RESTORING THE TRADITIONAL QUALITY OF AFRICAN LEADERSHIP:

PERSPECTIVES FROM THE DIASPORA

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ABSTRACT

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There is a widely held and mainly fair view that Africa's contemporary leadership is deeply flawed. Reform is needed and this dissertation takes the position that the challenges to and desirable characteristics of leadership are understood and can be influenced by Africans living in the Diaspora. To explore the challenges and possible solutions, four focus groups were convened drawing on Diasporic Africans living in Rhode Island in the United States. Each group meeting was facilitated by the researcher and discussed several questions about the most needed changes in leadership in Africa today. These concerned the most desirable characteristics in political leadership in Africa and how Diasporic African leaders can support leadership improvement in Africa. All group discussions began with consideration of the philosophy and relevance of Ubuntu a tradition-based perspective that has re-emerged through Africa in the last 30 years. Groups discussed how leadership renewal and improvement related to reviving practices based on Ubuntu. Transcripts from these sessions were analyzed for the number of mentions of particular ideas. Results were condensed into clusters of related ideas and themes for purposes of discussion. The top responses to the first question about challenges were about incompetence; corruption; and the exclusion of good leaders and officials because of sexism, tribalism, and nepotism. The leading responses to the second question on desirable leadership characteristics emphasized honesty, personal qualities of leaders, achieving visionary leadership, and enacting democratic values. In response to the third question of involving the Diaspora, a diverse range of ways in which help would be given were enumerated. This work concludes with a synthesis of the perspectives of Diasporic Africans on how to restore sound leadership in home countries.

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Keywords: Ubuntu, Leadership, Focus Groups, Diaspora, Corruption

Dedication

I dedicate this work to legacy of my deceased dad, my children, and my grandchildren and those who will follow, as well as the community of learners of African Political Leadership reforms. I am because we are.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Background of Study

Effective leadership is a prerequisite for the socioeconomic and political development of modern societies. However, the African continent is generally seen as suffering from a leadership vacuum, or worse, leadership whose "corruption sands the wheels of development in the African continent" (Owoye & Bissessar, 2014, p. 1). Salawu et al. (2012) postulated that excellent leadership is rare in Africa, and poor leadership is thought to be the source of most problems plaguing African societies.

An extensive body of literature associates Africa's underdevelopment for more than 50 years after independence with poor political leadership (Afegbua & Adejuwon, 2012; Heleta, 2007; Mbah, 2013; Mills, 2010). According to Mills (2010), Africa is underdeveloped today, mainly because its leaders have chosen poverty over the development of its people. Mbah (2013) concurred with Mill's views, arguing that "the fundamental cause of African underdevelopment and conflicts lies in the vicious leadership in the continent (p. 142). In October 2004, Moeletsi Mbeki, younger brother of former South African President Thabo Mbeki, made world headlines in asserting that "the average African is poorer (today) than during the age of colonialism," (as cited in Mercer, 2017, para. 3), accusing Africa's postcolonial leaders of wasting their nations' resources.

Authors such as Poncian and Mgaya (2015) contended that Africa's development challenges and marginalization in the international political economy have generated heated and continued debate for quite some time. There are two schools of thought on this issue. The first includes Rodney (1972/2018), Nkrumah (1963), and Bond (2006) who believe that Africa's colonial and postcolonial capitalist and economic exploitation and marginalization explains its

underdevelopment. Rodney (1972/2018) in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, argued that before the British came into relations with Africans, the people of Africa were developed, had their own institutions, and ideas of government. Bond (2006) summed up the alleged root of Africa's poverty and underdevelopment from this perspective, asserting,

> Africa is poor, ultimately, because its economy and society have been ravaged by international capital as well as by local elites who are often propped up by foreign powers. The public and private sectors have worked together to drain the continent of resources which otherwise if harnessed and shared reasonably should meet the needs of the peoples of Africa. (p. 1)

At the 2012 World Economic Forum in Addis Ababa, Goodluck Jonathan, the former President of Nigeria, stated that most of the problems of the continent of Africa were due to Africa's leaders placing their ego above the interest of the people they lead (as cited in Ogbu, 2012). Despite their vast resources, the bulk of African people live as if they were citizens of empty wastelands and this is often deemed to be in large part to incompetent leadership practices. The magazine reports that African leaders caused the continent to lose about $1.4 trillion in the three decades from 1980 to 2010.

Gray and McPherson (2000) contended that three major factors contribute to Africa's unending challenges, namely inappropriate policies, bad governance, and corrupt, and ineffective leaders. Corruption, which is symptomatic and causative of poor leadership, is one of the central vices of African leadership and is therefore seen as a primary contributing factor to the stunted development and impoverishment of many African countries. In 1957, Kwame Nkrumah, in his inaugural address to the newly independent nation of Ghana, stressed that corruption, if not eradicated, could gravely harm millions of Africans who were fighting for freedom and justice. Today, his predictions have become a reality. According to Transparency International (2019), a leading global watchdog on corruption, recent surveys have shown Africa to be widely considered among the world's most corrupt places. Of the 10 countries considered most corrupt

in the world, six were in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hanson, 2009). Furthermore, Hanson (2009)

reported that a 2002 African Union study estimated that corruption costs the continent about

$150 billion a year, compared with the $22.5 billion developed countries gave as aid to

Sub-Saharan Africa in 2008. This underscores the conclusion of many economists that effective

anticorruption policies rather than foreign aid would be the panacea for the social and economic

growth of African countries (Gyimah-Brempong, 2002). This assertion validates the comments

made by Jose Ugaz, the then-Chair of Transparency International in 2015:

> Corruption creates and increases poverty and exclusion, while corrupt individuals with
> political power enjoy a lavish life. Corruption deprives millions of Africans of their
> essential needs like food, health, education, houses, access to clean water, education, and
> sanitation. (as cited in Ewusi & Ngange, 2020, p. 43)

And so, Africans who care about, and even cry for what has befallen so many countries

of the continent, have often chosen to leave, to become what is referred to as "the Diaspora," a

term that echoes the unwilling out-migration of Jews from historical Palestine (Butler, 2001). As

author of this work, I am of the African Diaspora and my intent in this dissertation has been to

probe the perspectives of this group—one that the African Union formally recognized as a "sixth

region" of Africa (State of the Africa —as these pertain to the challenges and desirable

characteristics of leadership reform in Africa.

Statement of the Problem

Since the early 1990s, a renewed and concerted quest has been seen to identify ethical

and impactful leaders in Africa and thereby to ensure the achievement of meaningful

development has been the concern of various stakeholders from both inside and outside Africa.

Kauzya and Balogun (2005) pointed out that governance reforms adopted in the 1990s focused

on getting institutions and leadership aligned because they believed that leadership in Africa was

central to the attainment of any reform objectives. Since the 1990s, Africans, especially those

from the Diaspora, have begun to speak of a "renaissance" for the continent. Thabo Mbeki, the second postApartheid president of South Africa, turned back to the older writings of Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop, for the concept of renaissance, asserting, Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop,

> I am born of a people who are heroes and heroines. I am born of a people who would not tolerate oppression. I am of a nation that would not allow that fear of death, torture, imprisonment, exile or persecution should result in the perpetuation of injustice . . . Whatever the circumstances [Africans] have lived through and because of that experience, they are determined to define for themselves who they are and who they should be. (Mbeki, 1996, lines 31–35)

In the much talked about African Renaissance, many sources and practical activities were initiated from the Diaspora. Asante (2007)—who self-described as a seventh generation Diasporic descended from those abducted in the Atlantic Slave Trade—issued *An Afrocentric Manifesto: Toward an African Renaissance* from the perspective of one whose ancestors had been seven generations in the U.S. South. Magocha (2020) has called for explicit conceptualization of the role of the Diaspora in the renaissance that Africa continues to struggle towards.

This dissertation, then, focuses on what is probably the most pressing issue that Sub-Saharan Africa faces: the weakness and corruption of leadership and how to change that from the perspective of the Diaspora.

The Diaspora

Determining just how many people are of the African Diaspora is extremely difficult. From an archaeological point of view, given what is now known about humanity's origins in Africa (Reynolds & Gallagher, 2012; Stringer & McKie, 1998) it could be said that all *Homo sapiens* are of the African Diaspora—but that is not helpful in delimiting the term for purposes such as this dissertation! In more recent but still historical times, there have been several main

migrations, notably, the involuntary movement of millions of Africans to Asia and, later, the

Americas and Europe during the slave trade. Most infamous probably were the countless

Africans transported across the Atlantic from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Descendants of these

Africans often describe themselves as Diaspora (Conniff & Thomas, 1994) and such African

Americans have contributed immensely to political change in Africa back to at least the 19th

century.

In the 20th century, large numbers of Africans migrated to the Western world whether in

search of a more prosperous and free life or fleeing what could befall them and their families

back in Africa. Today, another component of migration has become "climate refugees"—which

includes both those who have moved within continental Africa and those who have migrated to

other parts of the world (Fagan, 2019).

In whatever way and how long ago or recently Diasporic Africans left the home

continent, they play an increasingly important economic and political role in the countries they

moved away from. The relative freedom they have to constructively critique leadership back in

Africa, adds to roles that they have been playing for many decades, including financial

contributions in the form of remittances and aid, and serving as an incubator of well-educated,

uncorrupted potential leaders. It is for these reasons that it is important to understand the

perspectives they have on the challenges and desirable characteristics of reformed leadership

back home, as well as grasping what specifically they think they can do to make that leadership

better. These are the questions at the center of this study, ones that were pivotal in the focus

groups whose deliberations were the main source of data for this dissertation.

Along with such matters, I have also related my work to even more popular traditional

African philosophy and practice of Ubuntu, a key theme in the study. Ubuntu is a deceptively

simple-sounding way of life and thought, can be summed up by the motto, "I am because you are" (Ogude et al., 2019, article title).[1] In the literature review in Chapter II, I delve deeper into the many shades of Ubuntu and the ever-increasing ways in which the concept has been applied to social and political development. Over the past several decades, spurred by the words and acts of Bishop Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela in the South African struggle against and after apartheid, Ubuntu has grown in profile to a point where a search using the Google scholar platform yielded over 250 thousand "hits"; a similar search with the two words "Ubuntu" and "leadership" returned almost 25 thousand references. Measured this way, Ubuntu is an idea whose time has come—but can it help address the kinds of challenges that a well-informed array of Diasporic Africans living in Rhode Island see with contemporary leadership of their home nations? This was a fourth basis for the questions I put to individuals from the Diaspora of Rhode Island for this research.

Recent Positive Changes in African Leadership

The dismal and stigmatized leadership of African Nations is not some inevitable and "genetic" characteristic. There are signs of hope mixed in with the failures and the negative discourse of leadership on the continent and these need to be put in the foreground as a lead into the explorations I have made in this dissertation.

From the 1990s on, Western intellectuals and political leaders have emphasized democratic political reforms as critical factors in the determination of future economic assistance to Africa. Western states have proposed participatory development for democratization, improved governance, and leadership as well as advances in human rights. However, since the

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[1] This is only one of many, almost countless but very similar summations and simple English definitions of Ubuntu (see Ncube, 2010). The basic concept is also expressed in several South African tribal languages and has parallel equivalents that can be found all over Sub-Saharan Africa (Ncube, 2010).

supposed decolonization of Africa in the 1960s, the implementation of Western leadership

models has not been beneficial in the unique African environment and has resulted in many

Pan-Africanists, including the African Union, advocating for Africans to take responsibility for

their destiny. This call for greater African self-reliance endorses the sentiments of the late Nelson

Mandela who, while addressing the World Economic Forum, said,

> Africa is beyond bemoaning the past for its problems. The task of undoing that past is on the shoulders of African leaders themselves, with the support of those willing to join in a continental renewal. We have a new generation of leaders who know that Africa must take responsibility for its destiny, that Africa will uplift itself only by its efforts in partnership with those who wish her well. (as cited in Shu, 2016, p. xvi)

In 2001, African leaders launched the New Partnership for Africa's Development as a

policy framework that sought to specifically promote good governance, human rights, social and

economic management as a catalyst to place Africa on the path of sustainable growth and

development (Funke & Nsouli, 2003). In 2004, a group of former and current African leaders

seeking to end the poor-leadership syndrome accepted Mandela's challenge to establish the

African Leadership Council through the Mombasa Declaration. The goal was to promote better

leadership and establish a series of courses to train up-and-coming political successors in the art

of good governance.

One highly regarded practitioner of promoting leadership and the mentoring of young

Africans to be future leaders is Mo Ibrahim, a British-Sudanese billionaire who created a

foundation for that specific purpose. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation annually awards a large cash

prize ($500,000 a year for the first ten years of the award and then $200,000 a year for the life of

the recipient) to former African heads of state who were democratically elected and who

demonstrated superior leadership while governing their country. By acknowledging African

leaders in such a positive way, the Foundation succeeds in shining a prestigious light on

examples of African leadership that can serve as models for other incumbent and aspiring officials.

The first laureate in 2007 was President Joaquim Alberto Chissano of Mozambique, who was cited for his substantial role in restoring peace and stabilizing democracy after a 16-year civil war in his country. He had been a leading organizer of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) resistance group that fought to end Portuguese colonialism. After independence, Chissano became the Minister of Foreign Affairs, then later became president after the death of Mozambique's first President, Samora Machel. On his assumption of office, Chissano instituted positive socioeconomic reforms and coauthored a democracy-leaning constitution. He served two consecutive terms as president (1994–2004), and according to the constitution, could have offered for another term but decided against doing so.

In 2008, the Prize Committee selected Festus Gontebanye Mogae, who had been President of Botswana from 1998 to 2008. He is credited in part for making prudent use of Botswana's natural resources for the benefit of his people. Moreover, he was honored for his efforts in combatting not only the stigma and misconceptions associated with HIV and AIDS but also the reality of just how widespread and devastating the disease had become among his fellow citizens. The Prize Committee commended President Mogae for implementing "one of Africa's most progressive and comprehensive programs for dealing with the disease," one that was so effective that it continued reducing the prevalence of the disease even after Mogae was no longer president.

In 2011, a third winner of the Leadership Award was selected, Pedro De Verona Rodrigues Pires, President of Cape Verde. He was recognized for his devotion and achievements in improving the quality of life in Cape Verde, whether they lived inside the country or

elsewhere in the Diaspora. Under President Pires's democratic guidance, which lasted for about a decade, Cape Verde managed to prosper to the point that it was able to have its name removed from the United Nation's list of "Least Developed" countries, becoming only the second African nation to achieve that status.

In 2014, President Hifikepunye Pohamba, the former leader of Namibia, who ruled that country from 2005 to 2015, was chosen According to the Prize Committee, President Pohamba earned the award because of his practical emphasis on increasing gender equality, providing free education for children, and ending the HIV crisis. As a result, nearly half of the members of Namibia's parliament are female, nearly 100% of primary-school-age children now attend classes free of charge, and the rate of HIV transmission from mothers to their children has fallen to less than 5%.

In 2016, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf who had governed Liberia for 11 years (2006–2017) was honoured with this leadership award. When Sirleaf took office, Liberia had recently seen the end of its Second Civil War (1999–2003), which in combination with the First Civil War (1989–1996) left a quarter of a million people dead, displaced five times that number, and saw a generation of children drugged and turned into killers, and a huge proportion of the female population were raped (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2016). In winning Liberia's first post-war national election, Sirleaf became the first woman to be elected head of an African state. Through her decade of determined transformative leadership, she managed to keep the peace, stop the spread of child soldiers, and refocused the country's attention to self-improvement. This was done while having to respond also to the epidemic Ebola crisis and the deaths of roughly 5,000 Liberians. Despite the depressingly swift and widespread impact of the Ebola outbreak, Sirleaf was otherwise effective as the chief executive that, during

her tenure, Liberia became the only country to improve in every one of the categories listed in the Foundation's Index of African Governance.

In July 2018, President Obama, through the "Obama Foundation Leaders: Africa Program," announced a 1-year leadership development and civic engagement program for 200 rising leaders from 44 African countries. This unique program, which was launched in Johannesburg, South Africa, aimed to train, support, and connect emerging African leaders to create positive change in their communities (Obama Foundation, 2018).

The pattern of some failed and some successful African leadership in the 21st century has led several Afro-optimists to debunk the application of Western leadership theory in the African political space. Poncian and Mgaya (2015) postulate that African leaders need to learn lessons from precolonial African leadership and governance to meet the leadership challenges of the 21st century. Nkomo (2006) has observed that most leadership theory practiced by African political leaders emanates from the United States based upon research on U.S. leaders and managers and is therefore not suitable for practical implementation in Africa.

Khoza (2011) calls for the practice of "attuned leadership," a unique African leadership style drawing on the principles of Ubuntu. Indeed, there is a large group of Pan-Africanists advocating the application of the transformative principles of Ubuntu in the political leadership of African societies in the quest for effective, results-based political leadership in the continent.

The array of African leaders honoured by the African Leadership Council this century are positive proof that there is no inherent inability or unavailability of excellent people. Indeed, the contexts they have faced and made important progress in are in many ways far beyond the challenges faced by exemplary leaders in the West. A path has been shown and what this dissertation aims for is to identify the challenges and most desirable leadership characteristics as

seen from the Diaspora—as well as pinpoint actions the Diaspora may undertake in support of people like Mo Ibrahim, Chissano, Mogae, Pires, Pohamba and Sirleaf.

Exploring the Diaspora's Perspectives on African Leadership

There is a missing voice in the heated discourse in the quest for effective African leadership: the voice of Africans in the Diaspora, who are nevertheless significant stakeholders in the socioeconomic and political development of African societies. According to Smit (2010), this group includes "professionals," often middle-class businesspeople, politically engaged persons, individuals who have received postsecondary education outside of Africa, who fully understand the importance of hard work, have become knowledgeable global citizens, and seek to exert strong local influence. The literature reveals that most of Africa's democratically elected political leaders who took office after their nation gained independence had lived and been trained in the West under the influence of foreign systems of governance, leadership and ethics. It is therefore vital that their Diasporic perspectives on effective African leadership are given adequate consideration in the debate. Ultimately, the Pan-Africanists in the Diaspora will exert valuable, affirmative influence in the African political scene. The goal of this dissertation is to explore stakeholder perspectives on African leadership as manifested by Africans in the Diaspora who reside in Rhode Island, in the Northeastern United States.

Western universities have, for decades, served as primary learning centers playing a significant role in the education of current and emerging African leaders. This was the case for the first generation of postindependence leaders as well. This has expanded into leadership development programs in the United States, such as the Young African Leaders Initiative launched in 2010 and the Mandela Washington Fellowship, which began in 2014. This Fellowship empowers young Africans through academic coursework in U.S. colleges and

universities, leadership training, and networking. The fellowship is to provide outstanding leaders from Sub-Saharan Africa with opportunities to hone their skills at a U.S. college or university in support of professional development.

Research Questions

The broad question investigated here is as follows: What are the perspectives and views of Sub-Saharan African (SSA) leaders in the Diaspora in Rhode Island on African political leadership reforms? The specific questions put to Diasporic Africans were as follows:

1. What are the most needed changes in leadership in Africa today?

2. What are most desirable characteristics in political leadership in Africa?

3. How can Diasporic African leaders support leadership improvement in Africa?

A fourth question pervaded the focus group discussions and their addressing of these three first questions. It concerns the long tradition of Ubuntu (or similar philosophies named differently outside of South Africa) and how it relates to restoring quality African leadership.

The Purpose and Significance of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to understand the views and perspectives of African leaders in the Diaspora in Rhode Island in the Northeastern United States on effective political leadership reforms that can promote sustainable development and growth in their respective African countries. This study seeks to lift the marginalized voices of Diasporic Africans in the discourse on effective political leadership reforms in Africa. The Diasporic Africans are significant stakeholders in African political systems and contribute enormously to the economy of their homelands. Their investments of funds as well as their own time and efforts to help are momentous. Bodomo (2013) has lamented that despite the enormous remittances provided by the African Diasporas, most African governments have paid lip service at most to the inclusion of

the Diasporic Africans into the governance and political decision-making process of their countries of origin. Most of the resources of the Diasporic Africans, namely their expertise, experiences, and technical know-how gained studying and living in other parts of the world, have not been adequately harnessed by their home countries because the political process does not include them. According to Bodomo (2013), the African Diaspora of more than 140 million Africans remitted US$60 million, which was more than the development aid funds from international donors. The African Diaspora has grown to become an essential source of foreign exchange for Africa such that the African Union has designated it as a sixth development "zone" (Edozie, 2012).

In terms of politics, Gramby-Sobukwe (2005), for example, has underscored the longstanding contribution of Diasporic Africans—especially those based in the United States, democratization of African leadership. Yet, to a large extent their voices and role are mostly missing from leadership literature about Africa's future and the preparation of its leaders.

This disregard for perspectives about Africa from its Diaspora is part of a larger problem of who studies and theorizes about the continent, who tells its "truths." Fourie et al. (2017) in a critical review of 60 years of research on leadership in Africa (1950 to 2009), found marginalization of the African from the discourse. The study revealed that most of the research on African leadership theory originated from outside Africa by foreign scholars who almost inevitably evoke cultural symbols or practices which often end up essentializing and homogenizing Africa (Nkomo, 2011). Fourie et al. reported a far smaller volume of research conducted by African scholars who live in Africa, with the majority coming from South Africa. Van den Heuvel (2007) suggested that an additional impetus for South Africa's dominance in research on leadership in Africa arose from the recent transition from a White-dominated

government to one led by Black Africans. This resulted in the need to search for an "African" leadership and management and how the concept of Ubuntu could form a foundation for a new type of leadership (van den Heuvel et al., 2007).

The contribution of this significant stakeholder to the leadership debate can enable Africans to develop more robust leadership reforms with inputs from a broader range of stakeholders. It is hoped that this dissertation will help to foster stronger commitment and collaboration among Africans both in Africa and abroad necessary for effective and sustainable implementation of leadership reforms. The added voices from this study may help to facilitate and offer guidance informing strategic methodology and the execution of change in African leadership.

Methodology for the Study

This study utilized focus groups to unearth the perspectives of members of the African Community Leadership Forum (ACLF) of Rhode Island. The ACLF is a network of leaders from the large and diverse African community in the state who have joined together to present a common front to improve the socioeconomic status of the members of their community, as well as staying politically active, following and desiring to contribute to the socioeconomic and political development of their respective African countries. The ACLF is broadly representative of the African voice because it has members from not less than 40 African countries who represent the 40,000 Africans in Rhode Island.

According to Morgan and Hoffman (2018) the focus group method emerged in the early 1940s with the work of Robert Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld who used focus groups to conduct studies of influence of war propaganda on audiences. Lazarsfield and others later introduced this technique in marketing (Lunt & Livingstone, 1996). This data gathering method has gained

popularity as a means of eliciting qualitative data from various groups in all industries, including health services as well as social sciences research. Powell and Single (1996, p. 499) defined focus groups as "a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research." Marczak and Sewell (n.d.) described focus groups as an assemblage of interacting individuals who share similar characteristics and are brought together by a moderator, who uses the group and its interaction as a way to gain information about a specific topic in research. As a method of inquiry, focus groups combine elements of both individual interviews and participant observation (Morgan, 1988).

Because of the diversity of the African community in Rhode Island, to ensure optimal participation and homogeneity, I conducted four focus groups: one for religious leaders, one for politically motivated professionals, one for participants who were significantly involved in nonprofits, and one for women professionals. The focus groups served to provide information and data regarding the types of leadership models practiced, and the influencers of these acquired leadership mindsets.

Limitations of the Study

The sample is of necessity one of convenience, given the broad dispersion of African-descended people throughout the Diaspora. The African Union (n.d.) defines the African Diaspora as consisting "of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union" (para. 3). Akyeampong (2000) narrows down the definition to refer to recent emigration from Africa. According to the Migration and Remittances Factbook (2011), as of 2007, an estimated seven million African migrants were

living in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. The
2010 U.S. Census Bureau reported that as of 2010, over 3 million Africans had migrated to the
United States.

Taking into consideration the extensive nature of the African Diaspora, whether, by the
broad or narrow definitions, the findings from this research are not generalizable to other
Diasporic African groups outside of the northeastern region of the United States of America. A
focus group consisting of a limited number of participants may not be an actual representative
sample of this extensive, diverse, and broad group. Therefore, generalizing from focus group
data is not possible. The generalization of the results of this study are further restricted by the
fact that the responses from members of the focus group are not independent of one another
because of the group interaction and dynamics (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014).

Nonetheless, though the findings of this study may not be generalizable or representative,
they may be indicative, descriptive and illustrative of the particular social phenomenon of
African leadership as perceived by the participants of the groups (Litosseliti, 2003). The
advantages that focus groups provide, however, outweigh its limitations. These advantages and
limitations are thoroughly discussed, along with the methodology in Chapter III. Since there is
limited available research from this perspective, any research that serves as a reservoir of
knowledge of the perspectives of Africans in the Diaspora is most welcome.

My Positionality

As a passionate Pan-Africanist and Afro-Optimist, I believe in identifying African
solutions to African problems. As a student of leadership and change I believe, with Nkomo
(2006), that Western-based leadership principles rooted in individualistic ideas have not served
the well-being of collectivist African societies. Whether imported or dictated to the African

situation, these principles have failed, enabling mass corruption and dictatorships all through the African political space, hence my quest for an "attuned" (Khoza, 2011) African leadership philosophy—which is, Ubuntu.

As a diasporic African leader in Rhode Island, I am part of a community committed to finding solutions and also being available to contribute to the resuscitating of dying African economic and political societies. Confronted with the reality that, though most of Africa's democratically elected leaders were once living in the Diaspora, Diasporic Africans have been sidelined in the discussions of African leadership reforms; therefore, my desire is to empower previously marginalized Diasporic African leaders to contribute to the debate on African leadership reforms.

The interplay of all the aforementioned motivations has directed me to follow this research trajectory. The reader may draw their own inferences on how this positionality may have influenced the framing, conduct, and analysis of the dissertation

Outline of Dissertation Chapters

Subsequent to this introductory chapter is Chapter II, a review of literature focused on topics that motivated this research and to which I hope to contribute.

In Chapter III, the methodology used in this research is defined and explained. The underlying epistemology, and the ethical considerations of choosing focus groups as a method of study are also outlined. Chapter IV presents and discusses the findings of the study, comprising a detailed analysis of themes and subthemes from the focus group discussions. Given that 35 spirited Diasporic Africans from Rhode Island together created the array of responses, the results had to be organized into a smaller subset of priority themes for discussion and theory; this was done in Chapter V, providing a framework for discussion of such theme clusters. Chapter V

provides my closing reflections on what the study has yielded, on ideas about study limitations future research, implications for the real world of practice.

Chapter II : Literature Review

Oh, Mother Africa
Your tears have bled for years
It is time to remind the world
Before you disappear
Remind us of your strong spirit
How you built humanity
Remind us of your strong heart
That sets people free
Remind us of your beauty, Mother
Remind us we're not alone
Remind us of your rightful place
Upon the world's throne
Remind us of your wondrous strength
Remind us of your past glories
Do not spare us your deep pain
When telling us your stories
Remind us how to unify
Remind us how to become one
Remind us how to be human
Remind us how it all begun
     Remind us now, we have no time
Your stories we must know
Remind us now, we have no time
Please tell us before you go
Break the bonds of silent strength
I cry beg you oh Mother of souls
We need your love, we need your power
Do not leave us in this cold
Tell of our mistakes and ignorance
We are lost without your love
Retake the role of leadership
Your rebirth is what I dream of
 We rose against you, and took your strength
Tried to make you forget your past
But the love and wisdom within your heart
Even after death will last
 Stand together, show us the way
I will fight to spread your voice
For letting you die before our eyes
Is nothing but our own choice

                           —Richard Hill III

This poem was written in 2005 by one of the Caucasian students in my African Studies

class at Rhode Island College. The poem captured the disgust that many of the African American

students experience in my class when they are exposed to the real truths about how the Western World plundered and otherwise mistreated Africa, and in the process, left the continent grossly underdeveloped in many places. Such student sentiments of appreciation for Africa's contribution to world history and civilization go a long way to rekindle my passion for Pan-Africanism—but also, optimism.

This poem is a depiction of the deplorable state of Africa as a result of Western exploitation, symptomatic of all the myths and stereotypes perpetuated by the West, to justify the chronically unfair and inhumane treatment of Africans. The effect of such negative narratives has been racial prejudice and discrimination. Such negative stereotypes persistently passed on from generation to generation leads to the perpetuation of the derogatory myths about Africans in particular, and black people in general (Harris, 1998). Harris reiterated that the concept of Black inferiority and racial prejudice is perpetuated "by the denial of meaningful and intellectual cultural and historical experience" (Harris, 1998, p. 2).

Overview of This Chapter

This literature review begins with and is rooted in Mother Africa and the countless tears that have been and still are shed because of historic and present-day inadequacies and injustices. After outlining the literature about this context with which all Africans and their leaders must contend—the never-ending debates about why Africa is so challenged and the colonialist (and continuing) view of Africa as a "dark continent," I look at what has been written and researched about the time-immemorial concept and philosophy of Ubuntu, which revolves around a very different perception of how Africa has worked and, arguably, can again work.

This will bring me to an overview of the literature on the challenge of achieving good leadership in Africa, with some reference to non-African leadership ideas that have been

suggested as an "antidote" to the problems of Africa. I have already been clear on my position

that Africa has suffered from disproportionate analysis and the attempt to impose non-African

systems of thought on us. But there are models that Western scholars have come up with that

resemble the best of traditional African leadership, approaches such as J. Burns's (1978)

transformational leadership and Greenleaf's (2003) servant leadership; these merit some

reflection and relating to Ubuntu and the best of long term traditional African governance.

Literature that attempts to connect such progressive Western models of leadership to Ubuntu is

reviewed briefly. Finally, the discussion moves to considering the literature on the African

Diaspora and their role historically and in modern times in reform in their native lands. Figure

2.1 sketches the parts of this literature chapter and how the discussion proceeds.

Figure 2.1

Topics and Flow of Literature Review
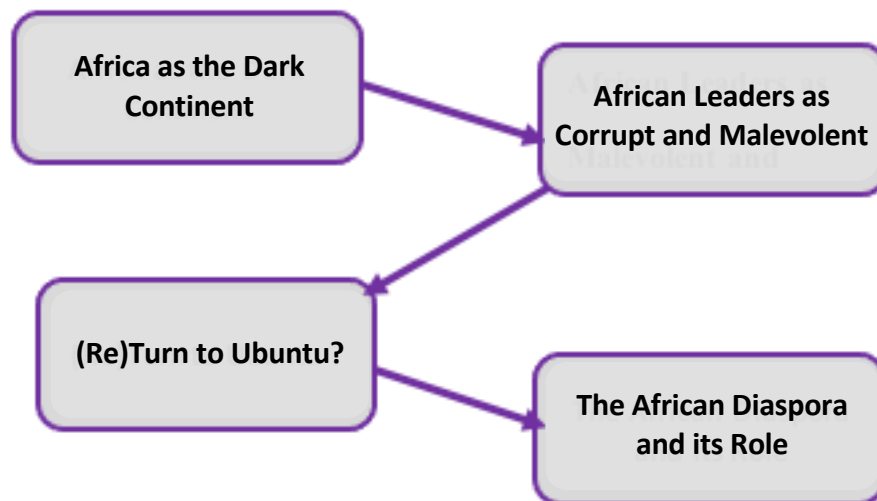
Africa as the Dark Continent

In this section I look at two distinct but related aspects of how Africa and Africans are seen as "dark" and sinister: the historical beginnings of the metaphor associated with justifying colonialism, and the contemporary stigmatization of Africa's leaders political systems as hopelessly corrupt and violent.

While often in times of early contact between Africa and Europe, there was an intriguing mystique about what came to be called the "Dark Continent," as imperial powers set their sights on the wealth of natural and cultural resources, certain myths became convenient to them. Many of these persist in the perceptions of Westerners. Among the ones that are the roots of prejudice and presumptions are that Sub-Saharan Africa is basically a single culture with only minor variations and that uniformly bad leadership and governance has prevailed as far back as anyone can remember. The people were seen as at best gullible and superstitious and lower down on the human evolutionary scale than Caucasians—one of the great Enlightenment thinkers, Immanuel Kant—who never traveled more than 50 miles from where he was born, lived, and died—came up with an influential classification that put Negroid Africans and other Black people next to the bottom[2] of human capability (Kleingeld, 2007).

Seeing "the Other" as inferior was a useful part of justifying invasion, conquest and seizure of lands and resources in Africa and many other parts of the world. Despite the teeming wealth of culture and languages, and civilizations that in some cases long predated civilization in Europe, imperial powers could see these lucrative lands as empty, terra nullius. People who lived amidst such riches but used their world in what Europeans believed were limited were prodigal sons or the descendants of Cain. On the basis of this thinking, European powers gathered in

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[2] Kant put indigenous people of the Americas in last place in his classification, asserting that while "Negroes" were trainable, Amer-Indians were not (Kleinge, 2007).

Berlin in 1884–1885 and carved up Africa into zones (Figure 2.2) where each European nation would then have exclusive ownership and jurisdiction (Forster et al., 1988). It is essential to point out that the peoples and communities of Sub-Saharan Africa, by the time of the European invasion, were long established, well-organized kingdoms and many successful empires like Ghana (Goodwin, 1957), Mali, Songhay, Zimbabwe, and Kano Bueno (Conrad, 2009; DeVillers & Hirtle, 2009), with rich, influential and well-respected leaders like Mansa Musa (Bell, 1972; K. Burns, 2001), Shaka Zulu (Austin, 2014; Kunene, 1979), Chief Moeshoeshoe (Becker, 1969; Sanders, 1975), and Mohlomi. Each kingdom had armies and many won the fierce wars that they fought against the invaders despite not having the guns that insured ultimate European victory (Vandervort, 1998). These long ago historical wars of resistance continued throughout the long decades of European occupation and exploitation (Saul & Royer, 2002; Serequeberhan, 2003).

Figure 2.2

Cartoon Depicting Leopold II and Other Imperial Powers at 1884–1885 Berlin Conference

Note. From File: Cartoon Depicting Leopold 2 and other imperial powers at Berlin Conference 1884.jpg.

Many Westerners continue to hold unjustified views of Africans never having taken the time to immerse themselves in the African culture and the true African history. By studying the mythology and the history of the Africans, from the beginning, one can understand Africa as a whole. The study of the African culture and its history can help to debunk certain myths commonly held about Africa today. In a speech on "The Significance of African History," the Caribbean writer, Richard B. Moore observed,

> The significance of African history is shown, though not overtly, in the very effort to deny anything worthy of the name of history to Africa and the African peoples. This widespread and well-nigh successful endeavor, maintained through some five centuries, to erase African history from the general record, is a fact which of itself should be quite conclusive to thinking and open minds. For it is logical and apparent that no such undertaking would ever have been carried on, and at such length, to obscure and bury what is actually of little or no significance. (as cited in Clarke, 1994, p. 1)

The significance of African history becomes still more manifest when it is realized that this deliberate denial of African history arose out of the European expansion and invasion of Africa, which began in the middle of the 15th century. The compulsion was thereby felt to attempt to justify such colonialist conquest, domination, enslavement, and plunder. Hence, this brash denial of a history and culture of Africa and even the human qualities and capacity needed for the European version of civilization.

Clarke (1994) contended that African history must be looked at anew and seen in its relationship to world history; Clarke criticized that what is called world history is only the history of Europe and its Anglo settler colonies. The rest is periphery and treated that way. But "the world did not wait in darkness for Europe to bring the light; the history of Africa was already old when Europe was born" (p. 2).

One of the most popular delusions about Africa is that it is the "dark continent." This term though a bit misused, could be understood when the history is clarified. The term usually is

attributed to the British Explorer Henry Morton Stanley, who wrote two books that both had titles referencing Africa as "dark": *Through the Dark Continent* (1878) and *In Darkest Africa* (1890). Stanley used the term to portray that in the 19th century, Africa was unexplored and unknown to Europeans. The "dark" therefore, used in the context to mean mysterious and not clearly visible.

In modern times, the term is used to denote the mass darkness of the continent perhaps due to a lack of electricity service that remains common in rural Sub-Saharan Africa. Africa, which accounts for a sixth of the global population at about 1 billion in 2007, generates only 4% of global electricity. With three-quarters of this used by South Africa, Egypt, and the other countries along the North African coast. Africa seen from space at night was unlit, darker than everywhere else except Siberia (The Economist, 2007). Thompsell (2015) also contended that the lack of knowledge was not the only cause of calling Africa a dark continent, but slavery, racism, missionaries, and savagery were also factors.

Heart of Darkness, a famous novel published by Joseph Conrad (1902/2004), strongly reinforced the concept of Africa as dark among Westerners. It is one of the most widely read Victorian novels and was still very often assigned often in schools and universities in the West throughout the 20th century. Thus, many an otherwise well-educated young person in Europe and North America was schooled in the compelling account of a supposedly brilliant Westerner who lost his civilized mind and morals by ruling over the superstitious indigenous peoples of the upper Congo region. On the surface, it was a dreamlike tale of mystery and adventure set in Central Africa; however, it was also the story of a man's symbolic journey into his inner being and the horror he found there is by implication, revealed because of the savagery that surrounded him. It is emblematic that the central character, Kurtz, was in a remote area of the region as part

of the truly savage exploitation of local peoples and their resources that followed from the overbearing European divvying up of Africa; the same region continues to be beset with violence and warfare to this day, still connected to the immense riches that Western interests want from the area.

The exploration and exploitation of Africa in the 1870s and beyond by European traders, officials, and adventurers, were based on hunger for resources but justified, as noted, in terms of this primitive dark nature of African societies. assumed power of the Europeans due to the invention of guns, which gave them the entitlement to rule the people in Africa. However, with the power abuses and failures, especially in Congo, the Europeans began to blame the "Dark Continent," rather than themselves, attributing the causes of savagery in men. *Heart of Darkness* was a reflection of the adventure experience to Africa and the philosophic presentation of the human character involved in the voyage.

The great Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe famously tore into *Heart of Darkness* as an expression of imperialist ideologies.

> The point of my observation should be quite clear by now, namely that Joseph Conrad was a thoroughgoing racist. That this simple truth is glossed over in criticism of his work because white racism against Africa is such a standard way of thinking that its manifestations go completely unremarked. (Achebe, 1958/1973, p. 176)

Achebe's main point was that Joseph Conrad portrayed Africa as a dark and primitive land, and the Congolese people as inhuman, barbaric, and animalistic, for the definite purpose of justifying European imperialism. But while that period of colonialism did slowly come to an official end after World War II as former colonies won their independence, the convenient stigmatizing has continued, still rationalizing unequal economic relations (Langan, 2017). What is no less disturbing is the stereotyping and stigmatizing of political, economic and social affairs

in African nations, so that Western leaders and citizens maintain an image of the whole continent

as being corrupt and under the control of dictators.

African Leaders as Malevolent and Corrupt

> That corruption has become one of the most notoriously persistent and progressively
> worsening social problems afflicting virtually all Sub-Saharan African countries today is
> indisputable. The practice has permeated virtually all institutions both public and private,
> governmental and non-governmental. (Mulinge & Lesetedi, 1998, p. 16)

I do not dispute the widespread corruption that has broken out in so many countries of

Sub-Saharan Africa. Reputable assessments have been made of worldwide corruption rates, such

as by Transparency International (2019) and the statistics for this region are unmistakably dire.

In the focus group discussions convened for this study, the theme was amply discussed and

lamented (See Chapter IV). But it is important to explore briefly the literature on why this has

happened if Africans are to come up with sound strategies for changing this.

Almost since the earliest days of independence for former African colonies, the prospect

and threat of corrupt/or violently bad leadership has been on the minds of scholars and

development workers. This is not surprising given the turmoil that broke out in many parts of

Sub-Saharan Africa in the early years of the newly formed states. Even people who had been

heroes in decolonization like Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana became soon entangled in alleged

corruption (Mazrui, 1966; Werlin, 1973), while in other countries vicious civil wars and

intertribal hostility broke out as in Congo and Nigeria, Eventually many who had bravely led in

the fight for independence turned into rulers whose oppression rivalled or exceeded in brutality

what had happened under imperial rule—for example Amin in Uganda (Gupta, 1972) and later,

Mugabe in Zimbabwe (Holland, 2012). Gupta (1972), not long after the expulsion of people of

South Asian descent from Uganda, wrote about "African Fascism" (p. 2203) but took the trouble

that many others have not to point out the fallacy of "treating the whole of Africa as a

homogenous unit. . . . [this] misses the wide variety which exists in Africa in terms of the culture, political system, leadership, ideology and socioeconomic development" (p. 2203). This assumption of homogeneity has, it should be noted, supported colonial stereotyping in encouraging neocolonialism while discouraging aid appropriate to different African countries.

The tragic stories of the post independence period run very much contrary to the historical pattern of leadership in Africa which did not frequently include corrupt practices and, instead, served communities in their own version of the public interest (Akena, 2019). I will come back to this when reviewing the idea of Ubuntu. What is easier to discern is that as European powers invaded traditional lands they replaced or trivialized good African community leaders. In most cases, very intentionally the colonial powers replaced existing leadership and governance with a comprador ruling class that would primarily serve imperial rather than indigenous interests (Iheriohanma & Oguoma, 2010). There have been a growing number of publications that shift from blaming Africa and its backwardness (i.e., darkness) to scrutiny of how continuing Western exploitation underwrites and perpetrates bad national leaders, thereby trickling corruption throughout society (Oluyitan, 2017). Apata (2019), for example, asserted that "the discourse on African corruption is a Western invention that emerged as a postcolonial construct" (p. 43). He proceeded then to dissect the ways by which this invention has occurred with emphasis on the continuity between pre-independence and postindependence colonial and neocolonial strategies.

It is this problem of who gets to tell the story of Africa's leadership problems that motivated my study, for I provided the opportunity for Africans living in the Diaspora to discuss issues like corruption and bad leadership as a basis for recommending how to make positive changes.

In this section I have spent some time providing a brief overview of the derogatory views that have been held about Africa and its leadership back at least to the 19th century. This was done to set up a contrasting background for looking at African history and leadership in a very different and opposite way. It should be noted as I move to that discussion that one of the advantages of research based on the perspective of Diasporic Africans is to get a non-Western and in my view a more valid perception about the realities—harsh but also uplifting—of leadership as it is and could be in Africa.

(Re)Turning to Ubuntu?

Having considered the "dark side" of the story of African leadership, I now turn to literature about the traditional community-oriented philosophy—mostly referred to as *Ubuntu*—and then, an outline of ways in which scholars and others have suggested using these principles for positive change. It should be pointed out that when I convened the focus groups from Diasporic Africans living in Rhode Island, I bought up the nature and prospects for applying Ubuntu. This was done to get conversations off to a start but also because calling for Ubuntu as a way to tackle today's leadership challenges has become an ever-increasing topic within and outside of Africa.

Before delving into the meaning and significance of Ubuntu, it is important to posit an alternative, in fact an opposite view of Africa and its contributions. It is now well established that the birthplace of humanity, the place where the human species first appeared in the fossil record was Africa (Reynolds & Gallagher, 2012; Stringer & McKie, 1998). This alone should help to dispel the supremacist ideas that Africa is somehow a backwater of human history: it is the homeland of all! Moving forward in time, the indisputably advanced Egyptian civilizations were, arguably, arising from a people who were not at all uniformly fair-skinned Middle Eastern/Asian

humans. The famed Greek historian Herodotus traveled often to this area of Africa and suggested that the dominant group in Egypt at the time were "Colchians" descendants of the soldiers of the pharaoh, Sesostris, who had "black skins and kinky hair" (as quoted in BBC World Service, n.d., para. 11). It was only much later when White ethnologists visited Egypt that they refused to believe that the magnificent civilization of the area could have been created by Negroid Africans. Senegalese historian Cheikh Anta Diop (1989) wrote *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* asserting, "Ancient Egypt was a Negro civilization" (p. xiv). This "Black Athena" thesis has never stopped being controversial (see for example, Lefkowitz & MacLean-Rogers, 1996) a reflection, I believe, in part of the refusal of Westerners, including scholars, to believe that Negroid Africans could possibly achieve unequalled early civilization.

Less debatable are the extraordinary cultural, economic and intellectual accomplishments of a number of African civilizations that were organized into grand kingdoms and empires (Aderinto, 2017). A stellar example of such a civilization was Timbuktu which was a great center of learning when places like London and Paris were still little more than muddy villages (Gomez, 2019). Timbuktu, located in what is now the troubled state of Mali, had great libraries and impressive palaces and mosques in the 12th century and thrived as a hub for a huge proportion of West Africa:

> Riverboats come from the South,
>
> Salt camels come from the North,
>
> Wisdom & Knowledge reside in Timbuktu
>
> —Tamashek Proverb (as cited in Rainier, 2003)

Yet the wisdom and rich intellectual and spiritual life of Africa before the European invasion was not found only in magnificent empires but in the principles that even small local cultures and villages maintained, the philosophy and way of life now widely known as Ubuntu.

Ubuntu is an ancient philosophy that has its roots deeply anchored in traditional African life. Bhengu (1996) defines it as the art of being a human being. Most basically it means as "I am because we are," or as Booysen (2015) explained, "*Ubuntu*. a Nguni word that literally translates to 'I am because of others,'[and] was popularized by Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela in the 1990s with the downfall of Apartheid in South Africa" (p. 135). A more comprehensive definition, according to Broodryk (2006, p. 52), is "Ubuntu is an ancient African view based on the primary values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in the spirit of family. Many scholars of Ubuntu have often noted the difficulty of translating or the inadequacy of conveying the full meaning of the term in English. The concept is variously translated as "African humanness" (Broodryk, 2006, p. 53), "humanity" (Shutte, 2001, p. 2), humanism or humanness (Mnyaka & Motlhabi 2005, p. 63) or the "process of becoming an ethical human being" (Mkhize 2018, p. 35). Broodryk (2006) stressed that the same concept albeit with a different word, occurs widely throughout Africa. He provided this information, which I summarize in Table 2.1

Table 2.1

Ubuntu Equivalent Concepts Across Africa

Language/Ethnic Group	Equivalent Concept
Zulu (South Africa)	Ubuntu
Sesotho (South Africa)	Botho
Akan (Ghana)	Biakoye
Yoruba (Nigeria)	Ajobi
Shangaan (Mozambique)	Numunhu

Language/Ethnic Group	Equivalent Concept
Venda (South Africa/Zimbabwe)	Vhuthu
Tsonga (South Africa)	Bunhu
Xhosa (Transkei – South Africa/Zimbabwe)	Umnta
Shona (Zimbabwe)	Nunhu
Kiswahili(Tanzania)	Ujamaa
Uganda	Abantu
Cape Afrikaans	Menslikgeit

Note. Drawn from information in Broodyk (2006).

In 2006, Nelson Mandela explained his interpretation of Ubuntu in an interview with South African journalist, Tim Modise:

> In the old days, when we were young, a traveler through a country would stop at a village, and he did not have to work for food or water. Once he stops, the people give him food and entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: "Are you going to do so to the benefit of your community?" These are the critical things in life, and if you do that, you have done a remarkable thing which will be appreciated. (As quoted in Kirsten-Coleman, 2020, para. 4)

Oppenheim (2012) concluded that Mandela radiated Ubuntu in his manner and interactions and was able to access the Ubuntu in others. This he did through direct respect and empathetic human connections, for he believed he was because they were, and his Ubuntu was also their Ubuntu in a collective whole (Oppenheim, 2012, p. 387–388).

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, standing alongside Mandela to end apartheid in South Africa, has been credited as the person who most popularized Ubuntu while head of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Tutu was unprecedented in his emphasis on restorative and not retributive justice. Tutu (1999) offered the following explanation of Ubuntu:

> A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated, tortured or oppressed. (p. 22)

Tutu (1999) admitted that Ubuntu is complicated to render into a Western language "It is to say my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in what is yours" (p. 31). In this definition, Tutu reasoned that there is a common bond between people; when one person's circumstance improves, everyone gains, and if one person is tortured or oppressed, everyone is diminished.

Ubuntu has now become immensely popular—and popularized—perhaps to an extent that threatens to turn the term into a panacea and a cliché. Washington (2010) contended that Ubuntu had become a buzzword in South Africa. There is now an *Ubuntu* magazine, Ubuntu software, Ubuntu style of management, Ubuntu ethics, Ubuntu foods, and Ubuntu pop psychology. Cilliers (2008) reported that a Google search would reveal some rather creative corporate and small business links: Ubuntu builders, Ubuntu communications, Ubuntu gymnasiums, Ubuntu taxis, and Ubuntu hairdressers—the list goes on to the point of potentially diluting the concept's purpose that is the focus of this dissertation: healing and restoring good leadership to a continent beset with the opposite.

More significantly for my purposes, a wide array of scholars and practitioners in many fields have connected to Ubuntu as a possible inspiration or reference point. Some examples of publications drawing on the philosophy of Ubuntu for application in fields of practice include the following:

- Edwards et al., (2004) for improving community mental health care.
- Seehawer (2018), for decolonizing social research in Africa.
- Le Grange (2012), as a basis for reforming education.
- Maphalala (2017), for better managing school classrooms.
- Ewuoso (2020), for establishing better ethical guidelines in genome research.

- Lutz (2009), as a basis for ethical business amidst globalization.

- Mugumbate and Nyanguru (2013), applying to social work practice and education.

It seems, borrowing a headline from the BBC reporting on an inspirational speech by former U.S. President Bill Clinton, that "all you need is Ubuntu" for anything (Coughlan, 2006).

Given the almost too rapid adoption or at least mouthing of Ubuntu as the solution to everything it is not surprising that quite a few scholars have been skeptical about Ubuntu. Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013), for example, set out to show, "that the aggressive promotion of Ubuntu in postapartheid South Africa is an elitist project so conceived by the new Black elite" (p. 197). MacDonald (2010) traced the subtle ways in which the term has been manipulated to serve the interests of neoliberalism and oppose progressive change. Booysen (2015), while acknowledging the strengths of Ubuntu as a philosophy cautioned how readily Ubuntu can be a tool for reinforcing parochial leadership.

Mandela (1995) believed that Ubuntu can go beyond a merely parochial view to contribute towards the enrichment of not only South Africa but humanity as a whole. South Africa, with its racial diversity and bitter past, could not have moved on as a nation without Ubuntu. In introducing the idea of Ubuntu to the challenges studied here, I am mindful of the statement of Kenneth Kaunda, the first president of Zambia: "Let the West have its technology and Asia its mysticism! Africa's gift to the world culture must be in the realm of human relationships" (1967, p. 27).

The African Diaspora and Its Role

This final subarea of my literature review is clearly important in light of the study that I have carried out. The organizing question is what has been written and recommended about the

importance of the Diaspora to Sub-Saharan Africa generally and specifically in how the Diaspora can be a significant agent for improving leadership.

It should first be noted that the African Diaspora includes those who departed Africa during several distinct eras and movements of people from Africa to other parts of the world. African Americans and the descendants of people who were enslaved and taken to other parts of the world, rightly consider themselves to be of the Diaspora. Their role in world history and in supporting economic prosperity of the regions where they were forced to live and work cannot be overstated (Baptist, 2016). More to the point of this dissertation, these early Diasporic Africans have long played a major role back in Africa itself through their political action and philosophical ideals. Among the most noteworthy influences were the advocacy by leaders such as Marcus Garvey of Pan-Africanism (Adi & Sherwood, 2003) and of the physical return of displaced Africans, known as the "Back to Africa" movement (Campbell, 2007). As is well known, the nation of Liberia was founded by freed slaves returning from the America (Cassell, 1931). Erhagbe (1996) has reviewed the Diasporic role, particularly of African Americans, in opposing imperial exploitation Later, as African colonies struggled for their independence, individuals of African descent from other lands played a significant role supporting these movements, notably through the Pan-Africanism movement. The Nigerian historian Edward Erhagbe has written numerous papers that span the centuries describing the changing but steady involvement of Diasporic Africans—mostly from America—in critical moments of Africa's struggle against and after imperialism. This includes the role in opposing European conquest (Erhagbe, 1996), in the Ethiopian crisis of the mid 1930s (Erhagbe & Ifidon, 2008), the opposition to South African apartheid from 1971 to 1990 (Erhagbe, 1995) and into the 21st Century (Erhagbe, 2007).

The participants in focus in this study are entirely from the later voluntary migration to the West in contrast to those forced long ago into migration and slavery. The role of this later and different wave of the Diaspora has become ever more prominent in the 21st century as their numbers increase while Africa continues to face upheaval and opportunities for better political leadership. The accelerated migration between African states and into the West further underscores the need to take the views and possible roles of Diasporic Africans very seriously (Rinelli, 2015).

In 2003, the Heads of State of the African Union formally recognized the Diaspora as what had long been referred to as the sixth region[3] of Africa. They deemed the Diaspora to be "an effective entity contributing to economic and social development of the continent" (as cited in State of the African Diaspora, n.d., para 4). Many saw this as long overdue since the African Diaspora's key role especially in making remittances and donations back to their home countries was already well established (Klute, 1986). In the last 40 years the amount and impact of remittances has burgeoned. Singh et al. (2011) drew on data from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to conclude that remittances to Sub-Saharan Africa from their Diasporas rose from US$20 billion in 1980 to US$317 billion by 2009.

Beyond financial contributions, the African Diaspora plays an increasing role supporting of civil society back home, a role especially important in states that are trying to recover from long deadly civil wars (Mohamoud, 2005). Newland and Patrick (2004) studied the role of the Diaspora in poverty reduction beyond the benefits of direct remittances, pointing to such means as, "foreign direct investment, market development (including outsourcing of production),

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[3] The other long-recognized five regions are North, West, East, Central and South.

technology transfer, philanthropy, tourism, political contributions, and more intangible flows of knowledge, new attitudes, and cultural influence " (p. iv).

With this ever-increasing and diverse role, naturally questions have arisen as to how respectfully and seriously the home countries are treating their Diasporas.

One important area of inquiry and innovation has been the use of digital platforms as means to connect members of Diasporas to each other and to groups in the home country. Andersson (2019) has comprehensively reviewed such efforts and recommended that efforts intensify to research the many ways in which Diasporas, especially recent migrants, can use the rapidly evolving "new media."

A central purpose of the present study was to gather the views of members of the Diaspora on how they can best assist in leadership improvement in Africa. Other studies that have looked at similar issues include Galperin et al. (2014) who compared Diasporas in Canada and the United States in terms of what were felt to be the most needed leadership characteristics and others by colleagues of these authors in a multinational project entitled "Leadership Effectiveness in Africa" and the Diaspora (Mukanzi et al., 2017).

Finally, and perhaps most important in studying and encouraging the involvement of Diasporas relates to what home governments can do to better facilitate this. As noted, very good intentions have been professed by home governments through the 2003 recognition of the "sixth region." As is often the case in life, good intentions do not accomplish much by just being stated and now, almost 20 years later, some assessments of progress in Diaspora engagement need to be made. Several studies on this were conducted a decade or more ago (e.g., De Haas, 2006). Ionescu (2006) wrote a comprehensive review for the International Organization for Migration in which she delineated numerous strategies for greater Diaspora involvement:

- Estimate the offsetting potential of macro-economic and political settings.
- Recognize the importance of trust, perceptions and images.
- Acknowledge the diversity of diaspora interests and strategies.
- Allow diasporas' ownership of their initiatives and contributions.
- Build collaboration with diasporas based on realistic objectives, tools and time frames.
- Relate incentives targeting diaspora contributions with diasporas' rights.
- Provide gender-specific responses.
- Commit at high institutional level.
- Assess the potential negative effects of diasporas' policies.
- Support internal governmental coherence.
- Establish collaboration between the home and the host country.
- Devise comprehensive diaspora policy packages. (pp. 54–55)

Similarly, de Haas (2006) also wrote a prescriptive analysis for Oxford University's International Migration Institute entitled, *Engaging Diasporas: How governments and development agencies can support diaspora involvement in the development of origin countries*. Again, however, these calls to action are 15 years old and there seems to have been much less focus on the question of facilitating Diaspora involvement in the last several years. This dissertation research contributes to outlining what is possible as seen from the view of Diasporic Africans themselves.

Chapter III: Research Methodology

To repeat the central purpose of the research undertaken for this dissertation has been to understand and document the perspectives of African leaders in the Diaspora in Rhode Island the Northeastern United States on effective political leadership back home. There are, of course, numerous methodologies that could provide some vantage on these views. In the first part of this chapter, I note these alternatives and explain why I chose to use focus group research. This discussion segues into the detailed procedure used here for the focus groups and my research plan. I conclude the chapter with an overview of what data was gathered and how it was analyzed.

Choice of Focus Group Discussion as Data Gathering Approach

In originally looking at methods for gathering data to understand the Diasporic perspective on African leadership I recognized several alternatives. One would have been to design and conduct surveys, which carry the advantage of receiving views from a much larger number of people than is feasible in purely qualitative research. But while surveys have that advantage of breadth, to design them one needs to be quite sure of what the relevant ideas are likely to be. I felt that this research needed to start at a more open-ended point not assuming that I, as researcher, could name the categories of responses likely to be obtained. This was later substantiated in the sheer diversity of thoughts in relation to what became three pivotal questions to pose to participants—what the challenges of present leadership were, the desirable characteristics for reformed and higher quality leadership, and what, if anything Diasporic Africans might be able to do to transform leadership back home. Surveys have the advantage of allowing for large samples from the population of interest, but they have several drawbacks important for what my research was about including providing no way to bring to light sensitive

topics that the researcher had not previously known of. It seemed that a qualitative study was

essential if these matters were to be explored without prior assumptions about what categories

would be named. Saint-Germain et al. (1993) in studies about breast cancer victims and

survivors, compared their survey work to focus groups:

> The findings of the focus group interviews, in most cases, confirmed the findings of the previous population surveys. In many cases, the *focus group interviews went beyond the information obtained in the survey amplifying our understanding* [emphasis added] of the various facets of barriers to breast cancer screening and specifying more exactly how some of the barriers work in practice. (p. 363)

A common way to go into a deeper exploration of sensitive matters is to hold narrative

one-on-one interviews (van Manen, 1990. This approach has been very productive in numerous

settings especially when the topics are sensitive, multifaceted, and controversial— an example is

Bar-On (1989) who used interviews to probe the lives and experiences of Germans whose

parents were involved in Hitler's atrocities. There is much to be said for the intimacy and privacy

that can be assured by a researcher conversing with one participant at a time. The single person

interview is proclaimed to be an effective way to bring out the "lived experience" (van Manen,

1990, p. 1): Beuthin (2014), for example, in a study in the field of nursing, asserted that such

interviewing could yield stories that would be a "basic human expression . . . seen

cross-culturally *regardless of ethnicity, language or culture* [emphasis added]" (p. 126).

However, from the perspective that I have grown up with and tried to practice in my

everyday work and life, single subject interviewing is deeply rooted in the individualistic

perspective that has long characterized non-African research. It assumes that the person being

interviewed can speak for a category of people and that what they recount as individuals is a

faithful description of their cultural perspective. Generations of Africans, like other Indigenous

peoples worldwide, have been "subjects" for non-Africans to do ethnographic interviews on this

basis. This has led, as famously stated by Maori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), to research being called, "one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (p. 1).

On reflection, I do not consider that the claim is valid that such interviewing can produce by itself a "basic human expression [that is valid] cross-culturally regardless of ethnicity" (Beuthin, 2014, p. 1)—not for obtaining a perspective on what are very much *collective* social realities, ones that are not only shared with others but exist only because those others exist. In other words, given that Ubuntu—I am because we are—is a substantive part of what I am studying, I felt that it would be inconsistent to line my informants up one-by-one as if I were a prosecutor who wanted to make sure that the "witnesses" would not influence each other. To the contrary, I wanted to listen to and learn from narratives collectively because the topic *is* collective. That brought me to seeking an approach for hearing from multiple participants *as they interact*, as they tell their stories not unlike a circle of their ancestors gathered around the fire pit.

This perspective on how I thought I best to convene Africans for candid and insightful discussion of leadership in their home countries led to the idea of focus groups. There are several reasons why focus groups were the main research methodology chosen. First, the participants in the research—the Africans in the Diaspora, are one group who has been marginalized in the conversations about African leadership renaissance because they live outside Africa. Their perspectives and experiences are very important and need to be heard because, as discussed in the final section of my literature review, they are key stakeholders in the social and political development of Africa. This topic therefore becomes very sensitive to them. In order to get better insights and understanding on their perspectives, interviews and mere questionnaires will not be suitable. Secondly, because this may be a new area of discussion for them, this research sought

to explore to a certain degree their consensus on the topic. In this chapter, it is essential to share fundamental information about focus groups, their limitations, and how to ensure effectiveness.

What are Focus Groups and How Did the Method Originate?

A variety of focus group definitions exist in the literature. Freitas et al. (1998) defined focus group as a type of in-depth interaction among a group of people whose characteristics are well defined with respect to the proposal, size, composition and interview procedures, and in which the object of analysis is the interaction within the group. Krueger and Casey (2014) saw a focus group as, "A carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (p. 5). Most often, focus groups are conducted with approximately seven to 10 participants in the presence of an interviewer who is also able to facilitate. According to Krueger and Casey, the discussion is intended to be relaxed, comfortable, and often enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions. Group members influence each other by responding to ideas and comments in the discussion.

Marczak and Sewell (n.d.) described a focus group as an assembly of interacting individuals who share similar characteristics and are brought together by a moderator who uses the group and its interaction as a way to gain information about a specific topic in research. Powell and Single (1996) defined a focus group as "a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research" (p. 499).

Focus group methods emerged in the 1940s with the work of sociologist Robert Merton who had been asked to conduct studies on the impact of propaganda on groups of individuals. Merton initially devised what he called a "focussed interview" (his preferred spelling; see Merton, 1987). This method gained huge popularity among those in the advertising field and

spread widely to applications as a means of eliciting qualitative data from various types of groups for health services, as well as for social sciences research (Morgan, 1988).

Barbour and Kitzinger (1998) highlighted the role of focus groups in research by stressing that a focus group is becoming an established part of the methodological tool kit within the social sciences. Therefore, it is imperative for social science researchers to understand how to adopt it to suit their research. Some general features of undertaking a focus group include, people participation, group homogeneity, and a series of meetings (Freitas et al., 1998). Focus groups require a flexible research design and not randomization. In selecting participants, it is critical to remember that the intent of focus groups is not to infer generalities but to understand participant realities, not to generalize, but to determine the range, not to make statements about populations, but to provide insights about how people perceive a situation (Marczak & Sewell, 2007). This previous work provides an examination of the potential use of focus groups for my research study as well as the benefits and limitations of focus groups. In addressing the limitations, strategies about how to overcome the limitations and have an adequate and successful focus group session are discussed.

Advantages of Focus Groups

In terms of advantages, to reiterate, the main methods of qualitative data collection in social sciences to which focus group method can be compared are surveys, individual interviews and participant observation.[4] Focus groups combine advantages of all these methods, giving the researcher the opportunity to interview, to quantify the responses, and to observe (Freitas et al., 1998).

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[4] The participant observation technique has been widely used by ethnographers. To apply this to the dissertation question would involve finding a setting in which Diasporic Africans were already working on aspects of leadership improvement for their home countries. I was not aware of any such prospects feasible within my time frame.

In addition, focus groups provide insights into people's views or perceptions regarding the research topic. They provide the platform for the researcher to understand how groups or individuals think or feel about a particular topic and how they hold specific opinions (Marczak & Sewell, n.d.). Furthermore, as Marczak and Sewell argued, the focus group process is based on a series of questions, similar to a group interview. Therefore, group interviews provide the researcher the ability to solicit deeper information that is not readily available in a survey.

Group interaction and nonverbal communication are also advantages of the focus group process. During group interaction, participants make connections with some concepts and ideas that might not emerge in interviews. These can enable the researcher to see a pattern based on background or characteristics of those who share similar perceptions (Marczak & Sewell, n.d.). This aids the researcher in reaching some conclusions about the dynamics of different groups and their perceptions.

Additionally, nonverbal communications such as facial expression and body language are an integral part of surfacing ideas and gauging feelings. Focus group interaction allows the researcher to experience first-hand the emotional reaction of participants on some controversial issues (Nagle & Williams, 2011). The researcher can observe the body language and facial expressions to determine which of the participants are either comfortable or uncomfortable about a certain issue without them having to verbally express their viewpoint. In addition, with group interaction, the researcher can easily identify the shy or confident participants. This informs the researcher on how to regulate the process of interaction to encourage the engagement of all participants.

Another benefit of using focus groups is that they allow the researcher to explore a wide range of matters as they arise during discussions (Nagle & Williams, 2011). Even though the

researcher has a defined area of questions, a response from any of the participant can be an interesting area to probe further for clarification.

Limitations of Focus Groups

One of the limitations to the focus group as a method of data collection is that information gathered is only analyzed at a group level and not at the individual level (Marczak & Sewell, n.d.). Focus groups may not be the appropriate method to collect individual perceptions and opinions when highly personal and possibly traumatic. If the purpose of the research is to address issues that are personal and unique to individuals, using focus groups is inappropriate, as individuals are unlikely to be comfortable sharing personal experience with others in a group.

Another limitation is that of the amount of control the researcher is able to maintain over the group (Freitas et al., 1998; Morgan, 1988). In a focus group, participants are encouraged to freely give their opinions concerning the topic of discussion and this facilitates the free flow of ideas. The free flow of ideas is integral to a successful interaction; it gives the researcher less control over the group but, especially for what can be very divisive issues can lead to conflict that is not necessarily bad so long as a baseline of civility is maintained. Exceeding that could cause some if not most members to leave whether physically or in terms of interest and participation. From the researcher's perspective, too much confrontation can produce chaotic data rendering analysis difficult (Marczak & Sewell, n.d.).

Short of such outbreaks there are other ways in which the group dynamics can flounder. For example, aggressive and outgoing participant may dominate the discussions throughout leaving the more reserved participant hesitant to talk (Nagle & Williams, 2011). At the opposite end of the issue of dominance is that some participants may be naturally (or situationally) inhibited from joining in. While this happens in groups that meet numerous times, tends to

resolve as shyness decreases and comfort levels increase, one-time focus group process and productivity from a research point of view can be weakened by too much or too little participation. The more experienced the researcher is with moderating groups, the more likely it is that such group dynamic challenges can be overcome. I chose to facilitate based on experience for many years with small groups in my church, an especially diversified congregation from different African countries and the Caribbean. Extensive teaching experience in seminars as well as involvement in the community also helped equip me with a skill set for meeting challenges of group dynamics.

A final concern that arises with focus groups far more than with surveys or individual interviews is protecting confidentiality about what is said. Routinely, the facilitator/researcher stresses that "what is said in the room must stay in the room" and participants are asked to acknowledge and honor this rule. But, in reality, there is no way for the researcher to guarantee that all those present will respect this (Tolich, 2009). Participants must be made aware that, in the end, confidentiality about proceedings is a shared responsibility and something that no one person, including the researcher, can guarantee

When to Use Focus Group in Research

According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), focus groups are used for the following purposes:

- To explore new research areas.
- To explore a topic that is difficult to observe (not easy to gain access).
- To explore a topic that does not lend itself to observational techniques (e.g., attitudes and decision making).
- To explore sensitive topics.

- When you want to collect a concentrated set of observations in a short time span.

- To ascertain perspectives and experiences from people on a topic, particularly when these are people who might otherwise be marginalized.

- In combination with other methods, focus groups might be used to gather preliminary data, aid in the development of surveys and interview guides, and/or clarify research findings obtained from another method.

Focus groups are also used to gain an understanding of the culture of a group and when there is a need to develop a degree of consensus on a topic. Again, this approach is used when group discussion or interaction among participants will bring out insights and understandings that would not be ascertained through questionnaire items or individual interviews.

The Focus Group Research Process

Krueger and Casey (2014) suggested that a focus group occurs in three stages. They are planning stage, session or interview stage, and the analysis and reporting stage. The planning stage is essential to the success of the focus group (Nagle & Williams, 2011). As in any research study, the first task was to define the purpose of the study. This is where the researcher considers the focus group as a key data collection procedure for the research. Being clear about the purpose of one's research is especially important when research involves numerous participants who need to know why they are contributing. At this stage of the study, the researcher is keen on some specific type of information and believes the focus group is the best method of acquiring this information. In addition, this guides the remainder of the research process, including the selection of participants (Freitas et al., 1998).

Once the purpose of the study has been clarified, the researcher has to determine the sample from the population of interest—those, who when the study is completed are the basis for

inferences—needed to fulfill the ambitions of the research (Marczak & Sewell, n.d.). Population in this context represents the pool from which individuals can be selected to participate in the focus group. For this study, the population of interest was specifically Diasporic Africans living in Rhode Island. It is a locale that I have long lived in and understand especially those who, like me, came from Africa for the long-term. I recognized that the purpose was never to generalize about what the American, New England, or even Rhode Island African Diaspora felt or believed; it was to draw on the rich perspectives of people who cared about and understood what was happening back in Africa.

During the selection process, demographic characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, and education are essential criteria to be accounted for (Marczak & Sewell, n.d.). It has been recommended that a focus group be conducted with reasonably homogeneous individuals. Dreachslin (1999), argued that in order to generate an equal level of contribution from participants, the group should consist primarily of individuals who fall within researcher-determined parameters such as age, level of education achieved, ethnicity, political affiliation, etc. However, Dreachslin also warned that too much homogeneity can lead to monotony of opinions or perceptions, which could render the results less revealing and therefore less robust than might otherwise have been achieved. Dreachslin suggested that a heterogeneous group can make a considerable impact due to differences in participants' backgrounds, opinions, etc. With this in mind, it falls upon the researcher to find the right balance among participants.

Pilot Study

Pilot studies are very useful if underreported for structuring and debugging any kind of social research from pre-test of surveys to management of group interviewing and discussion (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). Long before scheduling and starting the main sequence of

focus group sessions, I conducted a brief pilot study to test the design and better familiarize myself with what could go on in a full research session. This was in 2017. The purpose was to give me hands-on experience in the use of this methodology for the upcoming dissertation. This pilot study was meaningfully revealing. As a novice researcher, I went into the process with mixed feelings. I was a little anxious, but excited to engage in this exercise, having been equipped with all the knowledge gained from my studies. Reading the materials was easy, but the implementation came with some challenges.

Some of the challenges that I experienced during the focus group included the following:

- The skill of simultaneously moderating and note-taking

- The need for close attention to the physical environment

- The pros and cons of using homogenous groups

- Dealing with challenges of participant time availability.

One of my biggest challenges was trying to keep quiet and to take a back seat in order to observe the participants' interaction and at the same time, to guide the discussions and take notes. The topic, naturally, was one that I was fascinated in both as a Diasporic African myself and as it had become central to my ongoing doctoral studies. I struggled with getting a good balance so that I did not miss comments and feedback. This was especially true when striving to observe nonverbal communications among the participants yet taking accurate notes (my voice recorder failed to work). The atmosphere was very engaged because the participants had a lot to voice concerning African leadership, but some of them wanted to do it their own way and not according to the instructions I had outlined during the introduction. Hence, the challenge of simultaneously moderating the sessions and taking notes on participants' responses was difficult for me.

I therefore came to support and realize the importance of what Côté-Arsenault and Morrison-Beedy (1999) asserted, "No one individual can create and maintain a successful focus group environment" (p. 175). Also, the venue posed a challenge for the group discussion as it turned out to be inconvenient to the participants. As the pilot group discussion was taking place in the offices of the African Leadership Forum, there were external distractions, disturbances, and other interruptions that negatively affected my session. These disturbances distracted from the attention and focus of the groups and consequently affected the overall output of the focus group discussion. There were also problems with the tardiness of some of the pilot group participants, a factor having to do with how busy most strong participants are always likely to be. In light of the pilot group experience as detailed above and this tardiness, I recognized that the time allocated for sessions had to be extended for the desired quality of the discussion.

I also noticed that the involvement of participants varied considerably during the session. Some participants were highly involved throughout, while others' contributions were sporadic and, overall, minimal to the discussion. Some participants talked more than others did, which subtly or not so subtly affected the group agenda. This restricted the contribution of other participants in the group. Due to the unevenness in participation, the data was scattered and hard to integrate afterwards. Their contributions (and mine), I admit, did not reach my desired or expected objective of the study. A lack of homogeneity among the participants impacted levels of feedback. Two of the participants were PhD holders, two were high school diploma holders, and the other two did not indicate their highest form of educational attainment. This condition gives credence to the suggestion of Howatson-Jones (2007) that by separating focus group participants into homogenous groups, the researcher promotes "group cohesion and responsiveness" (p. 9)

In addition, one of my top priorities for this pilot was to obtain the maximum amount of information and also give a brief presentation on Chief Mohlomi, the mentor of Chief Moshoeshoe, who is known as one of the best examples of a brilliant precolonial African leader (Becker, 1969). In my dissertation study I planned to provide brief summary of the philosophy of Ubuntu and how it influenced South Africa under Nelson Mandela to solve some of the atrocities of the apartheid system and how it also played out in other African societies in precolonial times. I found within the pilot that such substantive presentations need to be kept short. My remarks about Ubuntu and Mandela were stimulatory but less seemed to be better than more so that the group did not fall into a listening rather participating mode. It was then that I decided to use an icebreaker about Ubuntu as a lead into the main focus group discussions.

As a result of the pilot group session, reflection on earlier facilitation-like experiences, I had had in my work in Church and community, and my readings of literature about the practice of facilitation, I compiled a set of advice to myself that I referred to mainly in preparation for each of the four focus group meetings. This is summarized in Appendix C.

Selection and Composition of the Focus Groups

The number of groups to be included in a study and the size of each of those focus groups are as important as any other aspects of the research because the group is the main unit of analysis (Freitas et al., 1998). Although there is no rule addressing the number of separate groups required per research, Krueger and Casey (2014) argued that a minimum of three groups is generally the minimum needed for research.

In deciding the number of participants per group, the researcher must bear in mind that the group should be big enough to provide diversity and yet small enough such that all participants would have sufficient opportunities and adequate time to participate meaningfully in

the session (Asquith, 1997; Tang & Davis, 1995). In other words, small groups tend to have less experience and diversity, while large groups are harder to control. Although the literature reflects a range of recommendations in terms of the optimal size of a group, there appeared to be consensus that a group of seven to 12 participants is optimal to achieve a successful interaction (Nagle & Williams, 2011).

I selected four focus groups in order to elicit broad based perspectives from the representatives of the diasporic population of 40,000 African immigrants living in Rhode Island. Participants were chosen based on systematic sampling using my prior connections with the ACLF to maximize the chances that I could successfully recruit, sufficient qualified candidates. The ACLF has a very diverse membership in terms of education, age, sex, religion, and countries of origin. Members are mostly from Sub-Saharan Africa namely Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Togo, Cape Verde, Senegal, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Congo, Cote D'Ivoire, Cameroon, and Southern Africa.

The composition of the four focus groups were as follows:

1. The first focus group was made up of leaders of various diasporic religious organizations and movements. These diasporic leaders provide not only spiritual empowerment to their followers but also social and political empowerment. Many of them were well educated, politically informed, and deeply interested in political reform in their countries of origin.

2. I had another two focus group of male professionals most of whom had postgraduate degrees with a few whose highest educational attainments were Associates and Bachelors. Many of the participants for these groups were known to be well informed

in the politics of both the Diaspora and their countries of origin and involved in

community and other nonprofit groups.

3. The fourth focus group were all female diasporic leaders. Because all too often

    Africans can be very paternalistic, regardless of the women's educational and

    political attainment, I felt that it would not be productive to mix women into groups

    with their male counterparts. I had witnessed this phenomenon in numerous contexts

    and deemed it best to have one all-female separate focus group to ensure no

    participants did not have their voices marginalized This was done precautionarily and

    grounded in assumptions based in my prior experience; the choice does not reflect my

    views of the specific male participants who were in the other groups.

Invitations and Commitments to the Participants

In accordance with the ethical requirements that were provided to me by the Antioch

University Institutional Review Board, having identified the best possible potential participants, I

wrote emails of invitation with as much detail as possible on the purpose of the groups and

research. Additional key provisions of the emails were to ensure that potential participants

understood that the sessions were voluntary, not remunerated, and that staying or leaving

throughout the session was up to each person. I also explained that there would be audio taping

of entire sessions after which transcripts would be made. I committed to fully confidential

handling of the tapes and transcripts.

In the end, I was fortunate to recruit a total of 35 participants who were able to meet in

four separate focus group sessions in late 2019. Their distribution among the four sessions as

well as countries of origin, educational levels, occupations, ages and gender are detailed at the

outset of Chapter IV.

Venues for Sessions

Masadeh (2012) recommended that the venue for the session must be easily accessible and convenient for all participants. It should be perceived by all as more or less neutral ground. It is the responsibility of the researcher to provide a comfortable and productive environment that is conducive to conversation which is also free from disturbances and distractions. I was very fortunate to be granted permission to use facilities that met and exceeded such requirements, courtesy of the African Alliance of Rhode Island for three sessions and the ACLF of Rhode Island for one session. More details about the locations are provide in Chapter IV.

Approach of the Facilitator/Moderator

Freitas et al. (1998) suggested that, in the planning stage, the researcher should identify the purpose and desired results of focus groups so as to guide facilitation or moderation. on how to conduct sessions in order to achieve the desired results. Freitas et al. (1998) argued that the facilitator's level of involvement is determined by the outcome the researcher wants the focus group to produce. A low level of involvement is ideal for research that aims to explore different perceptions concerning an issue. On the other hand, a high level of involvement is ideal for conducting research that addresses a particular hypothesis (Freitas et al., 1998). Moreover, a good facilitator has the ability to direct the discussion and encourage participants to freely express their views (Nagle & Williams, 2011). A skillful facilitator is essential in conducting a successful group session.

After considering the options for this work, I decided that there would be value in my being a person familiar to most participants at least by name if not more directly. As a bishop of 10 Church of God churches in Rhode Island (a Pentecostal denomination) and an experienced college teacher, I felt that I had the competencies to facilitate these groups.

Topics/Questions for the Session

The researcher has the task or responsibility of developing a series of questions related to the topics (Freitas et al., 1998). A list of questions serves to remind both the facilitator and the participants of the areas of interest. Once the facilitator has made purposes clear before and at the beginning of a focus group meeting, they help to keep the discussion on track, questions should be carefully planned before the session. Authors such as Krueger and Casey (2014), Marczak and Sewell, (n.d.), and Nagle and Williams (2011) have all uggested, some procedures for developing questions for group sessions. Their advice, combined is as follows:

- Use open-ended questions and avoid "yes" or "no" questions.

- Avoid "why" questions as asking these in a focus group may imply that there is a single rational answer.

- Questions should be systematically prepared but have a natural flow to them. The facilitator should get feedback on the set of questions from other persons.

- Allow for unanticipated questions.

 I kept this guidance in mind and decided that structuring sessions around three questions, outlined in Chapter I, preceded by a broad question about Ubuntu, would be most helpful and consistent with the key advice from the literature. In the end, focus group discussions were organized around the three research questions which followed an icebreaker discussion prompted about Ubuntu. These organizing questions were as follows (chronologically):

1. To what extent do African leaders in Diaspora identify Ubuntu as a leadership principle?

2. What are the most needed changes in leadership in Africa today?

3. What are most desirable characteristics in political leadership in Africa?

4. How can Diasporic African leaders support leadership improvement in Africa?

Format of Each Session

I began each session, with a welcome address first thanking and acknowledging the generosity of participants in taking the time to help in this dissertation research. I then outlined the purpose of the research, the reason for the focus group as the primary method of data collection, and ground rules of the session. This mainly followed advice from Freitas et al., (1998). It should be noted, that when inviting the participants for the session, the purpose of the study should be clearly explained to avoid any misunderstanding during the session. It is essential to be clear to the participants in advance that there would be audio recording and transcript preparation.

During the session, facilitator should enforce the rules but should do so in a way that does not discourage the freedom of expression. Rules for the focus group sessions I conducted were quite basic: no side conversations, one person speaks at a time, don't criticize what others have to say, and treat everyone's ideas with respect (Freitas et al., 1998; Nagle & Williams, 2011). Overall, I was very impressed though not surprised by the self-regulation of the participants—I almost never had to step in and call attention to transgressions of the rules. As stated, this was not surprising based on my years of working with welleducated Diasporic Africans in Rhode Island. It is fortunately common that the vast majority intuitively understand "the rules" of ordinary discussion and also, have a deep culturally based grasp of how collective story telling has always unfolded in Africa.

At the end of the session, I summarized the discussions and gave the participants a chance to make any additional comments and provide feedback. I thanked the group for participating, reassured them of the need for confidentiality and expressed an openness to speak

further with any individual who wanted to follow up. Closing remarks from participants were overwhelmingly supportive and many thanked me and others present for the opportunity to talk about their home countries, the challenges and the prospects.

Record of Meetings

After the meeting I reviewed the notes I had been able to take in session (although often these were sparse because moderating and listening carefully to the unfolding discussion occupied most of my attention. My main source of data for further analysis were the audiotapes which were subsequently professionally transcribed. The transcription ran to somewhat over 50,000 words for the combined transcripts.

Approach to Analysis

The analysis stage translates the raw data from discussions into a more understandable form for the research report (Nagle & Williams, 2011). The process of data analysis must be sequential and verifiable (Freitas et al., 1998). According to Marczak and Sewell (n.d.), when conducting analysis, consideration should be given to five aspects of the data collected. Firstly, the researcher should consider the words used by the participants. Words can be used to determine the degree of emotional attachment to topics and the level of expertise in that particular area. Therefore, the researcher should endeavor to listen closely, and explain the meanings of words they do not understand. Additionally, the researcher can also make note of the frequency of commonly used words. Secondly, the researcher examines the context of words by finding the triggering stimulus and then interpret the comment in light of that context. Thirdly, Marczak and Sewell (n.d.) suggest that the researcher should look for internal consistencies in the discussions among the participants. Identifying the consistencies in the interaction enables the researcher to identify the arguments that are either strongly supported or

opposed. The fourth aspect is to look at the specificity of responses. Responses that are specific and based on experiences should be given more weight than responses that are vague and impersonal. Greater weight should be given to responses in first person than to those that come out as third person hypothetical answers. Lastly through analysis the researcher should find the big ideas.

In addition, Frietas et al. (1998) add to the dialogue on this topic by submitting two basic forms of analyzing focus group data. They include qualitative or ethnographic summary and systematic code through content analysis. In the ethnographic analysis, priority is given to the quotations or statements of the participants, while with the content analysis, the numeric description of the data is valued. These forms of analysis though may seem conflicting rather complement each other.

Once I had taken my notes and the transcripts (with access as needed to original recordings), I decided to enumerate the number of mentions that particular themes received organized under the prompting question. Chapter IV is largely devoted to presenting the results of these enumerations. As will be further discussed at the beginning of Chapter V, the resulting array of key discussion themes that emerged was quite extensive and made "standing back" and seeing emergent patterns very challenging. In the end I engaged an experienced "coder" to work with me to organize this array into a smaller set of clusters in response to each of the main questions posed throughout the focus group sessions. This process is described and its results presented in Chapter V.

Ethical Considerations

In light of my exposure to the extensive literature on focus groups and more generally on the norms of conducting social research ethically, coupled with my experience during the pilot

study in 2017, I did not take the informal environment of the focus groups for granted. I sought

to apply significant ethical provisions for the physical and psychological safety of all the

participants in the upcoming research studies for my dissertation. I aimed to enact what the

Fors/Marsh Group (2017) observed, "Some of the best focus groups can look more like a table

of friends chatting than a formal data collection effort" while observing his cautions that

researchers must always remember to apply the necessary ethical requirements befitting a

qualitative research.

The plan for this study was subject to formal IRB review with invitation letters to

participants that specified the goal of the study, the rights of the participants and seek for both

written and verbal consent before conducting the focus group research. These steps sought to

ensure that my participates were treated in a very ethical manner.

Smith (1995) posited that the major ethical issue to consider when using focus groups is

the potential of over disclosure by some participants, particularly if the research topic is

sensitive. In the course of discussion, it is predictable that a friendly atmosphere—which is to be

aimed for—can lead levels of personal disclosure through a synergistic effect due to the intense

social interaction (Carey & Asbury, 2016). To protect participants' privacy in the community,

Morgan (1988) postulated that the intensity of the interaction in focus groups may significantly

stress some participants during the discussions.

Of course, in the end as the moderator of these potentially thorny paths it may be a bit

gratuitous for me to say that "all was well" in this regard. The best I could do was to closely

watch the participants, their body language as well as the way they spoke. On that basis and with

the experience of a pastor who has worked for many years with troubled individuals and

contentious groups, I do feel confident in saying that participants did achieve candor while not

moving out of their comfort zones. Confidential conversations subsequent to the meeting

similarly confirm that no one seemed to have left frustrated or unhappy about the sessions.

Chapter IV: Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand the views and perspectives of African

leaders in the Diaspora in Rhode Island in the Northeast of the United States, on effective

political leadership reforms that can promote sustainable development and growth in their

respective African countries. In fulfilling the above objective, the study was also an attempt to

add the marginalized voices of diasporic Africans to the ongoing discourse in the search for

effective political leadership reforms in Africa. In light of the originality of the topic of research

as well as the sensitive nature, focus group discussion, a qualitative research approach was

ideally suited for this study, as this study sought a degree of consensus. This chapter details the

findings gleaned from the study.

Map of the Findings Chapter

The findings are organized into four principal sections corresponding to the focus group

replications. Within each section, the results are described in terms of the leading main ideas

based on its frequency in each discussion. As will be further discussed, I judged what were

"leading ideas" based on the frequency of mention (quantitative) and on my assessment of the

richness of the discussion surrounding each idea. The latter, admittedly, is quite subjective but I

tried to bracket my own positionality and often strongly held views on the overall topic as I

worked through the discussions and subsequent transcripts.

After reviewing the findings of each focus, an integrated summary across the four groups

is offered, that presents the overall leading themes participants brought forward and discussed

across all groups.

Overview of Focus Groups—Participation, Location, Composition and Process

During the Fall of 2019, I organized and conducted four focus group meetings of Diasporic African-born leaders who live in Rhode Island in the United States. This included individuals whose leadership roles ranged from religious leaders to educators, professionals, and political leaders. Over the course of the four focus group sessions, a total of 35 African Diasporic leaders participated, providing viewpoints and observations regarding leadership strengths and opportunities for growth across Africa based upon the Ubuntu framework discussed in earlier chapters.

The focus group meetings were conducted on separate nights during November 2019. Three of the four meetings took place in the conference room of the African Alliance of Rhode Island (AARI). Three meetings were held in the African Alliance conference room—those comprised of religious leaders (Focus Group 1), professionals focused on social development (Focus Group 2), and professional women (Focus Group 4). The conference room was donated by AARI, a nonprofit organization seeking to mobilize and serve the needs of diasporic Africans in the State of Rhode Island. The meeting for the most politically active Diasporic professionals (Focus Group 3)—who are all members of the ACLF of Rhode Island—was conducted at the offices of that organization. This site is in another spacious building located on Broad Street, Providence, less than 5 minutes from the site of the other three focus group meetings. A second site became necessary, for two reasons. First, the ACLF had other previously scheduled meetings for their members ahead of time, and considering their busy schedules, the leadership felt prudent to shift one of the already planned meeting dates for the focus group discussion. This schedule modification resulted in this focus group having the highest attendance of all the focus group sessions. Second, there seemed to be a silent tension between the ACLF and AARI

organizations as to which entity is the legitimate spokes group for the Diasporic African community in Rhode Island. Therefore, the members of ACLF were not likely to travel to the AARI hall for the focus group discussions, which may imply submission to the leadership superiority of AARI.

The ACLF is a network of leaders from the large and diverse African Community in Rhode Island. This is a group of individuals who have joined to collaborate and present a united front relative to the quality of life issues that can serve to improve the socioeconomic status of the members of their community. Additionally, the ACLF works to stay politically active by contributing to the socioeconomic and political development of their respective African countries. Notwithstanding, upon assessment, there seems to be significant mission and vision duplication between the two organizations.

By all accounts, both conference rooms were quite suitable and comfortable enough for the focus group meetings. Both are located on Broad Street, a much-traveled street in a popular section of Providence, Rhode Island, thus making the focus group meetings easily accessible to all participants. The rooms were large enough to ensure uncrowded spacing between participants, who could select their seat, yet small enough to foster an air of intimacy and synergistic interaction.

A total of 35 individuals participated in the four focus group sessions. Table 4.1 presents the biographical details of all professionals by focus group; it details the country of origin, the age, profession, educational attainment, and the number of years each focus group participant has lived in the United States. Note that in all the focus groups participants' ages ranged from 41 to over 70 years.

Table 4.1

Biographical Details of the Focus Group Participants

	Participant #	Country of Origin	Region	Educational Level	Occupation	Age Range (Yrs.)	Gender
Focus Group 1	1	DRC	Central Africa	Masters	Behavior Therapist	51–60	Male
	2	Uganda	East Africa	Doctorate	Educationist	51–60	Male
	3	Kenya	East Africa	Doctorate	Dentistry	51–60	Male
	4	Nigeria	West Africa	Doctorate	Educationist	41–50	Male
	5	Nigeria	West Africa	Doctorate	Scientist	51–60	Male
	6	Nigeria	West Africa	Masters	Accounting	61–70	Male
	7	Ghana	West Africa	Bachelors	Health	51–60	Male
	8	Liberia	West Africa	Bachelors	Engineering	51–60	Male
	9	Togo	West Africa	Bachelors	Law	51–60	Male
	10	Liberia	West Africa	Masters	Christian Ministry	51–60	Male
Focus Group 2	11	DRC	Central Africa	Doctorate	Educationist	61–70	Male
	12	Togo	West Africa	Associates	Business Man	61–70	Male
	13	Togo	West Africa	Masters	Tax Accountant	41–50	Male
	14	Liberia	West Africa	Masters	Engineering	61–70	Male
	15	Ghana	West Africa	Masters	Engineering	61–70	Male
	16	Ghana	West Africa	Doctorate	Professor/ Pharm.	51–60	Male
	17	Ghana	West Africa	Doctorate	Medicine	51–60	Male
	18	Nigeria	West Africa	Masters	Prof. Accounting	41–50	Male
	19	Nigeria	West Africa	Masters	HR Manager	61–70	Male
	20	Nigeria	West Africa	Masters	Engineering	51–60	Male
	21	Senegal	West Africa	Bachelors	Engineering	> 70	Male
Focus Group 3	22	Zimbabwe	Southern Africa	MBA	IT	61–70	Male
	23	Nigeria	West Africa	MSC	Engineering	>70	Male
	24	Nigeria	West Africa	Masters	Human Service	41–50	Male
	25	Nigeria	West Africa	Masters	Engineering	51–60	Male
	26	Ghana	West Africa	Masters	HR Executive	61–70	Male
	27	Ghana	West Africa	Associates	Business	61–70	Male
	28	Gambia	West Africa	Associates	Manager	51–60	Male
	29	Cote D'Ivoire	West Africa	Bachelors	Health Services	51–60	Male
	30	Liberia	West Africa	Masters	Clergy	51–60	Male
Focus Group 4	31	Rwanda	East Africa	Masters	Educationist	51–60	Female
	32	Kenya	East Africa	Masters	Public Health	>70	Female
	33	Uganda	East Africa	Bachelors	Health Care	51–60	Female
	34	Ghana	West Africa	Masters	Minister	41–50	Female
	35	Liberia	West Africa	Bachelors	Reg. Nurse	51–60	Female

Note. The shading colors indicate which focus group participants were in: Focus Group 1: Green, Focus Group 2 Blue; Focus Group 3 Pink, and Focus Group 4, Yellow.

Figure 4.1

Map of Countries of Origin of Focus Group Participants
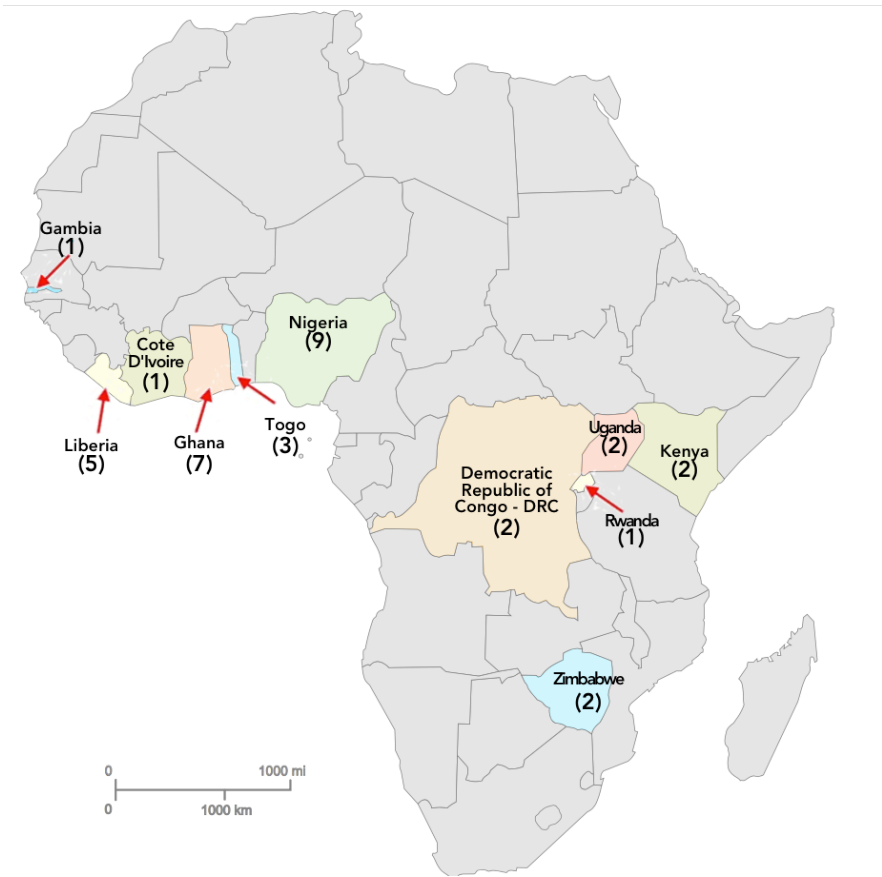
Note. Number of participants from each country is in parentheses. Note that countries from which participants in the groups arose are shaded with colors of ease of viewing but the choice of color is somewhat random and does not reflect any specific attributes.

Table 4.2 shows the responses of the participants to three questions that were asked in advance of the group session. These broad questions were posed to provide the researcher with an initial sense of where participants stood in terms of their interests in Africa and its leadership. Further consideration of the results of this table will arise in Chapter V.

Table 4.2

Focus Group Participants Responses to Three Questions

	Participant #	Country of Origin	Interested in Political Stability of Africa?	Interested in Future of African Leadership ?	Plans to Settle In Africa?
Focus Group 1	1	DRC	Yes	Yes	Yes
	2	Uganda	Yes	Yes	Yes
	3	Kenya	Yes	Yes	Yes
	4	Nigeria	Yes	Yes	Yes
	5	Nigeria	No	No	No
	6	Nigeria	No	No	No
	7	Ghana	Yes	No	No
	8	Liberia	Yes	No	No
	9	Togo	Yes	No	No
	10	Liberia	Yes	No	No
Focus Group 2	11	DRC	Yes	No	No
	12	Togo	Yes	Yes	Yes
	13	Togo	Yes	No	Yes
	14	Liberia	Yes	No	No
	15	Ghana	Yes	Yes	Yes
	16	Ghana	Yes	Yes	Yes
	17	Ghana	Yes	Yes	Yes
	18	Nigeria	Yes	No	No
	19	Nigeria	Yes	No	No
	20	Nigeria	Yes	No	No
	21	Senegal	Yes	No	No
Focus Group 3	22	Zimbabwe	Yes	No	No
	23	Nigeria	Yes	No	No
	24	Nigeria	Yes	No	No
	25	Nigeria	Yes	No	No
	26	Ghana	Yes	No	No
	27	Ghana	Yes	No	No
	28	Gambia	Yes	No	No
	29	Cote D'Ivoire	Yes	No	No
	30	Liberia	Yes	No	Yes
Focus Group 4	31	Rwanda	Yes	No	No
	32	Kenya	Yes	No	No
	33	Uganda	Yes	No	Yes
	34	Ghana	Yes	No	Yes
	35	Liberia	Yes	No	No

Note. The shading colors indicate which focus group participants were in: Focus Group 1: Green, Focus Group 2 Blue; Focus Group 3 Pink, and Focus Group 4, Yellow.

Process of the Focus Groups

Focus Group 1, whose session lasted for 110 minutes on November 3, 2019, comprised 10 Africans: seven from West Africa, two from East Africa, and one from Central Africa. (See Table 4.1). Their length of residency in the United States ranged from 12 years to 29 years, with a mean duration of 19 years. The group was very enthusiastic about the discussions and the gatherings itself since they all declare they had never experienced the gathering of ministers from the different parts of Africa together.

Focus Group 2, which met for 90 minutes on November 6, 2019, comprised 11 Africans, 10 from West Africa and one from Central Africa (Table 4.1). Their length of residency in the United States ranged from 15 years to 45 years.

Focus Group 3's meeting lasted for 120 minutes on November 16, 2019. The group comprised nine Africans: eight from West Africa, and one from Southern Africa (Table 4.1) Their length of residency in the United States ranged from 18 to 45 years, with a mean duration of 27.8 years. The majority of the participants lived longer outside Africa and therefore had a lot to say.

Focus Group 4's session was for 90 minutes on November 24, 2019. The group included two participants from West Africa and three from East Africa. (Table 4.1). Their length of residency in the United States ranged from 12 years to 29 years, with a mean duration of 21.6 years.

Each focus group was posed three broad questions although I did not use these to structure the sessions. Instead, I posed them opportunistically and, in some cases, it was not necessary to even do that as participants gravitated to the topics spontaneously.

The research questions that were raised and which provide structure for the discussion of the results of each focus group were as follows:

1. What are the most needed changes in leadership in Africa today?
2. What are most desirable characteristics in political leadership in Africa?
3. How can Diasporic African leaders support leadership improvement in Africa?

The results of the four focus group meetings are discussed in numerical order of Focus Group 1 to 4. This including graphs depicting the main themes and subthemes that emerged for each focus group in relation to each question.

Focus Group Results

The results of the four focus groups are presented using the same format (Figure 4.2). Each group considered the three topics which I posed as the discussion proceeded. Recordings were later analyzed in terms of main issues raised in response. The frequency of each of the discernible issues was determined and these are presented for each group and each of the three topics in bar charts.

After that I discuss the most frequently mentioned issues and then comment more briefly on other less mentioned issues. Then, for each group I summarize first with a bar chart that displays the top responses for all topics and then in a brief discussion.

Figure 4.2

Flow of Steps in Deriving and Presenting Results of Each Focus Group Discussion
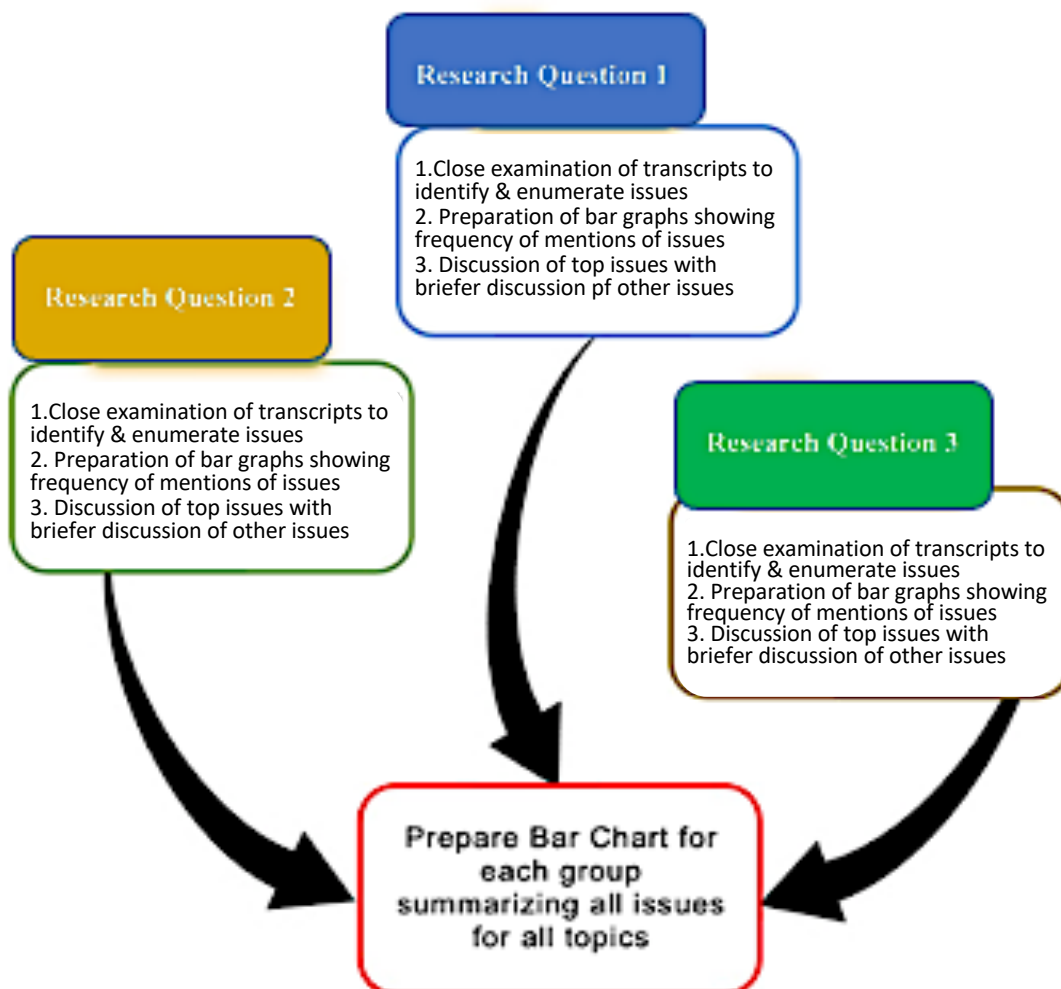
Focus Group 1 Meeting Results

The 10 participants of Focus Group 1 were highly educated religious leaders: four had doctorate degrees in sciences and education, while two had master's degrees, one in management accounting and the other a masters in Christian ministry. The remaining four had bachelor's degrees in law, mechanical engineering, social sciences, and health administration. Seven of the 10 participants were educated in the United States and nine were bivocational, with only one participant involved in full-time Christian ministry. As a result of the length of their stay in the

United States, coupled with their educational attainment and U.S. postsecondary schooling, most were well-informed and oriented towards the American culture. However, they were all Afrocentric and Pan-African in their thinking and, therefore, very enthusiastic about the research topic and the focus group discussions.

Focus Group 1 opened with the commonly used training practice of an icebreaker—a facilitation exercise used to foster team formation so that members get acquainted with one another quickly and are then better able to perform a task collectively (Fors/Marsh Group, n.d.). Group discussion centered on gathering feedback and viewpoints on the list of prepared questions. It was noted that in the preliminary exploratory questions (Table 4.2) four members of this group indicated that they were not familiar with the term *Ubuntu*.

Focus Group 1—Research Question 1: Challenges of Political Leadership in Africa. Figure 4.3 depicts the results of Focus Group 1's discussion of the challenges of political leadership in Africa. This and subsequent bar charts on the frequency of mentioned are presented in descending order and only topics that received three or more mentions are charted.

On the challenges of effective political leadership in African countries, the major themes that emerged as depicted in Figure 4.3 were corruption, the lack of Ubuntu leadership, what the participants called "broken systems," and the prevalence and impact of dictatorship. It must be recognized that these are far from being discrete issues. Each bleeds into the others. But here, they are separated for discussion purposes rather than any implication of separateness. In addition to the main topics most frequently mentioned, participants also referred to external pressure, greedy military operations, tribalism, and inadequate education of leaders.

Figure 4.3

Challenges of Political Leadership in Africa: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 1
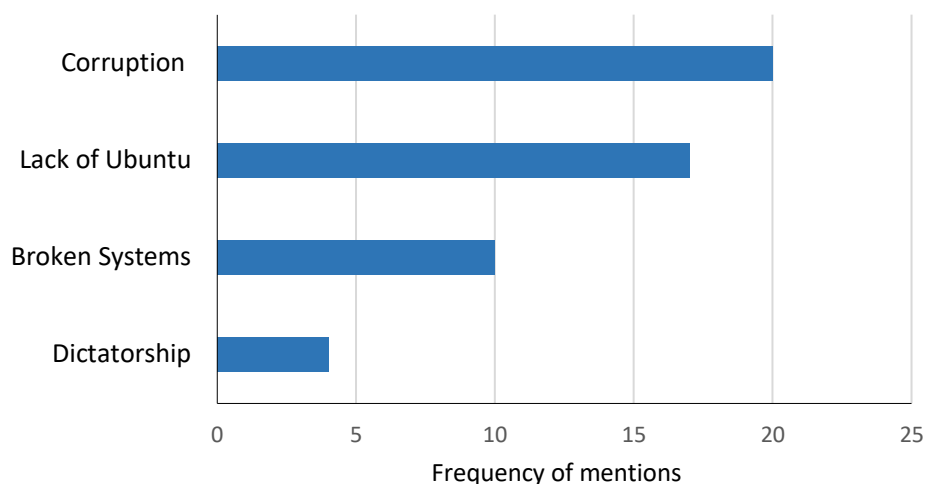
Note. Only issues mentioned three or more times are shown.

   Corruption. All participants spoke of corruption as endemic to their respective countries,

in fact, the severe corruption of most political leaders was the number one issue as measured by

number of mentions. Participant 5 had this to share:

> There have been changes in Nigeria, and these changes have not been the changes that we
> have expected. Growing up in Nigeria and then seeing what is happening today, we
> started experiencing democracy. Still, later on, successfully, we have put together what I
> call kleptocracy, and in the process, we have dismantled the infrastructures of democracy
> and replaced them with kleptocratic infrastructures. No matter your good intention to lead
> Nigeria, it becomes severe. Most people seeking to run for office in Nigeria do it to
> enrich themselves.

> Participant 4 reflected,

> You cannot have democracy without democrats. On the surface, what we have is Western
> Democracy; we cast votes and elect people to lead, which is the apparatus of democracy.
> Nevertheless, this is different from *being* a democrat. Being a democrat means accepting
> defeat, congratulating your opponent, and trying next time. However, in our system, there
> are threats of bloodshed, so though on the surface, votes are casting, but in principle,
> there is no democracy. How could there be a democracy with no free press, criticism is
> not publicly accepted, and there is no development.

The motivation of leaders who quickly abandon spoken ideals is tied to corruption, being

motivated not by the well-being of the people but by personal enrichment.

> The individual [who seeks election] tells people, "You elect me, I am going to work for you." But as soon as you elect them, they switch over and say—this is what Museveni [the current and long-term president in Uganda] has said recently—"I did not come into office to work for you. I came in office to work for my family." Participant 2.

Inevitably, talking about the present-day situation segued back to the loss of a system that

worked so differently and for the people.

Lack of Ubuntu. The discussion of corruption as a manifestation of the failure of

Western-style democracy inevitably tied into the sense that a prior state of traditional values and

governance has been lost. This led to the topic of Ubuntu and lack of it. Participants in Focus

Group 1 discussed both the definition and idea of *Ubuntu*, noting that while the concept was

universal, usage of the word as a label it varied somewhat from country to country. By

consensus, among this group settled upon a common viewpoint of Ubuntu. Participant 2

described it as follows:

> Ubuntu is an indigenous philosophy that existed before the Europeans coming to Africa. In Uganda, we call it "Obuntu" which means the standard way of thinking about our community, our society, how we do things, which ranges from raising our children, caring for our neighbors—A serving of humans. In Uganda, those who do not practice Ubuntu are frowned upon.

He indicated that another term for Ubuntu in his home country of Uganda is known as

ambanta, translated as "the people." Participant 4 shared that in his culture, "Ubuntu, to us,

means we are community-based, and community is better when we work together. Ubuntu in the

Nigerian culture means caring for one another—it takes a village to raise a child."

> Participant 1 contributed to the discussion in this way:

> Though we do not have the term "Ubuntu," the concept itself exists in the Congo. There is a saying that is recognizable in Congo that one finger cannot wash your face. You need all five to do it. It also signifies the community's understanding of coming together to achieve common goals.

Participant 9 spoke at length of the meaning of Ubuntu:

When we say the concept of Ubuntu, that is the concept that comes with us when we come to the Diaspora. That you see another African brother, and then you say he is my brother. Furthermore, when people ask you, is he from your family? Whether he is from Uganda, or is from Ghana, or is from Togo, you say he is my brother, and they are shocked, they say, "What is going on? How come you are calling him brother?" It is because we have that concept back home, where when we see someone that looks like us, we already consider him as a brother. I believe it is also that concept that when the Europeans came to Africa, they were welcomed because, for us, the human being is welcomed when he comes to our community.

In Togo, and especially in my village, we do not have the word Ubuntu, but we have another way of saying it. This is one of the ways it plays out when somebody gets a big land and wants to cultivate for farming, he can reach many people from the community to come and join him to clear the ground to make it happen. That is the concept we have there, that when you face something challenging to you, you are not all by yourself. You are not afraid because you know there are people in the community who are willing to join you and help you. I believe this is all over the continent of Africa. When something happens to one, it happens to all.

All but two participants followed politics in their home countries; they all passionately and eloquently described the disenfranchised political state of their respective countries. The participants who lacked knowledge of politics in their countries of origin did that as a protest to the corruption of leaders in their countries of origin. Despite his expertise in international business and management, Participant 6 shared the following:

First of all, I want to confess that I deliberately refuse to get updates on what is going on in Nigeria because, personally, it is very disheartening. I am a pastor, and a number of these things are revealed even before they start happening. I feel so terrible about it. I refuse to follow the news about what is going on because it is sickening. The situation in the country could be much, much better than what it is now. Unfortunately, many political leaders have thrown away the concept of Ubuntu, and focused on their wealth, superimposing their agenda over the collective will of the people.

Broken Systems. The participants referred often to the idea that preexisting and once

effective governance systems that had prevailed in their homelands had been damaged as a result

of imposition of a model that had arguably worked for "the West" but did not fit Africa. Thus,

the failure of Western democracy was a central theme which I have here considered within the

general notion of "broken systems." The following statements illustrate this theme.

Participant 2 had this to say in support of the treatise mentioned above,

Western democracy has failed in Africa; it is not what we need; we need Ubuntu democracy, which was advocated by Chief Mohlomi when he declared that a chief is a chief by the people's grace. We need Ethical and Responsible leadership.

Participant 5 declared,

The problem of Africa today is that we have copied something that was not meant to be part of who we are. We have made Western Democracy part of the African political system, which is where the problem is. This is just like I am in a restaurant, and I see you ordered something, and it passes my table and goes, and I say, I am going to have the same thing. Furthermore, I do not even know what I am asking for. That is what Africans have done. Africans have seen Western democracy and say, "I think we should have that, and the Western world has convinced us that the only democracy is Western democracy. This is false; we had great leadership before the White man came to Africa.

It also transpired that the way forward for African countries is to adopt a system that

would make leaders work for the collective will of the people. Two of the participants echoed the

following sentiments in support of this.

Participant 4 commented,

Many times, some of our African leaders thinking according to the Westminster way, like "how can I rise high above? and "how could I take advantage of this exclusive opportunity that has been given to me to advance 'myself' but not the people?" I think we need leaders who think about how I can advance my community. The collective advancement of the community has drifted away.

Inevitably, the discussion of the broken precolonial African systems turned back to the

contrast of imposed Western democracy and Ubuntu. Participant 3 expressed this view:

When Ubuntu was in place, the joint development and advancement of the community took precedence over individual advancement. The people of Fouba in Senegal,

practicing Ubuntu cared about the collective advancement of their community. Moreover, when we get into leadership, if we think about the community good, it will change how we make decisions. We will not make selfish decisions; we will have to consult with our elders. This is epitomized by Nigerian movies; when there is a problem in the village, the chief calls all the community leaders, sits around the table, presents the problem, and gets the feedback from the elders, and that is how they solve their problems. Alternatively, sometimes the chief tells them to go back to the community and consult with the people and report back. This is the collectiveness in the leadership that we should have.

Analyzing the interview frequency of how many participants mentioned specific themes, all participants pointed to corruption and lack of Ubuntu leadership style as the major causes of political failure in Africa.

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 1 About Research Question 1. As noted, there was understandable confluences between points discussed. Other issues that received mention in relation to challenges of political leadership in Africa, though not in the frequency of the "top four" included systems of inherited power (not so much traditional hereditary as the nepotism where a father rigs the system to ensure that his son or another close relative is his successor); tribalism, and lack of democratic education. Over and over again, the participants referred to the rise of authoritarian leaders almost always, people who, before coming to political power, had

avowed the ideals of democracy and often of traditional African values. [Candidates say],"You elect me, I am going to work for you." But as soon as you elect them, they switch over and say—this is what Museveni [the long-ruling President of Uganda] has said recently— "I did not come into office to work for you. I came in office to work for my family. (Participant 2)

Another participant commented on the unfortunate transitions that seemed to inevitably come as soon as leaders took control:

But as soon as they get the sweetness of power, they don't want to leave the place anymore. Either they are good or not, they just want to be there. That's why we are suffering. It's not because of lack of people that can lead the country the right way, it's just because the people that take over the power become greedy. (Participant 9)

One participant emphasized kleptocracy[5] rather than mere autocracy, saying, "We have built kleptocratic structures, it becomes really difficult for him to run a democracy under that system. And every average Nigerian today that want to run for office is running for office because he wants to enrich himself" (Participant 5).

Focus Group 1— Research Question 2: Characteristics Desirable for Leadership Reform. Figure 4.4 shows the feedback provided by Focus Group1 participants, on desirable leadership competencies and mindsets deemed to be most needed for the reform of practice of leadership and sustainable impact to occur.

Figure 4.4

Characteristics Desirable for Leadership Reform: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 1
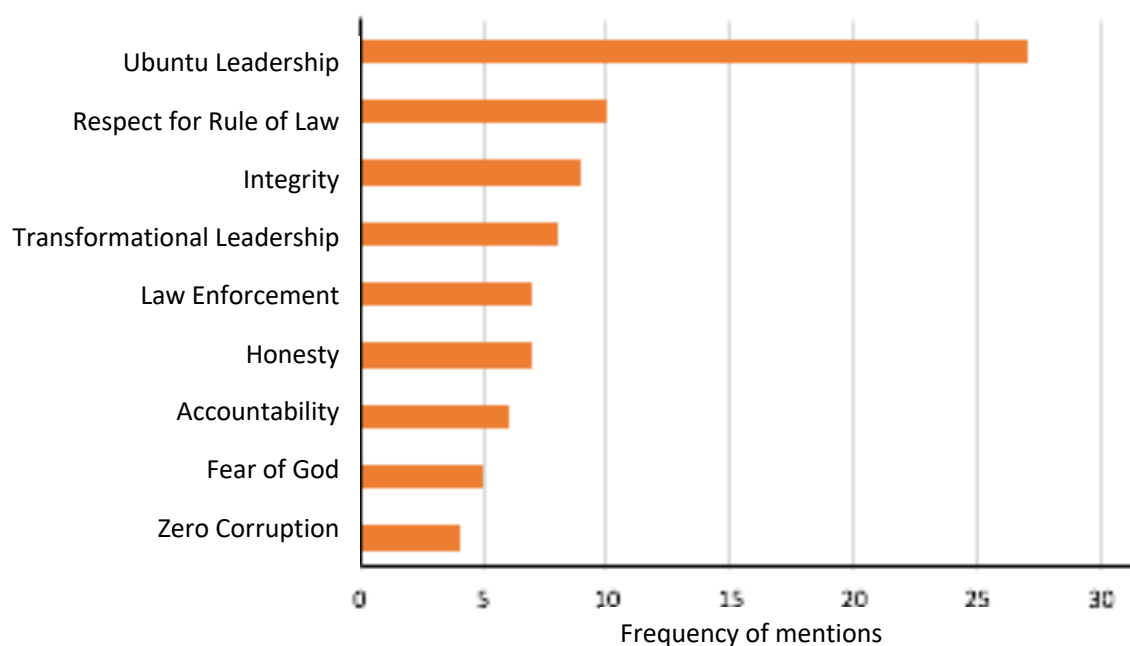
Note. Only issues mentioned three or more times are shown.

Ubuntu Leadership. The group's discussion of the need for leaders who follow the philosophy of Ubuntu segued directly from their previously quoted views on lack of Ubuntu

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[5] Kleptocracy has been simply defined as "government by those who seek chiefly status and personal gain at the expense of the governed" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b).

(discussed above in response to Research Question 1). I will not repeat these but only stress how frequent it was for this group to bring this up as an ideal towards which African leaders should strive.

   Respect for the Rule of Law. Since many of the participants agreed that it was very easy for elected leaders to undermine the law in Africa, some of the participants were of the contention that leaders who respected the rule of law were ideal for Africa. Participant 6 contended this way,

> I believe that in any nation, even the so called first world nations that we talk about, once a person rises up and can successfully undermine justice, that's it. So, therefore, it is important to have leaders that will respect the law. Leaders who will hold themselves accountable, leaders who say, "if I steal, mention my name."

   Integrity. Many comments during the Focus Group 1 session touched directly or indirectly on the universally acclaimed and yet so rarely achieved quality of leader integrity. In most cases the participants reflected back to traditional leadership as practiced long ago. Participant 2 turned to the movies to find and enjoy examples of that time of higher integrity, linked to inclusiveness of the community (without the chief surrendering responsibility):

> I always like to watch the Nigerian movies. They show the chief and the chief has a problem in his village, he calls all the community leaders, and they sit around the table and he presents the problem and then gets their feedback, and that's how they solve the problems. Or sometimes he tells them go back to your community and consult with the people, see what the people have to say and come back and tell me what I can do. So that's the collectiveness in the leadership that we should have.

   Participant 10 was able to find this model in contemporary Africa but immediately this brought to mind the considerable, often violent pushback that leaders with integrity face from neo-colonial Western powers:

> Look at Burkina Faso. But is it [value-driven collaborative leadership] kind of possible without the West fighting back? Of course, because it's their interest in Africa. So if we want to go back, we have to get ready that they're going to come forward because they're not going to sit back and let their interest be taken away.

Participant 1 reflected again on the way that a chief with a sense of integrity—"firm adherence to a code of esp. moral . . . values, incorruptibility" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a) —roots his leadership in the collective interests and contributions of the people.

> So now the chief with all those elected from the neighborhood, that's how he will settle issues in the community. When there's something going on and he needs counsel, it won't come from him alone, but he will gather all these people that were elected from the neighborhood and he will seek their advice and upon that he will decide.

The vision of integrity repeated within Focus Group 1 clearly lies in how decisions are made as much as in sticking to a solid ethical position.

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 1 About Research Question 2. Africans are known for their high level of spirituality; therefore, the fear of God was one of the five most mentioned desirable characteristics for leadership reforms. As mentioned above, Participant 7 relayed the following sentiments in support of the above-mentioned treatise. Stating "in Africa we need leaders who have the Fear of God." To buttress this statement, Participant 1 added, "One of the things that the current president of Congo has done, the new one, he dedicated the country to God. He called for prayer, repentance, instilled the Fear of God, and then dedicated the country to God. Participant 1 provided the example of the current President of the Congo who "dedicated the country to God. He did. He did. He called for prayer, repented, and then dedicated the country to God." Later, he linked such faith to another need, namely education, stating,

> One of the ways I can do as a minister is to bring a prophetic voice because I do believe that God will use the church to educate the people. I believe it. The destruction, the most chaos we have in our countries is not necessarily the system, it's the people.

In addition, the group also brought up the need for accountable systems and for more effective and less corrupt law enforcement several times.

Focus Group 1—Research Question 3: Ways Diaspora Leaders Can Help Their Country of Origin. Focus Group 1 participants articulated a number of ways in which African diasporic leaders can contribute to expanding leadership capacity in their home countries. Figure 4.5 highlights the most frequent suggestions offered by the participants and the frequency of mentions. Leading these was having the Diaspora—people like themselves really involved in reform back home; confronting the dilemmas of foreign aid that can unbalance governance and social action; having Diaspora leaders relocate so that they are in a better position to help; which could lead to running for political office back home; and, finally, enhancing civil education.

Figure 4.5

Ways for Diaspora to Help Build Leadership Capacity in Country of Origin: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 1
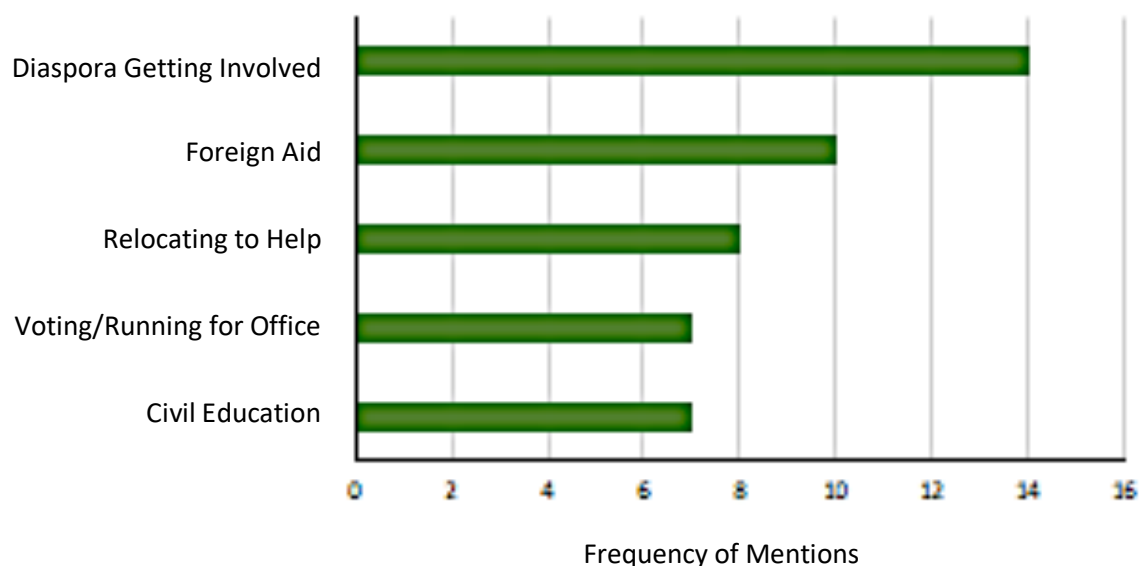
The participants were divided on how they could help their country of origin embrace reforms on leadership; no clear consensus was reached as there were different perspectives expressed by Focus Group 1 participants. Viewpoints ranged from doing nothing to getting very involved, and even to themselves becoming leaders in their countries of origin.

Diaspora Getting Involved. The leading discussion item in response to the question of how Africans in the Focus Group can help in improving leadership back home was, broadly, to actually get involved. Numerous examples and concepts were advanced on this. Participant 2 concluded,

> I support the view that we here in the Focus Group need to get involved in the economic and political development of our countries of origin. This is in line with Ubuntu, for there is no place like home. For instance, right now in Uganda, the younger people are starting an uprising talking about "people's power." They are talking about collective representation. To me, that is Ubuntu, and they need help from us, in the Focus Group to support their cry for change in the politics of their country.

> Participant 5 added,

> I have always challenged our community here about the need to mobilize ourselves here to get involved with the Nigerian politics. We can do so when we are well organized here as a political force and use the US government to pressure our home government to do the right thing, which the US has the power to do.

> Another perspective was that funds earned and sent back home from Africans in the

Focus Group have a role to play in changing the system. Participant 7 emphasized this:

> I believe remitting monies to help family members at home for school fees and other living expenses, building houses and businesses in our countries of origin are better ways of helping them than Western Aid with all the high interests and expensive strings attached to the loans.

Foreign Aid. Foreign aid is now generally a controversial issue in regard to making positive changes for any African initiative, including leadership improvement. As noted, there was deep suspicion in evidence in the discussion of the West. The legacy of colonialism and the way in which Western interests manipulate African political systems accounts for this mistrust. So, when foreign aid arises as a possible way to build African leadership capacity, there is at most cautious interest. In this discussion group, Participant 6 was wary of the role of foreign aid:

> Look, it's not aid that people need. Let them be taught how to elect their leaders. We therefore need to teach our people how to elect their leaders. Though this may look ordinary and simple, they are highly effective. If we do that and target the people, I

believe that in time leaders will rise out of there to be able to take over the position that they need to take.

Relocating to Help. The participants in this focus group were divided in terms of their

own future plans to permanently move to and settle back home in their African countries of

origin. Only four of the 10 presently have such plans. One of the four participants who did

foresee returning, responded to others who had no such plan:

> I think someone here was saying that he doesn't want to go back . . . You cannot run away from a problem and then claim to solve it [someone agrees]. . . . At the end of the day, there's no place like home. (Participant 2)

This participant felt that those in the Focus Group who are clergy have a particular and

positive role to play back home:

> I realized that I don't have to be a politician to help, but I can play a role in helping. And one of the ways I can do as a minister is to bring a prophetic voice because I do believe that God will use the church to educate the people. I believe it. The destruction, the most chaos we have in our countries is not necessarily the system, it's the people. How people think, and how people see. (Participant 2)

So, relocating to help was mentioned but more often led to reflection on what Africans in

the Focus Group can do from their current locations. Organizing politically is happening.

Participant 10 explained,

> I am already the chairman of our party here in the U.S. and there is focus in the Focus Group. So I am already involved. I'm a coordinated member to the political party of mine. So part of the executive. . . . And I have radio programs every Thursdays from the Diaspora to the country. Currently, we have a political program, and we have people calling us from everywhere, from Africa, throughout the world.

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 1 about Research Question 3. In response to

the topic of how Focus Group leaders can help their country of origin, there were several points

mentioned though not so frequently as those discussed above. One was participating in elections

(listed as "voting/running for office"). Another participant forcefully contrasted his opportunity

to have influence on current American leadership and its hostile disparagement of his home:

"The only thing I can do is to prove Donald Trump wrong. Donald Trump said Africa is rich, but the people are poor and so they are foolish. We must prove him wrong" (Participant 5). Others mentioned supporting revolution and broad strategies for improving the unity within their nations (reducing factionalism).

Overall Summary of Main Themes from Focus Group 1. Figure 4.6 shows the most mentioned issues for the three topics that the group discussed. Major themes derived from Focus Group 1 discussions responded to the challenges of Political Leadership in Africa, which were Issues of Corruption, lack of Ubuntu leadership style, corrupt structures that do not enhance western democracy, dictatorship, tribalism, corrupt military, external pressure, and lack of influential leaders. The consensus for the group was that the Western model of democracy had faded—and failed—in African political systems and their leadership. Regarding characteristics for leadership reforms, the themes that emerge were Ubuntu leadership, which rules to the collective will of the people and community and creates a system that portrays accountable and transparent leadership. Concerning the various ways diasporic leaders could help their countries of origin, a few themes emerged, namely, relocating to help, ability to be involved in the political process through voting and running for office, foreign aid, granting scholarships to needy students for further education, supporting violence (revolutions), mobilizing in the United States to help them, public education, the use of religion and seeking for unity in the countries of origin. However, there was no consensus.

Overall, this focus group's discussions were invigorating and energizing. Participants felt empowered, and all said they had never met representatives from different countries together though we all lived in Rhode Island. As a result of the vibrant discussion, Focus Group 1 participants indicated that they felt empowered and suggested further convenings to discuss

Figure 4.6

Summary of Most Mentioned Issues for All Topics, Focus Group 1
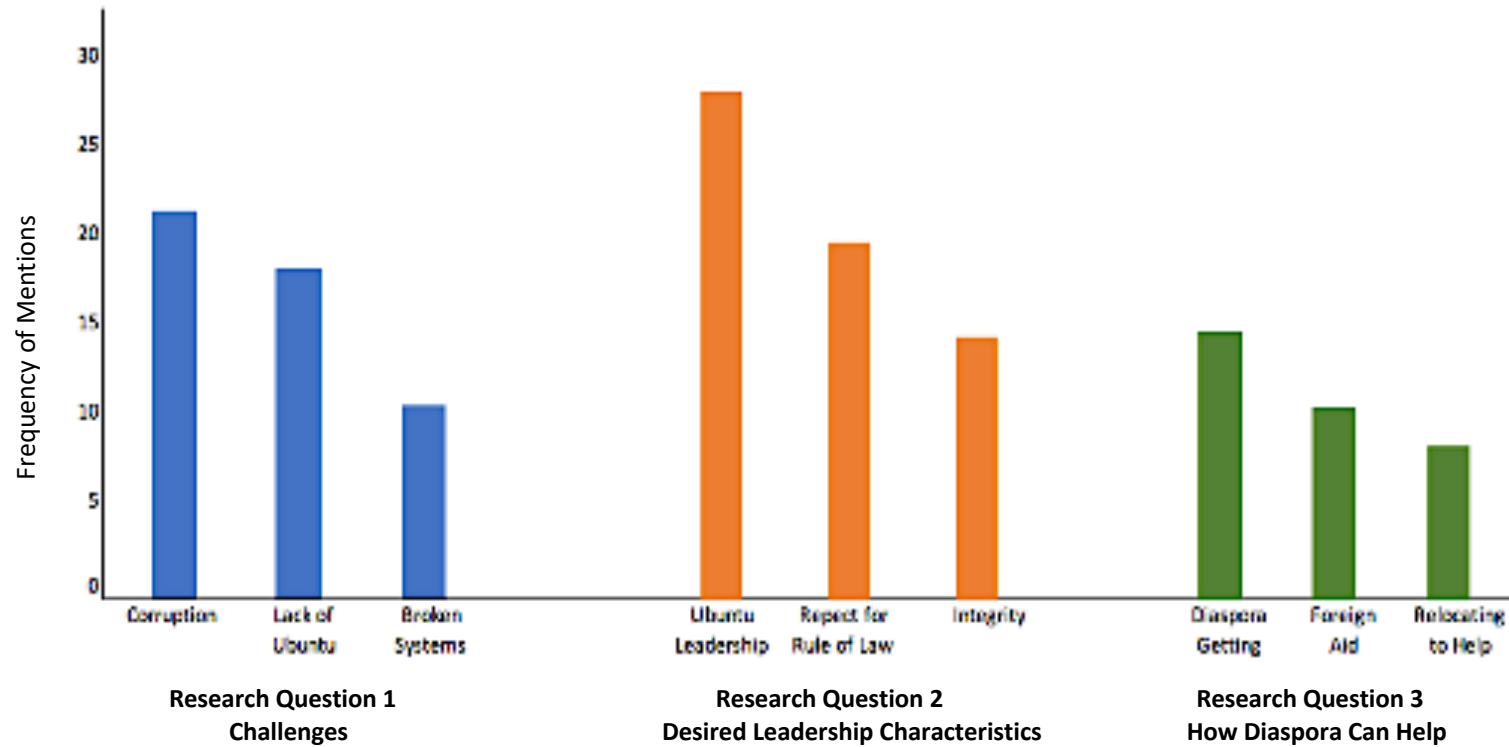
viable frameworks for improving African leadership. The participants also requested that a WhatsApp account be created so the dialogue could be continued on an ongoing basis. They also asked to take a group picture in order to memorialize this time of collaboration and dialoguing that resulted during the focus group meeting discussions.

Focus Group 2 Meeting Results

Focus Group 2's discussion was held on November 6, 2019 and included 11 male African Diasporic politically active Rhode Island leaders. The participants were highly educated, exceptionally politically active, and had lived in the United States for a range of 15 to 45 years. They came from six African countries, comprising five West African and one Central African country. Focus Group 2 participants' educational attainments included one physician, one doctor of pharmacy, and one with a Doctorate in Education. All have attended postsecondary institutions in the United States and are interested in the political stability of Africa, as well as the sociopolitical, economic well-being of the African Diasporic community in the USA.

All but two participants gathered under the auspices of the African Community Leadership Forum of Rhode Island. Of the two other participants, one was a medical practitioner and the other a professor of Pharmacy; both were originally from Ghana. They were student leaders while in college in Ghana. Both had run for political office in Ghana and continue to be politically active though they now live and work here in one of the neighboring cities to Rhode Island. Their voices were needed in this discourse.

The Focus Group 2 meeting took place on a Wednesday, while the other three focus group meetings took place on Saturdays. The Focus Group 2 meeting was conducted using the same structure as with Focus Group 1: an opening activity to unfreeze the group and foster team formation and collaborative engagement, followed by the three main research questions. Though

the discussions started with the icebreaker on the participants' knowledge of Ubuntu philosophy, the overall views of this group on Ubuntu were not as embracing and positive as group one. Three of the participants declared they were not familiar with the term "Ubuntu." Two other participants were particularly critical of the idea of Ubuntu, one calling it a "nebulous" concept and the other contending that Ubuntu was itself the leading cause of the rampant corruption in African societies. On this Participant 16 opined, "I have heard about Ubuntu faintly, and it is still a nebulous concept in my mind, I guess it reflects the African tradition of humanity. However, beyond that, I do not know very much." Participant 17 stated, ,

> Somebody would say that part of why Africa is so corrupt is the concept of Ubuntu; community because everybody says, "He is family." I cannot give him up even if he is evil. If I am heading an organization somewhere and he is not qualified, I should put him there because he is family or he comes from my village, or he comes from my tribe, so it might be perversely the very sense of Ubuntu that should be a strength, is working against us.

Focus Group 2—Research Question 1: Challenges of Political Leadership in Africa.

Figure 4.7 shows the frequencies of mention from Focus Group 2's discussion of the challenges of political leadership in Africa

Figure 4.7

Challenges of Political Leadership in Africa: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 2
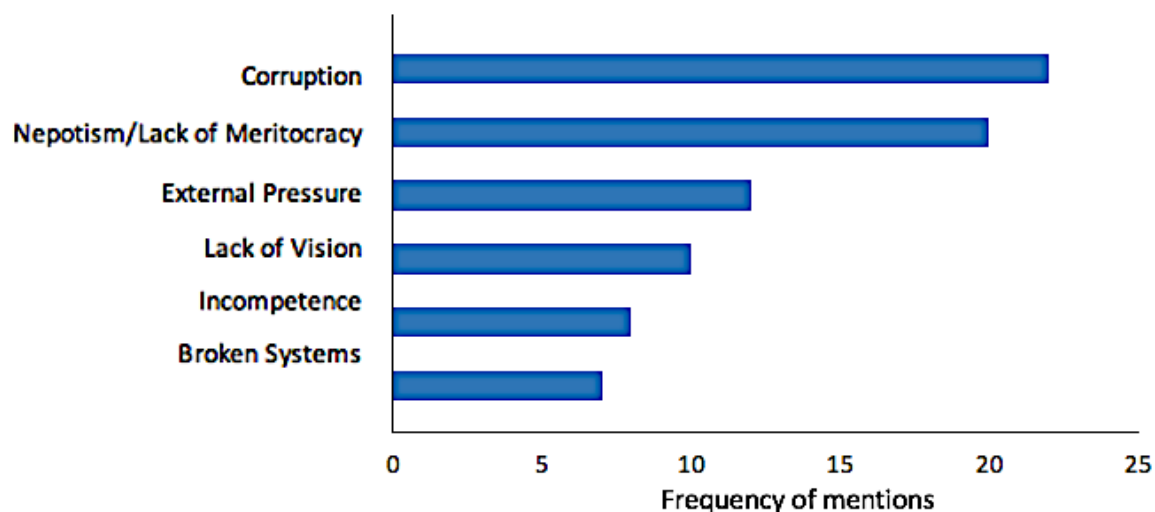
Corruption. Corruption was the theme most mentioned in the course of discussion. The consensus among the group was that corruption was endemic among African political leadership. Participant 18 had this to say:

> In Nigeria, corruption is a household factor. The corruption is not one way. It's not only by the leaders. Even the followers are corrupt. There is also a lack of the will to actually serve the people. Everybody gets in there to serve their own pockets or serve their own immediate family at the expense of the masses. So, we have abundance of wealth, but we live in abject poverty. That is one of the things I think is wrong with political leadership in Nigeria.

> Participant 11 complained,

> For the DRC, the leaders, when they start, have a good faith, and they want to help the country; then I believe that they are corrupted by foreign interest, who influence them to do something terrible. If they do not do that, they then know they will remove them. They, therefore, feel trapped.

> Thus, corruption is not only a rampant characteristic but is also present as a process

whereby the well-intentioned and initially honest new leader falls into a web of illicit actions and expectations that bring him or her to unethical being. The net result for the nation led by the corrupted is economic and social disorder and poverty.

Nepotism/Lack of Meritocracy. Many of the participants in this group contended that incompetence in African leadership was a reflection of a leadership culture that ignores competence in favor of putting close friends and relatives in positions of power. Though the participants agreed that leaders with exceptional qualities and skills were critical for Africa's development, most appointments were based on personal connection and not on merit.

Participant 15, after indicating that corruption was his highest concern, observed, as a second key challenge, that leadership is,

> Not inclusive of the brightest minds in the country. By saying that, what it means is that, let's say there are about a group of people and a job that needs to be done. They won't pick the one who's much more capable of doing the work, but rather they'll give it to either a brother or a father or sister, whatever. Nepotism is so rampant over there.

Participant 14 argued,

There is no accountability for leaders. Many remain as ministers because the president likes them. They don't have to do nothing for the people. They could be ministers for 20 years and the ministry never got broom to sweep. As long as the president likes them, they will be ministers. So, there's no performance based to say because you performed well, you will continue.

Participant 15 pointed out that

In Ghana, politics are not inclusive of the brightest minds in the country. By saying that, what it means is that . . . let's say there are about a group of people and a job that needs to be done. They won't pick the one who's much more capable of doing the work, but rather they'll give it to either a brother or a father or sister, whatever.

External pressure. The consensus among this group was though many African leaders may start with hopes to lead their countries well, along the line, they are significantly influenced and forced by external pressure, often international business interests, to be corrupted. Failure to give in to demands to join in has often led to their being the victims of coups, exile and even murder. Many of the participants saw corruption as the doing of external forces. From the discussions, though a few of the participants had retired from active professional service in the United States, they were reluctant to relocate to their home country with the fear of being killed if they refuse to compromise. Participant 11 further elaborated,

When President Mobutu took power, he was an outstanding leader for his country. However, after a while dealing with Europeans, he started to change. They made him corrupt, so he changed his mind because of all of them. They were telling him that if you do not do this, we are going to do this. Everything is put in there. He changed his mind, and he began to take the money for himself, corrupting people destroys leadership.

After Mobutu, Kabila came. He started the same thing as Mobutu. They tried to remove him, and he resisted, so they killed him. Now they put his so-called son in power. He is there, and he cannot leave because they have an arrangement that he cannot go. When people talk about the United Nations, the keeper in Congo, they are not there for the people. They are there for international businesses. What can you expect from African leaders when they have this kind of pressure around them? That has weakened African leadership.

Participant 15 added,

> To buttress your point . . . I can speak for myself: I retired after 40 years in the power business, utility business. Moreover, some of the friends are in high office in Ghana. A friend of mine who is a doctor, the two of us decided that when we retire, we are going to go home and offer our services for free because we do not expect them to pay us as much as they will pay us here. That is a service we wanted to give. My friend, who is a doctor, went over there, faced many problems. Eventually, he died mysteriously in a car accident.

> Then I followed. I went there and talked to my friend, energy minister over there. During this time, they were having what you call brownouts and blackouts, where now and then, the lights will just go off because you do not have enough capacity. I was willing to work for free. When I brought that idea to the energy minister, he, in turn, recommended that I come back, talk to some power companies, and then come with them, and then he will allow us to get someplace where we could build new plants, as long as he gets 20% of my investment as his share.

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 2 about Research Question 1. To keep focus on the major themes, only the top mentioned themes have been emphasized. However, there were some other themes which were worth noting. These were: lack of vision depicting leaders with no conviction to serve the people but to get in power for their personal gains. Nepotism, selecting people to occupy positions not based on merit but kinship relations or friendships. Lack of accountability was also an important mention because when people are appointed to positions because of relationships, they are kept not because of performance but continued relationships. Due to lack of accountability, coupled with nepotism and the collectivist culture, the bureaucratic systems inherited from the colonial days, are not effective!

Focus Group 2—Research Question 2: Characteristics Desirable for Leadership Reform. Figure 4.8 shows the most mentioned issues as provided by Focus Group 2 participants.

Accountability. Several participants in Focus Group 2 shared their perspectives on the significance of accountability among characteristics desirable for leadership in Africa. Participant 14 recommended,

From my experience, some of the reform in Africa, you keep your job not because of performance, is because president likes you and I think we need to get rid of that. You keep your job because of performance. My country especially, there are people who the government sent abroad for a meeting and they go back and nobody asks them a question. They don't even tell I went to a conference this is what was discussed and this is how we can benefit, nothing.

Others stressed that for accountability to be achieved, those who perform honestly and effectively need to be recognized, commended, and protected.

Figure 4.8

Characteristics Desirable for Leadership Reform: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 2
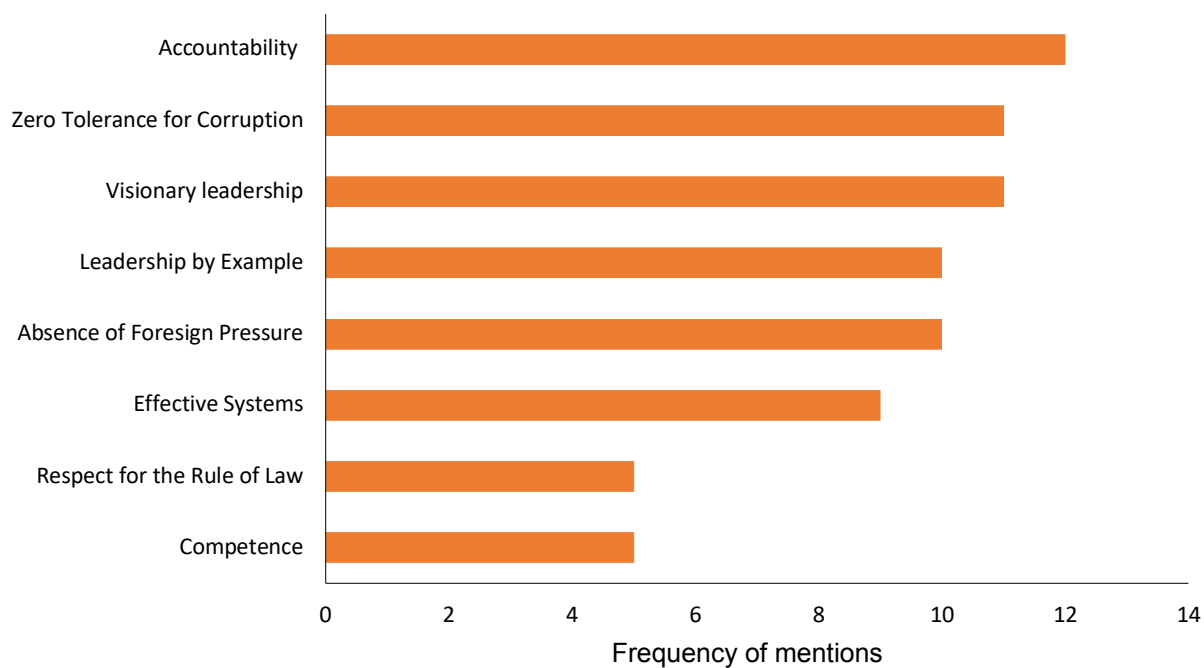
Zero Tolerance for Corruption. Many of the participants in this discussion pushed for a tough stance against corruption. They advocated for a leadership system that will ensure full investigation, prosecution, and severe punishment of all instances of corruption, regardless of the size.

Participant 18 advocated this:

I have stringent penalty for corruption. We know that there is no place in Africa that leaders are not corrupt. But you guys know that if somebody is found, they will be summarily executed or something like that for the capital punishment.

Participant 19 reiterated the problem: "Somebody steals money in the government, and he comes out of jail, we hail him. We go to welcome him coming out of jail, and that guy was in prison for stealing money in the first place." But then several participants went back and forth on the feasibility of rooting out corruption:

Participant 13: Somebody here believe that it can never happen? Meaning that the leader will be strong enough to take corruption out?

Participant 14: It has already been shown. What is that country in East Africa?

Speaker 4: Rwanda.

Participant 14: Rwanda. That's a case in point. It can be done.

Participant 13: That happened in Togo before. I remember when I was a young boy, the former president, Gnassingbé Eyadéma, if you were a policeman and take money from a driver or someone, you get jail for it. He sent out people to test them, and for some time it was good.

There followed discussion, however, that significantly qualified just how the struggle against corruption seemed never to be fully accomplished. The transition to zero corruption and maintaining that integrity is never done.

Visionary Leadership. Africa's need for visionary leaders came up many times in this focus group with participants contrasting that requirement with the common negative narratives from Western media about short-sighted African leaders.

Participant 16 commented,

I think the most important thing we want is a leader who has an idea where he wants to take the country, a leader with a vision, who leads by example, especially, in terms of fighting corruption. We've had a lot of lip service. We've had a lot of leaders who say one thing then do the opposite. I think if we have leaders at all levels who really put the country ahead of themselves and have a clear understanding of what most would be

desirable for the community that they lead, that will help a lot. Sometimes running for office and winning the elected office is an end in itself, rather than the means to an end.

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 2 about Research Question 2. In addition, there were three other themes that arose in the discussion of for leadership reform: eliminating foreign pressure, leadership by example and effective systems. Each minor theme allied with one of the major themes. Effective systems was related with accountability, absence of foreign pressure enabled a zero tolerance for corruption policy and lastly leadership by example was an element of visionary leadership.

Focus Group 2—Research Question 3: Ways that Diaspora Leaders Can Help Their Country of Origin. Figure 4.9 shows the most mentioned issues in discussion in this group about the various ways diasporic leaders want to help their countries reform from the limitations to political leadership.

Figure 4.9

Ways for Diaspora to Help Build Leadership Capacity in Country of Origin: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 2
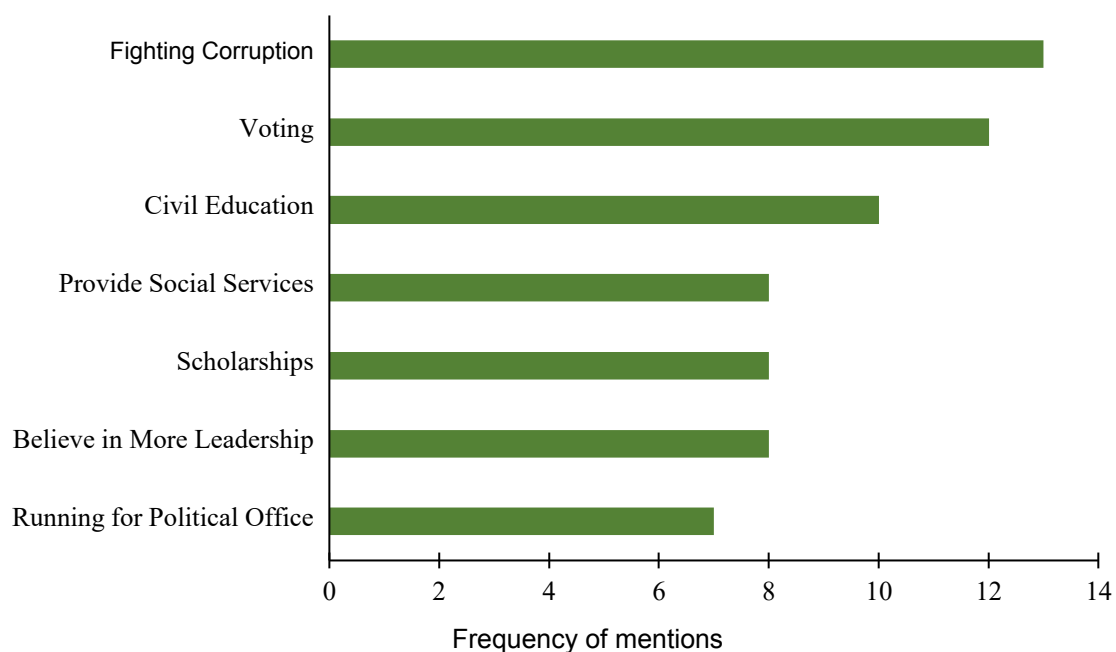
Fighting Corruption. Just as corruption was the theme most mentioned in the discussion of the challenges of political leadership in Africa, it was logical that discussion about fighting corruption was the most mentioned theme on the changes the Diaspora needed to promote in leadership.

Participant 18 commented,

I plan to organize group activities. I run a noncharitable organization against corruption and being patriotic about the growth of the country. I believe once we start, over time it will catch up and others will join, and support and help eradicate corruption from the Nigerian society.

Participant 13 added,

Though I am not doing enough currently, my longterm project is to retire at 62 with an early retirement and go home to become a consultant and give classes on ethics, and how to be bold to resist and fight against corruption.

Voting. The members of this group being more politically active, desires to influence political decisions in their countries of origin and therefore being able to vote in their countries of origin was important to them. They had the most of the 35 participants who plan to settle again in Africa in the future, so influencing the political decisions and leadership was important to them.

Participant 15 shared this:

After I had been frustrated by corrupt government officials to help my country of origin, I have decided to gather a group of Diasporic leaders from Europe and the United States to work together to fight for voting rights in our country of origin so we can influence political decisions and leadership in the country of origin.

Participant 19 endorsed the above statements saying,

I am appealing to all of the participants tonight, that we should come together like this focus group and mobilize ourselves so that we can help change the voting laws in our countries of origin to our favor with our concerted efforts.

Civil Education. Members in this group being all professionals adhere to the views that education had the power to change people. Involving themselves in civil education in their countries of origin, was the main way some of them thought they could change the moral fabric of the societies.

Participant 17 said,

> I write reform proposals in the newspapers in Ghana, I give lectures at colleges when I visit, with the increase use of internet it has become easy for me to try and change the morality of the people through my postings, writings and public lectures on morality and responsibility.

Participant 13 informed the group, "After early retirement at 62 years I will go home to Togo and organize classes on ethics to help my people become socially responsible."

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 2 About Research Question 3. In response to the topic of how Diasporic leaders can help their countries of origin, additional themes emerged other than the three discussed above. They were as follows—some diasporic leaders mobilizing themselves here to give back to their countries of origin, by providing social services like building hospitals, schools, and other essential social amenities, as well as giving scholarships to needy students in their countries of origin. Other participants thought believing in the leadership at their home countries was the way to go. Others rather thought getting involved in the local politics by running for political office was the way to go.

Overall Summary of the Main Themes from Focus Group 2. Figure 4.10 combines the results for the three topics, presenting again the leading (most mentioned) issues considered in Focus Group 2's discussion. It is striking though, not surprising that all three topics drew substantial discussion about corruption—its ubiquity, the priority of eliminating it, and ways to fight it. In the diagnostic part (Research Question 1) as to what is wrong, the persistent postcolonial influence of foreign interests was a leading concern and, often, participants linked

this to the rampant corruption of so many African leaders. I will address this more fully in Chapter V.

General Observations About Focus Group 2 and Its Results. This focus group was drawn from politically-motivated professionals. Their emphasis was less about loyalty to Ubuntu and traditional-religious values, and a heightened awareness of the lasting impact of colonialism, especially the neo-colonialism of foreign investment and all that goes with it.

These Diasporic leaders was notably focused on corruption: the issue was frequently mentioned in response to all three topics. The tangible goal of achieving accountability (the most-mentioned aspect in Research Question 2) was balanced by this group bringing up visionary leadership many times (second most mentioned in Research Question 2). The high-achievers that made up this group obviously see the need to be both critical-minded yet know that having a future to aim for is essential. I would also note that although it was not the top-mentioned desirable characteristic, "leadership by example" was important. This is not surprising to me in thinking about the value that this group of participants places on personal and organizational accomplishment.

Figure 4.10

Summary of Most Mentioned) Issues for All Research Questions, Focus Group 2
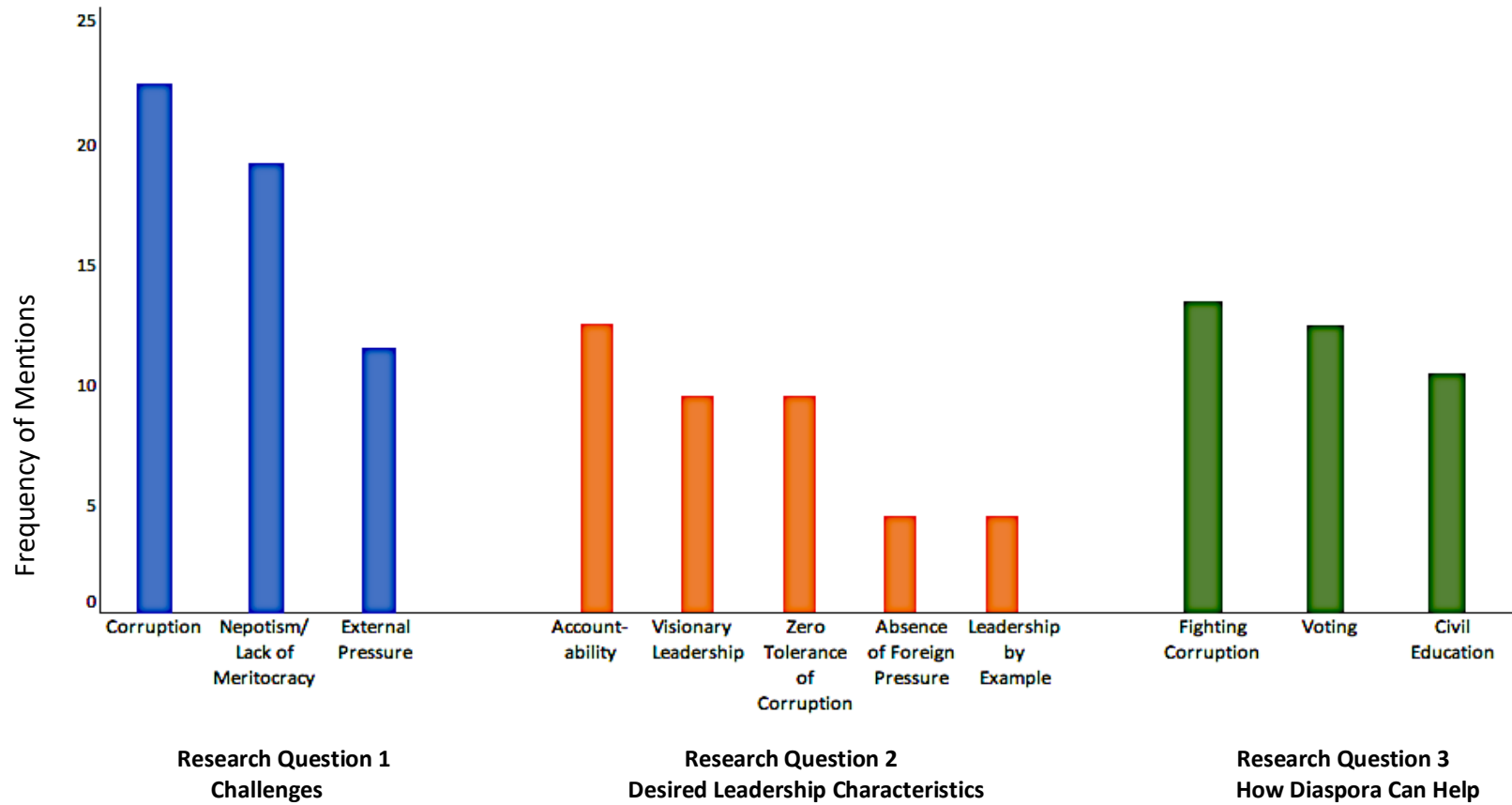
Focus Group 3 Meeting Results

The session for Focus Group 3 was conducted on November 16, 2019. It engaged nine influential African Diasporic Leaders in Rhode Island. Participants in this focus group consisted of the leadership of the AARI joined by several other influential Diasporic African leaders in Rhode Island The AARI is a nonprofit organization run by Diasporic African leaders dedicated to improving the lives of Africans living in the State of Rhode Island. The AARI seeks to promote and celebrate the African culture while tackling the challenges facing the African communities in Rhode Island. The nine participants came from seven countries in Africa, five from West Africa, one from Southern Africa, and one from East Africa. Participants ranged in age from 40 to over 70 and have all lived in the United States for 15 to 45 years. Though the participants are not politically active like the members of ACLF, they are all Pan-African in their orientation and showed great enthusiasm for the discussion. Because of the variety of the participants' career experiences, their international exposures, educational levels, age, and the length of time they have lived in the United States, their discussions were vibrant and practical and an endorsement of the ideas from Focus Group 1 and 2. Demographic information about the Focus Group participants is provided in Table 4.1.

The leader of AARI, who has lived in the United States for 45 years, spending most of his time in Rhode Island, helped me from the beginning to prepare for this. He provided me with key contact information for potential focus group participants, Africans who have lived in Rhode Island for many years, and donated the meeting space for convening three of the focus group discussions. The AARI took personal responsibility for mobilizing the participants for the discussion, and despite the freezing Saturday night weather, the turnout was very encouraging.

The meeting began with the same convening framework as in Focus Groups 1 and 2, using discussion of familiarity with Ubuntu as an icebreaker. Because of their Pan-African orientation, all nine participants indicated that they were very familiar with the concept and identified its manifestation in their countries and traditional societies. Participant 22 commented, "Ubuntu is part of my language, Ndebele, a Bantu language, predominantly in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Ubuntu is humanity working together. Participant 23 succinctly stated, "Ubuntu is opposed to Western individualism." All participants also indicated that they were very aware of the current political leadership of their country of origin, through the news, and contacting people in the United States who could provide updates about the country.

Focus Group 3—Research Question 1: Challenges of Political Leadership in Africa. Figure 4.11 shows the most mentioned issues the group spoke of in response to the first question regarding of main leadership challenges.

Figure 4.11

Challenges of Political Leadership in Africa: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 3
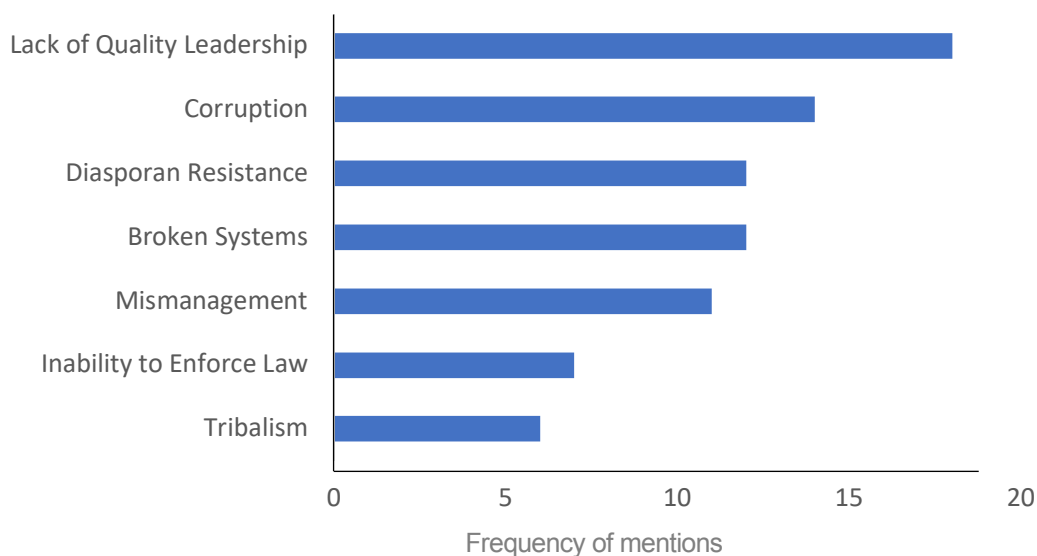
Lack of Quality of Leadership. The most mentioned theme in this group's discussion

challenges of political leadership was lack of quality leadership in various countries in Africa.

Participant 24 had this to say on this issue:

> Lack of quality leadership is one of the main problems in Africa. We just elect anyone who feels like they can become anything. Majority of them, they are not even qualified to manage an organization that only has 15 people, not to talk of ruling the whole country of millions of people. So, lack of quality of leaders, they don't know what they are doing. So how can you give them a country to run when they can't even run their own home?
>
> Participant 26 discredited a commonly heard claim: "I think we excuse our leaders who

claim they are good but the people around them. I totally disagree, good leaders surround

themselves with people who they can trust and rely on." Participant 27 added, "If a leader is not

able to scout for good people to work, then he is not a good leader. Leadership is not you ruling.

It's about you putting in a system that works." The consensus of the group was that African

leaders have to do their homework to build strong and credible team of ministers to work with.

They are vicariously responsible for the actions and behaviors of their associates.

Corruption. Corruption was the second most mentioned theme in this discussion.

Participant 22 affirmed, "The biggest vice of African leadership is corruption. It's a no brainer,

really. It seems to be endemic in Africa." Participant 27 added, "Corruption is indeed the major

cancer in all African countries. Participant 29 commented, Corruption is a common ground, I

think it goes with your length of stay in power. The longer you stay in power, the more corrupt

you become.

Diasporic Resistance. The participants in this Focus Group expressed frustration and

disgust at the treatment they experienced when they attempted to resettle in their home country.

Participant 27 offered this critique:

The challenge I have is, we have come here to acquire knowledge and wealth. I believe everybody has something that can benefit our home countries. Now, how can the government of our countries of origin welcome us so that what we have acquired here will be incorporated to develop our nations? This is my major challenge, besides corruption.

Participant 26 added to the complaint of Participant 27 against poor Diasporic treatment

in Ghana.

Some countries have taken particular interest in the affairs of Diasporas as they return to help the home countries. They have effective Diaspora Affairs Departments, especially India. The treatment of Focus Groups in Ghana is very poor—Ghana is an earthquake zone. With my expertise in this area, I contacted the State of California, which has one of the best disaster planning in the world and was ready to connect with Ghana to help put in place a disaster preparation capacity. When I contacted the department in Ghana, they kept on frustrating and delaying to respond; I had to eventually give up and we keep seeing the chaos happening in the country because of earthquakes.

Broken Systems. Post-independence African countries were largely built with Western

structures and systems of organizations but lack the corresponding Western attitudes and

behaviors that make the systems effective. This poses challenges to Africans in the focus group

who to varying degrees are socialized with the system here. They therefore call the systems of

Africa "broken" and are frustrated when they return to their home countries. Several participants

complained of broken systems as some of the major challenges of political leadership in Africa.

Participant 26 stated,

People always ask me, as a Ghanaian, why do you guys have Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the UN, and others, who know how to run international institutions but you can't run your own country, why? What's wrong with your country? What it is, for the country to function in a modern world, you need infrastructure in the broad sense. Hard infrastructure, roads, airports, as well as soft infrastructure – cultures and rules that make the systems work. For example, when you need a passport, there is a clear system to follow to get it. If you want it expedited in the US, you pay more to get it. There is nothing like that in Ghana, you have to pay bribes. If you get into this system, no matter your expertise, if the system does not change you are frustrated. It does not work like in the USA.

However, Participant 23 disagreed with Participant 26's assertion:

It takes leadership. Not one person. You can't get upset and say because it didn't work while you were there, it does not work. You must be determined to make it work; you may have to adapt to the system. I know many others who went back to Africa, stayed in the system, and made it to work for them.

It should be noted that the participants spoke of this as something of an aggregate issue which overlaps with other more specific issues such as the failure to enforce laws.

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 3 about Research Question 1. There was explicit discussion of several other thematic issues including mismanagement, lack of ability to enforce the law and tribalism. I must repeat here that the various issues mentioned overlap and in a number of cases, one is actually part of another. Mismanagement could be related to lack of quality of leadership. Lack of ability to enforce the law could be related to Broken Systems and tribalism could be related with corruption. Several mentions were made of "tribalism," a reference that some saw as the "other side of the coin" from Ubuntu—that following tradition is not an unqualified virtue.

Focus Group 3—Research Question 2: Characteristics Desirable for Leadership Reform. The results of Focus Group 3's discussion of Research Question 2 are shown in Figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12

Characteristics Desirable for Leadership Reform: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 3
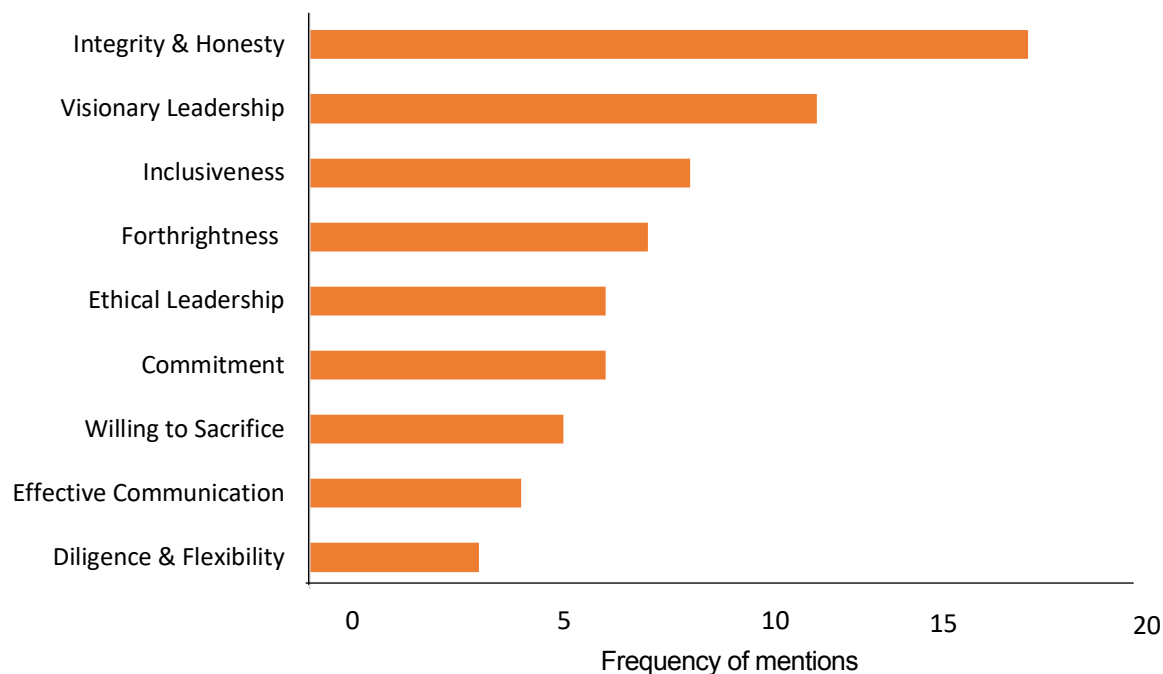
Note. Only issues mentioned three or more times are shown.

Integrity and Honesty. The most mentioned desired (and presently inadequate)

characteristic of leadership for Africa was integrity. Participant 26, a HR Executive, decried,

> We lack leaders with integrity. In my country Ghana, over the years, a large number of Christian churches have been filled with many of our leaders but there is no correlation between how the churches are packed and integrity of leadership. It's just not there. [WE need] a leader who you can count on. A leader who stands for their country and for their people. This is what we want in our political leaders.

> Participant 30 endorsed the statement of Participant 26 with this:

> Looking at my country Liberia, integrity is a big challenge. Though I believe a democratic government is supposed to enforce the law, in Liberia it is not enforced effectively. There is no transparency among the leaders and no integrity with the leaders, we can never trust them.

Visionary Leadership. Mention of need for leaders who are forward-looking, having a

vision, a strong idea of where the country should go, were scattered throughout the discussion of

this topic. In response to one participant puzzling out why his country was more progressive than

Asian nations now doing much better than his, participant 22 exclaimed, "[We need] leaders, not

one person, not two people, not three people . . . the visionary that can stay the course." When I

prompted the group directly on desirable characteristics, "visionary" kept coming up. Participant

23 brought up Kwame Nkrumah (the first prime minister and president of Ghana) as an example

of a true "visionary, and not only for his own nation but for all of Africa. The participants came

up with transformational leadership as one of the major themes of desired characteristics for

leadership reform in Africa. Participant 26 drew on one of Africa's most famous and revered

former leaders: "We need leaders like Nelson Mandela, selfless and visionary who we can

emulate because he is able to bring his people to the finish line."

Inclusiveness. On inclusiveness, the participants discussed the need to broaden the

partakers in the governance of the people, to limit tribalism and nepotism and form ruling teams

from the diverse ethnic groups for the benefit of the entire society. Participant 30 commented,

> We need an inclusive government in Liberia. We have people from different
> backgrounds, different ethnic groups but most of our leaders, only select from their ethnic
> groups weather they qualify or not. Our governments are therefore limited and not open
> to all and many are sitting on the sideline.

Participant 26 added concisely, "Inclusiveness in leadership makes for good governance."

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 3 About Research Question 2. Two of the

themes that also came up in Focus Group 3 as they discussed " for leadership reform," were the

need for leaders to have both commitment and a willingness to make personal sacrifices. Rather

than going into the top office eager to obtain benefits for self, family, and friends, leaders had to

face personal as well as governing difficulties. Persisting through these challenges, Participant 28

saw, as a fundamental matter of devotion to country: "[It] is about patriotism. You have to love

your country. This is what we lack that's important. That's what we are lacking in Africa—

patriotism."

Focus Group 3—Research Question 3: Ways That Diaspora Leaders Can Help

Their Country of Origin. Figure 4.13 shows the most frequently mentioned ideas that arose as

Focus Group 3 wrestled with how they felt the Diaspora could help to improve the leadership

back home.

Figure 4.13

Ways for Diaspora to Help Build Leadership Capacity in Country of Origin: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 3
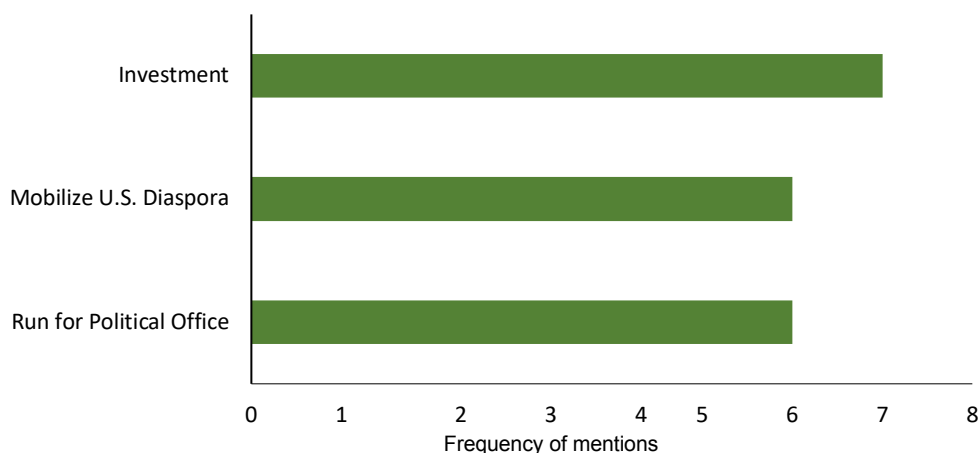
Note. Only issues mentioned three or more times are shown.

Investment. The topic of what Diasporic African participants can do tangibly and in

general for their former home countries relates to the high incidence of remittances that already

play an important role in supporting local livelihoods, community projects, and innovation and

entrepreneurship. As major stakeholders in the economic development of their home countries,

this group's participants amply discussed how investing in the home country could specifically

improve leadership. Participant 26 observed,

> If you look at the US, the backbone of the US economy is small business, and then the
> future of Africa is the youth. So, I founded this organization called Afrolink which really

targets the youth to provide them with business training, mentoring and access to funding and investors. We're currently only Ghana and Kenya, but the idea is to be Africa-wide.

Participant 26 elaborated on the specifics of how the enhancement of business could

work as an initiative from the Diaspora.

The African Union has talked about a bond for the Diaspora, which will be an investment vehicle targeted to do different projects. I think that's a good idea, creating an African bond so we invest in it and we get reforms.

Participant 23 responded, first pointing out that many African nations have plentiful

valuable resources such as oil that would make what was invested from the Diaspora trivial in

comparison. But he then observed, regarding investment from the Diaspora, "people will learn

from it [investment]. And again, I don't know how we're going to do it, but those are ideas we

need to look at." One participant felt that investment could also be significant in not-for-profit

service provision, stating, "I'm trying to organize Ghanaians in the Diaspora all over the world

so we can finance ambulances and run free ambulance services in Ghana." A caution raised by

Participant 30 brought the discussion back to the overlapping issue of corruption and

untrustworthy leaders: "I believe that the reason why people don't want to actually invest is

because of the government not enforcing the law."

Mobilize in United States. Several of the Diasporic leaders felt that if they are

mobilized here in the United States they become, almost spontaneously, a political force to

reckon with, supporting prospective congress and senate candidates and lobbying them to make

policies to hinder abuse of human rights and power in their home countries, hence the

formation of the ACLF and AARI. Several of the participants in this focus group felt powerless

to bring changes to their home country and preferred to lobby U.S. politicians. Participant 23

made this suggestion:

I believe that AARI has become a political force in Rhode Island which different US political candidates have sought our help to win the immigrant votes toward their

elections and as we get stronger by continually coming together we can influence the U.S. policies on Africa by lobbying these lawmakers once they get elected.

Run for Political Office. Participants were open generally to the possible strategy of going back to their African home nations and actually seeking public office. They pointed out how many of postindependence democratically elected African leaders, had lived in the Diaspora at some point before returning and ascending to power back home. Participant 27 reflected on seeking public office back home and the dilemma of leaving the United States:

> If I go in seeking for elective office in Ghana, I love America for what America has given me; the knowledge, the power of what I am. But I can never—I'm sorry. I'm sorry—I can never say I love America more than Ghana. (Participant 27)

But this participant had been through this before and added the caution,

> Fifteen years ago, I tried to get into political leadership in Ghana. I was a co-founder of a party Traditional Congress Party. We got to Ghana and were disqualified because we will not give up our U.S. citizenship. I still have plans to run for political office and waiting for Ghana to completely enact the dual citizenship policy, which will enable me to run without an impediment.

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 3 About Research Question 3. It has to be acknowledged that when Africans in the Diaspora gather and talk about how to counteract and change politics and leadership back home, there are concerns and even dangers. One interaction that shows this was when one participant (who I will not identify) referred to their involvement "behind the scenes" and at a high level to try to affect change; Participant 27 answered by asserting, "I don't fight a [losing] battle. I know the strength of Mike Tyson and I will never throw myself in a ring with him. I can't win." Unquestionably there are dangers which is why, participants also mentioned *sacrifice* as part of the Diaspora's desire to do something about corrupt and ineffective leadership back home. This willingness to put their safer and successful lives on the line goes together with another response, to Research Question 3 that came up

several times in Focus Group 3: commitment. The participants were well aware of the limits to efforts made far from where the problems of leadership are playing out: Participant 27 opined,

> They [leaders in government back home] call you a "foreigner." You can't penetrate. You came from America and [they say] "you think we are stupid? You can't come in." There's no way they allow you to seek any particular leadership in [home country].

> He added, "I don't want to be a passenger in the van in the backseat, I want to be in the front seat holding the steering wheel."

Overall Summary of Main Themes from Focus Group 3. Figure 4.14 shows the most mentioned issues for the three topics that the group discussed. Again, corruption was much on the mind of Focus Group 3, ranking second in the number of mentions. It was not surprising, therefore that leading the frequency of mentions for Research Question 2—desirable leadership characteristics—was Integrity and Honesty. These closely related values were seen as qualities that leaders needed to have copiously to deal with the massive and widespread corruption afflicting African societies and governments. This group felt it was important to look far ahead ("Visionary Leadership") and to emphasize inclusiveness so that citizens will be allies—not skeptics—about leaders who struggle against corrupt practices. This said, I was struck by the low number of mentions of all possible ways that the Diaspora could get involved in changing their nations' leadership qualities (Research Question 3).

General Observations About Focus Group 3 and Its Results. The combined results for all three topics discussed by Focus Group 3 are shown in Figure 4.14. For this group, corruption was not the most mentioned challenge; the leading issue instead, was lack of quality of leadership, with corruption as the second most mentioned. I can only repeat that while there were many mentions of what characteristics leaders ought to have (Research Question 2), there was relatively few ideas brought forward on what the Diaspora—the kinds of people attending the session—could actually do to help make change happen.

Figure 4.14

Summary of Most Mentioned Issues for All Research Questions, Focus Group 3
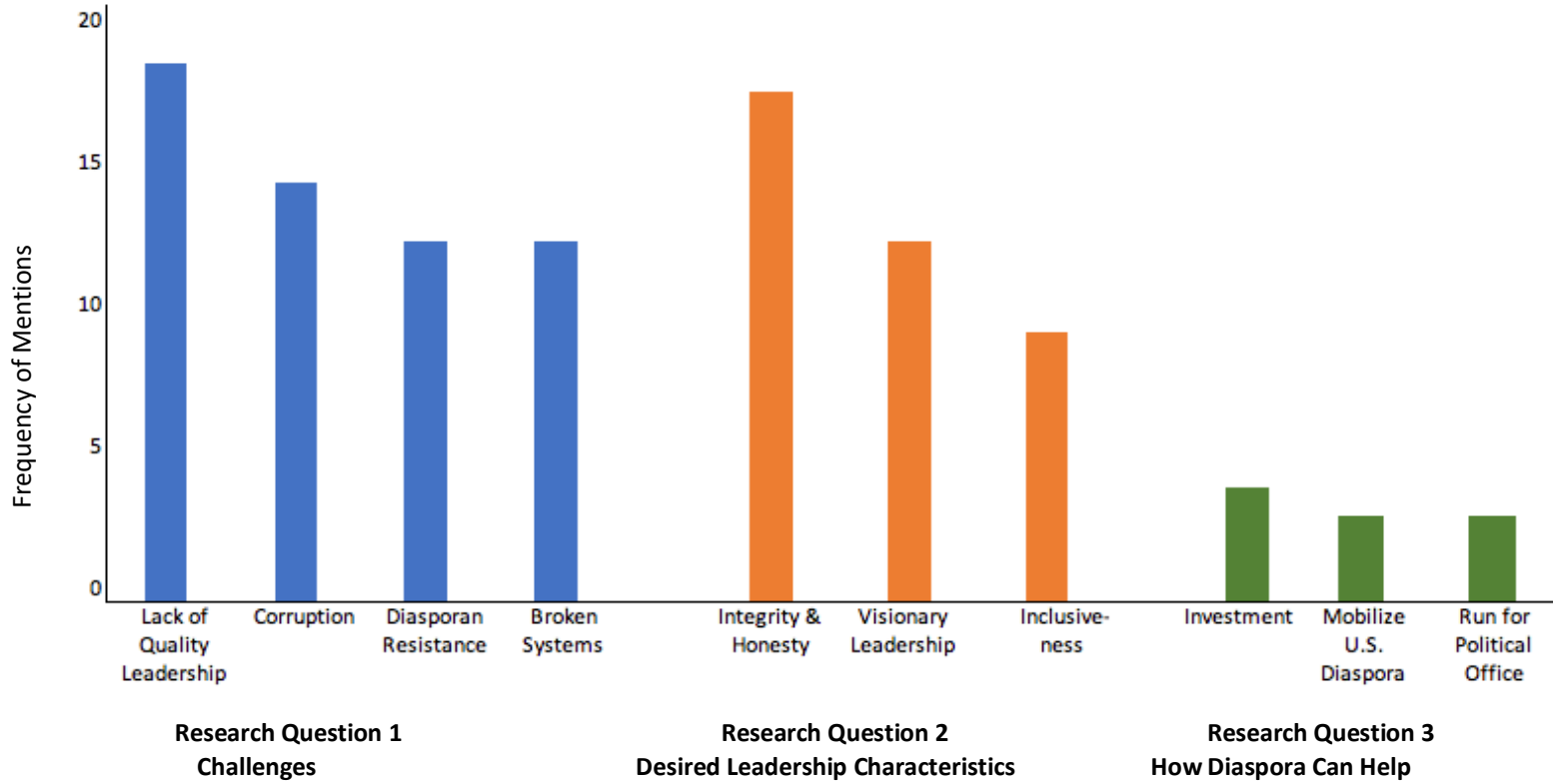
Focus Group 4 Meeting Results

Focus Group 4 was convened on November 24, 2019 and was comprised of five African Diasporic women leaders in Rhode Island. They came from five countries, three from East Africa and two from West Africa. All the women were married, and all were mothers living with their families in the Diaspora. They have each lived in the United States for at least 10 years and were between the ages of 41 and 70. They were all college educated: two had master's degrees, and three had bachelor's degrees. Three were full-time career women in public health, nursing, and education. One was a full-time health care specialist and a part-time credentialed minister of a Christian church. The fifth one was a full-time credentialed minister, an assistant pastor of a church, and a leading Executive of the Women's Ministries in a denomination with 120 churches in Southern New England (Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island).

These women perform these professional roles and are also homemakers with tight domestic schedules without an extensive social network of support and assistance. This type of support system is quite common in their collectivist and communal societies of their home countries but is absent in their lives in the United States. In light of these factors, mobilizing them for a focus group discussion of political leadership issues back home in Africa was a big challenge. All the women were keenly interested in political stability in Africa, although none were interested in future political leadership roles in Africa. Four of the five do plan to resettle in Africa one day. Additional demographic information about Focus Group 4 participants was provided above in Table 4.1

Working with Focus Group 4, I had to be creative in my approach to have them share their perspectives and views on topics of discussion. On the day of the meeting, only three showed up, despite all my efforts to get them to attend. The President of the African Alliance,

who knows the women well because of their involvement in the diasporic community in Rhode Island, also made an effort. I, therefore, had to meet the other two in a separate face to face discussion after following up with telephone calls. Thus, the discussions detailing Focus Group 4's perspectives that follow, are a combination of the two meetings and the follow-up telephone interviews.

I started with the same approach used in Focus Groups 1, 2, and 3—the ice breaker centered on each participant's familiarity with the concept of Ubuntu. All positively identified with the idea, especially the three women from East Africa, who endorsed the centrality of the concept in their culture and everyday life. Participant 31 had this to say:

> Ubuntu means being human. It is the source of President Kagame's success in Rwanda. He has the compassion in serving his people, loves his people, develops them, and has zero tolerance for corruption, with his practice of Ubuntu the Rwandan people will continue their journey toward peace and unity.

On the question of how much the women were aware of their country of origin's current political leadership, all the women responded without much hope that they were somewhat aware! The women's responses exhibit an apparent disconnect between the diasporic women and their countries of origin. However, when probed further, there were different reasons for the women's loss of interest in the politics of their countries of origin. Participant 32 explained with the following:

> I think I am about 40% aware of what is going on politically in Kenya. It is what my sister tells me and maybe occasionally talking to friends in the U.S. who have been following the politics of Kenya. I do not go out of my way to find out what is going on. I do not think I have never been ever much interested in politics, even when I was in Kenya; coupled with career pressure as well as home pressure here, I could care much less.

Participant 33 added a saddening story in explaining her early distancing from the political situation back home:

> I do not know if I have any interest in politics. When I was a little girl, like a child looking at politics, I felt cruelly abused. After I have grown, I see the same vicious cycle of bad leadership. I have therefore decided not to be bothered at all.

Focus Group 4—Research Question 1: Challenges of political leadership in Africa.

Figure 4.15 displays the issues mentioned three or more times in the discussions of Focus Group 4 members.

Figure 4.15

Challenges of Political Leadership in Africa: Frequency of Issues Mentioned in Focus Group 4
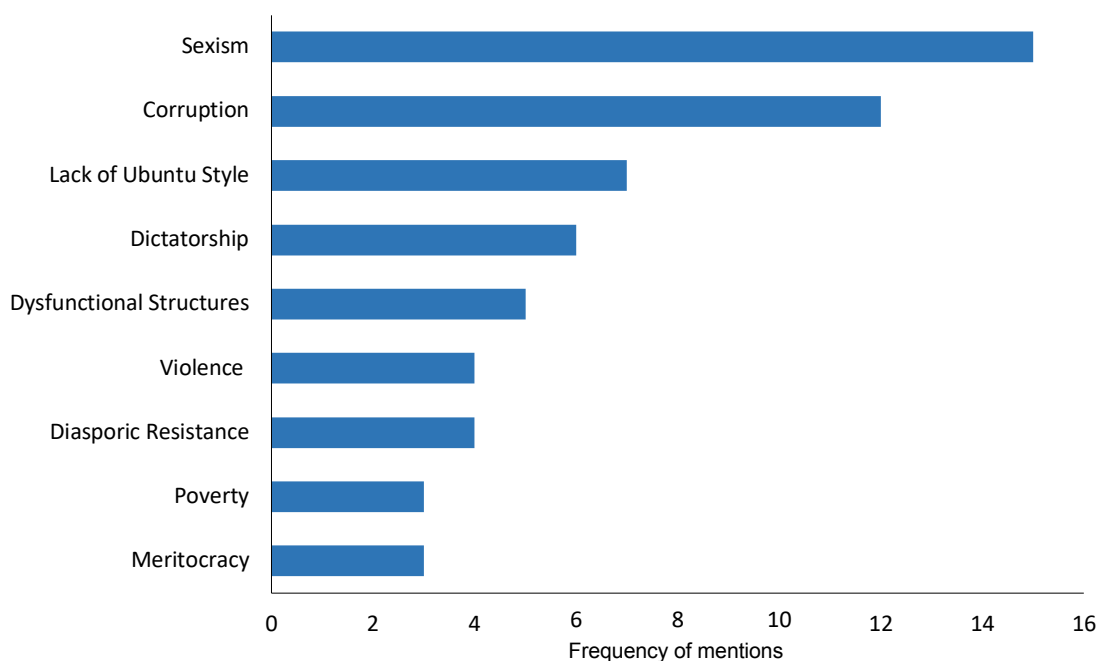
Sexism. The participants, who were all female, profoundly condemned gender inequality against women in African politics and identified it as a main demotivating factor for the lack of interest in their continued involvement in the politics of their countries of origin.

Participant 35 explained,

I am not interested in politics because growing up in Liberia, women were not given their due place in political leadership, I saw places where girls were not even allowed to be educated and left them as domestic helpers and staff. We have not been empowered as leaders for a long time, and that is why I am not interested, I am tired and fed up with the gross sexism of the African society.

Participant 33 alleged the following:

Growing up in Uganda I witnessed many life-threatening crimes against women who run for political office. Sometimes gangs have been sent to rape potential female leaders, which is a defeating situation. If I raise my head and I will be a target why should I put myself in danger? Forget about it. I have my family, I can take care of them and take care of my home, let me do as good as I can, and leave politics alone.

In general, both in the actual three-person focus group and the separately arranged one-on-one conversations, gender discrimination was always pervading.

Corruption. Many women favor liberal democracy, a political system that advocate for gender equality and better governance. There was an expressed belief that women have a stronger inclination than most men towards honesty and the common good; therefore, group members advocated increased female participation in government *as a means* for combatting corruption. The women participants were vehement about corruption as a major hindrance to political leadership in Africa.

Participant 32 strongly complained:

I think corruption seems to be a big issue in Africa. The last time I visited Kenya, my country of origin, I was disappointed because of the rampant corruption that affected me. I saw the rich getting more productive and the poor getting poorer. I saw many people suffering, especially women, who do not have any voice. I saw only a few women who have the connections who were making it not based on merit but connections. This was very discouraging to me and also a big turn off to politics.

Participant 33 spoke similarly of the ever-present corruption as a wearying discouragement for her and others:

There are very well, abled-bodied people who are really, really good leaders, but they don't have a voice because there's a gun. There's a gun, they are being threatened and

abused—and then there's a lot of corruption. So that is so tiring and I'm fed up with it. That's why I'm not interested in this politics.

Lack of Ubuntu Style. Ubuntu, the reflection of the African understanding of the essence of humanity, was taken very seriously by this group of women as a means of correcting widespread bad leadership. Several postulated that women leaders in Africa live out the values of Ubuntu and also enact leadership with the Ubuntu worldview. Participant 35 had this to say: "One of the greatest challenges to us Liberians is the availability of leaders who lack Ubuntu lifestyle, leaders who lack compassion, empathy, care, and love for their people." And Participant 34 contributed,

> Africa has many political leaders who are selfish, greedy, and corrupt, who don't have the interest of their people at heart but are in power to enrich themselves and their family. This is not who I am because you are. Our leaders lack the spirit of Ubuntu.

And to repeat, Participant 31's brief but powerfully summarized that "Ubuntu means being human"—thus, the widespread *inhumanity* witnessed so much in African political action.

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 4 About Research Question 1. The main issue that was not among the top ones that Focus Group 4 discussed was the recurring drift into dictatorship that has happened so widely in Africa. Often stories of such political oppression were linked to personal experiences of oppression in the home. Further, political dictatorship was perceived as having personally impacted participants. Participant 33 explained,

> I wouldn't say I'm very interested in politics. One, when I was a little girl, I was affected by leadership of a dictator and I was forced into exile with my family with the clothes on our backs. So that was a very bad picture because my father was very close to the president and the president started looking for him and it was a big thing and we were forced to go without any warning, and we were off. We left everything behind.

Hand in hand with authoritarianism is the threat of violence about which Participant 33 also had strong remarks: "There are very well, abled-bodied people who are really, really good leaders, but they don't have a voice because there's a gun. There's a gun."

Focus Group 4—Research Question 2: Desirable Characteristics for Leadership

Reform. The frequently mentioned issues in response to the second topic on desirable leadership

characteristics, are depicted in Figure 4.16.

Figure 4.16

Characteristics Desirable for Leadership Reform: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 4
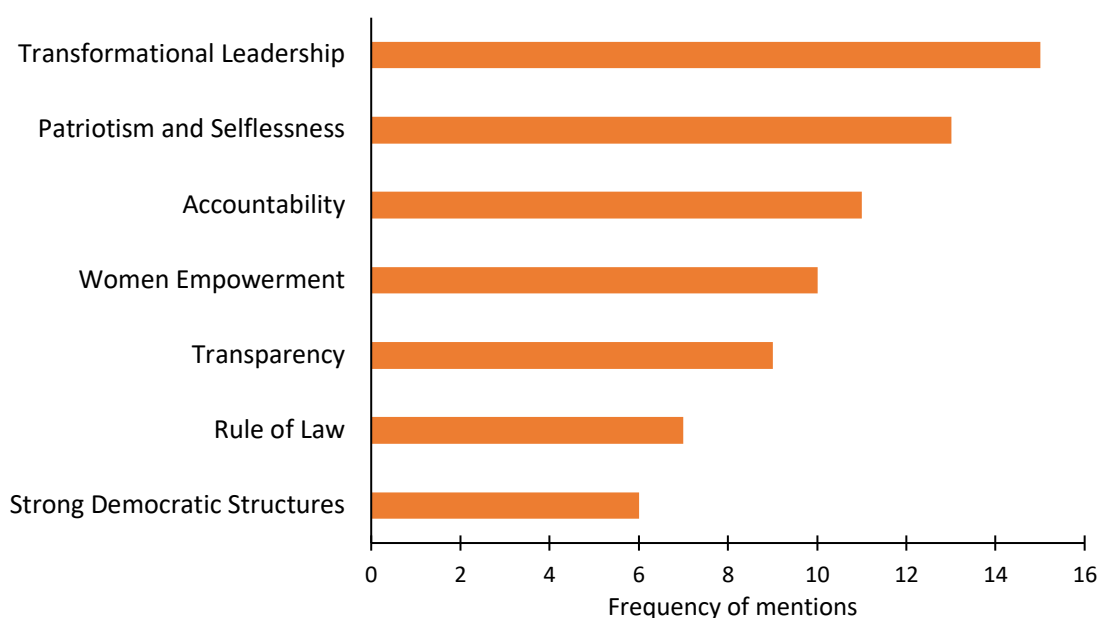
Note. Only issues mentioned three or more times are shown.

    Transformational Leadership. The need for transformational leadership—changing the

game not just the rules of how to play it—was a significantly mentioned response to this

Research Question by Focus Group 4.

> This is how Participant 32 described the transformational leaders Africa needs:
>
> I want somebody who has got the welfare of all the people, especially those who are
> marginalized at heart. Leaders who will actually stick out their neck to stand up for the
> rights of everybody. They need to be persons who are courageous to do what is the right
> thing, leaders who are honest and able to bring people together rather than diving them so
> that we can appeal to the strength of our community. Leaders who are not afraid to
> delegate so that it's not that they are the only person who will do everything. They must
> be able to identify those who are suited to doing different things. We need leaders who

will transform our people and societies. Leaders with vision of our countries future and hopefully lead us there.

Participant 34 added, "We need transformational leaders who will think about human rights, the old, the young, helping the poor, women, children, who think about the entire society." And Participant 33 connected this thought to values and characteristics that make a leader open to transformation:

Also, [we need] a leader who is humble enough to peacefully transfer power to somebody else. You cannot be a leader perpetually. At some point, you need to step down and let somebody else take over. There has to be a limit to how many terms a leader stays in power.

This segues into the second most discussed issue under this topic—patriotism and selflessness.

Patriotism and Selflessness. Patriotism is defined as the "love for or devotion to one's country" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-c) and was manifest in the stories that Focus Group 4 participants turned to in prescribing leadership change. For example, one was a woman known as a "dangerous warrior" who opposed colonialism's deculturating demands:

This woman in history, they call her the dangerous warrior, Yaa Asantewaa.[6] She really stood up for women. She was the Queen Mother of Ejisu in Asante [Ghana]. The British colonial government wanted to take the golden stool. There were men there and, I think, she was the gatekeeper for that golden stool and she stood up and spoke up and her voice was heard. She said, "I won't sit down for this stool to be taken away. I will gather my fellow women and we will go and fight. We will fight till the battles are won on the battlefield." And that's exactly what she did. (Participant 34)

Hand in hand with deep patriotism for one's home country goes humility and empathy, serving others ahead of looking after one's own interests. Participant 32 also spoke of contemporary instances of such selflessness: "Tanzania is interesting, and I would like to

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[6] Discussion of this heroic leader's story and impact can be found in Agyeman-Duah (1999) and Arhin Brempong (2000).

probably know a bit more because of the leadership of Nyerere and the basis of where they started. They valued community, I think, over and above individualism."

Accountability. Accountability—the third most mentioned characteristic under Research Question 2 for Focus Group 4— is seen when leaders accept responsibility for the outcomes of their actions and are open to criticism, to ensure that they deliver on their promises. Participant 33 reflected on this:

> We want a leader who will be accountable to us. A leader who is able to take constructive criticism and do something to improve the situation not one who will say "I tell you and you cannot tell me and that's final" I don't want a dictatorial kind of leadership. I want a leader who is able to get our concerns and do something about it.

The same participant later linked this back to the features of Ubuntu:

> Even when you go to the villages, this Ubuntu is there. I mean, when you have a problem with your wife, there are elders. Elders come. You're not lonely, you're not by yourself. Here, you don't have mentors. You may choose a mentor, but that is choosing. But here, *there are people who hold you accountable* [emphasis added].They hold the young women and the young boys accountable wherever they are all over. They are protecting each other. So, I'm thinking that some of it is still there. We just have to [return to Ubuntu].

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 4 About Research Question 2. The rich and wide-ranging discussion both in the focus group itself and in interviews came up with several other recurring themes. Women's empowerment, of course, was mentioned as a change that had to come. For that, education was necessary and often brought up. Participant 33 stated this as follows:

> In my country, there are some places where girls are not allowed to be educated. I mean, that's not a priority. They will educate the boys and leave the girls to be domestic helpers and stuff like that. So, if a woman is not empowered, is not given the right cards to be out there—the one who is well educated has the power. And the one who is not educated is going *to serve* the one in power.

Other desirable characteristics mentioned by Focus Group 4 included the need for transparency in public decisions, respect for the rule of law and, overall, stronger democratic structures.

Focus Group 4—Research Question 3: Ways that Diaspora Leaders Can Help Their Country of Origin. Figure 4.17 shows the leading issues by frequency of mention for Focus Group 4's conversations about how the Diaspora might help build or rebuild African leadership. In light of this all-women group's diagnosis of what was wrong with present leadership (Research Question 1), it follows that the prescriptions for change were quite different from the other focus groups.

Figure 4.17

Ways to Help Build Leadership Capacity in Country of Origin: Frequency of Mention in Focus Group 4
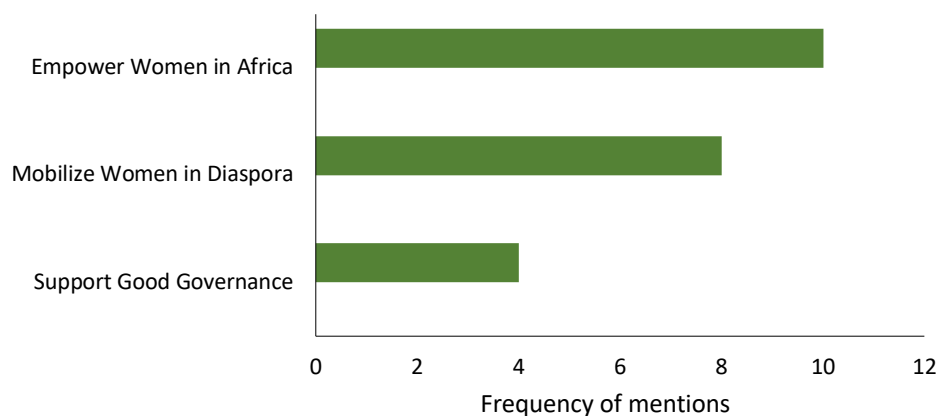
Note. Only issues mentioned three or more times are shown.

Empower Women in Africa. The discussions with the group and individually seemed repeatedly to come back to the importance of empowering women as a means of greatly improving African political leadership. The diasporic women leaders, after being victims of disempowering politics (and social dynamics) while growing up in Africa, were determined to help free the disempowered women in Africa. Participant 33 explained,

I am part of a ministry called Women of Purpose who among, other things, help women and girls in Uganda my home country. We go to schools to educate, support, encourage and uplift the women and girls in the villages, trying to empower them.

Participant 32 offered,

I am also part of a campaign in Kenya, who visits schools to teach and help the girls with sanitary hygiene. We also teach them on women's reproductive health. I supply the wipes, tampons, and other accessories from here. We saw how we were deprived growing up in Kenya and have decided to empower the young girls by helping them with their sanitary hygiene.

Clearly, the Focus Group 4 participants do not draw precise lines between the work that is done in the United States helping new Diaspora women and the strengthening of those who remain in the home country.

Mobilize Women in Diaspora. One key and recurring prescription for leadership reform back home was mobilizing diasporic women here in the United States to help some displaced immigrant women like refugees and new immigrants to settle in the system. This is another area of need for women empowerment. Participant 33, who is active in a nonprofit that does work in this area, explained, "The Women of Purpose [her NGO] helps refugees and new immigrant women and their families to settle in the USA." Participant 32 also emphasized this:

I am part of the group in my church who has been working to help refugee women and their families to settle in this system. We do tutoring and also help the parents to understand the structures of this society and where to find what they need.

Support Good Governance. Out of one of the other focus group discussions, remarks were made (by the President of AARI) that recommended setting up a "African Women Leadership Forum." This would serve as a platform to discuss and find solutions to women's problems in the Diaspora as well as become a lobbying group to advocate for help from lawmakers in United States to African countries. Participant 31 agreed: "The African Women Leadership forum is such a laudable idea, that can help us to support good governments in our home countries."

Other Issues Discussed by Focus Group 4 About Research Question 3*.* After I posed

the question for Research Question 3 on what the Diaspora could do to improve African

leadership, I was struck by how this group in particular turned to inspiring stories some from

earlier in their lives, some from the long-ago history of the continent. It seemed that giving direct

advice was less popular with this group than telling exemplary stories from which lessons could

be gathered. Some returned to the topic of the icebreaker: Ubuntu.

> Being a human being. Being what a human being is supposed to be; to protect your integrity, to cover you. You are my brother. You're hungry, you're a stranger. You're not a stranger when I have a space here. I can share with you. How can we go back there? We just have to do it. We just have to do it. Because there's a lot of selfishness going on, this is for me. (Participant 33)

> Others recollected an upbringing that provided for the social interaction that often seems

to have been sacrificed in the postcolonial rush to make money selfishly:

> When you look when we were growing up, it was very different because everybody talked to everybody else. If you showed up at breakfast or in the morning, you could sit down and have porridge and you just eat whatever we are eating. Everybody stood around, talked with each other. Maybe that's why we don't know the concept of time.

> To this, Participant 33 added, "And everybody's child was your child. You could chastise

that child when they are away from the parent." The message—which I will come back to in

Chapter V—seemed to be that the essence of (re)building leadership in Africa was to live well

and care deeply about everyone, not just "one's own."

Overall Summary of Main Themes From Focus Group 4. Figure 4.18 shows the most

mentioned issues by Focus Group 4 on the assigned three topics. This group recognized the

pervasive nature of corruption but mentioned even more "sexism," seeing that as a perpetrator of

much that is wrong with African leadership. Thus, it is no surprise that high among mentioned

ways for the Diaspora to change the present leadership dysfunction. The ideas that came out in

discussion of Research Question 3 together showed that these women of the Diaspora aim to take

concrete actions to help make leadership better. They explored tactics for empowering women back home and mobilizing Diaspora women to help. Under Research Question 2, the main leadership challenges framed were broader: the advent of transformational leadership, meaning leaders who are committed to change; the down-to-earth assurance of accountability; and, interestingly to me, what the group called patriotism linked to selflessness. These women saw patriotism differently than many men do who link it to flag waving and arms races. For them, the key to being a patriot is to sacrifice the interests of self to the good of all citizens.

General Observations about Focus Group 4 and Its Results. As just noted, the most striking feature of this group was its insistence on what are often considered "women's issues." I will come back to and reflect on this perspective in Chapter V. This said, it is also to be noted that the Focus Group 4 discussion was broad ranging on topics other than gender, bringing up corruption in Research Question 1, and then several important ways that bad leadership can be replaced by different qualities (transformational leadership, patriotism and selflessness, accountability).

Figure 4.18

Summary of Most Mentioned Issues for All Research Questions, Focus Group 4
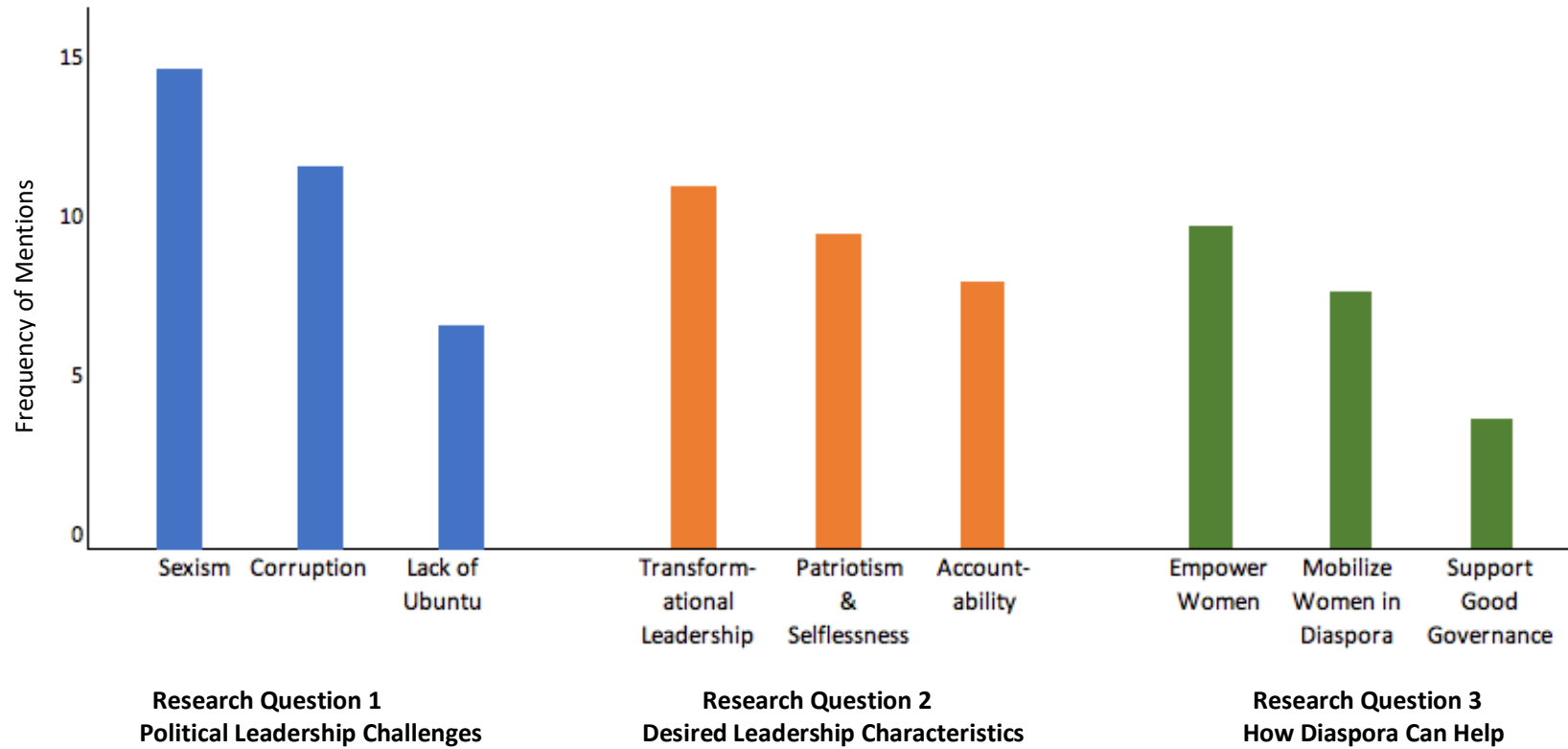
Comparing and Consolidating the Results of the Focus Group Discussions

The three focus group discussions by male diasporic leaders (Focus Groups 1, 2, and 3) were well attended. The participants were enthusiastic, and the deliberations were vocal and heated at times. The participants felt empowered and their expectations of active involvement in political discourse in their home countries came to fruition as they felt entitled to some leadership roles in their countries of origin. The women's focus group (# 4) on the other hand, after much follow up was not well attended. However, the participants who did attend, honored the invitation based on their relationship with the President of the African Alliance and me. The women participants seemed to have attended out of a sense of duty and felt liberated after the discussions since it was a space to voice their deprived opinions on political views affecting their home countries.

While all the male complaints of inequality in their respective countries of origin were based on tribalism and nepotism, the women's complaints were based on sexism, in addition to tribalism and nepotism. All the five women recounted bitter experiences of male dominance growing up in Africa. All the women unanimously advocated for the empowerment of women in Africa, so women could also fully contribute to the political development of African societies. All the women felt more empowered in the United States, and the consensus among them was that the low turnout rate of the women of the focus group discussions, in comparison with the men was due to the gross sexism and lack of participating opportunities to the women growing up in their home countries. The women felt these situations were discouraging to their political motivations and aspirations. The women leaders agreed that with the congenial atmosphere in Western societies, they feel empowered and believe with time, most of the African women in the Diaspora will be politically active.

The women left the discussions satisfied because they felt space had been provided for them to voice their sentiments on the unequal political leadership opportunities. In contrast, the men left empowered because they felt the focus group discussions restored their right to participate in political discourse in their countries of origin. This could lead to involvement in future political leadership dialogues and efforts there.

Finally, the women's suggestions and recommendations in the focus group discussions were along the lines of collaborative, inclusive, shared, and cooperative leadership in their home countries, serving to foster political reforms.

Comparing Group Responses on Research Question 1 (Political Leadership Challenges in Africa)

Figure 4.19 displays the top issues mentioned for each of the groups. It is not surprising or uplifting that corruption rated in the top two challenges for all four groups. The two other highest mention topics were Focus Group's 1's "Lack of Quality Leadership—undoubtedly an aggregate of other more specific concerns—and "Sexism" for the Focus Group 4, the only group to be comprised of just women. "Broken Systems," which tied for third in Focus Group 1, is related to "Lack of Ubuntu," which came second in Focus Group 2 and tied for third in Focus Group 4. "Broken systems" not only refers to the breakdown of initial postcolonial systems but also to the rupture of precolonial governance that worked well for eons. As Achebe's famous novel was titled and depicted, things fell apart.

Figure 4.19

Summary of Most Mentioned Issues in the Four Focus Groups for Research Question 1—Political Leadership Challenges in Africa
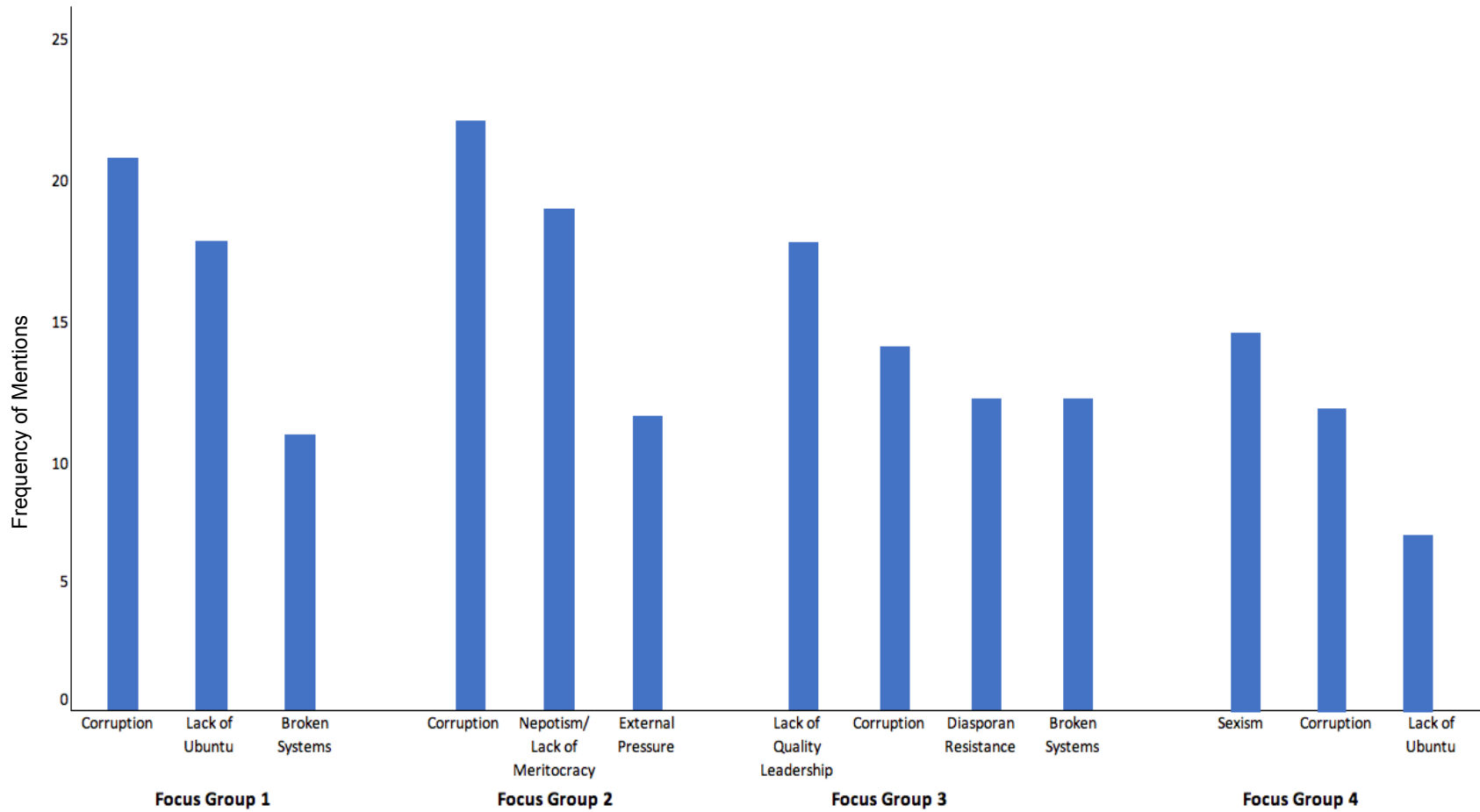
Comparing Group Responses on Research Question 2 (Characteristics Desirable for Leadership Reform)

Comparatively speaking, the groups differed more in their responses to the topic of desirable leadership characteristics than they had on Research Question 1. Integrity (once with "Honesty," a closely related feature) was in the top three issues twice, as was Accountability. These are the pragmatic antidotes or at least opposites to the leading issue of corruption—and I note that Focus Group 2 designated "Zero Tolerance of Corruption" as desirable quality of leadership, which presumably would entail having integrity and acting honestly. Likewise, "Respect for the Rule of Law," Group 1's second most mentioned theme, was frequently mentioned in Focus Groups 2 and 3, indicating it is crucial to have a clear idea of where African nations should be going. Transformational Leadership was what was needed and most mentioned by Focus Group 4 and that is closely related to Visionary Leadership but emphasizes more knowing and addressing what needs changing not just where to go. Focus Group 4 also brought up Patriotism and Selflessness as a highly mentioned desirable characteristic. I found that interesting because too often "patriotism" is associated with seeing one's country as better and worth more than others. Here, combined with selflessness, it is about real love for country that makes a leader willing to sacrifice her or his interests for the good of all.

Figure 4.20

Summary of Most Mentioned Issues in the Four Focus Groups for Research Question 2—Characteristics Desirable for Leadership Reform
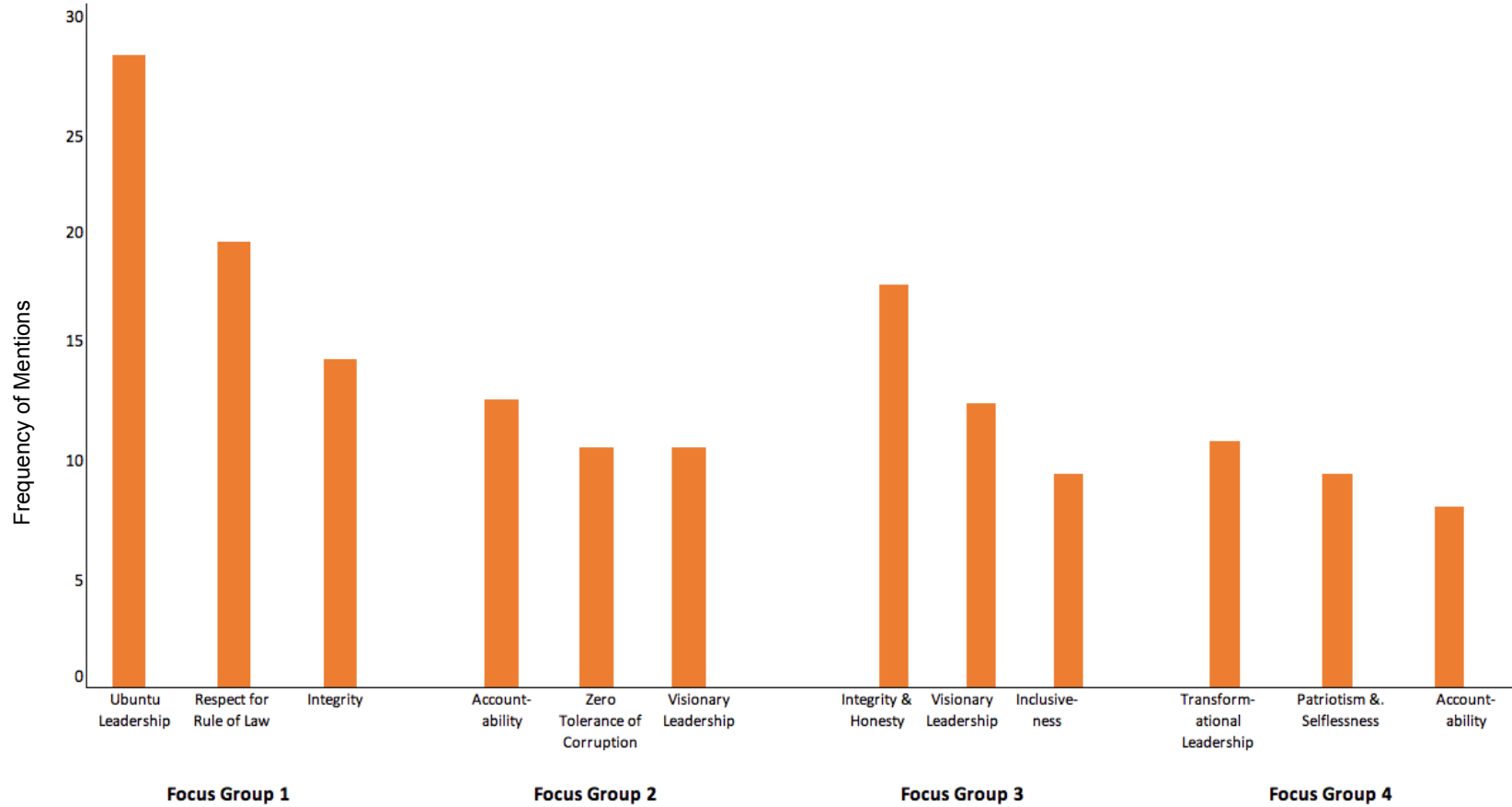
Comparing Group Responses on Research Question 3 (How Diaspora Can Help)

Research Question 3 brings the challenge of better African leadership to the Diaspora itself. What struck me, in contrast to discussion of the other two topics was that no theme made the top three most mentioned more than once. This indicates a diversity of ways that the Diaspora might be able to help. Also, personally I felt that some of the leading responses stayed at a very general level, one that would be hard to take action on, possibly because of an underlying pessimism about changing Africa from overseas. From my perspective, several in this category included, Group 1's leading topic, "Diaspora Getting Involved" (which only answers the question with restating it as a statement! Group 2's leading topic, "Fighting Corruption," which was brought up as much to say how far Africa has to go than to give specific responses needed from the Diaspora; and Group 4's third most mentioned idea, "Support Good Governance." None of these really commit to specific course of action whereby the Diaspora could help. This is in contrast to several more tangible thoughts that drew frequent mention such as focusing on civil education (Group 2, third highest number of mentions), relocating back to Africa to be "on site" to help (Group 1, third highest number of mentions) making sure to vote in home elections (Group 2, second highest number of mentions), or even running for political office in them (Group 3, tied for second most mentions), and two related ideas of having the Diaspora continue and expand its work on direct foreign aid (Group 1, second highest number of mentions) and/or become investors in projects back home (Group 3, highest number of mentions). Becoming a force for improved education that can lead to better leaders was also a theme that made the top three in Focus Group 2).

Figure 4.21

Summary of Most Mentioned Issues in the Four Focus Groups for Research Question 3—How Diaspora Can Help
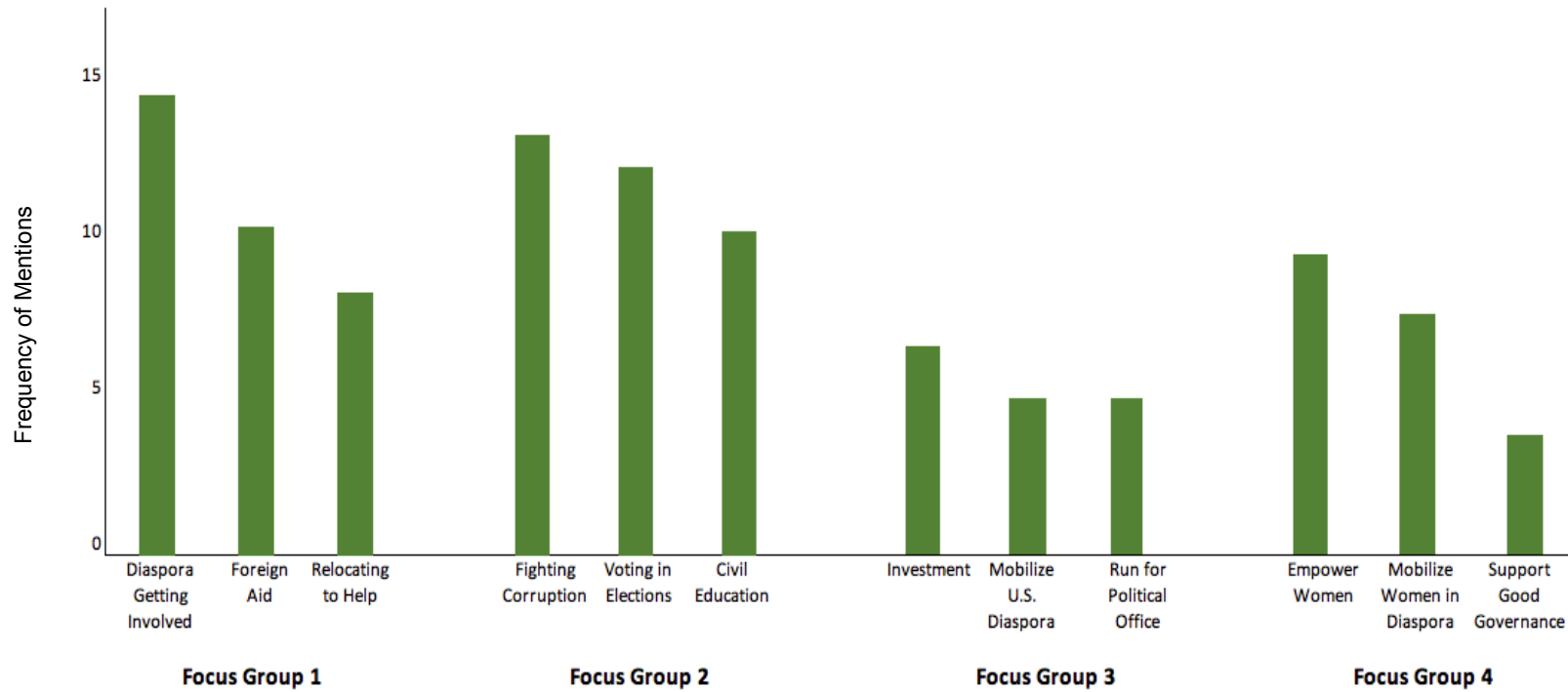
The ideas and discussion topics of Group 4—which was made up of all women—are worth singling out for these were the only "solutions" they felt the Diaspora could offer connected to addressing gender discrimination and exclusion. Empowering women was Group 4's most mentioned action, while the second most mentioned was for them to mobilize women in the Diaspora to improve leadership. I have taken note of this distinctive attention of Focus Group 4 to these challenges in further discussion in a separate section of Chapter V.

Having facilitated this diverse array of Africans from the Rhode Island Diaspora, I was left pondering how to bring their many and often dissimilar ideas together in conclusions. This chapter reported on the findings of the focus group data; in Chapter V, I will discuss the findings, and link these to extant research, making recommendations for future research and practice. The discussion will be organized to probe the results as seen in this chapter on the cross-group discussion of the three topics posed to participants. I will also refocus the issue I brought up at the outset of each meeting—Ubuntu and how and whether it continues to be relevant.

Chapter V: Conclusion

As discussed in Chapter I, effective political leadership is a prerequisite for the socioeconomic as well as the political development of modern societies. However, the African continent broadly suffers from leadership that ranges from merely ineffective to grossly corrupt and harmful for development. There are almost countless analyses—yet far fewer sincere efforts to alter this tragic reality (Iwowo, 2015; Walumbwa et al., 2011). Largely, however, such efforts have taken place with the exclusion of a vital stakeholder, the Africans in the Diaspora. My dissertation research was intended to be a small step towards changing this. Thirty-five Africans living in the Diaspora in Rhode Island, in the United States have participated in four focus groups which I facilitated and recorded—vigorous discussions analyzed in Chapter IV. This concluding chapter looks across these important conversations and their results, seeking the participants' diagnosis and prescriptions for reforming leadership.

The chapter is organized according the main research questions and resultant discussion topics as depicted in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Connecting Research Questions to Focus Group Topics

Research Question	Focus Group Discussion Topic
To what extent do African leaders in Diaspora identify Ubuntu as a leadership principle?	(used as icebreaker discussion of Ubuntu and its possible significance to modern African leadership)
1. What are the most needed changes in leadership in Africa today?	Topic 1: Challenges of political leadership in Africa.
2. What are most desirable characteristics in political leadership in Africa?	Topic 2: Characteristics desirable for leadership reform
3. How can Diasporic African leaders support leadership improvement in Africa?	Topic 3: Ways Diaspora leaders can help country of origin.

I will discuss the responses to the questions/topics first and will conclude with a discussion on the findings of to what extend the respondents identified Ubuntu as a leadership principle.

Discussion of Findings Research Questions (Topics) Considered in the Focus Groups

In discussing these results, I have done a fairly subjective and interpretative analysis that relied primarily on my experience as both a Diasporic African—an insider researcher as this is often termed—and the facilitator of all the focus groups, where I had the privilege to hear the words but also absorb the feelings of the participants. I believe that Leininger (1985) has described this well: "[The] coherence of ideas rests with the analyst who has rigorously studied how different ideas or components fit together in a meaningful way when linked together" (p. 60). For each of the three research questions, I present a simple diagram that shows how the themes were combined. In discussing each question, I will put this study's findings into "conversation" with the principal relevant literature. The discussion will go back and forth between what has been discovered here and key works in existing literature.

Research Question 1: What Are the Most Needed Changes in Leadership in Africa Today?

This question speaks to the challenges of political leadership in Africa, and as depicted in Table 5.2, are very much aligned with what the literature identifies as Africa's leadership defects. Gray and McPherson (2000) contended that three major factors that contribute to Africa's seemingly perpetual challenges were inappropriate policies, bad governance, corrupt, and ineffective leaders. As will be seen, the focus groups' concerns with present day leadership parallel closely such explanations.

Table 5.2

Frequency of Mention of Responses to Question 1 re Challenges with Today's Leaders

Rank	Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	Σ of mentions all groups	% of mentions all groups
1	corruption	20	22	14	12	68	24.2
2	lack of meritocracy		10	18	3	31	11.0
3	broken systems	10	7	12		29	10.3
4	lack of Ubuntu	17			7	24	8.5
5	lack of quality leadership			18		18	6.4
6	sexism				15	15	5.3
7	external pressure					12	4.3
7	tribalism		6	6		12	4.3
8	mismanagement			11		11	3.9
9	dictatorship	4		6		10	3.6
9	lack of vision					10	3.6
9	nepotism	10				10	3.6
10	incompetence		8			8	2.8
11	inability to enforce law			7		7	2.5
12	dysfunctional structures				5	5	1.8
13	Diasporic resistance				4	4	1.4
13	violence				4	4	1.4
14	poverty				3	3	1.1
	TOTAL					249	100.0

Note. FG means focus group.

The 13 themes (total of 191 mentions across the four focus groups), can be reorganized into six categories as shown in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1

Clusters of Themes for Focus Group Question 1

Table 5.3 shows the data on frequency of mentions for the amalgamated themes.

Table 5.3

Aggregated Themes for Research Question 1 Responses

Rank	Aggregate Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	Σ # of mentions all groups	% of all mentions all groups
1	Incompetence		28	54	3	85	30.2
2	Corruption	20	22	14	12	68	24.2
3	Broken Systems	14	7	18	12	51	18.1
4	"Isms" of Exclusion	10	6	6	19	41	14.6
5	Lack of Ubuntu	17			7	24	8.5
6	External Pressure		12			12	4.3
					TOTAL	196	100

Incompetence. Included in this cluster, in addition to the explicit mentions of the word "incompetence, "were several near synonyms (lack of quality leadership, mismanagement), as well " lack of meritocracy" and one specific area of incompetent governance ("inability to enforce the law"). I also included "lack of vision"— a serious deficiency among the attributes of a good leader—in this cluster. As in many cases of this aggregation step, that was a judgement call. But it struck me as reasonable to see a lack of vision as a missing competency (although, admittedly, lack of vision arises from other defects in character and in the system).

Together these issues amounted to 85 mentions, the largest aggregate category of themes describing current leadership issues. In essence, incompetence comes down to the advancement of people into leadership roles who lack basic skills needed to "run things." Several participants contrasted the efficiency and underlying planning that happens in many developed world jurisdictions with the lack of real growth of capacity. Participant 28 (Focus Group 3) described the continuous improvement that he experiences in his American workplace with the way it is back in his African home nation:

> Every morning, the directors will come into my department and they [ask], "What is your obstacle for the day. What have you done yesterday? How come you don't make your goal? If you make it, what did you do?" . . . It's not like that in Africa leadership . . . And if you don't do that, you're always going to be behind. You have to improve every day.

In contrast to this, Participant 1 in Focus Group 1 lamented,

> They [leadership] are not inclusive of the brightest minds in the country. By saying that, what it means is that let's say there are about a group of people and a job that needs to be done. They won't pick the one who's much more capable of doing the work, but rather they'll give it to either a brother or a father or sister, whatever. Nepotism is so rampant over there.

Although, incompetence was often seen by the participants as linked to corruption, they really are different leadership fault. Solomon O (2019) connected incompetence and autocracy using this illustration: African countries are "like aircrafts being flown by pilots who did not go

to flight school . . . a lot is in the hands of people who owe their position not to meritocracy but to cronyism, political loyalty and corruption" (para. 5). Attention to leadership incompetence and the low quality of so much African leadership has been mostly focused on emerging business leaders (e.g., Botha & Claassens, 2010; Inyang & Enuoh, 2009; Namusonge, 2014) or, importantly, on administrative management within sectors such as public health (Curry et al., 2012). Some participants singled out one sector of incompetent leadership in particular: law enforcement. Of course, "inability to enforce the law" may be hard to distinguish from rampant corrupt police and court systems whose "inability" is not a matter of not being able but of not wanting to be. Or midlevel law enforcement officials may fear the consequences of pursuing justice: "What we have in these countries is not only the leaders who do not respect laws, we have law enforcement agents that are complacent. They themselves are afraid to enforce the law" (Participant 6, Focus Group 1).

Two of the themes that I have treated as basically synonyms with incompetence —"lack of quality leadership" and "mismanagement"—are broad criticisms. Lack of quality leadership boils down to the belief that many leaders and their appointees, whatever their intentions, just do not have the ability based on their skills and knowledge to handle the affairs of state. Participant 22 (Focus Group 3), was adamant:

> The people in power don't know what they're doing. There was a budget presented this past week. It includes launching a satellite program, satellite going into space and Zimbabwe cannot even pay its doctors. *It's just total mismanagement* [emphasis added].

Thus, even for a nation whose corrupt and violent leadership was notorious worldwide, the plain fact of incapability to lead was asserted.

"Lack of meritocracy" earned was frequently referred to and is often described in the literature on Africa's leadership problems, as it implies how things should be: appointments especially at high levels of government should be based solely on merit, thus creating a new

elite. The groups did not really explore the downside of this, the fact that many critics use the term meritocracy as something negative (Littler, 2017) and that, especially in the contexts of developing countries, it can mean leaving people out, ones who are already marginalized and want to grow into positions of responsibility. Or as Morley and Lugg (2009) said, based on a multiyear project, *Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania*, "current opportunity structures reflect traditional beliefs about meritocracy and [may] reproduce privilege and exclusion" (p. 37).

The final phrase that I have included in the combination labelled "incompetence" overall is "lack of vision." While this flaw could be interpreted more broadly, to me and to several participants, it implies a gap that can make leaders incapable of doing what is often most needed: taking a broad and long view of difficult challenges and creating an inspiring vision for others to follow (van Knippenberg & Stam, 2014). At the beginning of many formerly colonized African nations, there were leaders who had the quality of vision and while many fell from grace and were unable to take their young countries forward. These "visionaries" were spoken of reverently by participants but mention of these first flawed but heroic visionaries led to unhappy descriptions of what followed and especially of more contemporary leaders who lacked any such vision or the interest in reaching out to their citizens to spread the vision. They spoke in admiration of the Congo's Patrice Lumumba, who was followed by Joseph Mobutu who eventually became a cliché, the once loyal and heroic freedom fighter who turned on his leader and converted the Congo into a vicious kleptocracy (Shiner & Geekie, 1994). One participant stated that Mobutu, who was an associate of Lumumba, was an accomplice to his murder.

Participant 1 (Focus Group 1) expressed the belief "that if we have a leader with a strong will, who is *willing to communicate the vision* [emphasis added]to the people and cause people to line behind him, something can happen.

Corruption.

> There is no genetic code that predisposes Africans to corruption, neither does the C shaped sickle cell in the African's blood stream stand for corruption. The prevalence of corruption in Africa today is a process of socialization, which commenced with the excessively corrupt colonial government. (Chikaforafrica, 2012, para. 32)

Corruption emerged as the most mentioned (68 mentions), which is 35.6% of the identified challenges to political leadership in Africa. This is not a surprise, not only because of widespread denunciation around the world of corrupt leadership in modern Africa (Apata, 2019) but because my written and oral description of the research to focus group participants emphasized this challenge. This said, the volume and demeanor of the participants' statements on corruption evidence that they needed no prompting to identify corruption as the continent's most enduring leadership flaw. For several of this study's participants, Ghana's founding father, Nkrumah was still seen exemplary—but as much for his fall from grace as his once heroic status. Participant 23 (Focus Group 3) spoke of him as a "visionary" who was "about Africa, not just Ghana." And yet by the time he was overthrown, critics spoke of how "The existence of corruption mocked Nkrumah's advocacy of socialism undermined integrity and substituted personal gain for an ideological commitment as the basis for loyalty to the political system" (Werlin, 1973, p. 82). The tragic fall into corruption by former hero figures among African leaders was brought up repeatedly. The dismal record of corrupt African leaders that was so much on the minds of many participants is borne out by Transparency International (2019) that found six of the 10 most corrupt countries in the world come from Sub-Saharan Africa.

Yet, the participants were not without hope that uncorrupted leaders can rise and stay true to their ideals. I will come back to several of their points and stories below in regard to the second research question about principles and practices for better African leadership. I would also note one theme was not spoken of often enough to show up in the quantitative presentation of themes in Chapter IV yet was on the minds of some participants: that bad as African leadership corruption is, there is a hypocrisy from the West in speaking as if only our home continent is afflicted. Participant 5 was adamant:

> Our problem is not peculiar to us. China, Japan, countries in Asia, South America, they have similar problem. We talk about corruption. Corruption is not just Nigerian thing. Corruption is a worldwide thing. We're talking about, like the bishop [another Focus Group 1 participant] said, disregard for law enforcement. Nicaragua, same thing! These things are not peculiar to Africa.

Participants noted several times the relationship of today's corruption to the legacy of colonialism. And this like so much else of the participants' judgement of Africa's modern leadership predicament comes back to losing what once we had, to the disappearance of Ubuntu from how nations are run.

"Isms" of Exclusion. Participant 22 (Focus Group 3) lamented,

> I think in Liberia, we don't have a diverse system where you have people from different backgrounds with different ideas incorporated within the government. And when you do that, you just limit the government from being very open in order to operate. Because of that, *there are a lot of people sitting on the sideline* [emphasis added].

In the course of focus group meetings, three phenomena, ending in "isms," described different ways of excluding people from positions and obtaining public services due to who they were. Either they the wrong gender (sexism) or they did not have the right kinship (nepotism and tribalism). Additionally, and specifically, there were also numerous mentions of the fact that Africans like the ones convened for this research, were left out because they had left Africa. This was referred to as "Diasporic resistance." Excluding anyone because of gender, tribal identity,

lack of family connections, or because, for whatever reason, they are living outside the home country, means losing all the skills and knowledge needed to face Africa's problems today. It squanders human resources.

Sexism was primarily discussed by Focus Group 4 as a defect of contemporary leadership. Early in the discussion Participant 32 brought up the challenge of women not being in power and linked that to discrimination against girls being educated.

> In my country, there are some places where girls are not allowed to be educated. I mean, that's not a priority. They will educate the boys and leave the girls to be domestic helpers and stuff like that. So, if a woman is not empowered, is not given the right cards to be out there—the one who is well educated has the power. And the one who is not educated is going to serve the one in power.

"Nepotism" is about who gets or doesn't get to play a significant role in governance, based on connection to the leader. It is defined as, "favoritism (as in appointment to a job) based on kinship" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-b). Metz (2009) has provided an overview of the spread and impact of nepotism and other kinds of preferential hiring that dampens enthusiasm of those on the outside and builds a public service of dubious quality. To repeat words from Participant 22, "They won't pick the one who's much more capable of doing the work, but rather they'll give it to either a brother or a father or sister, whatever. Nepotism is so rampant over there."

The phenomenon of nepotism is certainly not an issue found only or primarily in Africa but a characteristic of politicians everywhere. Several participants made the point that non-Africans and especially the West should not be pointing fingers: one noted that the Trump administration in the United States had sons, and daughters and sons-in-law appointed to high and demanding positions well beyond their ability (see also Kuhner, 2017). But that does not make the widespread practice any more acceptable especially on a continent where so many unmet demands for public services!

Nepotism in Africa inevitably is mixed with tribalism because tribes are kin systems, which means that blood relations are closer than with other groups in the country. Hiring a distant cousin who is a fellow member of a tribe is on a continuum that eventually comes back to hiring immediate family. Basing choices of who get jobs and especially the top jobs in public sector inevitably compromises merit hiring/appointment—and this leads back to the rampant incompetence already discussed. Tribalism can be seen as nepotism on an enlarged scale. Like nepotism it is about favoring on the basis of kinship but with a much wider catchment. Most Sub-Saharan African nation states have political boundaries drawn up that purposefully ignored and denied the precolonial distribution of villages of kinspeople. This means that the erosion of old affinities is of concern which plays into the hand of leaders who distribute jobs and favors based on tribal affiliation. It is not wrong to feel loyal to one's own people yet bad when that crosses the line into excluding or disfavoring those from a different tribe. For the most part, across all discussion groups, when participants spoke of tribalism it was as a concern not an asset:

> I think the issue of tribalism, it is still there. . . . I was shocked that during the last elections when tribalism and violence broke out. I thought we were beyond that. . . . I think the issue of tribalism, is still there . . . you hear, "why are the Kikuyus the only people who have been in powerful for so long?" . . . there is still that kind of divide. I don't know how deep it still is. (Participant 32, Group 4)

It is to be noted that often when tribalism is mentioned it is in the same breath as speaking of violence. The linking of tribal affiliation to intertribal massacres is very well known when one thinks of postcolonial political history in many parts of Africa. Some would say that anyone who thinks sentimentally about going back to the old ways—and this includes restoring Ubuntu—needs to remember the slaughter of Igbo in Northern Nigeria in 1966, the genocide in Rwanda, and the ethnic conflict in Darfur.

As noted above, the problem of being excluded as a group was also raised by the participants in reference to their own experience as members of the Diaspora. While their remittances of money back to family and home villages were always welcome, a deeper contribution of involvement back home led in some cases to rejection. For example, Participant 27 commented,

> In Ghana, the system they have either is unintentional or is intentional, they have built a wall against any Diasporic coming to take any leadership. . . . I've tried it 15 years ago, that you want to seek political appointment, there's a huge wall. I think it's thicker than what it used to be. You can't penetrate . . . they call you a foreigner. . . . I don't want to be a passenger in the van in the backseat, I want to be in the front seat holding the steering wheel.

Another participant explained in some detail his efforts to come back to his home country and work for free on energy infrastructure. To his shock and disappointment, it became apparent that this offer of free service was of no interest; financial contributions are acceptable because they can be rerouted to bribes. In this way, a man of talent and integrity from the Diaspora was rejected and discouraged.

Broken Systems. The culmination of widespread corruption and lack of skill and knowledge throughout the government (and starting at the top leadership) leads to feelings that it's not just groups and individuals who are failing but whole systems. This was reflected in the often mentioned issue of *broken systems.*

This theme ranked third overall across the four focus groups with a total of 29 mentions or 11.6% of the issues raised (Table 5.1). In fact, the feeling that the whole system—not just parts but all—has been badly damaged, is implicit in much more of what the participants said, than just specific assertions of "broken systems." This is how Participant 28 (Focus Group 3) put it, first referencing a 2016 memorandum of understanding (Hultin, 2020) that had aimed to restore democracy after many years of one-party dictatorship:

All the agreements they have with their [public sector] programs, they were supposed to help the leader to implement those programs. But down the road, what happened, it broke down. They all started fighting and now *the system has collapsed* (emphasis added), unfortunately.

The discouragement that could be felt often in the focus group meeting rooms, was reminiscent of many writings that go another step and refer to *failed states*. It is common to read statement like this: "State failure is an apparent pandemic in the region of Sub-Saharan Africa (Howard, 2010, p. 963). The same author draws attention to the private nonprofit Fund for Peace's "failed state index" (now more diplomatically called the "Fragile State Index"—see Evers, 2014). In 2009, 52 of 54 African nations were rated "at the critical levels of warning or alert" (Howard, 2010, p. 963).

This said, when a group of Diasporic Africans speak of "broken systems" it is clearly more than just a problem here and a weakness there. And they do see violence as going hand in hand with such a widespread breakdown in governance. The topic of violence was mentioned four times in Focus Group 4 and was linked to the overall failure of African governance systems. Similarly, poverty was seen as the outcome of all the dysfunction of leadership especially in nations that are well endowed with natural resources but cannot turn that wealth into a good standard of living for all: "Africans have a lot of resources, however, [the] majority lives like we live on a desert. We don't benefit from the resources because of leadership."

Perhaps the most depressing danger of all, seen repeatedly in Sub-Saharan Africa, is how good people elevated to national leadership lose their integrity because of being caught up in the systemic brokenness. Said Participant 5 (Focus Group 1),

I believe Muhammadu Buhari [the current Nigerian president] had a good heart when he wanted to run for office and get elected. But because we have built kleptocratic structures, it becomes really difficult for him to run a democracy under that system.

Brokenness is highly contagious!

External Pressure. It is difficult for Africans and others to think about the forces that weaken or corrupt their leaders without referring to interference from abroad. The legacy of colonialism is heavy and, likewise, the continuing influence of foreign interests on African nations is a ubiquitous concern. Although references to the old colonial powers came up, perhaps the most explicit concern in this category was in relation to the rapidly advancing involvement of China. For example, Participant 23 (while sitting in on Focus Group 4) worried,

> If we don't be careful, we're going to be tenants in our own country. The Chinese are buying. . . . Those lands that used to be family land, the landlord is going to show up one day and say, "Excuse me, I paid for that. You got to leave."

Overall, the cumulative result was that, while definitely on participants' minds, there was comparatively less focus on this influence than reflection on primarily internal factors. This parallels what Ey Moussa (2020) described as a shift from attributing African problems mainly by reference to external factors, to more focus on internal explanations.[7] Only one focus group contributed the "mentions" of this concern and, accordingly, "external pressure finished well down the list of disaggregated themes, and last among the clusters. This is not to say that the Diaspora discounts the historic and contemporary efforts of more wealthy nations to hamper political and socioeconomic development. Against the backdrop of colonialism here was quite lively discussion of how seemingly generous Western organizations may still negatively affect Africa through foreign aid and pushing Western models of democracy. Participant 2 (Focus Group 1) linked the loss of Ubuntu to such interference, saying, "We have foreign systems that are in operation. And until those foreign systems are discredited and pushed out, whatever we do would continue to [prevent] Ubuntu to come back into play. Participant 23 (Focus Group 3), cautioned, "There is the external influence in our life, in our thinking . . . the overlay of external

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[7] An excellent perspective on the external versus internal factors negatively impacting African leadership comes from companion articles by Joy Asongazoh Alemazung (2010, 2011).

influence on our leaders is serious. It's significant. We don't think about it." All this corresponds to the widespread perspective and research result that "the foundation for failure was laid in Africa during colonialism and is sustained through colonial legacies with the accomplice of African elite leaders" (Alemazung, 2010, p. 62).

Research Question 2: Regarding What are the Most Desirable Characteristics in Political Leadership in Africa?

The second research question focused on good practices in political leadership in their countries of origin? The number of individual themes mentioned was high but they lent themselves to a relatively straightforward amalgamation into a more easily discussable array of seven clusters. Table 5.4 displays the unaggregated list and frequencies of mentioned themes for Research Question 2.

Table 5.4

Frequency of Mention of Responses to Research Question 2 re Most Desired Characteristics of Leadership

Rank	Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	Σ mentions all groups	% mentions all groups
1	integrity & honesty	16		17		33	12.0
2	Ubuntu leadership	27				27	9.8
3	transformational leadership	8		18		26	9.5
4	(respect for)rule of law	17			7	24	8.7
4	zero tolerance for corruption	13	11			24	8.7
5	accountability		12		11	23	8.4
5	visionary leadership	4	11		8	23	8.4
6	patriotism & selflessness				13	13	4.7
7	women's empowerment				10	10	3.6
7	absence of foreign pressure		10			10	3.6
7	leadership by example		10			10	3.6
8	transparency				9	9	3.3
8	inclusiveness			9		9	3.3
8	effective systems					9	3.3
9	commitment			7		7	2.5
9	strong democratic structures				7	7	2.5

Rank	Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	Σ mentions all groups	% mentions all groups
10	willing to sacrifice			6		6	2.2
11	fear of God	5				5	1.8
					TOTAL	280	100.0

In all, there were 280 mentions of various themes in these discussions. Integrity and honesty led with 33 (12.0%) of these, followed by the call for Ubuntu leadership at 27 (9.8%) and for transformational leadership with 26 (9.5%) mentions. Figure 5.2 displays the resulting clusters.

Figure 5.2

Clusters of Themes for Focus Group Question 2

Table 5.5 presents the frequencies of mention and in Figure 5.4 are the clustered themes as organized by myself and my coding associate.

Table 5.5

Aggregated Themes for Research Question 2 Responses

Rank	Aggregate Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	Σ # of mentions all groups	% of all mentions all groups
1	Honesty	29	23	17	20	89	32.4
2	Visionary/ Transformational	20	11	18		49	17.8
3	Personal Qualities	5	10	13	13	41	14.9
4	Democratic Values	17		9	14	40	14.5
5	Ubuntu Leadership	27				27	9.8
6	Women's Empowerment				10	10	3.6
6	Absence of Foreign Pressure		10			10	3.6
7	Effective Systems		9			9	3.3
					TOTAL	275	100.0

Honesty. What drew the several specifically mentioned themes together under the rubric, honesty, was really, the need for the opposite of the rampant corruption, flagged by the participants as among the top concerns with African leadership today: "integrity" and "honesty": were brought often as if they were one phrase. Overall, they were mentioned 89 times across the groups, the highest frequency of what participants felt was needed.

The second and third most mentioned responses on needed changes in leadership are closely tied to a positive belief in the importance of reviving a value system that works for those it serves rather than the formal leaders' self-interest. Leading with integrity and doing so with a vision came up over and over as the participants deliberated on needed changes.

There are various writings by both Africans and international scholars which endorsed many of the above-mentioned desirable qualities for African leadership. Khoza (2011) advocated

for the practice of what he called a style of "attuned leadership" (his book's title). In referring to being attuned Khoza saw this as multidirectional. Leaders need to be attuned to the "needs and aspirations" of followers, to be "ethically attuned" and, consistent with the focus groups' beliefs in Ubuntu, attuned to history. Significantly, Khoza also stressed a fourth pillar: being "self-attuned." This connects to a theme in some of the focus groups—the belief that many ineffective and corrupt leaders are the way they are because they have lost this sense of being attuned to their own cultural self. Tied closely to this "attunement" among the most mentioned desirable characteristics was *integrity*. Many of the focus group participants saw integrity not just as an opposite to selfish and corrupt behavior but almost as the word origin implies, "quality or state of being complete or undivided" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.-a). Participants 26 and 25 (Focus Group 3) discussed this point straightforwardly in this exchange:

> (Participant 26): Integrity refers to a leader who is trustworthy. A leader who you can count on. A leader who stands for their country and for their people. When we talk about integrity in leadership, it's one of the key [qualities] when we go to management training, they tell us the key skill required is integrity. . . .

> (Participant 25): But that's relative, though. What you call integrity may be a quest of somebody been aligned. In other words, if you have pressure and you are the leader, and you have people pulling you to left, people pulling you to the right . . . we all know what integrity means. A person of good character, good moral uprightness and [one] can do things right.

Another closely related dimension that focus groups discussed as a needed quality was being visionary. In the first focus group, Participant 1 called for "a leader with a strong will, who is willing to communicate the vision to the people and cause people to line behind him, something can happen." In parallel, Solomon O (2019) in his blog, "Africa in Desperate Need of Visionary Leaders," endorsed these sentiments. To realize the transformation agenda, there is a need to instill in African leaders, a sense of character, vision, and direction (Ezega.com).

Visionary/Transformational. To call—as the Focus Groups in aggregate did 49 times—for either visionary or transformational leadership is to look to the future for leaders who not only forsake corruption but who have a vision for their countries and an idea of how fundamental changes can get their country to that future. Often, in the discussions, participants would refer back to the early postcolonial period and the first leaders who came from a background of struggling for independence. These men (and all were men) articulated a vision, preaching about what their country and all of Africa could become once the imperial oppressors left. Thus, across the focus groups names were spoken reverently. Participant 26 (Focus Group 3), for example, asked, "You take Jomo Kenyatta. You take [Julius] Nyerere, I mean they were all well. So, should we ask the question? What talents did they have and how did we lose that?" Robert Mugabe, who in later years was condemned as a tyrant and swindler, was recognized in focus group discussions for having had the vision of restoring lands to Africans. While the vision was there, the transformation was not what many had hoped for as the expropriated White settler farms did not end up serving the land reform in the original vision but became part of the booty that ended up in the hands of an elite few or dysfunctional "cooperatives" (Moyo, 2013).

Participant 1 (Focus Group 1) articulated, "we need leaders who are *transformational leaders*, who believe in the ability of others also to contribute to the well-being of the country." The implication is that we need positive dreams of what African nations can accomplish but having those is collective not individual (again, echoing the ideals of Ubuntu. In Focus Group 4, similar words came from Participant 34:

> I think I want to see a leader who is a transformational leader, who thinks about the human right, the old, doesn't mind going to the village, helping with the farmers and educating the women, the children, who thinks about everybody as a whole.

How vitally needed effective transformational leadership is both for the present and the future of the continent is emphasized in the disaggregated data (Table 5.4) where it was the third

most mentioned desirable characteristics of effective political leadership in Africa. The focus groups' emphasis on the necessity of developing transformational leaders is parallel to Linthicum's (1991) succinct statement that without leadership development, everything you have done will pass away. But with it, the future is constantly being created anew for the people of your community.

Personal Qualities. This, the third most mentioned cluster of themes, is something of catch-all category in which I have placed a variety of personal attributes, mentioned by the participants as what a leader ought to have.[8] In aggregate, the attributes noted here are about having leaders that have a strong array of personal qualities that have been widely associated in theory and practice of good leadership. Included (in order of combined frequency of mention) are patriotism and selflessness, leadership by example, commitment, willingness to sacrifice, fear of God.

The participants spoke of *patriotism and selflessness* together: "You have to love your country. This is what we lack that's important. That's what we are lacking in Africa, patriotism" (Participant 28, Group 3). It was clear to me that no one was advocating the kind of narrow-minded anti-foreigner ideals that have taken hold in so many places worldwide. Patriotism for Africans requires balancing real love for one's country (and a sense of duty to it) with the terrible scourge of violent factionalism that broke out in many young postcolonial African nations.

Leadership by example came up a number of times, with participants emphasizing how important it is that political leaders' actions set high standards for all the citizens of their nations.

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[8] It is recognized that the category spoken of as the leading one, under the heading of "Honesty" is of course a "personal quality" too. Breaking it away into its own heading is for convenience of discussion as well as to highlight the special emphasis that participants gave to what is essentially the opposite of the leading flaw—corruption.

"We need leaders . . . who lead by example. Who do what they say [they are going to]. Because leadership is influence" (Participant 1, Focus Group 1). And this influence must include commitment, willingness to stay and struggle rather than give up. This leads to the notion that leaders need to be willing to sacrifice what may be selfishly best for them and people close to them, and "pay the price." As so often in discussions of modern Africa, when sacrifice comes up the name of Nelson Mandela (and Desmond Tutu) soon followed. This dialogue, in which I joined) illustrates:

> The Researcher: Mandela and Desmond Tutu . . . they promoted a principle and the principle brought the country together.

> Participant 10 (Focus Group 1): Because they were able to sacrifice.

> Participants 2 (Focus Group 1): Because *one* person sacrifice himself. . . . They were was a stability compared to since Zuma [South African president after Mandela died] took over, compared to what is going on right now in South Africa. There was some kind of stability *because of the sacrifice* [emphasis added]. I don't know if there is going to be any total liberation in any African country without any sacrifice. We don't want to sacrifice anything.

As will be noted below, participants later returned to the necessity of self-sacrifice as a quality that members of Diaspora must also have in order for them to play a role in changing the nature of leadership back home.

Finally, faith in and *fear of God* (in the Christian sense of fear as awe; see Johnson, 2016) arose as a quality that at least some of the participants brought up. Participant 7 (Focus Group 1) said this very directly: "Africa, we need leaders who have fear of God in them." Participant 1 from the same group, added by way of example, "the current president of Congo, the new one, he dedicated the country to God. He did. He did. He called for prayer, repented, and then dedicated the country to God." And Participant 6, summing up what leaders to be like to accomplish for their people, "Prayer for God to raise godly leaders is very, very important. Things change by prayer. If we believe in God, we need Him. We need Him."

Democratic Values. Along with the personal attributes related to honesty, discussed above, among the most frequently-touted hopes that Africans speak of is to achieve stable democratic regimes. The literature abounds with diagnoses of Africa's problems and prescriptions for democratization (Chabal, 1998; Sklar, 1983). Yet, looking at governance and how democratic it is has been largely through Western eyes and under the scrutiny of developed nations who arrogantly measure democracy in Africa by idealized histories in their own countries. Echoing more critical analyses—as for example Crowder's (1987) essay whose title said so much—"Whose Dream Was It Anyway?"—this hypocrisy and the need to find a different and truly African path came out frequently in the focus group meetings conducted here. Focus group participants mentioned topics related to democratic values in response to Research Question 2 (most desired changes in leadership), 40 times in aggregate. This often came up by looking back to what Africans once had in contrast to what is called "democracy" in the West. An example was,

> When it comes to the type of democracy we have, it looks like a monster. A monster is something that doesn't look like something that you usually see. We have the Western democracy and then we have our African way of leadership and they joined those two together to create something that does not work today for Africa. (Participant 9 Focus Group 1)

This leads to the recognition that the positive attitude of any given leader to the ideals of democracy are not enough nor are they lasting: "You cannot have democracy without building the infrastructure that comes with it. And we have replaced that infrastructure with kleptocratic infrastructure" (Participant 5, Focus Group 1).

Another participant, however, cautioned regarding what may be sacrificed by focusing reform on just having the infrastructure of democracy:

> We need to redefine democracy. Lots of people here have said Kagame [long-ruling president of Rwanda]. . . . Kagame is not even practicing democracy [people agree]. But he is an effective leader [people agree]. That's very important. Because for us Africans

we just want perhaps the idea of democracy, but what about development? Should you lose development because you want to cast votes? (Participant 4, Focus Group 1)

I must add, however, that more recently, the high cost of being willing to forego democratic freedoms, especially a free and critical press, have been underlined by President Kagame's increasingly repressive actions (York & Rever, 2014). These have included surreptitious attacks on his Rwandan opponents even when they are already in exile. Kagame's name came up many times in various focus groups in this research, illustrating the nuances and difficulties of progress towards democracy for nations recovering from conflict and abject poverty. In Focus Group 4, Participant 33 added this crucial requirement for true democracy, one that is so sadly missing from the actions of too many long term state leaders. She said we need "a leader who is humble enough to peacefully transfer power to somebody else. You cannot be a leader perpetually. At some point, you need to step down and let somebody else take over."

Women's Empowerment. This discussion topic arose only in the responses to the question of desirable characteristics for better leadership in the all-female Focus Group 4. Participants not only reached into history but also celebrated the unique achievement of contemporary African women leaders in arguing that women's empowerment is a key to overall better leadership. There was admiration for the modern presidency of Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in the Focus Group 4 discussion, noting how she had not only led a period of recovery after the bitter civil war but also won a Nobel Peace prize for her accomplishments. Others reached into history for exemplars of what women leaders can achieve:

> This woman in history, they call her the dangerous warrior, Yaa Asantewaa. She really stood up for women. She was the Queen Mother of Ejisu in Asante. The British colonial government wanted to take the golden stool. There were men there and, I think, she was the gatekeeper for that golden stool and she stood up and spoke up and her voice was heard. She said, "I won't sit down for this stool to be taken away. I will gather my fellow women and we will go and fight. We will fight till the battles are won on the battlefield." And that's exactly what she did. (Participant 34, Focus Group 4)

However, against the uplifting historical background and exemplars of contemporary women's leadership prospects, Participant 33 (Group 4), posed a concern for what can happen when women try to lead:

> Security is another issue. There's a lot of violence and crime against women. . . . I mean, and people in politics, sometimes send gangs to rape the women who are trying to lead. So, I mean, it's a defeating situation.

Absence of Foreign Pressures. This theme mentioned 10 times (3.6% of all responses to Research Question 2 follows logically from results of Research Question 1 where "external pressure" was cited as a problem to be dealt with. But as noted there, this theme was not among the most mentioned and, likewise, all mentions of this desired change were comparatively few. When decreasing external or foreign pressure did come up, it tended to be more about resisting Western models of democracy and leadership more than opposition to the powerful influence of foreign governments and business. Several participants echoed Nkomo (2006) who debunked Western leadership theories as unsuitable for practical implementation in collectivist African political environment. Participant 34 contrasted such outside models by turning to the story of Yaa Asantewaa relying on Asante cultural history as an inspiration for her heroic leadership in the historic struggle against colonial forces. In general, while this theme was not explicit, indirect references abounded to the problems African faces on an ongoing basis from postcolonial interference.

Effective Systems. Under this category, the participants shared some thoughts on how having more effective systems—institutional and infrastructural—is a result both of better leadership and governance but can then enable good people to lead more productively. Note was made above how the opposite happens: people who appeared to have integrity become leaders only to be caught up in a mess of inefficiency and corruption; too soon they are no longer serving the people but are perpetrators of further ineffective governance. In frustration, they turn to

officials of the old regime who can help with the technical problems but do so at the price of cronyism and corruption.

Research Question 3: How Can the Diaspora Support Improved Leadership in Africa?

Responses to the third research question varied more among the groups more in responses to Research Question 1 and 2. No single theme emerged that led others as decisively as was seen for the first two questions. Table 5.7 shows the raw frequencies of mention for the responses, arranged in descending order.

Table 5.6

Frequency of Mention of Responses to Question 3 re How Diaspora Can Help Reform Leadership in Africa

Rank	Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	Σ of mentions all groups	% of mentions all groups
1	foreign aid (from Diaspora)	10	10			20	13.1
2	civil education		10			17	11.1
3	running for office		11	6		17	11.1
4	voting		15			15	9.8
5	Diaspora getting involved					14	9.2
6	fighting corruption					13	8.5
7	Empower women in Africa				10	10	6.5
7	relocating to help					8	5.2
8	provide social services		8			8	5.2
9	mobilize women in Diaspora					8	5.2
9	investment			7		7	4.6
9	believe in more leadership					6	3.9
10	mobilize U.S. Diaspora					6	3.9
11	support good governance				4	4	2.6
					TOTAL	249	100.0

In comparison to responses to the first two research questions, there was a more even frequency of mentions. This diversity of themes signified the highly varying perspectives of Diasporic Africans on how they could help their home countries. This can be attributed to the participants' diversified abilities, skills, talents, and interests within the Diasporic African

community. Though there were divergent views on how participants wanted to help their home countries, one characteristic was central and common: a felt duty as people now enjoying higher standards of living than most back home to assist the home countries in one way or another. Many were openly grateful for the opportunities and blessings the United States had offered them. Some participants expressed nervousness verging on fear of the consequences of too visible an attempt to go back and help out. But most participants believed that it was their duty to in some way assist in the socioeconomic and political development of their home countries.

Figure 5.3 presents the resulting clusters and the aggregated themes are in Table 5.7

Figure 5.3

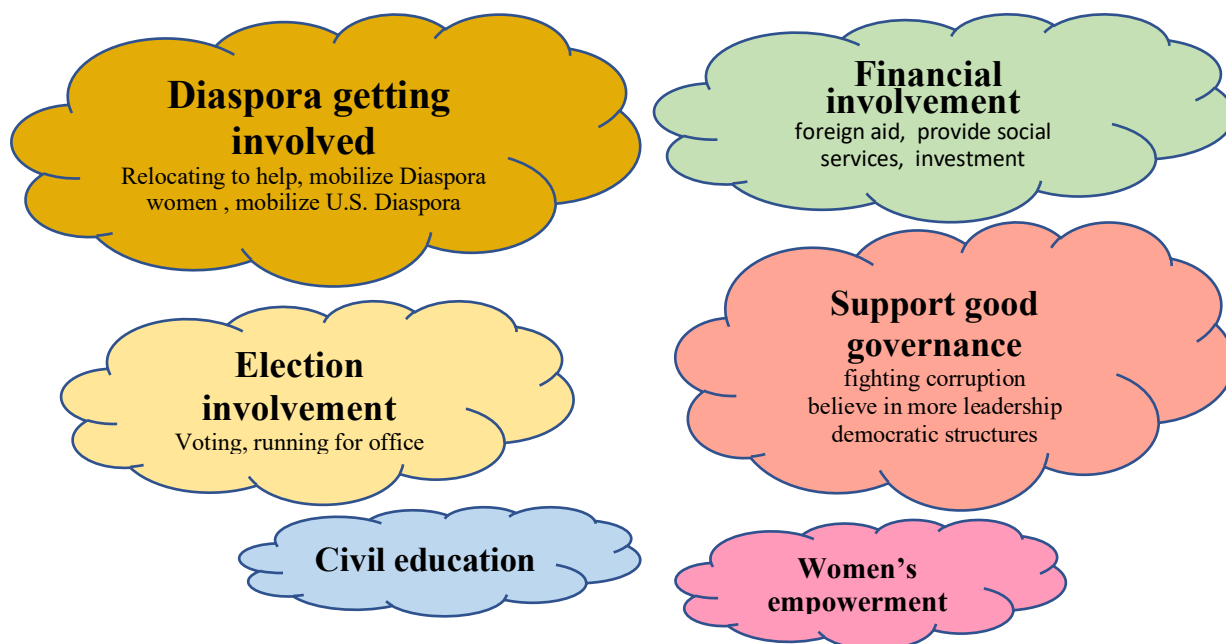*Clusters of Themes for Focus Group Question 3*

Table 5.7

Aggregated Themes for Research Question 3 Responses

Rank	Aggregate Theme	FG1	FG2	FG3	FG4	Σ # of mentions all groups	% of all mentions all groups
1	Diaspora involvement	22		6	8	36	23.5
2	Financial involvement	10	18	7		35	22.9
3	Involvement in elections		26	6		32	20.9
4	Support good governance		19		4	23	15.0
5	Civil education	7	10			17	11.1
6	Empower women				10	10	6.5
					TOTAL	153	100.0

Diaspora Involvement. The most frequent and the most general response across the groups was reiteration of the belief that Africans who are living outside their countries ought to be contributing somehow to making leadership back home better. I need to explain that, of course, this theme actually just restates Research Question 3—all other more specific items that participants brought up in response fall logically under this heading. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to highlight this generalized feeling that many, especially in Focus Group 3, wanted to convey even as they then proceeded to be more specific about ways the Diaspora could help.

More specifically, included in this cluster were statements that revealed strong desire to return to the homeland at least more frequently and for longer periods so as to take on a more proactive role in economic and political life. Comments by Participant 5 (Focus Group 1) called for Diaspora involvement while being mindful of what it does not entail:

> Obviously, we're not saying how many guns are you going to buy so we can go overthrow the president of Liberia. No. In other words, how can we begin to get involved in our political systems back home even when we're in the Diaspora? *The only way we can change is by participating.* [emphasis added]

In addition to the financial contributions the African Diaspora can contribute new ideas, new intellectual capacities, new skills, and new business opportunities that all influence Africa's socioeconomic and political development. Several times participants pointed out that many prominent African leaders spent significant time in the Diaspora picking up such attributes and then bringing them home. In Focus Group 4 specifics were given of how women from the Diaspora have been helping both back home and in their adopted countries with others from Africa. Participant 32 (Focus Group 4) described the wider impact of efforts made by women from the Diaspora back in Africa:

> We not only help them in terms of their needs and so on but helping the kids do well in school like tutoring or taking them out and showing them places. And during the summer, we try to work with the parents sometimes so that when there are, say, high school camps and things like that, they know about it because sometimes, the parents have no idea.

Similarly, leaders in the Diaspora reach out to recent African immigrants, well aware of the shock and unfamiliarity of arrival in America.

> And during the summer, we try to work with the parents sometimes so that when there are, say, high school camps and things like that, they know about it because sometimes, the parents have no idea. . . . I'm trying to think more on how I can be more involved in helping to improve the health of the African immigrants here. So that is an area I can say I'm working that process. I probably can make a difference in the lives of a few. (Participant 34, Focus Group 4)

Securing greater involvement of all kinds of the Diaspora is not solely a matter of what members of the Diaspora want or do; there is a need for home countries to recognize the potential great role of the Diaspora. Resende-Santos (2015) cited several structural obstacles to this asserting that "the Diaspora's own fragilities . . . and lack of internal organization" (p. 104). As well, members of focus groups mentioned several emerging nonprofit groups in the Rhode Island area who were moving ahead to coordinate Diasporic involvement.

Financial Investment. The role that Diasporic Africans play in providing finances to people back home is long established and widely recognized. This contribution is most often

thought of in terms of remittances—direct transfers of currency back to the home community, usually family members. Bodomo (2013) estimated that in 2012 the African Diaspora of more than 140 million Africans, remitted US$60 billion, which was more than the development aid funds from international donors. Perhaps such payments are taken for granted but issues around direct remittances did not arise in any of the focus group discussions. However, other ways for Diaspora to assist financially did come up. Focus group participants spoke a number of times about what funds from people like them who are the Diaspora, are doing to support community-level rather than just family members. Participant 20 (Focus Group 2) explained,

> We are awarding scholarships, we are building schools, we are doing now medical things. So much money has been spent through collective effort to help the people. Because [it's]not even the government, it's the people. Spending that goes directly to the people.

Undoubtedly, financial contributions make the role of Diasporic Africans in reforming African political leadership influential but participants indicated that this goes well beyond economics. Diaspora individuals and organized groups have made significant contributions by bringing what they have learned overseas back to bear on Africa's challenges: "We are talking about how we have all individually tried in so many different ways to say transfer knowledge back to Africa. But we transfer the knowledge, it gets there, either they steal it or they misapply it or they misuse it" (Participant 25, Focus Group 3). Such contributions have been recognized in the literature: Nwokocha and Ajaegbu (2014) concluded that "remittances had accounted for notable social and physical development of the community; and that apart from financial remittances, the people had benefitted from cultural diffusion and adaptation" (p. 104).

Involvement in Elections. Participating in the basic democratic process of elections is seen as the "hallmark" (Lindberg, 2006, p. 139) of growing democracies worldwide—without fair elections there can be no true democracy but the participants indicated that that is not by any means enough:

The leaders, when they come in, they're so corrupt. They'll come in and they'll ask vote for me and you vote for them, they begin to use the money for their own selfish. So, building hospitals and building schools, they'll never do that. That's why I'm not interested. (Participant 7, Focus Group 1)

Despite this skepticism, some participants still felt that minimally they needed to cast their votes in elections back home and to make sure, before that, that a reasonable opportunity was provided for the Diaspora to vote. A further step of engagement with elections was proposed by Participant 21 (Focus Group 3):

I'm saying that we need to have our own candidates. It might work, it might not work, but if we have our own candidate that we can take our own money and support the candidate to go make some changes.

Support Good Governance. The call for Diasporic Africans to "support good governance" arose in the focus groups in a variety of ways. The dilemma participants recognized is that when they live far from their home countries they cannot directly exercise a powerful influence on change back home. For Participant 5 (Focus Group 1), this did not mean staying silent. But he saw a promising opportunity to organize and act politically from his base in the United States.

What I challenge our community to do . . . is to mobilize here, in the United States, and use the mechanism of the United States government to pressure our Nigerian government to do the right thing. Because . . . as long as we organize together here in America . . . we cannot go home and overthrow our government. We can put pressure on our senators and people in the House of Representatives to put pressure on our Nigerian government and help our people to have a better life.

Civil Education. Several of the most mentioned ideas in response to Research Question 3 were about formal and informal reeducation, how the Diaspora can influence a change in the way Africans back home know about critical issues such as environment, education, and, especially as noted in Focus Group 4, the role of women. Historically, the Diaspora has been both a center of pan-African political thought and a place where the common challenges and visions of Africans from different nations can exchange ideas—in fact, that is really what the

focus groups were of the brief periods they got together! Edozie (2012) has mapped this

connection and suggested that the African Union should recognize the Diaspora as a creative

"sixth zone" in its efforts of "socioculturally sculpting and re-inventing the universality of the

African identity and Pan African Nation" (p. 268). Participant 4 in Focus Group 1 felt strongly

that supporting education is a key role for the Diaspora:

> I think education is key. It's the mindset. The thing is, even change just needs to be small and incremental. . . . So, attitudes will change if people are educated enough to change these attitudes. And that's what I'm interested in, teaching people. It might just be tiny, but then when people invite it, there's a huge ripple.

Participant 6 followed up by specifying how civil education can bring out individual

qualities needed in future citizen action and leadership:

> You see, we need, first of all . . . to teach our people self-worth. Who are they? Because one of the things that is happening is that if we allow others to define us, and we don't know who we are, then we will accept their definition of us [people agree]. There needs to be a conscious effort to *educate our people about who they are*.

Empower Women. In Focus Group 4, much was said about gender discrimination and,

following from that, the need to empower women in Africa as a route to restoring good

leadership. That this only came up in the one group that had mainly female participants,[9]

underlined their point about the lack of attention the issue receives! The one man (other than I as

researcher-facilitator) who sat in on Focus Group 4's conversation, trenchantly observed,

> I've sat through and participated with men, one point that comes across is what the women see and focus on has not been part of a major conversation. . . . We [men] don't think about it. The lens at which women look at things, I've not seen that as part of our conversation, and I think that's really, really important. (Participant 23).

When Participant 34 (Focus Group 4) opined that "Maybe [we should] mobilize the

women in the Diaspora. Do a campaign," another immediately joined in, explaining,

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[9] Focus Group 4 consisted of five women, myself as facilitator and, by the group's agreement, an observer (male) who had taken part in Focus Group 3 and was the person who had provided the space for the session.

> What can I do? I'm already doing something. I am part of a ministry called Women of Purpose. They help immigrant women here, and they also help women in Uganda and girls. They minister to . . . they go to schools and educate and support and encourage and uplift women. And they are planning to do many things. (Participant 33, Focus Group 4).

Another (Participant 32) answered, describing a group known as "African Voices" and provided the example of her own engagement with young women in the Diaspora: "My church has been working with the refugee families. We not only help them in terms of their needs and so on but helping the kids do well in school like tutoring or taking them out and showing them places."

As stories of each participant's small-scale efforts to help African women back home and in Diaspora came out, the group shifted to some discussion of historical women leaders, queens and chiefs who exemplified quality leadership characteristics. Some felt that a concrete step for women's education in Africa and the Diaspora would be to bring together groups that could talk and learn about this legacy. The participants" concerns for lack of awareness of women's lead roles in Africa's past (including their own felt need to know more about this) echoed the comments by Awe (1992):

> The task of piecing together women's history has been difficult. So acute is the dearth of information, particularly documenting evidence that some of the outstanding women in history have been mistaken for men and their achievements attributed to male rulers. (p. vi)

As the group spoke of women and the African past, very seamlessly their conversation returned to the icebreaker discussion of Ubuntu. I will now do the same.

The Role of Ubuntu in Reforming Contemporary Leadership in Africa

As explained at the outset of this chapter, I deferred discussion of the potential role of Ubuntu until this point because the concept was intentionally introduced to the focus groups as an icebreaker question. Ubuntu was mentioned numerous times both as what African leadership has lost sight of (Research Question 1) and how it is to recover (Research Question 2). "Lack of

Ubuntu" drew 23 (8.5%) mentions when the focus groups were asked about present day problems or challenges, fourth among the disaggregated themes (Table 5.2). And achieving "Ubuntu leadership" placed second in responses to the question about most desired changes—27 mentions or 9.8% of all mentions. Such data cannot validly be presented as rigorous evidence of what these participants had on their minds because I raised the topic of Ubuntu as an icebreaker for the meeting.

This said, the substance of what was discussed about the lack of and the need for Ubuntu was very fruitful. Most participants believed strongly that the recovery of Ubuntu philosophy among African leaders was critical to redressing today's shortcomings. This result is consistent with the ever-widening application of the concept of Ubuntu not only as a better basis for political leadership, but for diverse other settings such as decolonizing social research (Seehawer, 2018), to achieve cultural sensitivity on mental health care (Edwards et al., 2004), legal reform and conflict resolution (Mokgoro, 1998) and countering patriarchal work settings (Luvalo, 2019). The list could go on and on but my point is that the commentary of the participants in this research's focus groups, also took an overall positive view of the potency of Ubuntu as a means for vastly improving the current leadership situation in Africa.

There was an alternative view, however, that restoring Ubuntu was not right for contemporary Africa and could actually be regressive when it comes to handling the most serious issues. Two participants in Focus Group 2 (Participants 16 & 17) who have been strongly involved in the politics of their home country had somewhat negative views of Ubuntu. Participant 16 saw Ubuntu as a "nebulous concept," and Participant 17 saw Ubuntu as a contributing factor of the mass corruption in Africa due to nepotism and group affinity that, he felt, comes with the concept of Ubuntu. On the idea that Ubuntu is a two edged sword that can

democratize and empower women or consolidate the status quo, Booysen (2015) summarized

that Ubuntu could be a "positive, inclusive, and relational-enabling cultural construct that has a

favorable, generative impact on how organizations are managed" (p. 135), while cautioning that

it can also "devolve into an exclusive parochial practice" (p. 135).

Ubuntu arose repeatedly in the focus groups' consideration of the three core research

questions. When discussing the first research question on the main current challenges, "lack of

Ubuntu" was mentioned 24 times, about 8.5% of the total mentions. Participant 2 (Focus Group

1) after taking part in comments about incompetence and corruption, observed with regret, "One

of the things that the Western world did very well was it actually undermined Ubuntu. It worked

very hard to undermine [it]."

The second research question on desirable characteristics of contemporary leadership also

segued several times into references by the participants on how traditionally, the qualities

associated with Ubuntu were exactly what ought to be resurrected. Participant 28 (Focus Group

3) related good relations and leadership at the village level to the philosophy:

> Ubuntu, in my own language . . . We call it *Tishito*. That's a Mandinka word . . . it's more
> like a socialism; to socialize for the little that . . . the unfortunate people [have]. . . . In
> practice, in Senegal, there's a town called Touba. I think they're practicing the same
> thing because they don't get nothing from the government. They do everything by
> themselves. They are still building a university right now for Touba and they're doing it
> on a community level. So, they provide water, electricity . . . all paid by the community
> and it's also free. So, it's already in practice in Touba, Senegal.

Several participants explained that although the actual word comes from the Nguni

people of South Africa—one of the ethnic groups comprising the Bantu—very similar

philosophies abound throughout Sub-Saharan Africa,

> In Uganda, we call it "Abuntu," which means the collective way of thinking about our
> community, our society, how we do things, which ranges anywhere from raising our
> children, caring for our neighbors, how do we do politics, how do we participate in the
> cleaning of our community. (Participant 2, Focus Group 1)

> Ubuntu is all over Africa. There's a Congolese proverb that also says something about it. There are different proverbs. It says your friend's problem is your problem. It say a neighbor is a sibling. Like it takes a village to raise a child. (Participant 6, Focus Group 1)

Finally, in relation to Research Question 3, again consideration by the focus groups of ways to help, were connected by several participants to enacting the Ubuntu philosophy. The idea appeared that when Africans from the Diaspora went back to lend a hand in their home countries, they sensed and relied on the enduring and reviving Ubuntu philosophy.

General Implications and Recommendations From This Study for Theory, Research, and Practice of Leadership

I believe this study has significant implications for scholarship about leadership and about how leadership is practiced. This section briefly looks at both kinds of implications.

Contribution and Relation to Scholarship

This study joins a burgeoning literature that has at last begun to consider African leadership as more than just a sad case of what not to do. True, the participants here amply identified corruption and other defects as a focal point of needed change. These thoughts join a massive literature on the flaws of today's African leadership (e.g., Anise, 1974; Easterly & Levine, 1995). But a great deal more was said in the focus groups about how leadership got that way and, importantly, what to do about this.

The problems named in response to Research Question 1—lack of basic competencies, the various "isms of exclusion" (sexism, nepotism, tribalism), and the overall brokenness of institutional systems have been researched and theorized far from Africa. The literature on lack of leadership, failed leadership (leading to failed states), and corruption and toxicity running systemically through organizations and governments are not exclusively or primarily from Africa. The vigorous discussion for my research focus groups that flagged severe issues like

incompetence and corruption fits into a much broader pattern and, I hope, contributes in a small way to bringing out the commonalities between a Diasporic perspective on leadership challenges and those seen around the globe.

My study also contributes to research on how to make leadership better, especially in places that have struggled to overcome colonial and postcolonial legacies of ineffective and careless leadership. I believe, for example, that many of the precepts of the very popular writings of Heifetz and his associates on adaptative leadership can be found in the numerous ways that my participants spoke about desirable characteristics (Research Question 2) and even their own role (Research Question 3). Heifetz's (1994) views on "Leading Without Authority," underscore the role of undervalued and relatively powerless people to step up lead without having an official role, is inspiring. This unofficial, informal and often unrecognized role of nonleaders was also captured by Wergin's (2007) ideas and collection about "leadership in place." The idea of people without assigned authority rising to fill temporary opportunities and meet transitional needs, is very compatible with how many of the Diasporic participants foresee doing their part for Africa.

Contribution of This Study to Practice and Resulting Recommendations for Action

While Africa struggles with both the reality and the stigma of bad leadership, the positive directions of changes some that are happening and others envisioned by the participants here—may actually become good models of how toxic leadership (Padilla et al., 2007) and systems can be reformed. Based on the findings of this study I see the following practical implications which give rise to recommendations.

1. Because the desire was clearly shown by Diaspora members in this study's focus groups to find effective but safe ways to lend a hand back home: recognize that the Diaspora is more than a "cash cow" for personal remittances and encourage the

African Union to implement the recognition it made in 2003 (State of the African Diaspora, n.d.) of the African Diaspora as the "sixth region." Home governments that seriously want to break with the recent past and its shortcomings and to work to restore Ubuntu or related means of building good leadership, should facilitate the assistance from and remove bureaucratic barriers faced by their Diasporic sixth region. Special efforts need to be made to make short-term, long-term, or permanent return, especially of Diasporic youth, one that is straightforward and safe. Specifically I call for African countries to set up effective Diaspora departments in the home countries with former Diasporic Africans managing it. This department will coordinate and motivate Diasporic Africans to contribute effectively to their home country's social, economic, and political development. Dual citizenship, with diasporic friendly regulations should be enacted in the various African countries.

2. Because the participants in this study recognized that their leaving for long periods of time could impact the availability of expertise and potential leaders back home, I recommend African countries work to mitigate some of the adverse effects of Brain Drain, with international bodies like the United Nations (UN) and the United Nations Development Projects (UNDP). Training centers should be established in the Diaspora to help prepare and coordinate with African countries for the effective involvement of Diasporic Africans back in their home countries. One step that could be taken would be to look seriously at the policies that Israel devised and implemented to attract Diasporic Jews to "make Aliya" ("return") to the historic Jewish homeland (Rodin et al., 2004).

3. Because in the course of discussion, focus group participants turned often to the exemplars of historical African leaders and criticized the dominance of Western values of democracy and leadership, all Diasporics and especially the youth should have learning opportunities about these positive models. Curricula for African leadership training and preparation should include the scholarship on precolonial African leaders like Chief Mohlomi, Moeshoeshoe, Yaa Asatewaa (Day, 2000), Chaka Zula, Mansa Musa, and others. Special emphasis needs to be placed on the ongoing history of remarkable African women who led ranging from Syokimau Akamba and Wangu wa Makeri, prominent leaders in the 19th century (Kailiti & Adams, 2017) to modern exemplars such as Nobel Prize winners Wangari Maathai and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. This kind of curriculum will inform potential future political leaders of Africa and the Diaspora on sound leadership principles based on Ubuntu, avoiding continued dependance on Western leadership models and personalities whose style are not suitable for the collective African societies.

4. Related to the previous, Africans at home and in the Diaspora need to have critical information on the lasting negatives of the colonial and neocolonial periods. There is the dire need to stress the foreign origin of corruption, as the result of the colonial and neocolonial efforts of the developed countries. Coupled with the strategic emphasis on the ethical and moral nature of precolonial African leadership to help to instill the virtues of honesty and integrity into the contemporary African political leadership principles.

5. Following from that, it is essential to put the often desperate condition of African political leadership of the day into context with the historic and ongoing exploitation

of the continent's wealth by foreigners. Certainly, colonialism and postcolonialism in Africa has had a negative impact on the economies and the social systems of Africa. To exploit African societies and resources through corruption, imperial powers had to destroy the African societies' institutions and values of collectiveness, like Ubuntu which ensured a high sense of integrity and honesty in the societies before colonialism. Africans in the Diaspora, witnessing the stability of the economics and the social system of the place they now live compared with the brokenness of the systems back in Africa, have the potential to emerge as leaders who bring changes in their home countries. The literature on African past and present leadership has proved that many of the past and current democratically elected African leaders at a point in their lives lived in the diaspora.

6. Finally, because of the compelling case made by Focus Group 4 on how women's empowerment can reshape and correct leadership problems in Africa—accentuated by the silence of the three exclusively male focus groups on this subject, stronger initiatives for increasing women's participation in leadership and younger women's education for awareness of their potential, need to be enacted.

These directions which this study joins in pointing to, illustrate that when intelligent and motivated Diasporic Africans come together to look at the urgent challenges, best characteristics of, and their own role in leadership, positive change can be envisioned.

Limitations of This Study

As I had hypothesized and hoped it would, this focus group study produced useful insights about leadership and governance in Africa as seen from the perspectives of Africans living in the Diaspora in America. However, the results I obtained are limited in their

applicability because of several limitations in the structure and content of the study as it was conducted.

In terms of structure, one of the most significant limitations of this study was the restricted nature of the research population from which the focus group participants were drawn. The population was a sufficiently large and easily accessible cohort of African Diasporics residing in Rhode Island. As such, it was a population of convenience, a nonrandom population.

As well, this qualitative study drew all data from focus groups. Focus groups can be excellent means for bringing out questions and responses that might not occur to a single pair of interviewer/interviewee but there is also a risk that dynamics may arise that impede good information exchange. In a relatively tight knit community like the Diasporic Africans largely from one urban area of Rhode Island, there may be issues between individuals that inhibit open expression of viewpoints. In a group there are always those who are hesitant to "take the floor" resulting potentially in uneven rates of participation. As the facilitator, I was attuned to this possibility, yet cannot be sure that all members really came forward with their most heartfelt or candid viewpoints. I did feel that most participants had a reasonable opportunity to be heard, but this is always an uncertainty in such forums (Bloor et al., 2001).

Related to the limitation of the extent of participation is the difficult challenge of guaranteeing confidentiality. All participants agreed in advance that what was said in the group would not be spoken of outside. But it is impossible to guarantee such discretion and not doing so could potentially cause some members to hesitate to be fully candid; one must remember that one of the dangers that surround corrupt autocratic regimes is that outspoken critics could suffer personal or family consequences for what is said if that gets back to home governments. All of my participants are aware of this and I believe honored—and will continue to honor—the trust of

fellow participants. But, to repeat, guarantees of what is said outside the room are impossible and this could have had an effect on some participants' willingness to speak out.

Rhode Island is generally considered a politically liberal state, so it is likely that different useful results would be obtained from a cohort of African Diasporans living in Arizona, Indiana, Texas, or South Carolina, states whose sociopolitical "personality" is decidedly more conservative than Rhode Island's. By the same token, it is reasonable to expect different and yet equally valid results from Diasporics residing in California, Michigan, Oregon, or New York, states that are arguably more liberal than Rhode Island. Similarly, it is a limitation of this study that at the time it was conducted, all of the focus group participants were residents of the United States. As is true at the state level, it is likely that equally useful results could be obtained on an international level from African Diasporics residing in countries other than the United States, for example, countries where English is not the primary language, or alternatively, from countries where English is the primary language.

In addition to the geographical boundary of the population, another limitation of this study is that most of the focus group participants were members of the ACLF and AARI. It is likely that different but equally valid data could be obtained from cohorts that consist of both members and nonmembers of the Council. By empaneling focus groups that contain non-members as well as members of the Council, the researcher may be able to minimize (or prevent) the impact of "group-think." This might be especially true and prudent in light of the fact that a central issue to be discussed is Ubuntu and its emphasis on conformity and consensus.

Another major limitation of this study derives from the inherently controversial and intensely personal nature of the topic: leadership/leadership reform/governance on the African Continent. It is such a controversial topic that many Diasporics, who may have had to live

through truly tragic cultural abuse and political repression in their homeland, would be reluctant or perhaps unable to publicly verbalize strongly held feelings about African leadership. Thus, it would be enlightening, I am sure, to conduct a series of focus group sessions in which all of the participants emigrated to America after having endured verifiable abuse in their native land.

Future Research Directions

The enthusiasm of the focus group participants for involvement in improving leadership back home suggests that one significant follow-up study to this one would be to use participatory action research (PAR). PAR has become a very familiar and successful community tool in parts of Africa (e.g., Jackson, 2020). While there might be scheduling issues in getting busy people together to do PAR, I believe, however, that a project which made the participants into coresearchers with responsibility and eventual authorship and ownership of the process and its outcome, would add motivation for those who were willing to become involved.

Ideally, a participatory action research project involving Diasporic Africans would center on their involvement in several carefully chosen projects undertaken cooperatively with people back home and would describe what works well and not in such involvement. Making the work pan African would build on the significant historic role of Diasporic Africans in searching for common causes that stretch across the home continent (Edozie, 2012).

I also believe that the story of Africans living in the Diaspora as they connect or perhaps lose connections to the problems of their home countries would also be well portrayed in narrative ethnographic studies. Narrative ethnography involving interviews with contemporary people living in the West has been widely used to obtain an understanding of how they live and relate to sensitive issues and change (Andrews, 2007). Selecting a small number of activist Diasporic Africans who have experienced trying to make a difference back home and, then,

conducting more detailed interviews and case studies of their lived experience would add life to the fragments I was able to learn about these people in relatively short conversations in groups.

I would add that I also have stories to tell that I have not yet shared publicly, so an autoethnography (Jones et al., 2016) would be a project that I would recommend for me and, when they are willing for other Africans in the Diaspora.

This dissertation only skims the surface of an enormous and understudied topic of political perspectives of those who have migrated from their home countries. These people, my participants, and many other well-educated Africans who have physically moved to what used to be called "The First World," are both reflections and agents of changing times in postcolonial Africa. As Andrews (2007) used the terms, they both shape and are shaped by the contemporary society and recent history of the place they left. In revisiting what would be useful to add to a study such as I have completed, I now believe that adding some individual stories gathered through qualitative interviews would have enriched the understandings that emerged in focus groups. In particular, a significant characteristic that was not brought into my work is the biographical detail of at least a crosssection of the participants. I knew many of these people personally, but that was not in consistent detail on how they came to be in the Diaspora. Were they voluntary migrants who sought a better life in America, hoping for the financial and educational resources that they could not so readily get at home? Or were they people who felt it necessary to leave because of the negative impacts of weak, corrupt, or tribalistic leadership that prevented them from living normal and safe lives back home? Both of these poles and much in between is probably true for the participants and would shed light, I believe, on the positions they took in responding to the three research questions. To gather and reflect on the stories of Diasporic Africans in relation to those questions would be a worthwhile expansion of what was

done here. Extensive transcripts of individual interviews produced in such individual interviews would add to the words already recorded in the focus groups to provide a fuller source of information on perceived challenges (Research Question 1), desirable characteristics (Research Question 2), and potential Diasporic engagement (Research Question 3) from the perspective of Diasporic Africans.

There are several more specific studies that would be important on particular themes that arose in what was said and was not in the focus groups. A study of the attitudes towards the necessity of women's empowerment in African leadership among males would fill a gap that was quite conspicuous among the three all-male focus groups. My study showed that women are understandably focused on the topic, but in regard to the absence of mention in Focus Groups 1, 2, and 3, is this just a problem of insufficient time or does it illustrate the marginalization and, the "disappearing acts" (Fletcher, 2001) that make women and their role invisible? Finding out and putting the results in the context of carefully researched histories of women as leaders in Africa, would be an important step to redressing this.

Another direction worth considering in studying what members of the African Diaspora think about leadership issues back home would be to systematically look for a sample that is less well educated and politically engaged than the population I studied in this work. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD; 2019), there is an increasing population of African migrants who have moved to the West (Europe and North America). Many are not university graduates; they are skilled and unskilled tradespeople who do not as frequently become involved in politics of the Diaspora. What do they think about the array of issues that were raised in the questions for this research? If political action and other participation by the Diaspora in restoring leadership back home is to succeed, it will need the

wider involvement of all those who have moved from home. Their perspectives on what needs to change and how they can contribute are definitely worth studying.

Final Thoughts

When this study was initiated and also when each of the focus groups began, Ubuntu was a chosen theme and also a framework. The question of what participants thought of Ubuntu's relevance and meaning in modern Africa, especially in connection with leadership challenges, kicked off all focus groups. I like to think that not only did the groups talk about Ubuntu but also we all lived by that philosophy in respectful relations that were established in the focus group meetings. Further, I hope that my approach to researching this topic was consistent with Ubuntu. Recent literature has advocated making Ubuntu guide the way that research is carried out (Seehawer, 2018). This built on the famous work of Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) in *Decolonizing Methodologies*. In this study, I relied on how a group (including myself) conversed with each other, their mutual creation. This contrasts with depending on interviews where each participant would have talked about the research topics independently of his or her fellow Diaspora members. Seehawer (2018) contrasted the data collection approach used here to the common "atomistic" interview: "interviews aiming at individual expression of opinion may be unnatural in some indigenous cultures, qualitative focus groups in which people construct meaning collaboratively, might be closer to indigenous methods" (p. 458). During the discussions I did walk a line between offering my own views—which inevitably impact the content of the discussion—and following the more usual approach of the researcher standing back and letting the participants talk without any prompting. The latter is what is usually expected but the former whereby the researcher has (and does not hide) a passionate interest and his or her own thoughts on topics, comes close to the principles of Ubuntu.

I must recognize however that overall, the participants did not play a role in this research that fully met the demands of true Ubuntu research as recommended by Seehawer (2018). They did not plan the meetings with me and they were expected to respond to a set of topics that I provided. It is difficult but not impossible to turn over control of a research project in the course of a doctoral dissertation (which is expected to be predominantly the work of the one person). Nevertheless, I think there were many moments in the course of the focus group sessions when the participants and I merged in a collaborative and synergistic way consistent with the core Ubuntu saying, "I am because we are." Consistent with Ubuntu, the group members related positively to each other and towards me as the researcher and meeting facilitator. While there was variation and even disagreement among the participants without me having to "referee," there was an almost automatic smoothing of such differences, and a unity—not of ideas but of purpose, what Swanson (2007) referred to as a "humble togetherness" (p. 58).

Experiencing Ubuntu for those of us from the Diaspora who have watched with sadness and often anger as so many political leaders in Africa go the opposite way (corruption, incompetence, cronyism, and violence to subdue critics), shows that a different way is possible. It may be generations before the reform efforts of people like this study's participants—whether in the Diaspora or back home—finally lead to the visionary and transformational leadership the continent needs so badly. As that happens—and I continue to hold faith that it will—dialogues such as arose in the focus groups here will become essential for support and constructive criticism of the changes needed so badly back in Africa.

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Appendix

APPENDIX

Recruitment Letter for Focus Group Participants

October 11, 2019

Letter of Invitation

Thanks for agreeing to participate in a focus group planned for *Saturday, October 26, 2019*. The session will begin at *12:00 pm* and conclude by *2:00 pm*. The topic for discussion will be *Implications of Ubuntu in African Political Leadership Reforms: The Perspective of some Africans in the Diaspora in Rhode Island: Northeastern USA.*

Ubuntu is a traditional African leadership philosophy and a way of life that stresses the importance of community, solidarity, sharing and caring. The purpose of this study is to gain deeper understanding into the views and perspectives of SSA leaders in Rhode Island on the effective political reforms that can promote sustainable development and growth in their respective countries. I would like the share the questions that I will ask during the 90 minutes to 2 hour session with you. They are as follows:

Q1: How well are you aware of the current political leadership of your country of origin?

Q2: In your opinion, what do you see as some of the challenges of effective political leadership in your country of origin?

Q3: What are some of the effective methods of political reforms that you recommend for your country of origin?

Q4: What are the leadership characteristics you think are most needed or desirable for political reforms in your country of origin?

Q5: What can you do to support effective political reforms in your country of origin?

Q6: How well do you understand or know about precolonial African political leadership, especially the philosophy of Ubuntu?

Q7: How do you think Africa can adapt some of the precolonial leadership principles into its modern political leadership reforms?

Please remember there is no wrong or right answer, I am there to learn from your opinions and perspectives on each question. I look forward to hearing your opinions, as well as those of the other participants, on this topic. This is strictly a research project and no sales or solicitations will be made. The discussion will be audio taped and the tapes will only be used by me in writing up the research. Your name will never be associated with any of the comments or quotes used in the research report.

As a participant, you have the right to discontinue your participation in this research at any time either before, during, or after the focus group has been conducted. You will also receive a draft copy of the analysis to examine and comment on. If you have a concern about your contribution

to the study, you have the right to revise your comments, strike out any comments, or ask that your comments be deleted from the transcripts altogether. If you wish to have your comments deleted, those comments will not be used in any way in the research analysis. Any possible concerns you may have are of concern to this researcher and any request by your for your revision or deletion will be complied with.

The success and quality of the focus group discussion depends on the cooperation of the people who attend. The focus group will not be a large group. It will be between 6 and 8 people, so I am counting on your attendance. If for any reason you are not able to attend, please call me as soon as possible at (*researcher's phone number*).

I look forward to seeing you. Thanks again for agreeing to participate.

Sincerely,

Daniel Kyei-Poakwa BA, PG. Diploma in Industrial Management, MBA, MA.