Authentic and Transformative Leadership Development in Environmental Justice Activism
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Introduction
Environmental Justice (EJ)
Environmental racism and environmental injustice are characterized by the inequitable distribution of hazard sites, the size and quality of green space, and the inequitable division of political power over land use decisions in low-income or minority communities (Holifield, 2001). As leadership is a crucial component to successful social movements this study explores how environmental activist engage in effective leadership in issues such as climate justice, park and green space equity, and energy justice in a southern state (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004).

Authentic Leadership
Authentic leadership is a pattern of leader behavior that is rooted in and promotes positive psychological capacities, a positive ethical climate, self-awareness, internalized moral perspectives, balanced processing, and relational transparency (Gardner, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Critical Life Events are an essential antecedent to authentic leadership as the narrative constructed around them and the resulting reframing of one’s life story facilitate the discovery of the purpose of one’s leadership (George, et al., 2007).

Transformative Leadership
Transformative Leadership draws on the importance of social justice, equity, inclusion, democracy, and education for the creation of a better community and quality of life (Shields, 2010). Both Transformative Leadership and environmental justice call for equity and social justice, so that certain populations are not unfairly burdened by environmental hazards. Further, both Transformative Leadership and environmental justice call for democracy so that low-income and minority people (who typically have little political power) will have more decision-making power over the land uses in their communities and the forms of energy that they have access to.

Methods
Throughout the month of March 2019, four events were attended as a part of this research: The NC Climate Justice Summit, Duke University’s EJ Symposium, The Climate Reality’s Project’s Climate Leadership Training, and a NC Environmental Justice Network Quarterly Meeting. Notes were taken during each of the events and the notes were analyzed for trends in authentic leadership and transformative leadership.

Methods & Advocacy

Results
Trends of authentic leadership and transformative leadership were present at every event. The chart below shows the number of instances that stood out to the researcher as falling into on of those two categories of leadership.

“ I used to just be a landowner, then the pipeline came through my land, taking a third of my property by eminent domain. Now I’m an activist!”

“ If you’re not uncomfortable then you’re not doing anything.”

“We graduate from school, but we never graduate from racism!”

“We need to get info from both sides, including radicals, and keep emotions out of it.”

Figure 1: Event attendees comments related to authentic leadership

Figures of Leadership Trends at EJ Events

Advocacy
During the course of this research, the NC Department of Environmental Quality took public comments on a new community mapping tool, which had been mandated by a title VI settlement. The tool was meant to map environmental injustices, but was inadequate as proposed. As an advocacy component of this project, the researcher submitted public comments and asked others to do the same.

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