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# Preparing “academic citizens.” Service-learning in Research Universities

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## **Abstract**

Service-learning is often promoted as a way of increasing civic engagement and concern for public life. While these are excellent goals, their prominence may obscure the ways that service-learning benefits students as burgeoning scholars. I argue that conducting research with and for community organizations helps students understand that academic work is accountable to both public and academic communities. At the same time, comparing the community-building strategies of both public and academic communities introduces students to the rhetorical moves by which scholars signal their disciplinary affiliations. A reflexive approach to service-learning emphasizes students’ roles as scholars as much as it emphasizes their role as citizens.

## **Introduction**

As a philosophy of teaching embraced across many disciplines, service-learning is employed to promote students’ civic and academic engagement. Studies of K-12 service learning programs show that students who participate in service-learning are more politically engaged, more tolerant of others, and even fifteen years later are more likely to remain active in community work and to vote than those who do not participate in such classes (Corporation for National and Community Service 2007). Moreover, students develop better problem-solving skills, understand complex ideas more fully, feel more connected to their schools, and receive higher grades on content area tests (Corporation for National and Community Service 2007). When college students take service-learning classes, they have better attitudes, skills, and more understanding of social issues (Eyler, Giles and Braxton, 1997).

As a strategic institutional initiative, the growth of service-learning can be understood as a response to the broader public portrayal of “the academy” as a distant, elite place that is out of touch with the “real world.” In times when public budgets are highly scrutinized, research pursuits that are seen as too cerebral are regularly ridiculed by those who would have universities focus on pragmatic concerns. Articles written for specialized academic journals are criticized for their dense, academic language and convoluted sentences; the complexity of academic

thought is shrugged off as elitist obfuscation. Legislatures and businesses call on higher education to focus on what matters to them, such as training students to be future workers and entrepreneurs. Connecting academic work with community work can effectively counter some of those concerns by making visible the usefulness of fields that aren't readily seen as "pragmatic." And indeed, many students value service-learning courses precisely because of the connections they can make between academic content and the "real world."

To break down this conceptual division between "academic" and "public" work, service-learning helps extend the definition of "public work." Often we talk about "public" life as that which happens outside of the university; we profess that what we are teaching "in here" can better serve students and communities when they work "out there." But I think we present a disingenuous view of the relationship between academic and public life when we treat the two as so completely separate. If we reflect more fully on the intersections of these arenas and use that overlap, we will help our students understand that they can draw on a similar set of intellectual, community-building tools to navigate both worlds.

A longitudinal study of students at Harvard University reveals that when students viewed their writing and research projects as activities with a purpose beyond the specific class, they grew more as writers and felt more engaged with their studies (Sommers and Salz 2004). Students were more receptive to feedback and more engaged in their work. My approach to service-learning tries to harness this motivation and to provide a framework through which students can look at work both inside and outside the academy and see how it draws on similar rhetorical approaches and meets similar needs. The goal is to teach academic writing in such a way that students recognize it as public work.

In this paper I first offer a precautionary story about setting up service-learning partnerships: I argue that professors need to pay special attention to what communities can teach us. Then I explain the common rhetorical features of academic articles and the publications of community organizations: both scholars and community organizations draw on rhetorical strategies to build their public support. Both work hard to convince their audiences that their methods of making and sharing knowledge are valuable. Both make implicit arguments about what is worth paying attention to, what an audience should do, and how people in the audience are connected to each other. After briefly explaining these rhetorical strategies, I will show how they appear in both a community document (a "report card" compiled by two local environmental organizations about the state of the Anacostia River) and a scholarly article (a chemistry article that studies how PCBs flow down the Anacostia River). Because students in service-learning

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courses are surrounded by both academic and public ways of working, talking, and writing, they have an opportunity to study how people indicate these underlying values within both kinds of writing. When service-learning professors show students this overlap, we not only prepare them for writing in both places, but we also give them tools to analyze and reflect on the values that are inherent in the writing they may be asked to do in either place. We can show them how to move back and forth successfully and with integrity.

### **Epistemological Questions: Who makes knowledge and how?**

The term “service-learning” designates many different relationships between classrooms and communities. Sometimes students perform direct service with a community organization (serving as tutors for an after-school program, for example, or serving food at a shelter). Sometimes students take on research and writing tasks commissioned by an organization (conducting community surveys about health issues or local development; creating marketing materials or researching best practices). Sometimes students work individually; sometimes the whole class takes on a project together. In this article, I work with a model in which students conduct research (either individually or collaboratively) on behalf of the organization. This research may be commissioned by the organization, or it may be developed in response to a need that the student identifies after working at the site. This model of service-learning, sometimes called community-based research, requires the student to collaborate closely with the community organization to identify parameters, understand local context, and gain access to community resources.<sup>1</sup>

If we and our students enter into a commitment to produce research for or with a community organization, that community relationship must be approached mindfully. In particular, we need to be careful about how we understand what counts as “knowledge.” The tension between academic and community knowledge is constant. Faculty and students have the luxury of time and resources to conduct research that nonprofit staff may not be able to carry out, but members of community organizations have a much fuller understanding of the context and history that will affect what knowledge is useful and appropriate to their settings. As we design service-learning courses, we can include units that investigate how community organizations draw on academic scholarship in developing and carrying out their programs, and units that examine where academic scholarship is supplemented—or even corrected—by knowledge-on-the-ground. We should regularly emphasize the question of who makes knowledge and how? What kind of knowledge is valued where? What is knowledge supposed to do? What responsibilities and obligations do knowledge-makers have?

Understanding the relationship between academic perspectives and community perspectives requires careful listening and preparation. When I first started teaching service-learning courses, I made the mistake of organizing my course around academic theories that I expected would be illustrated through the community work my students were engaged in. My course drew on theories of participatory democracy and rhetorics of social protest; we investigated the qualities of direct democracy and how citizens might be empowered to rally for change. Our readings were about grassroots democracy that pressured government for policy and funding changes. The community organizations I worked with, though, drew on different models of social change: they developed on-going, measurable projects that might transform a neighborhood slowly. They developed after-school tutoring programs for middle school students; they brought people together to clear hiking trails and plant gardens. Because of the design of my course, my students left the semester feeling as if these community organizations were adequate but not particularly important. They didn't see community organizations as vital to democratic life. As a teacher, I had to pause and reconsider. Instead of beginning with academic theories, I had to begin with the community organizations themselves and understand that democratic vision, which I then built into my course. Whereas my first course design reinforced the hierarchy of the academy judging the community, my second course design began by assuming the community had the knowledge and the theory. Through my class, the students and I worked to understand their perspective and integrate it with the academic literature. At the same time, we came to see how community perspectives pushed and challenged academic scholarship.

Another misfire offers a second cautionary reminder. The activities we develop together and the way we prepare our students to enter into those partnerships need to attend to the particular historical and contemporary tensions in a place. David Coogan (2006) describes a service-learning writing class that was invited to help increase parental involvement in Chicago's public schools. He observes that the class chose an ineffective rhetorical approach because they had not attended carefully enough to the historical dynamics of the community's experiences. They had not understood what kind of change the parents felt was possible. What Coogan's example makes clear is that all public work is contested work: all communities struggle to define who they are and how they come together.

The admonition to pay attention to local context applies to service-learning partnerships in all academic fields: chemistry students working with environmental organizations to study waterways, education students working with

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tutoring programs to boost academic achievement--we all must prepare for our partnerships by understanding how past government, community, and cultural dynamics might affect the work we undertake. At the same time, we must consider how the context of the university, with its own agendas and epistemological ideals, impacts the relationships. Making all of these components visible to students is an exciting and important aspect of service-learning courses.

### **Rhetorical Moves of Public Making**

Mindful of my admonition to learn from the communities we work with, I want to show that analyzing public writing can help us see academic writing in new ways. Because the methods and audiences for academic writing can be so specialized, it's easy to assume that academic writing is distinct and isolated from any writing that would be used in community organizations. An academic paper that analyzes how specific chemicals flow down a river is a very different sort of document than a brochure from a community organization working to clean up that river is. However, the chemistry article, like the brochure, is a response to a particular rhetorical situation. Neither the article nor the brochure is a simple transcription of fact. Just as the brochure is crafted to draw on the values of its local audience, the academic article is carefully crafted to demonstrate the author's understanding and affirmation of the values of the academic community. Both authors have to persuade their audiences that what they say is important and worth reading, that the author is the most qualified person to learn from, and that the author has taken into account the values and expectations of that audience. Moreover, both texts project how the audience is expected to advance this work, to continue what it takes to find the answers to the problem posed. In this sense, academic writing is a form of public writing.<sup>ii</sup>

I find that I can better name and explain these rhetorical strategies when my students and I begin by looking at public writing, especially the documents produced by nonprofit community organizations. Community organizations make their mission and vision very explicit; in websites and pamphlets, we can readily see overt statements about their purpose and methods. Moreover, it's easy for students to understand why community organizations need to regularly convey their worldview—their sense of how the world is and how it should be—and why community organizations need to assert that they have the capacity and the right methods for getting to that vision. Beginning with community documents, we can then begin to see the similar rhetorical strategies in academic work.

We can break down the public-making strategies by looking at several components of public writing: purpose (what creates the need for this work?),

agency and capacity (who can do the work?), and interdependence (with whom do they do this work?). Looking at each of these components of writing can help us uncover the worldview that the text is advancing. I offer a brief glossary of these concepts here.

*Purpose:* Community organizations and academics alike have to signal the reasons for doing this work in this place at this time; in so doing, they delineate what they see as possible and why it matters. Community organizations are explicit about their purpose in mission statements; these are often incorporated into their publications in some way. Those mission statements define the problem or ideals that motivate them (sometimes emphasizing the urgency of a bad condition, sometimes highlighting a vision they strive toward). All of the documents that the community organization produces flow from this mission and vision.

At the university, the mission and vision is not made quite so explicit. Some college departments and universities publicize their mission statements, and these ideals might be conveyed in strategic plans or Presidential addresses. If we consider that the most frequent publications of universities are academic articles and books, a value built into universities when such publication is a requirement for tenure or promotion, then the purpose for university work is to create new knowledge. In academic articles, we find, the “problem” being addressed is a gap in knowledge, a misunderstanding of how the world works. Academic writing is motivated by a need to correct or advance what has come before.

In both communities, the purpose for writing is defined in such a manner that it suggests who can do the work and what actions need to take place.

*Agency and Capacity:* One of the most critical steps in bringing people together as a public who will take action together is to convince the audience that they are the ones who can do the work, and that they have the right tools to do so. Nonprofit organizations might define agency and capacity in various ways. Sometimes they highlight civic power (the importance of voting and monitoring the public policy decisions of those in power); sometimes they highlight consumer power (boycotting, pressuring corporations to change their behaviors); sometimes they highlight do-it-yourself community power (such as removing trash from a river, creating after-school programs, or putting on a community fair).

Academics locate their agency and capacity within their disciplinary research methods, methods designed to ensure objective and thorough analysis. The author convinces the audience that the methods are appropriate for this

particular question under review. At the same time, the author invites researchers to continue to investigate the problem and the methods for answering it. In providing an answer to the gap in knowledge, the researcher contributes to an ongoing scholarly conversation, and invites further reflection on the methods or the outcomes of the research. In this way, academic writing perpetuates its own vision of what matters: it perpetually demands that scholars create new, more, better knowledge. Just as a community document rallies its audience to take specific action, so the scholarly article serves to motivate and extend the work of the academy.

*Interdependence:* Public writing speaks to multiple audiences: it addresses individuals who are part of a broader public, equally invested in the issue at hand. It has to signal to the reader that he or she is part of that larger group and that by working together, the reader can accomplish more than he or she can individually. The rhetorical strategy that accomplishes this is to address both friends and strangers simultaneously. One might name leaders and associations that are part of the cause already and also name concrete opportunities for new people to get involved. One might describe people currently in the community who have similar values or experiences as those who have not yet joined, so that they can see themselves already there.

In academic writing, the audience is an academic public that is committed to creating knowledge together over the long term. As Joseph Harris (2006) explains convincingly in *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*, academics draw on the works of those who have come before by extending their ideas, countering their findings, or drawing on their methodology. Especially in the review of literature sections, but often throughout the analysis, academics name colleagues working on the same kinds of questions. These moves demonstrate that knowledge-making is clearly a collaborative enterprise. Indeed, all the rules for accurate and complete citation are in place to ensure that the collaborative motive is not compromised by sloppy or unethical attribution. They are tools that academics use to reinforce and perpetuate their interdependence; they signal that no individual scholar can arrive at a full, complex view of the world—we need each other.

Faculty teaching service-learning courses can help students understand how writers invoke the public value of their work for both community and academic contexts. The framework helps us to the common rhetorical strategies in academic and community work. Moreover, examining these strategies can help us name the aspects of service-learning that can be difficult. Sometimes, the conventions that ensure that one's place in the academic public can be at odds

with the conventions of the communities where we work and vice-versa. Students need to pay critical attention to the distinctions among those conventions if they hope to cross boundaries effectively.

### **Anacostia Watershed Society and the George Mason University Chemistry Department: A Study in Public and Academic Writing**

The service-learning context can offer helpful, specific ways to explicate these rather abstract concepts. Using concrete examples, such as websites and reports, we can compare the rhetoric of academics and community organizations and show how those moments in the texts that convey purpose, capacity, agency and interdependence also convey the underlying value systems within each group. To illustrate, I'll offer a case study of the Anacostia Watershed Society in Washington, DC, their *State of the River* report, and a study about polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the Anacostia River conducted by George Mason University chemistry professors and published in the *Journal of Environmental Science and Health*.

#### ***Overview of the river and the two communities who report about it***

The Anacostia River flows through the eastern Washington, DC, bordered by Wards 5, 6, 7 and 8. It is fed by watersheds in Maryland's Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. Near the southern tip of DC, it feeds into the Potomac; then it joins the Chesapeake Bay and drains into the Atlantic. The Department of Health of Washington bans any recreation that would provide primary contact with the river, and it has declared the fish and shellfish too contaminated to eat. The pollution in the river has been attributed to overflow from DC sewage treatment centers during storms, other DC and area stormwater drainage problems, agricultural chemicals flowing down from Maryland farmlands, and pollution and leaks from industries and or contaminated sites of now defunct industries.

One community organization that would like to see the river clean is the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS). The mission of The Anacostia Watershed Society is "to protect and restore the Anacostia River and its watershed communities by cleaning the water, recovering the shores, and honoring the heritage in order to make the Anacostia River and its tributaries swimmable and fishable for the health and enjoyment of everyone in the community." The organization maintains on-going partnerships with area universities, and students are invited to help with trash clean-up and removal of invasive plants. AWS partners with local science classes at all levels, as well as with local



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environmentally-oriented community organizations. They focus on recreational activities (to help people develop a familiarity with and commitment to the river), stewardship activities (removing non-native plants, picking up trash, building rain gardens, monitoring water quality) and advocacy work (identifying sources of pollution and applying pressure on appropriate targets to address them).

An academic researcher who studies the pollution in the Anacostia River is professor of chemistry and biochemistry at George Mason University, Dr. Greg Foster. Like the AWS, the goals of the Foster laboratory include tracking down sources of contaminants and aiding in river clean-up. The GMU chemistry and biochemistry department announces that students working with Dr. Foster can expect to contribute to projects along the Anacostia River:

Students in the Foster research laboratory investigate the sources, reactions and transport of contaminants in the aquatic environment. [One of the] ongoing lines of active research . . . involves determining the amounts and sources of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in storm runoff in the Anacostia River.

In addition to the concrete tasks of identifying pollutants and identifying best practices for removing them, Dr. Foster contributes to the field of chemistry and biochemistry by developing analytical methods. A biographical blurb on George Mason's Research Groups page describes Foster's agenda this way: "divided among assessing urban regions as sources of organic contaminants to coastal air- and watersheds in the Chesapeake Bay region, developing technologies to remove contaminants that harm the aquatic environment, and developing analytical methods."

This last point is a critical distinction, as it indicates Dr. Foster's commitment to the university as a place to develop and refine research methods. Whereas the AWS hires chemists and biologists to monitor and track the impact of pollutants, Dr. Foster's purpose is also to evaluate and improve the methodology used to do such work. In this way, his affiliation to the university, and to the broader goals of knowledge creation, exceeds the practical focus on cleaning up the river.

### ***Analyzing Community and Academic Documents about the Anacostia River***

To illustrate how scholars and community members build a sense of public purpose and capacity in their writing, we can compare the *State of the River Report Card*, a publication from the Anacostia Watershed Society, with an

article co-written by Dr. Foster in the *Journal of Environmental Science and Health* that also evaluates pollution in the Anacostia River.

The *State of the River Report Card* is an 8-page 8 ½ x 11 glossy pamphlet with a full color photo of a Great White Egret and a Great Blue Heron standing in the Anacostia River. Most of the pages include large graphics and little text. The first page offers a short welcome statement from the President of the Anacostia Watershed Society and the Riverkeeper and Executive Director of the Anacostia Riverkeeper (AR), the organizations that jointly wrote the report. They explain, “This annual report card is your guide to how well our communities, environmental groups, and governments are meeting the goal of a fishable and swimmable Anacostia River as soon as possible. .... It provides a benchmark of the core river health parameters based on scientific data and policy efforts” (p. 1). Below the letter, but above the signatures, is a photo of the two leaders, standing in front of the Anacostia River. The mission statements of the two organizations are listed. At the bottom of the page, in small print, is a series of “disclaimers”: these footnotes report the assumptions behind their methodology, with acknowledgements like, “All available, professionally collected data was used. The data sets include those collected by DC government, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the Anacostia Watershed Society.” Acronyms are explained, and explanations about rate calculations are provided.

The remaining pages lay out the findings, using short paragraphs and plenty of graphics. The second page shows a map of the Anacostia River with named bridges indicated. Three large “Fail” notations are stamped along the river. The page defines the three main areas studied and the main impediments to clean water, and the parameters used to assess the water quality. The third page includes a chart, delineating the water quality according to each of the assessment areas and the number of years estimated to meet the water quality standards. Page four is a political report card, evaluating public policy around stormwater management, toxics, trash and overall plan for DC, two Maryland counties, the State of Maryland and the Federal government. The ratings are indicated visually by thumb-up or thumb-down hands. The final pages provide brief (one-to-two phrase) explanations of the problems that the river associations seek to address, with photographs and one or two sentences describing solutions, which include environmental site design (such as rain gardens) along with political pressure and legal action to address trash, toxics and bacteria.

The *Journal of Environmental Science and Health* article, in contrast, is a dense seven and a half page document followed by a page and a half of footnotes. The descriptive title is “Polychlorinated biphenyls in stormwater runoff entering

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the tidal Anacostia River, Washington, DC, through small urban catchments and combined sewer outfalls.” The abstract announces that the major findings contradict previous assumptions about the primary sources of PCB contamination: “The present study suggests that input of PCBs from Lower Beaverdam Creek is likely to be greater than those from the two major branches (Northeast and Northwest Branches) that were believed as primary source areas.”

The article includes an introduction, which reviews the current state of the Anacostia River, drawing primarily on government reports and identifying the exigency for this project: “To achieve the first goal of the Anacostia River action plan—the reduction of pollutant loadings—it is essential to understand the sources and behavior of pollutants in stormwater runoff, which is regarded as one of the major pathways delivering urban pollutants to surface water” (p. 568). The paper argues for the necessary methodology to complete such a task, “A quantitative understanding of the sources of PCBs in stormwater runoff and its transport dynamics in the Anacostia River will be essential in developing cost-effective stormwater runoff control strategies employing effective best management practices” (p. 568).

After reviewing the sample collection and the strategies and materials used for extracting PCBs, the majority of the article discusses the level of PCBs in stormwater runoff, noting that most occur as particles, and then evaluating how the particles behave in the water. The analysis includes explanations about the techniques used to evaluate the data, equations that express the relationships of materials in the stormwater, graphs that show the linear regressions of some findings. The analysis refers frequently to the previous studies of PCBs in the Anacostia River and elsewhere, both to give credit when this study uses their techniques and to indicate how the current study extends the findings or methods of those works. It concludes with a review of the findings, acknowledgements of the funding sources for the research, and thirty-five bibliographic endnotes.

*Purpose:* Both documents arise from a concern about pollution in the Anacostia River. The *State of the River* responds to a political need to document progress (or lack of progress) from DC, Maryland counties, Maryland state and federal agencies in stemming the causes or cleaning up the pollution. It provides a water quality report that looks at four indicators of pollution; by highlighting the number of years until the water quality will meet set standards, it again heightens the need to take action. The document is created to rally people to take action and to encourage them to take action with AWS and AR.

Identifying the purpose in academic work can be harder for students, who often criticize academic work for merely explaining problems and not laying out

solutions. The scholarly article is also motivated by a concern about pollution in the Anacostia River and it draws on government sources to clarify the urgency of the problem. The main focus of the article, though, is not the lack of progress but a gap in the understanding of the problem itself. The goal is not to rally people to make change, but to rally people to study the problem more closely so the action later on taken will be most effective. The article seeks to “understand the sources and behaviors of pollutants in stormwater runoff,” and while the ending does suggest some potential best practices to address the sources and behaviors that the researchers found, the majority of the document lays out the methods and analysis that allow them to better describe one particular part of the problem. The article is designed to build on previous research and provide evidence-based data that can contribute to someone else’s solution design.

*Agency and Capacity:* We can readily see how the authors of the *State of the River* indicate that they have the capacity to take on the problems they’ve identified. The introductory letter from the Executive Director of Anacostia Riverkeeper and the President of Anacostia Watershed Society ends with an upbeat assertion that “We can clean [the River] up if we work together!” After listing the current failed water quality standards and lack of action by the politicians, the document outlines the solutions that the nonprofits advance to address the issues. The problems are depicted visually with photographs of the river. For the problem “Stormwater,” we see a photo of the River under normal flow and a photo of the same site with high and turbulent waters. The solution is “Environmental Site Design,” such as raingardens that “maintain a site’s original drainage pattern as much as possible by capturing and infiltrating rainwater.” Similarly, the page on the problem of “Toxics, Trash and Bacteria” uses a photograph of trash in the water and a picture of an industrial building tagged as a “legacy toxic site.” Here, the solution is “education, restoration projects, and legal action.” Finally, the document lists the eight actions individuals can take, including supporting the organizations by donating and volunteering. The reader of the document is invoked as someone who has power to pressure the political entities who received the thumbs-down ratings, and who can support the work of the organization through donations, volunteering, and a few individual actions.

Finding the indicators of agency and capacity in the academic article is easier when students understand the audience to be other academics, whose job is to scrutinize the methodology and analysis of any study. As Frank Haig and Peg Kay argue in “The Role of Academies of Science in the Critical Examination of New Ideas,” professional communities “provide a willing but intelligent audience to which an innovator can make a presentation” (p. 61). Once presented, “a new

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idea has to find its way to acceptance. The path may be long and conflicted. The opposition may be intense and tortuous. The process, however, is necessary to ensure the emergence of a founded confidence on the part of the broad scientific community” (p. 61).

Once we understand this context, it’s easy to find the places where the PCB report authors assert who has the capacity “to understand the sources and behavior of pollutants in stormwater runoff” (p. 568). Throughout the article, the authors anticipate their skeptical audience by reaffirming the capacity of their disciplinary and interdisciplinary methodology to explain pollutant sources and behaviors. They regularly anticipate concerns about how they have executed the techniques, acknowledging and justifying whenever they have made variations on previous methods. Moreover, they regularly qualify their assertions; they understand that for their argument to be persuasive, it cannot exceed the capacity of the methods. In this way, they provide an active and important role for their academic readers, just as AWS and AR do for their civic readers.

*Interdependence:* Examining the rhetoric of interdependence in a document can help us gain a deeper understanding of how the authors imagine the members of their audience should relate to each other to accomplish the work at hand. The nonprofit authors of the *State of the River* depend on public attention and action to achieve their political and environmental goals, so their readers must come away from the document feeling as if they are part of a broader community that is invested in the cause. The rhetorical challenge in such a document is to address newcomers and current participants at the same time, and to help them see their relationship with each other. Some of the gestures that invoke such interdependence are easy to spot—as in the closing of the introductory letter, “we can clean it up if we work together! Will you join us?” The audience here is the newcomer, interested in becoming part of the “us” crowd. The solutions proposed are described as “our” solutions and what “we” do. However, sometimes the reader is treated as separate from the organizations, a move that seems to undermine the message of interdependence. The organizations are given agency and capacity for certain kinds of change, while the reader is invited to take different steps. The steps that “you” can take include actions readers can do individually, without the nonprofits. While the final action is “support the Anacostia Riverkeeper and the Anacostia Watershed Society,” the overall phrasing in this section suggests that the reader may not need the organization in order to accomplish the same goals.

Just as public texts should convince their audiences that they are already potential actors in that community, so in academic context, the readers should see

that they have a significant, important role in the broader goal of knowledge-making. Through the exchange of scholarly articles, scholars depend on each other to help create, critique and extend knowledge. The bigger goal of arriving at new understanding does not happen alone, and scholars regularly and explicitly acknowledge their dependence on other scholars throughout their work. We can see these efforts throughout the PCB article, as the authors name those scholars who have asked similar questions in other geographical areas: “For comparison with the present study, some other studies are summarized below” (p. 570). They also confirm their results by comparing them with similar studies: “This high enrichment of PCBs in the particle phase is quite common in urban stormwater samples. Eganhouse and Sheerblom found high concentrations of PCBs in the particle phase (50-98%) in combined sewer overflow samples” (p. 570). The general academic habits of citation and attribution are part and parcel of this need to acknowledge interdependence. By acknowledging how our methods and analysis have been influenced by previous scholars, we signal that we understand that on-going knowledge requires us to read each other critically, to explain the heritage of our ideas, and to offer a clear roadmap for future scholars so that they can replicate our work. If we skip any of these steps, we risk violating the expectations for our roles as members of the academic community.

### **Public and Academic Writing in Service-Learning classes**

To keep my argument relatively concise and straightforward, I limited my analysis to two documents related to the same public concern. When faculty develop partnerships with community organizations working on public issues, and when we help students conceptualize research projects that can be useful to those organizations, I suggest that we ask students to prepare both academic- and community-orientated documents based on their research. The challenge of transforming their analysis to meet the different expectations of each community allows them to explore the parallels and distinctions in those rhetorical conventions. I further contend that we provide a helpful framework for understanding the variations they find. A productive rhetorical framework will demonstrate that at a broader level, academics regularly signal their participation in academic communities as they write, and they follow conventions that reveal their understanding of what academics value and their understanding about why academia itself is valuable to the broader public. To accomplish this, academics project their purpose, their agency, their capacity to address the problem, and the audience’s interdependence with the author and each other. By comparing the rhetoric of community organizations with the rhetoric of academia, students in service-learning courses can see that both groups draw on a repertoire of

community-building strategies. Naming and analyzing these distinctions can help students consider their own responsibilities and potential as “academic citizens.”

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<sup>i</sup> In *Writing Partnerships*, Thomas Deans offers a helpful overview and useful advice about “writing for” and “writing with” communities in service-learning courses.

<sup>ii</sup> For more on theories of public rhetoric, see Hauser, Ryder, Warner. For more analysis of the public function of the academy, see the final chapter in Ryder.

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