Advancing Followership Discourse in Theory and Practice

2023 ILA Conference Workshop Summary

On October 14, 2023, as part of the International Leadership Association (ILA) global conference, over thirty-five individuals contributed to a session on "Advancing Followership Discourse in Theory and Practice," facilitated by Eric Kaufman. A copy of the session proposal and related slides are publicly available at http://hdl.handle.net/10919/116551

As part of the session, participants were invited to comment on and contribute to three published timelines related to leadership and followership: "Leadership Through the Ages" (Harrison, 2012), "Taxonomic Organizational Branching for Ancient worlds Versus modernity" (Markham, 2012), and "Important Theoretical Milestones in the Evolution of the Role of Followers in Leadership Research" (Oc. et al., 2023). The ideas captured were transcribed and are displayed in the appendices of this document.


Following the gallery walk of the timelines, participants engaged in a World Café dialogue surrounding the following question: "What are the characteristics of and influencing factors of followership discourse (or social implicit theory)?" Participants expressed appreciation for the conversation, as noted in the following post-session survey response: "I appreciate the openness to share these emerging discourses." The following pages reflect data collected during the workshop.
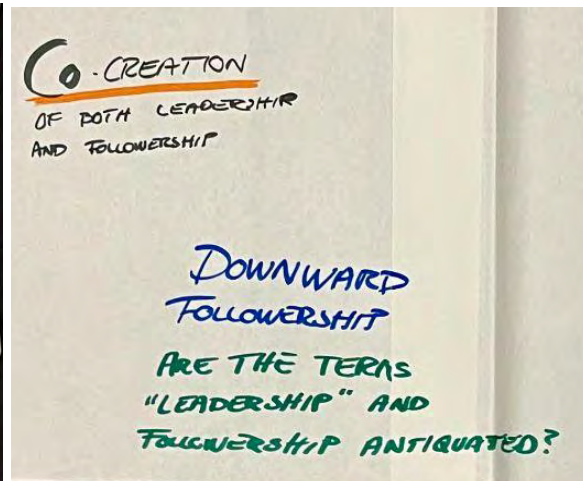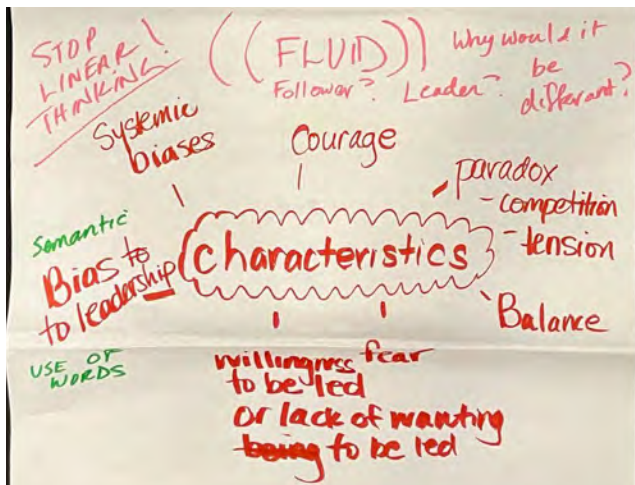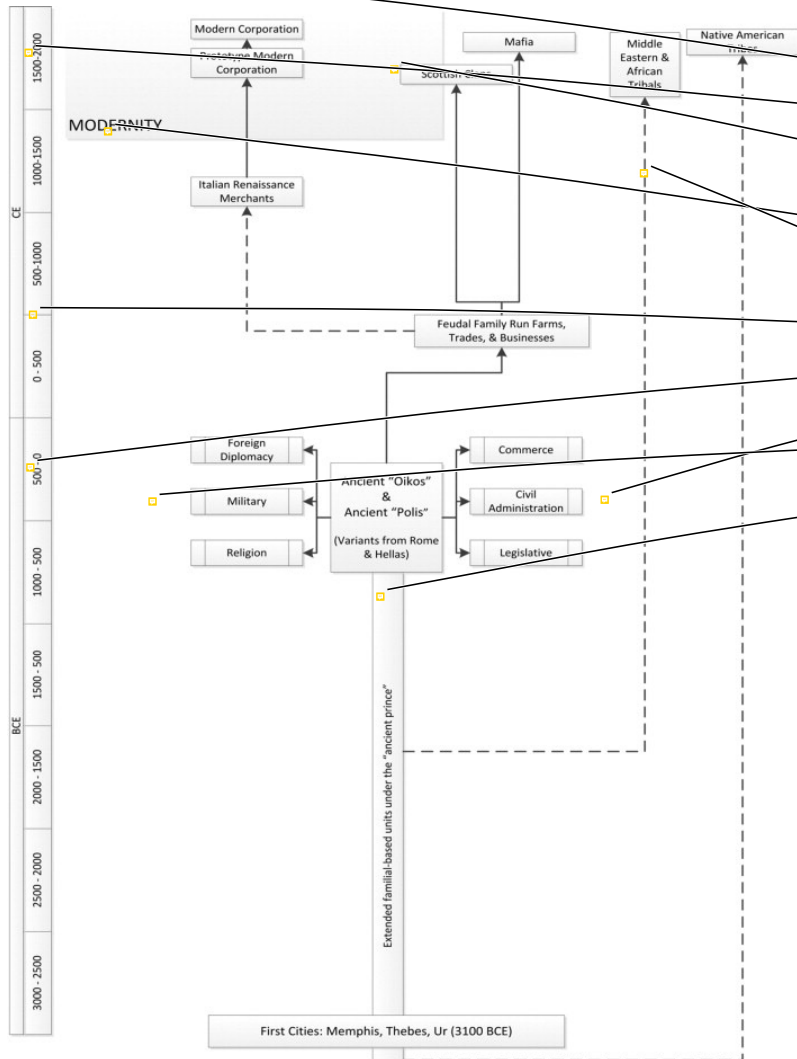

References

Markham, S. E. (2012). The evolution of organizations and leadership from the ancient world to modernity: A multilevel approach to organizational science and leadership (OSL). *The Leadership Quarterly, 23*(6), 1134-1151. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2012.10.011

Harrison, J. (2012). *Leadership through the ages*. Mzuri Design Limited.

Oc, B., Chintakananda, K., Bashshur, M. R., & Day, D. V. (2023). The study of followers in leadership research: A systematic and critical review. *The Leadership Quarterly, 34*(1), 101674. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2022.101674

LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE AGES

Timeline categories (vertical bands):
- GREAT MAN / TRAITS
- SCIENTIFIC / CONTROLLER
- PEOPLE-CENTRED
- HERO / MESSIAH
- EGO / CONNECTED

Theory labels:
- Taylorism / Fordism
- Role Theory
- Traits
- Human Relations Movement
- Participatory Theory
- Behaviorism
- Personality
- Self Actualisation
- Motivation
- Team Development
- Contingency Theory
- Workflow
- Transactional Leadership
- Best Practices
- Corporate Culture
- Theories Of Learning
- Transformational Leadership
- Benchmarking
- Self Organising Systems
- Ethics
- Emotional Intelligence
- Complexity Theories
- Authenticity
- Eco-Leadership

Timeline years: 1900, 1930, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010

ILA 2023 Conference Comments on Leadership Through the Ages

Religion
God

Futures thinking
Co-creating futures
Collaborative Foresight
by Burhring & Liedtka

Event:
Tech, Startups, Apple/Google
Culture = transforms work and work
process

In practice, followership is not marketable for organizational learning because it is not seen as glamorous.

Strengths-based leadership

Tiananmen Square

Mainstreamed World Wide Web
early 90's

Stopping voices of followers

In Praise of Follower
R. Kelley

Why should anyone be led by you?
Rob Goffee (LBS 2019, 2000)

Cynefin Framework

Sustainability Leadership
Redekop, Stanberry, Gallagher,
Satterwhite

Leadership Followership in a systems context

Raise of central power authority - China, Russia

4 Disciplines of Execution by Covey, McChesney, and Huling

Systemic & micropolitics
approaches to organizational studies

Generational positions of power and their perspectives on leadership

Backslide to authoritarianism

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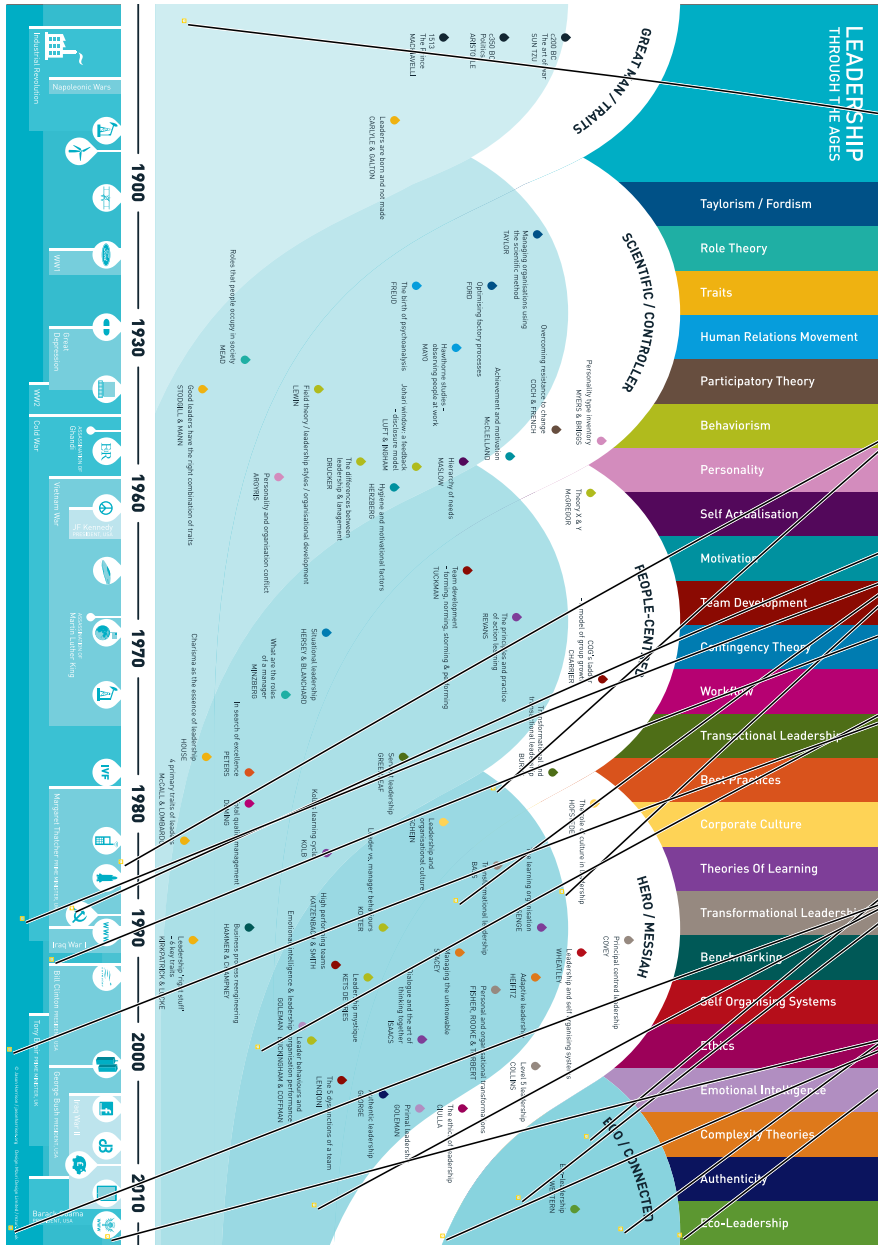
Taxonomic Organizational Branching for Ancient World Versus Modernity (Markham, 2012)

Note. From "The evolution of organizations and leadership from the ancient world to modernity: A multilevel approach to organizational science and leadership (OSL)," by S. E. Markham, 2012, *The Leadership Quarterly, 23*(6), p.1145 (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2012.10.011). Copyright 2012 by Elsevier.
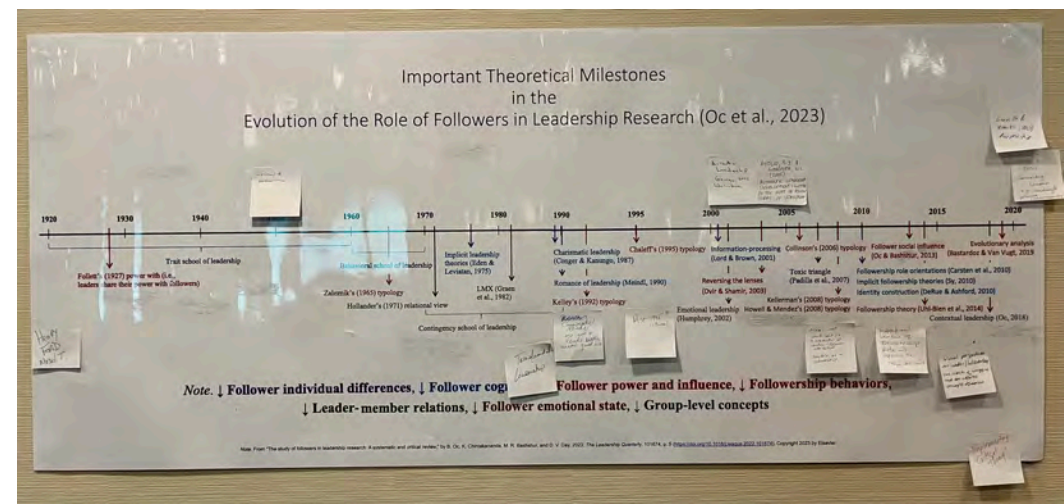
ILA 2023 Conference Comments on Taxonomic Organizational Branching

Human resources professionals evolve into strategic advisors in organizations due to technology advances in more data & less transactional roles.

Civil rights focus
60s - now

Social Networks
-> Impromptu followership
-> Informal organizations

Military organizational development in the USA creating profession of arms and professional soldiers

Non-western cultural context and situational orientation to followership

Great man theory

Religion - Biblical

East Asian (Chinese) Approaches

Plutarch, Suetonius etc
founding leadership studies

Ethical conduct
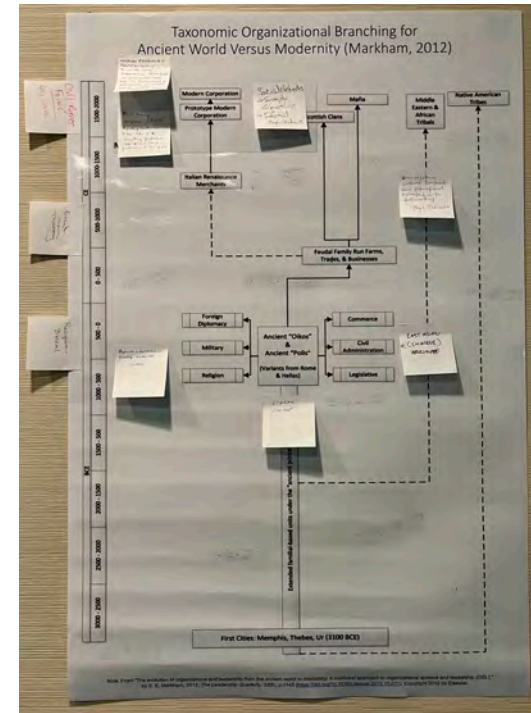
ILA 2023 Comments on Followership Timeline

Henry Ford Model T.

Criticisms of totalitarianism

Transformational Leadership

Charismatic leader - One who leads with heroic qualities

Authentic Leadership
George, 2003
Walumbwa

Avolio, B.J. & Gardner, W.L. (2005) Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership

Shamir, 2007: Leadership is a co-creation of leader-follower interaction. Therefore so is followership.

Rost, 1995

Institutional lenses of followership role and influence

Global perspectives on leader/followership - the clash of western and non-western's concepts and theories

Implementing critical theory?

Jaser's 2021 connecting leader
e.g. leading and following simultaneously

Linville & Rennaker (2023) - Purposeship

Important Theoretical Milestones
in the
Evolution of the Role of Followers in Leadership Research (Oc et al., 2023)

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ILA 2023 Conference World Café Table 1: *"What sort of care + support do you want or need from each role?",* *"Characteristics - i. Willingness to be led or lack of wanting to be led, ii. Fear, iii. Balance, iv. Bias to Leadership, v. Tension, vi. Competition, vii. Paradox, viii. Courage, ix. Systemic biases", "Semantic", "Use of Words", "Stop linear thinking ","Fluid ","Follower? Leader? Why would it be different?", "Branding semantics reframing", "Women is strong-negative", "Influencing factors - (cultural perspective) Internal agency, power distance, movements/voice, gap (is leadership training enough), View of being obeyed (social constructionism), presence of value exchange (agency)", " How does followership fit in an eco-shared distributive process?, Fluidity by purpose, whole body of shared leadership - focus?", " Indicators for a successful follower - Internal and external are money and love", "participation", "place", "priviledge", "Values - cultural case study: Hofstede's theory, Japan - Honor, obedience, Switzerland - Critical thinking", "informs the follower role".*
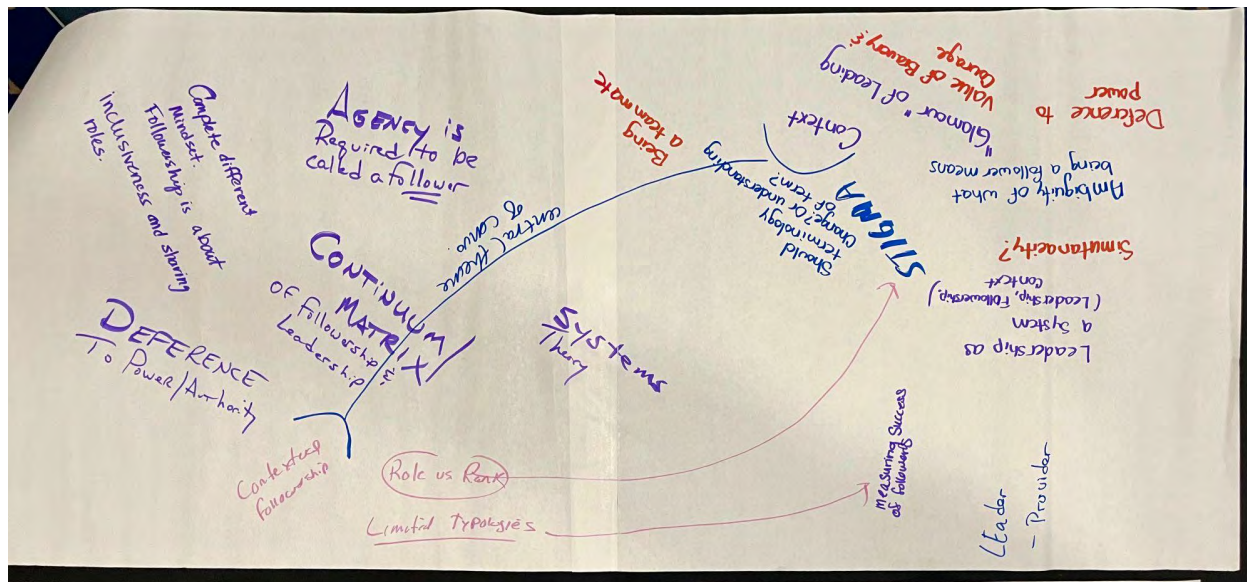
ILA 2023 Conference World Café Table 2: *"The value of followership - the word leadership has intrinsic value but followership does not", "Types of power", "The F word (label) - opposite of leader, subordinate, semantics", "Purpose of work - Direction, Alignment, Commitment", "engaged colleagues", "power sharing", "psychological impacts of the term", "Do we label the person or the activity", "Followership is fluid", "Current - social media followers, how many followers support the influencer; Leader", "Social relationship of leaders and followers?, Authority of leaders?", "The puzzle piece of followers in the leadership table", "What happens when there is not a clear leader?", "Identify with leader view to be effective", "Followers (and leaders) must be willing and capable of following", "Is followership an extension of shared leadership, or is it a separate construct?", "How to educate institutional followers and followership?", "Reterm - where does the term "follower" go?", "AWARD followership", "No clear definition of leadership and followership", "Followership is a practice, leadership is a practice + a being", "Leader is the one who influences", "Exemplary team mates (followers)", "Mitigating the F word mentality".*
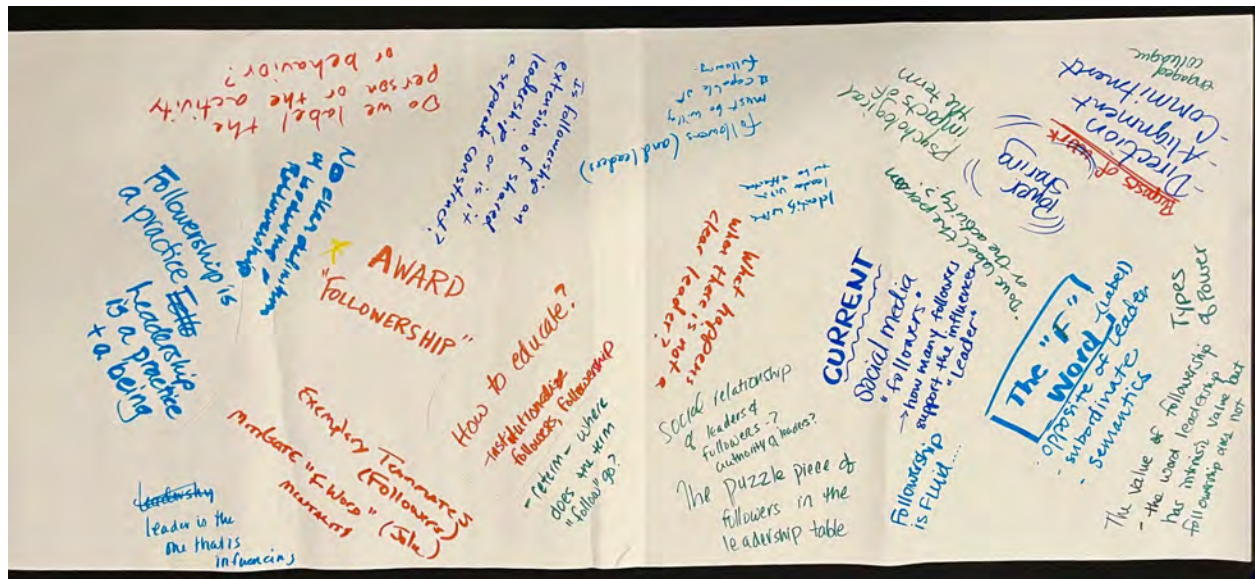
ILA 2023 Conference World Café Table 3: *"How much do leaders want courageous followers?", "All-star employee", "Exemplary team mates", "Social media - critical thinking, misinformation, risk", "Leader is a mechanistic view in a systems world", "Engaged participant or colleague", "Labels limit - Even limit leaders and what they are supposed to do", "Recognition theory - there is no leader without recognition", "Emphasis remains on developing leaders", " Dangerous - Take Vs Give Vs Emergence?", " How do we use tools for leadership now for followership", "Do good leaders care?", "Academic programs: Students connecting more with followership - Do we relabel repachage's semantics; making leaders connect more", "Practical aspects of followership", "Redefine value", "How is followership tie to authority vs leadership", "Connecting power vs co-creating" "Future, information, work", "why are we having an issue fully transitioning curricular, pedagogy, ways of working to fully recognize and incorporate followership", "More people have to write on followership", " Future thinking: co-creating futures", "Followers support sometimes play a key role", "Followership (Van vugt) - Biologically, anthropology", "What are the values that form followers and who's values: Maybe leaders don't want empowered followers" " A leader started as a follower", "Who is telling the stories", "Leader was the term we got used to?", Leaders VS followers = Are the skills we value different? No", "Evolutionary", "What have we learned", "How marketable and valuable do people see followership?", "Is it situational, authentic, or transformational theories", "Identity of leaders based on group-identity and securing democratic deliberation as an antidote to totalitarian tendencies in leadership".*
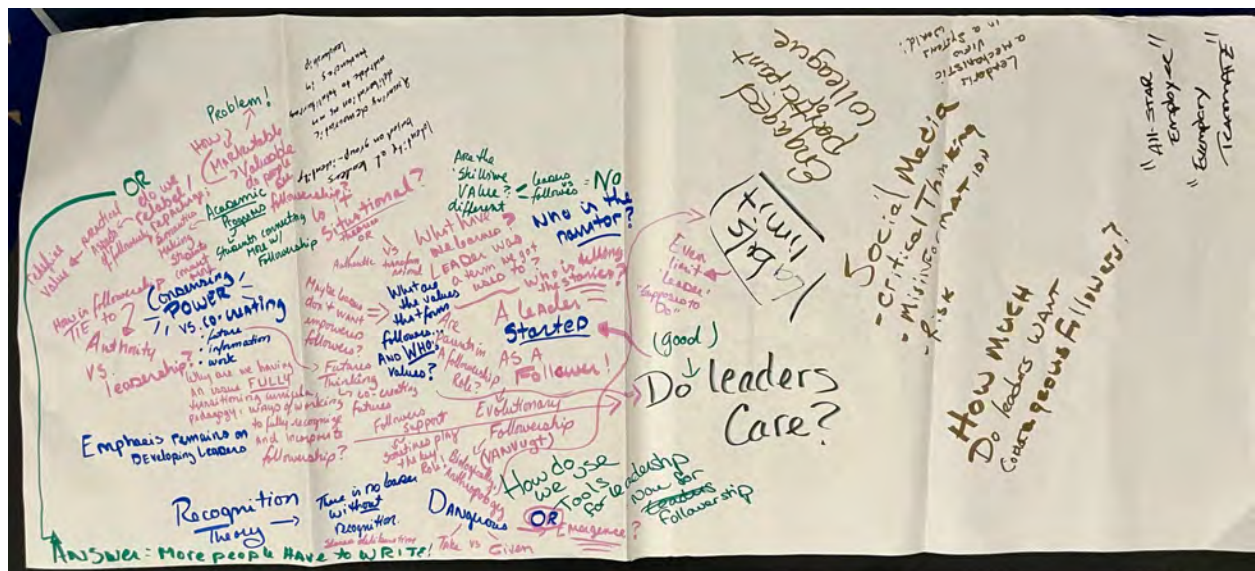
ILA 2023 Conference World Café Table 4: *"Complete different mindset: Followership is about inclusiveness and sharing roles", " Difference to power and authority", "Agency is required to be called a follower", "Continuum/matrix of followership and leadership", "Contextual followership", "Stigma - Role Vs Rank", " Systems theory", "Limited typologies: Measuring success of followers", "Leader - provider", "Leadership as a system - leadership, followership and context", "Simultaneity?", "Ambiguity of what being a follower means", "Deference to power", "Glamour of leading", "Value of bravery and courage", "Should terminology change, or the understanding of term?", "Being a teammate", "Context".*

ILA 2023 Conference World Café Table 5: *"Do followers want courageous leaders", "Do leaders really want courageous followers", "Whoever influences is the leader", "Plan", "Executive assistants move in and out of leadership and followership roles, and rarely see themselves as leaders", "Co-creation of both leadership and followership", "Downward followership: Are the terms Leadership and Followership antiquated?", "Authority vs Power + Influence", "Why do some people see a person in a position as a leader and others do not", " We are all both leaders and followers - which one depends on the context", "Success stories with FDIC teaching followership - trust improved, preferred place to work, improved self-efficacy", " When the mission fails, what is the cause?", "Communication theory - Speaker - Leader - Listener-follower", "Self-leadership: Involves leading (Goal setting) & following (Action, plans, beliefs)", "He who he thinks he leads but has no followers is only taking a walk - John C. Maxwell".*