellectual leadership; transformative leadership; obituaries; virtues; professors

### Introduction

Leadership in higher education is a growing area of scholarly enquiry. Yet, much of the current literature focuses on the roles and responsibilities of senior academic leaders with formal managerial roles as, *inter alia*, heads of department, deans and vice-chancellors or presidents (e.g. Bright and Richards 2001; Knight and Trowler 2001; Smith, Adams, and Mount 2007). By contrast, the phrase ‘intellectual leadership’ is often invoked but rarely explained. Attempts to define what intellectual leadership means in connection with higher education are limited. J. Patrick Conroy’s book, *Intellectual leadership in education* (Conroy 2000), offers a guide to the history of western intellectual traditions rather than an exploration of academic leadership. Wepner, D’Onofrio, and Wilhite (2008) identify a conceptual model consisting of four leadership dimensions including the ‘intellectual’, which they report as the most frequently used by Deans of Education. However, while they identify a series of behavioural characteristics in relation to intellectual leadership, including tolerating ambiguity, the ability to see reality as complex and contradictory, recognising individual differences, defining problems, making decisions and seeking information, these traits might be equally applicable in any leadership context. Hence, work specific to intellectual leadership in higher education is relatively unexplored. Here, one might expect to see a literature on the way in which (full) professors, as the most senior and experienced

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members of the profession, might contribute as intellectual leaders. Yet their role appears disconnected from theories of educational leadership (Rayner et al. 2010; Macfarlane 2011).

This article reports the findings of a research study using academic obituaries as a means of exploring intellectual leadership in higher education. In so doing it builds on previous research on the role of professors as intellectual leaders by one of the authors (Macfarlane 2011, 2012). Most prior research studies, however, deploy conventional methods of data collection through interviews or questionnaires. Obituaries provide an alternative source of data for research purposes. Despite the limitations of obituaries as representational of social and class-based inequalities, they still provide a valuable insight into the positive characteristics and achievements attributed to leading academics, indicating the basis of their intellectual leadership.

### **The use of obituaries**

The conventional way to collect data in education and social science research is via questionnaires and interviews. The default method for researching leadership in higher education appears to be the interview (e.g. Bryman 2007; Clark 1998; Finlay 2004). By comparison, obituaries are a much under-utilised resource that have, to our knowledge, rarely been used in published research about leadership and management although Tight (2008) has made use of them in exploring the formation of academic reputation more generally. While some scholars have made occasional use of them, they are rarely deployed as part of empirical work. This may partly be due to the tendency of obituaries to canonise rather than criticise. Hence, they are commonly regarded as an unreliable source of secondary analysis frequently authored by loyal friends and colleagues. Arguably, in the worst cases, they can be simply sycophantic. According to Fowler (2007), obituaries have a twofold significance: as a store of value in terms of symbolic capital and, secondly, as a measure of value illuminating social dominance and distinction. Hence, from a sociological perspective they are laden with messages about the hierarchies and inequalities of class, gender and ethnicity. One element of this sociological analysis is that a very small proportion of obituaries is devoted to women (Fowler 2007, 9). Despite these obvious limitations, Fowler argues that obituaries are more than simply an arbitrary series of reminiscences but are representative of a 'social or collective memory' (25).

Fowler (2007) distinguishes a number of genres of the obituary. The standard form is the 'traditional positive', full of uncritical praise. In an academic context, this implies an obituary focusing on someone's greatness as a scholar. However, obituaries can take other forms and can contain more balanced appraisal or even include criticisms. Tight (2008, 133) applies Fowler's categorisation in the context of academic obituaries and provides examples of the 'untraditional positive' genre:

While some would judge her science as too eclectic to place her among Britain's elite, others would see her oeuvre as the product of an intellect flexible enough to confront the most pressing issues.

... not everyone approved of her management style. Matilda's standards were extremely high and she was no lover of compromise.

Bourdieu (1988) draws on obituaries to map a series of adjectives in relation to professional virtues. He sees this as a means of illustrating the hierarchical nature of

academic life, arguing that they 'are first-rate documents for an analysis of university values' (1988, 218). Obituaries are, as Bourdieu recognised, indicative of social assimilation 'in the last judgement made by the group on one of its deceased members' (1988, 218). Hence, they need to be treated with caution as they are indicative of social privilege as well as intellectual achievement. Those who are obituarised more generally represent cultural producers within the social elite such as musicians, writers, actors, media figures; traditional professionals with symbolic power such as doctors and the clergy; and those with access to political and military power such as politicians, army and navy officers, civil servants, diplomats, judges and lawyers. Academics account for around 8% of contemporary obituaries (Fowler 2007).

As Bourdieu argues, it is important to be wary of the obituary. Yet, however flawed obituaries might be, they provide a revealing portrait of what is valued by the academic community. Interpreting Bourdieu's analysis of obituaries as a window on the occupational ethics of academic life, Fowler (2007, 63) contends that 'the whole ethos or *raison d'être* of the group emerges in this set of judgements as an idealized form or ethics' (Fowler 2007, 63).

In this article we are assuming that those who are considered to have been sufficiently influential to warrant the honour of an obituary were considered to have been, in some sense, an intellectual leader. By this we mean someone who is looked upon by others in their discipline or profession (and possibly more widely or across disciplines) as a respected and, possibly in some cases, an inspirational figure. While obituaries are, to some extent, extensions of social privilege, they do provide a barometer of recognition and therefore a means of identifying those persons considered by others to have been intellectual leaders. Unlike formal leadership roles, intellectual leadership is not an ascribed title. Hence, we are using obituaries as a proxy for intellectual leadership.

### The use of NVivo

Previous use of obituaries in social science research (e.g. Fowler 2007; Tight 2008) has made limited use of the potential of software to generate both qualitative and quantitative data. NVivo 9 software, the leading commercial package for qualitative data analysis in the social sciences, is normally used to examine interview transcripts and has not previously, to our knowledge, been used to interrogate obituaries. Its use in connection with this study seemed appropriate, as a key objective of the research was to conduct a close textual analysis of obituaries to uncover the adjectives most directly associated with intellectual leadership.

The software was used to code data and create a database using a total of 63 academic obituaries published by the *Times Higher Education* between 2008 and 2010. This single source was selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, the *Times Higher Education* is widely recognised as the leading and best known higher education news publication in the UK, of equivalent status to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in North America. Secondly, while other British newspapers publish obituaries of academics from time to time, these principally feature world-famous international scholars associated with elite institutions rather than academics drawn from a broader range of disciplines, roles and types of university. This pool of data helps to represent academics associated with more diverse forms of intellectual leadership, such as teaching innovation and academic citizenship, beyond ground-breaking scholars making significant scientific and artistic contributions to new knowledge. Finally, drawing on a single

source for this study meant that obituaries could be compared on the basis of a consistent set of conventions as deployed by the publication related mainly to their length and linguistic style.

Sections of text were selected and assigned to *a priori* codes. While the use of software alone is no guarantee of rigour, NVivo provided additional checks on the accuracy of comparisons and enabled more detailed interrogation of the data via the search facility. Our approach was to focus on the adjectives used to describe subjects in the default ‘traditional positive’ obituary. The adjectives were generated from the NVivo 9 software through the word frequency query. A word frequency query creates a list of synonyms and similar words based on the text. This facility enables the exploration of the data and possible refinement of coding. Moreover, word frequency queries help identify and test ideas about emerging patterns and themes as well as facilitating the grouping of specific words together with similar meaning. It is important to note that various words have been grouped or clustered together containing similar meanings based on the word frequency function. For example, the words ‘research/researcher’ incorporate exploration, explore, exploring, inquiry, investigated, investigator, research, researcher and search. ‘Management’ subsumes managed, management, manager, overseeing, supervised and supervision while ‘teacher/teaching’ contains the words learning, pedagogy, teach and teaching.

### Teaching, research and service

A majority of attributes reference achievements in teaching, research and service: the core functions of academic life (Cummings 1998). They include descriptive material about attainments connected with academic careers: significant books, articles, discoveries, inventions as well as awards, such as professorial titles, honorary degrees, and even, in one instance, a Nobel prize. Aside from research-based achievements, these frequently include service elements such as positions held in universities, scholarly societies and public life more generally. Expertise and the ability to inspire as teachers is a further point of note whilst changes in career direction, and moves between institutions, into leadership and management, and occasionally across disciplinary boundaries are highlighted.

The word ‘service’ refers to the exercise of citizenship-type responsibilities as a member of a university, a broader disciplinary or professional community and in relation to the wider world served by higher education institutions (Kennedy 1997). In a UK context, though, the word ‘service’ is rarely used and the so-called third leg of the academic role tends to be more narrowly (and less accurately) referred to as ‘administration’ or ‘management’ (Macfarlane 2007). Hence, it seemed appropriate to compare how often these terms were used using the NVivo word frequency function. The query revealed that the word ‘research’ or ‘researcher’ (or synonyms) occurred most often (92 times), followed by ‘teacher’ or ‘teaching’ (34 times) and finally ‘management’ (18 times). This confirms that while accomplishments in teaching and management are not unimportant, it is primarily research that is seen to define significant academic achievement. Examples that portray ‘research’, ‘teacher’, and ‘manager’ include the following:

[his] professional love was *research*, and how it might inform teaching and the next generation of designers.

[he] played a leading role in the establishment of international *research* networks on sustainable innovation embracing China and the US.

He took it [i.e. the university] with him by a very open style of *management* and left it a strong research institution with great self-confidence.

[he] was an enthusiastic *teacher* for his discipline and was elected a fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering in 1994.

[she] was widely admired for her good humour, her commitment to *teaching* and her leadership skills.

Significant achievement as an academic is thus primarily defined in relation to research and scholarship rather than teaching or management responsibilities. This pecking order is perhaps reflective of a rank ordering of academic virtues identified by Bourdieu who, in his analysis of obituaries, identified ‘pedagogical skills’ as among the lower or subordinate virtues. It is largely through research that an academic can demonstrate something higher in terms of intellectual achievement, especially through ‘transcendence of academic categories’ or someone who is ‘not a prisoner of his specialization’ (Bourdieu 1988, 218, 221).

### Scholarly attributes and personal characteristics

As obituaries are almost exclusively traditional positive in genre, a decision was made to generate a list of the most commonly occurring positive adjectives with at least five

Table 1. Most commonly occurring adjectives.

Rank	Word	Frequency
=1	Authority	18
=1	Develop/Developed	18 (12/6)
=3	Popular	13
=3	Scientific	13
5	Served	12
=6	Expert	10
=6	Innovative	10
=8	Effective	9
=8	Global	9
=8	Good	9
=8	Scholar	9
12	Pioneering	8
=13	Commitment	7
=13	Influential	7
=13	Involved	7
16	Intellectual	6
=17	Committed	5
=17	Helping	5
=17	Impact	5
=17	Patient	5
=17	Recognised	5
=17	Respected	5
=17	Responsible	5

occurrences (see Table 1). The most frequently used words were ‘authority’ and ‘develop/developed’.

Further examination of the list of adjectives indicates a clear division between adjectives connected with scholarly attributes (such as ‘authority’, ‘expert’ or ‘innovative’) and those more closely related to personal characteristics or virtues (such as ‘popular’, ‘good’ or ‘patient’). Hence, the list of adjectives was divided into two further tables representing scholarly attributes (Table 2) and personal characteristics (Table 3).

Obituaries will tend to include words denoting a balance between both scholarly attributes and personal characteristics. The word search shows, however, that adjectives connected with scholarly attributes (14) occur more often than those related to personal characteristics (9). Scholarly attributes are about the exercise of academic freedom to be intellectually creative and to ‘get things done’. They describe achievements (e.g. being ‘effective’ or ‘pioneering’, having ‘impact’) and the honouring of achievements (e.g. ‘recognised’, ‘respected’). Personal characteristics, by contrast, are connected with an evaluation of the personality of the obituarised (e.g. ‘charming’, ‘witty’). They can also relate to academic duty in serving the needs of others, mainly colleagues and students, in a way that demonstrates a commitment to building and sustaining a community of scholars. While most obituaries contain reference to both scholarly attributes and personal characteristics, on occasions, single sentences can convey a sense of both aspects of the obituarised, as in the following example:

He was capable also of touching many others through his understated charm, infectious laugh and impressive talent for languages and music.

Building on this analysis of positive adjectives, the word frequency query was combined with our own observations of the data to generate a tree map (see appendix). A list of key words was first compiled, and thereafter, subcategories were selected to portray what types of scholarly and personal attributes were used to describe

Table 2. Scholarly attributes.

Rank	Word	Frequency
=1	Authority	18
=1	Develop/Developed	18 (12/6)
3	Scientific	13
=4	Expert	10
=4	Innovative	10
=6	Effective	9
=6	Global	9
=6	Scholar	9
9	Pioneering	8
10	Influential	7
11	Intellectual	6
=12	Impact	5
=12	Recognised	5
=12	Respected	5

Table 3. Personal characteristics.

Rank	Word	Frequency
1	Popular	13
2	Served	12
3	Good	9
=4	Commitment	7
=4	Involved	7
=6	Committed	5
=6	Helping	5
=6	Patient	5
=6	Responsible	5

intellectual leaders in academic obituaries. To help design our drawing, a few elements were incorporated from Tight's (2008) earlier analysis.

Following the earlier analysis, the tree map was divided between personal characteristics and scholarly attributes that closely reflected the clustering of adjectives found in the *Times Higher Education* obituaries. Personal characteristics represented the values, roles and beliefs of academics. Scholarly attributes comprised academic duty, philanthropy and individuality. Of the two subcategories, the majority of the words used to describe academic obituaries were largely personal characteristics. A few examples are honesty, integrity, trust, and (being) charming and energetic. Unlike values, the philanthropy cluster contained the fewest words to describe the obituarised. Philanthropy consisted of activities connected with committee work, reviewing journal papers, editing journals, being a campaigner, and so on. It was interesting to note that the cluster of academic duty contained the highest number of descriptive words found among scholarly attributes. Similarly, the values cluster had the largest number of descriptive words found amongst personal characteristics. Consequently, the tree map reveals that there are a number of characteristics used to describe qualities that might be associated with intellectual leadership in higher education.

### A passion for transformation

A recurring theme in the data was the expression of the transformational nature of the work undertaken by those remembered. This related to their scholarship in, for example, publishing books that challenged the way that people might understand their research field and, more broadly, as an activist committed to changing society in some way. A cluster of attributes appear in the word tree connected with scholarly attributes, particularly in relation to research that relates to attempts to transform theory and practice.

The sociologist Peter Townsend (1928–2009) is illustrative of someone with a passion for transformation. He devoted his career to research into poverty and campaigned to change government policy to recognise that poverty is a 'relative' rather than an 'absolute' concept. In alliance with his academic interests he also he founded the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and later co-founded the Disability Alliance. Townsend is a quintessential example of a man who linked his scholarship with a passion to effect change (Reisz 2009a).



While the image of professors occupying ‘ivory towers’ removed from real-life concerns is a powerful one in the popular portrayal of academic life, a passion for transformation is essentially linked to a vision of how academic knowledge can serve or change society in a particular way. For some scholars this is about harnessing disciplinary expertise to help tackle the problems facing humanity and is a key driver for the direction of their research. Nutritional epidemiologist Sheila Rodwell (1947–2009) sought to make a difference to public health by finding a more reliable way to measure the link between diet and disease. The techniques she pioneered led to a better understanding of how fat could be a risk factor in breast and bowel cancer (Reisz 2009b). In a similar way, another epidemiologist, Jerry Morris (1910–2009), sought to inform government health policy after establishing the importance of physical activity in preventing cardiovascular disease. Morris devoted the early part of his research career to the field of public health specifically in the area of infant mortality and heart disease but later dedicated his time to service, chairing various conferences and societies, as well as to his voluntary involvement in committees surrounding smoking, air pollution and inequalities in health (Reisz 2009c).

Other scholars seek to transform public understanding of academic knowledge and revive cultural traditions. The historian Hywel Edwards (1934–2010) was committed to the dissemination of Welsh history and culture through the Welsh Language Society and the National Eisteddfod (an annual festival of Welsh culture). Edwards was also politically active as a member of Plaid Cymru, a nationalist party that campaigns for an independent Wales (Reisz 2010a). Transformations can be further effected through innovations in teaching and learning. Illustrative of this purpose, another historian, John Golby (1935–2009), was a member of the UK Open University’s history department during the early days of the institution. He pioneered a course entitled ‘Family and Community History’ as a means to increase public interest and appreciation of history (Reisz 2009d).

Transformation can also be about the understanding of university teaching itself. Tyrrell Burgess (1931–2009) was an educationalist closely associated with scholarship connected with understanding the polytechnic sector. However, he made an important contribution in transforming teaching and learning approaches by developing a model of negotiated or independent learning. He was among the first to deploy teaching techniques that are now mainstream in higher education, including group work, reflective statements and guided study (Reisz 2009e).

### **Possessing a balance of personal virtues**

Another recurring theme in the data was a strong balance of personal virtues. Here, it is important to note that far more personal characteristics were used to describe the obituarised compared to their academic achievements (see appendix). The obituaries outline the personal characteristics of leading academics and use adjectives to describe the virtues or excellences of character that they held. These adjectives are divided between instrumental and non-instrumental virtues (see Table 4). In terms of the tree map, the subheading ‘being’ contains a number of such virtues.

Instrumental virtues are essentially achievement-oriented (Pincoffs 1986), such as being ‘energetic/industrious’, ‘a strategic thinker’, ‘a true fighter’, ‘creative’, ‘innovative’ and ‘decisive’. These words and phrases were used to describe the ability of the obituarised to achieve things in an academic context. This includes being able to convince others through being ‘persuasive’ and even ‘forceful’ in promulgating intellectual

Table 4. Personal virtues.

Instrumental virtues	Non-instrumental virtues
energetic/industrious	Honest
strategic thinker	Patient
creative	Humorous
innovative	co-operative
decisiveness	Witty
a true fighter	Charming
	Modest

arguments. The English scholar Graham Rees (1944–2009) is described, for example, as someone able to ‘win over anyone in a room within five minutes’ (Reisz 2009f, 23). Part of the armoury of the talented persuader involves questioning received wisdom. Illustrative of this orientation, Caroline Thomas (1959–2008), a professor of global politics, is notably described as someone who ‘asked “why?” a lot’ (Reisz 2008a, 23).

Balancing these instrumental virtues is a further set of non-instrumental attributes (Pincoffs 1986) exemplified through adjectives such as being humorous, patient, cooperative, independent, charming and modest. The mechanical engineer and academic leader, Bob Boucher (1940–2009), is depicted in his obituary, for example, as someone with a ‘charming personality’ (Reisz 2009g, 23) while the historian Robert Lee (1959–2010) is praised for his sense of humour. In other words, non-instrumental virtues are used to describe someone who is well liked or personally popular whereas instrumental virtues speak to someone’s ability to achieve things intellectually (Reisz 2010b).

An expert on French literature, Elizabeth Fallaize (1950–2009), was the first female tutorial fellow at St John’s College, Oxford and was credited for creating Oxford’s first MA degree in women’s studies in 1993. She was known not only as ‘a fine communicator’ but as ‘warm, social, direct, honest, efficient, and courageous’ (Reisz 2009h, 23). In a leadership capacity she is described as possessing ‘managerial skills that are compatible with deep humanity’ (Reisz 2009h, 23), suggesting a balance of instrumental and non-instrumental virtues.

Ideally, individuals are credited with a combination of instrumental and non-instrumental virtues. An academic is able to influence and lead others successfully by possessing an instrumental virtue (such as persuasiveness) together with a non-instrumental one (e.g. charm or wit). Yet, obituaries only occasionally obliquely reference what are perceived as character faults in the untraditional positive genre.

### A commitment to service

While academic obituaries tend to highlight scholarly achievements in terms of significant publications, discoveries or other areas of intellectual influence, most also make reference to a commitment to service in respect to work aiding the development of students, disciplines, the university, and wider society.

A cluster of service-related activities is shown toward the base of the tree map and in other places by reference to public intellectuals as ‘ambassadors’ and under ‘community connector’ (see appendix), for example. This refers to the way that the

obituarised may have brought their subject to wider public attention or made significant contributions to the external affairs of the university in carrying out leadership and managerial roles. Obituaries made frequent references to mentoring students or colleagues. A good example, in this respect, is Aileen Smith (1953–2009), who was praised in her obituary for her ‘sympathetic treatment of students facing difficulties’ (Reisz 2009i, 23). Described as ‘Auntie Aileen’, in the mould of a caring personal tutor, she was someone who students would turn to for advice on both academic and private matters. Her mentoring skills also extended into her research work where she was regarded as someone who aided the career development of less experienced colleagues.

While significant academic reputation is mainly shaped through research, a commitment to service includes a commitment to teaching in a charismatic style. A number of academics included in the sample are lauded for their ability as speakers and teachers, including the botanical photographer Brian Case (1947–2010), Elizabeth Fallaize, and Hywel Edwards. While the ability to communicate is not necessarily synonymous with a commitment to serve students, it can be closely related. For example, Brian Case was said to possess ‘unorthodox style’ (of teaching) which ‘made the subject come alive’ (Reisz 2010c, 23).

The obituaries contain considerable references to service to the discipline and wider society. This involves, *inter alia*, an acknowledgement of the way that academics have served on important university committees, chaired academic societies, conferences and symposiums, edited journals, and reviewed papers. Several of these activities are indicative of offering intellectual leadership and of seeking to establish or preserve processes and structures that help the discipline to survive or thrive.

### **Overcoming adversity**

Those who are considered to offer intellectual leadership attract admiration and few things attract more admiration than an ability to overcome personal disadvantage and adversity. This observation applies equally to obituarised academics who are not only lauded for what they have achieved in the way of academic scholarship but for the obstacles that they have overcome. An important feature of many obituaries is the extent to which they emphasise dealing with disadvantage and personal problems, including financial difficulties, caring for family and children, divorce and overcoming the limitations of a modest educational background. Brian Case, for example, had no formal qualifications beyond his practical experience as a photographer but still forged a successful academic career. This ability to overcome adversity is represented in the word tree by a cluster of attributes connected with ‘challenges’.

Part of the function of an obituary is in revealing the ‘real’ person beneath the public persona but it is also about illustrating how the character of individuals is formed through adversity and makes them sometimes better equipped or determined, as a result, to press ahead and achieve in their professional lives. Here, determination to overcome personal challenges is taken as a metaphor for the scholarly achievement of individuals.

Moreover, academic disciplines can go through peaks and troughs of popularity and so ensuring their survival in difficult times is a source of admiration. In his obituary, the historian Christopher Bartlett (1931–2008) is remembered for keeping the history department at Dundee University ‘afloat’ despite the cuts that were occurring within the sector and the institution in the 1980s (Reisz 2008b).

Sometimes facing a particular personal challenge can prove a source of inspiration or innovation. Robin Mason (1945–2009), a pioneer of online teaching and learning, is symbolic of an individual with an ability to overcome personal disadvantage in the field of educational technology. Her personal experiences directly informed her scholarship. Prior to becoming an academic, Mason had to deal with financial difficulties as well as caring for family and children. One of her earlier challenges was to raise two children within her household. In addition to taking care of the children, Mason worked part-time. As a result, the two major challenges Mason encountered had forced her to overcome several personal challenges outside of the classroom and laid the foundations for her own academic contribution by pioneering computer-mediated conferencing (CMC) for distance education. With very limited time to attend classes at the Open University, Mason's research led to the development of distance learning and the design of online learning platforms through the use of educational technology (Reisz 2009j).

### Conclusion

Some of the elements of intellectual leadership identified in the article may be related to the broader literature on leadership and management. A passion for transformation is closely linked with the concept of transformational leadership (Burns 1978). This phrase refers to those with the ability to inspire others and bring about some form of change. In the same way, academics who are leaders in their field can help to bring about changes in, for example, the way that knowledge about the world is understood (McGee Banks 1995).

Despite the acknowledged limitations of obituaries as part eulogy, part biography, they still provide a useful insight into understanding why academics were admired and respected. These 'last judgements' provide further clues as to what it means to be considered an intellectual leader, in the sense of someone who was well known and influential within their academic field. However, but for a few exceptions, such as the Nobel-prize-winning pharmacologist Sir James Black (1924–2010) (Reisz 2010d), the obituaries sampled contained few genuinely world-famous scholars known beyond academic circles.

Rather than being a limitation, though, this feature of the obituaries helps to reveal how the achievements of individuals are judged beyond the rare, iconic figures recognised as genuinely world-famous figures, enabling us to move beyond conventional analysis of 'great' leaders. The obituaries of these academics reveal many things but notably testify to the alignment between their scholarly interests and their efforts to change society for the good. Connecting academic expertise with the wider world and making a difference to the lives of others is, perhaps, above all, what makes an intellectual leader.

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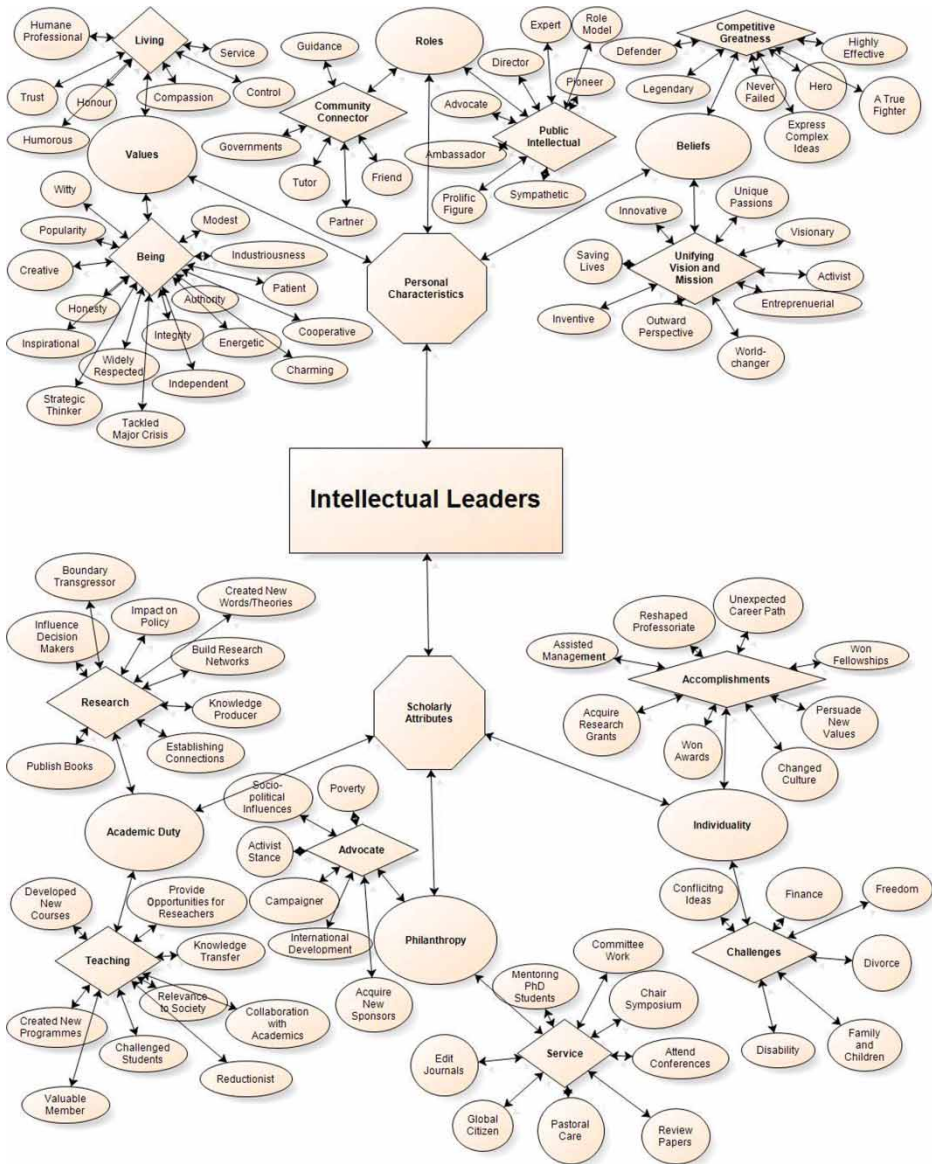
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Appendix. Tree map



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