

An Article by the 2006 Award Winner  
CCCC Outstanding Dissertation Award  
in Technical Communication

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## Creating Knowledge for Advocacy: The Discourse of Research at a Conservation Organization

Neil Lindeman  
*San Francisco State University*

In the field of conservation, the distinction between academic research and advocacy appears to be undergoing a shift as the number of PhD-level researchers at conservation advocacy organizations grows. Drawing on my case study of one researcher at a prominent conservation nongovernmental organization (NGO), I have shown how this shift is manifested in the communication of NGO research. My study includes a discourse analysis of this researcher's publications from the forums of both scholarship and advocacy including, as a representation of discourse in the latter forum, gray literature (reports, books, and other texts produced and distributed outside the channels of the academic and publishing industry). I have also drawn on my interviews with this researcher about her publications. My study highlights specific features typical of her rhetoric that result from her occupying a hybridized cultural and professional space where research and advocacy overlap.

In some form or another, scientists and other researchers are involved in finding solutions for virtually every problem our society currently confronts, including, of course, environmental problems. Environmental research, moreover, takes place in many different organizational settings, including academic institutions, government agencies, and private industry. Recently, some advocacy organizations committed to environmental conservation have established themselves as significant centers of scientific research. This new kind of conservation organi-

zation, engaged in advocacy and research at the same time, represents a departure from the previously widespread split between conservation and science whereby conservationists in the advocacy sector consume (through application) the knowledge research scientists in the academic sector produce. One driver of this trend is that academic researchers have not kept up with the demands of their consumers in the advocacy world. As a prominent scientist at a leading conservation organization recently observed, “the main ... drawback to leaving research entirely to the academics is that there are too few of them” (Fonseca, 2003, p. 346). As a consequence, more and more NGOs have begun to produce the knowledge they need by adding PhD-level researchers to their staffs and providing significant funding for in-house research on conservation problems. Consequently, notes Fonseca, “for some years now, a good volume of conservation science is being generated by the NGO sector” including “much of the new and exciting research” in conservation (p. 345).

However, the research practiced by conservation NGOs, because it is intended above all to support the specific advocacy aims of particular organizations, differs in significant ways from research as it is commonly practiced in the academic sector. The research conservation NGOs produce embodies what Gibbons et al. (1994) argue is a new mode of knowledge production. Traditionally, within the academy, what Gibbons et al. refer to as “curiosity-oriented” research has predominated, meaning research focusing on problems that “are set and solved in a context governed by the, largely academic, interests of a specific disciplinary community” (p. 3). However, this academically located, discipline-centric demarcation of research is shifting as more and more knowledge-producing expertise and resources spread to extra-university institutions such as NGOs, which are growing in size, number, and influence (Salamon & Anheier, 1996). As knowledge production has spread to these new contexts, a new mode of research has become increasingly prevalent—Gibbons et al. refer to it as “mission-oriented” research (p. 23). Mission-oriented research is not focused necessarily on building a body of disciplinary knowledge, but instead seeks solutions to the particular problems—often related to social issues like environmental and public health, poverty alleviation, etc.—that various institutions are working to solve. Within this new mode of knowledge production, multidisciplinary teams in both academic and nonacademic settings collaborate on applied research intended to solve a particular societal problem rather than contribute to a body of disciplinary knowledge.

In the field of conservation, mission-oriented knowledge production has grown as NGOs have developed their capacity to produce original research. NGOs have been a significant force in environmentalism and conservation for quite some time. Exact numbers are hard to come by because of the size and diversity of the environmental NGO sector, but a 1999 study estimates that in 1990 more than 100,000 NGOs worldwide were focused on environmental problems (Runyon, 1999). Thousands more have likely been established since 1990. While the vast majority

of these organizations are small and relatively limited in their influence and scope of activity, many large and quite influential environmental NGOs have emerged. Within the US, they include The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF), The Sierra Club, and the Natural Resources Defense Council. Many of these large organizations now have the resources to hire full-time PhD-level researchers to carry out research aimed at organizing, prioritizing, and coordinating the work of conservation. Indeed, the number of national and international NGOs who now employ biologists, social scientists, and other researchers has grown to the point where policymakers are increasingly turning to NGOs rather than academic institutions or government agencies for environmental data and analysis (WRI, 2003). As a result, the boundary that has traditionally divided academic research and advocacy in conservation is becoming increasingly blurred, with conservation NGOs now occupying a boundary zone of sorts in the overlapping and sometimes antithetical cultural and professional spaces of (a) conservation research, predominantly centered in the academy, but, as noted above, increasingly spilling over into NGOs, and (b) conservation advocacy and implementation, primarily centered in the NGOs.

As the discourse community of (academic and nonacademic) conservation researchers evolves in response to this trend, the forums of conservation research continue to expand beyond the conventional discursive spaces of the academy—i.e., specialized journals and academic books—to those of conservation advocacy and implementation, i.e., reports, books, and others types of publications developed, produced, and distributed by the NGOs on the front lines of conservation. Among many researchers and librarians, much of this latter category of discourse is often referred to as *gray literature*.

The origins of the concept of gray literature can be traced to scientific and technical *report literature*, a term that first became common in the 1940s as government-sponsored reports flourished due to intensified WWII-related research and development (Auger, 1994). The term *gray literature* emerged in the 1980s as a way of referring not just to report literature produced by government agencies and other organizations outside commercial and academic publishing, but also anything not available through the channels of the commercial book trade. As participants at the Third International Conference on Gray Literature (held in 1997) agreed to define it, gray literature is “that which is produced at all levels of government, academia, business and industries in print and electronic formats but which is not controlled by commercial publishers and where publishing is not the primary activity of the organization” (Aina, 2000, p. 178). Auger (1994) notes that much gray literature is produced outside the rigors of any formal refereeing system, is often characterized by a nonprofessional layout and format and relatively low print runs, and is commonly issued by pressure groups who need to publish quickly and may have limited funds and “no scope for the niceties of sale or return and trade discounts” (p. 2). NGOs can be counted among these pressure groups that produce gray literature.

My study<sup>1</sup> investigates the shifting boundary demarcating research and advocacy in conservation by examining the discourse, including gray literature, produced by one researcher at a prominent international conservation NGO headquartered in Washington, DC. At the time of my study, this NGO had over 30 offices worldwide and a staff of approximately 800. My study focuses on the organization's research center (henceforth, the Center), which was created in 1998 with an initial \$35 million donation from a prominent Silicon Valley entrepreneur and a mission to serve as a "distant early warning center" for threats to biodiversity. To carry out this mission, the Center sponsors research fellows working at partner organizations around the world and maintains a full-time DC staff of approximately 60, including about 30 research scientists and 25–30 management and support staff. The Center's researchers engage in a range of conservation-related inquiry, including comprehensive species status assessments, remote aerial and satellite-based monitoring of landscape changes in threatened areas, and analyses of the social dimensions of environmental degradation and conservation.

In this study, I analyze the publications of one of the Center's researchers in order to examine features of the overlapping discursive spaces of conservation research and advocacy. I refer to these discursive spaces, respectively, as scholarly and advocacy forums. The individual whom I studied, Katrina Brandon, is a social scientist at the Center. She holds an interdisciplinary PhD in development sociology, economics, and conservation and describes her field as conservation planning coupled with agricultural and rural development. She has spent her career doing research for various conservation and development NGOs. I performed a comparative discourse analysis of four texts from Brandon's record of publications—two published in scholarly forums, two in advocacy forums. I also conducted an interview with Brandon in which I asked her to contextualize various aspects of her publications. My study is aimed at extending a tradition of context-oriented discourse analysis in rhetoric studies that includes, for example, Huckin's examination of the discourse of homelessness (2002), Barton's analysis of doctor-patient discourse (2004), and Faber's study of emergent representations of nanoscience in public discourse (2006). In what follows, I draw on data from both my textual analysis and my interviews to show how Brandon adapts her discourse to the scholarly and advocacy forums within which she publishes her writing.

## TEXTUAL ARTIFACTS

My study focuses on 4 of the 28 journal articles, chapters, and reports Brandon had authored (or coauthored) throughout her career at the time of this study. These 28

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<sup>1</sup>My study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the university where I completed this work.

texts are fairly evenly distributed between scholarly and advocacy forums, which I define as follows: scholarly forums include academic journals and books published by academic publishers; advocacy forums include gray literature and books published by NGOs. I chose two publications from each forum type. The scholarly publications I analyzed consisted of a chapter from a scholarly book and a journal article. The advocacy publications included a chapter from an NGO-published book and an example of gray literature, namely, a report published by the World Bank. For brevity, I will refer to these texts, respectively, as SF1, SF2, AF1, and AF2. Each is identified and briefly summarized below.

#### SF1: Book chapter

Brandon, K. (1997). Policy and practical considerations in land-use strategies for biodiversity conservation. In R. Kramer, C. von Schaik, & J. Johnson (Eds.), *Last stand: Protected areas and the defense of tropical biodiversity* (pp. 90–114). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. This chapter is a strong critique of several common assumptions within the conservation community, such as the assumption that local people in tropical forests live in harmony with nature when isolated from the developing world, or that local communities are always motivated to use their forests sustainably if given the proper support and training.

#### SF2: Journal article

Brandon, K., & Wells, M. (1992). Planning for people and parks: Design dilemmas. *World Development*, 20, 557–570. Based on research Brandon and Wells did for AF2 (described below), the article introduces “integrated conservation-development projects” (ICDPs)—a relatively new and little-studied approach to conservation, at least at the time of this article.

#### AF1: Book chapter

Brandon, K. (1998). Perils to parks: The social context of threats. In K. Brandon, K. H. Redford, & S. E. Sanderson (Eds.), *Parks in peril: People, politics, and protected areas* (pp. 415–440). Covelo, CA: Island Press. Jointly published in 1998 by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), one of the largest international conservation NGOs, and Island Press, a nonprofit environmental publishing organization, the book reports and draws lessons from nine case studies of protected areas (or parks) in TNC’s Parks in Peril program, which seeks to bolster conservation in parks that, for various reasons, have historically been protected in name only.

## AF2: Gray literature

Wells, M., & Brandon, K. (1992). *People and parks: Linking protected area management with local communities*. Washington, DC: The World Bank. This report examines the effectiveness of land-use projects that focus on reconciling the conservation-oriented goals of protected areas (e.g., national parks, wildlife reserves) and the socioeconomic needs of communities and individuals displaced by, living in or near, or otherwise connected to protected areas. The authors coin the term *integrated conservation development projects* or ICDPs to describe these projects.

These four texts represent the types of discourse Brandon typically uses in both scholarly and advocacy forums. In the sections that follow, I draw on my analysis of these texts as well as Brandon's commentary on them to illustrate both contrasts and similarities between scholarly and advocacy discourse in conservation. I first discuss contrasts between Brandon's discourse in both types of forums, focusing on the constraints advocacy organizations impose on their researchers' discourse and the dynamic of Brandon's dual identity as both conservationist and scientist. When publishing in advocacy forums, Brandon has often been compelled by her advocacy sponsors to downplay politically damaging criticism despite her objections, which are grounded in her scientific commitment to disinterested analysis. A related contrast is Brandon's tendency to present herself as a disinterested observer more in scholarly forums than in advocacy forums. Yet, while distinctions such as these exist between Brandon's scholarly and advocacy discourse, her published work in the two forums share an important similarity, namely, that their explicit, persistent purpose is conservation advocacy.

## POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS IN ADVOCACY FORUMS

One of the strongest distinctions between Brandon's discourse in advocacy versus scholarly forums is the extent to which she has had to grapple with the political implications of her rhetoric for the conservation movement in general and the NGOs sponsoring her work in particular. As these four texts show, her research and writing tend to focus on identifying problems in how a particular aspect of conservation is either conceptualized or executed and then suggesting solutions. As a researcher she appears to see it as her role to provide conservationists with an analytical perspective on their work, which of course often entails critiquing the status quo. In addition, all other considerations aside, she prefers to be direct in delivering criticism. She commented that she is known for "being a little too blunt," but she modifies this aspect of her writing "depending on where it's published."<sup>2</sup> She and her scientific colleagues at the Center give and receive criticism "in a posi-

<sup>2</sup>All quotes from Brandon are taken from an interview I conducted with her on March 5, 2005.

tive, peer-review kind of spirit,” whereas the NGO community as a whole, because “they don’t have that tradition of peer review, ... [often] get really upset” about the kind of criticism Brandon views simply as “analytical thinking.”

SF1 illustrates how Brandon prefers to present analysis when writing outside the forums of advocacy. As she explained, in this chapter she was free to be direct in her criticism because she was between jobs and thus was not writing as a representative of a particular NGO. So, when presenting her criticisms, Brandon openly identifies responsible parties more frequently in SF1 than in the advocacy-forum texts, as the following examples illustrate<sup>3</sup>:

The danger is that these positions continue to be reiterated on a national and international basis, as reflected in such policies and planning documents as *Caring for the Earth* (Munro et al., 1991), the 1992 World Parks Congress, and the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987). (p. 95)

One clear example of the failure to promote strong policy reform as a serious initiative comes from the World Bank. (p. 97)

Shifting our focus to AF1 and AF2, however, we see that Brandon frequently endures complicated, drawn out, and in some cases tense negotiations with internal stakeholders at NGOs as she attempts to publish critique in advocacy forums. As she put it, “you never know how much an institution is going to hold you back.”

Connections between the discourse of AF1 and AF2 and the activities and goals of the two publications’ sponsoring organizations are explicit in various attributes of the texts. The text of AF1 contains numerous references to the publishing organization (TNC), especially those where TNC staff were involved in theorizing the design and implementation of protected areas, i.e., the “park planners” named in this statement of AF1’s purpose: “This chapter reviews some of the ‘perils to parks’ that are clearly rooted in the social context, in an attempt to explicitly guide park planners to recognize the social and political nature of their actions” (p. 417). TNC is also explicitly referenced in these and other examples throughout the chapter:

A program such as PiP [TNC’s Parks in Peril program] can accomplish a great deal on all of these fronts. (p. 415)

... programs such as PiP need to be sensitive to this context when they begin the process of implementation. (p. 426)

AF2’s connection to its sponsoring organizations is on open display in the cover and first few pages of text. The cover (see Figure 1) includes logos for the

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<sup>3</sup>Further examples illustrating my points here and elsewhere can be found in Lindeman (2006), the larger study that is the basis for this article.



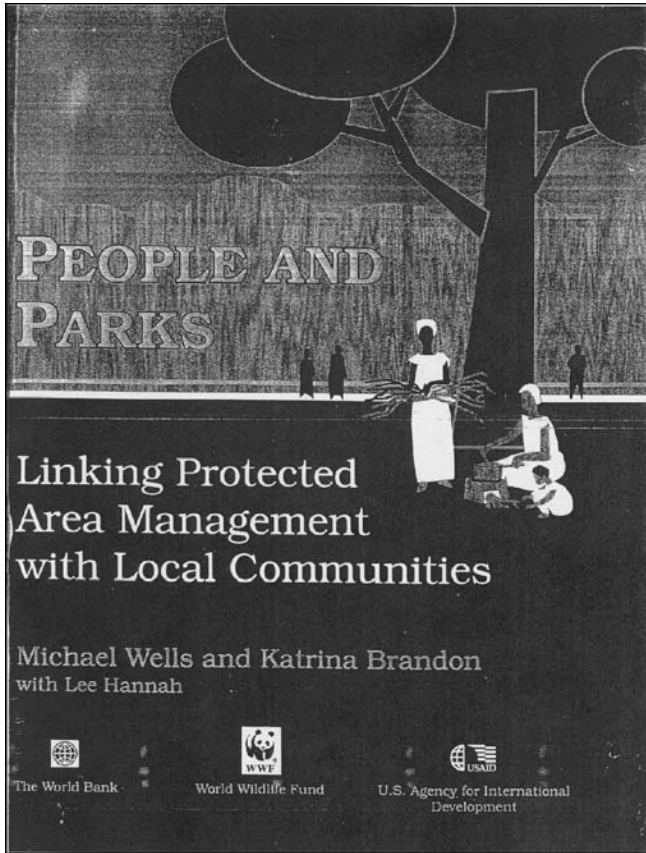


FIGURE 1 Cover of AF2, a report published by the World Bank (1992) entitled *People and Parks*. Logos of the report’s three sponsoring organizations (World Bank, WWF, USAID) are displayed at the bottom of the cover.

World Bank, WWF, and USAID featured prominently at the bottom of the page. The masthead includes a lengthy disclaimer stating that the text represents the views of the authors, not the publishing organizations, and that “the designations and presentation of material in [the maps] do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Bank ... concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city, or area, or of the authorities thereof, or concerning the delimitation of its boundaries or its national affiliation” (p. ii). Finally, a foreword is also included, signed by representatives of each of the sponsoring organizations, in which the report is linked to the broader mission of biodiversity conservation.



Brandon's explanation of how these texts were developed further illustrates how the discourse was shaped in response to the aims and interests of their respective organizations. AF1 was part of a book published by TNC that was based on assessments of parks associated, either through their origins or management, with TNC. As a result, writing and editing the book meant negotiating, in Brandon's words, a "political minefield." Things became politically complicated from the very start because TNC sent Brandon and other researchers to assess sites that "TNC thought ... were doing really well in most cases," but the researchers quickly found evidence to the contrary. As Brandon explained, "I thought [most of the parks] were just a mess. But I couldn't say 'Gee, TNC, your projects are a mess.'" Or at least she was told not to say that after writing a first draft that was critical of the parks, and therefore she ended up changing the draft considerably.

She was careful to note that she still reported back to TNC staff that their sites were having problems, so the "information wasn't being lost," but in the book this information had to be presented in a way that did minimal harm to TNC's reputation. So, for example, Brandon noted that one of the "perils to parks" she describes seems obvious and noncontroversial in how she presents it for the book's readers but is based on controversial findings that she could not report explicitly without harming TNC's image. In the chapter, Brandon explains that a park's "circumstances of origin" are a potential peril or, in other words, "how a park is formed is going to last for a really long time," which, she was quick to add, "doesn't sound like rocket science." But what she really found in her research was much more incendiary: "What I didn't want to say was 'In nine of these places, you kicked people off their land [when creating a park]. Of course they're still pissed 20 years later.'" In contrast, Brandon sometimes gives specific examples when giving praise. She sees the difference not so much in terms of public relations for TNC but as a way of presenting bad news constructively:

I think a fair way to put it was that I wanted to include what the problems were as a way of getting people to try and fix them. But I wanted to hide people's names for anything that was done wrong. However, in places where somebody seemed to be doing something well, it made sense for me to call attention to that because ...just like with little kids, praise gets you further.

AF2 went through a similar internal review process, though much more tumultuous. Indeed, the process ultimately led to Brandon leaving the organization she was working for at the time. The problem began in the early stages of the project. WWF, the World Bank, and USAID, as well as Brandon and her coauthors, began the study thinking they would be evaluating "everyone's best projects." The study and report were "supposed to be skewed towards the best conservation projects that were helping people in the world." Brandon and her coresearchers designed a

rigorous methodology for evaluating the handpicked case studies: “We spent a good chunk of time and developed a really detailed, serious research tool.” Once they got to the field, however, they realized their methodology was useless because so much of the data they wanted to analyze were simply unavailable—people had no idea what their budgets were or how money was spent, the projects themselves never established baselines for evaluating their progress, etc. More important, Brandon et al. quickly realized that the projects were not exemplary at all: “We went out to the field and went ‘Ah, shit, these projects suck’ ... I was just going ‘If this is the best, this is terrible.’”

The first draft they wrote reporting the disappointing results of their study was “critical and disparaging” of the case study sites. Brandon described the draft as being much more “in your face” than the final, published version. After circulating this initial draft for review, the leadership of Brandon’s organization tried to stop publication entirely: “I was actually called in front of the president of WWF and told that if I published what was in there I’d be fired.” Internal reviewers, she said, were saying things like “Are you trying to destroy our fund-raising?” Initially WWF was not simply asking for major revisions—they “didn’t want anything to come out” at all.

Brandon, however, was unwilling to conform with this demand so she quit working for WWF and became a consultant for the World Bank. (She did not comment on resistance from the World Bank and USAID, which might indicate that objections came primarily from WWF.) No longer an employee of WWF, Brandon was able to go ahead with the report but, as she explained:

I’m a reasonable person, and so I listened to their concerns for the second version of the report .... The second version ended up being something that was more, I won’t say the criticism’s not there, but I think it’s a little more constructive in how stuff is framed .... I would say we toned it down a little bit, but I didn’t feel like we changed any of the messages at all.

Although she was not privy to internal discussion at WWF after she left, Brandon noted that “somebody [at WWF] had to have given the final sign-off because WWF decided to put their logo on the final report.”

These two texts are not exceptional examples of the extent to which advocacy-forum research is subjected to revision due to the political concerns of sponsoring organizations. Brandon noted that one conservation NGO she worked for was “pathetic” in its concern about the politics of publishing her research. While employed there, she had at least four or five “huge, good” publications that were never published “because they had review committees and they never came out of the review committee because they couldn’t even decide who should be on the review committee.”

## BALANCING IDENTITIES: DISINTERESTED SCIENTIST VERSUS COMMITTED CONSERVATIONIST

As a scientist, Brandon's commitment to providing disinterested accounts of her research, even if it is critical of the activities of her sponsoring organization, has often led to difficult prepublication negotiations with internal stakeholders at NGOs. Brandon's role as disinterested scientist is also on display in certain rhetorical features of her published discourse, although with some variation as we compare her work in scholarly and advocacy forums. Not surprisingly, Brandon adopts the dispassionate language of science when publishing in scholarly forums. For instance, SF1 and SF2 are both characterized by widespread use of passive voice. Two examples from SF2 are listed below, drawn from dozens in both texts (emphasis added):

The value of traditional enforcement activities, however, *is increasingly being questioned* as a long-term solution to the protection of many critical ecosystems. (p. 557)

... the benefits generated from tourism *have been poorly captured and distributed* to the local community. (p. 560)

Used in this way, the passive voice obscures human agency in the study and downplays the subjectivity of the study and its results, thus giving the discourse a tone of objectivity. When Brandon shifts to presenting her work in advocacy forums, she maintains this tone of neutrality. Her writing in AF1 and even more in AF2 is similarly steeped in passive voice and other sentence constructions that obscure the involvement of humans in gathering and interpreting data, such as the placement of inanimate objects in the subject position of sentences.

Yet, even though Brandon maintains a tone of disinterested objectivity throughout her discourse in both types of forums, contrasts between her discourse in scholarly and advocacy forums show, if not a tension, then a fluctuation in the persona she assigns herself in relation to the world of conservation. In other words, the extent to which she counts herself as one who is committed to the cause of conservation or simply a disinterested observer and analyst varies throughout her discourse.

In SF2, Brandon maintains a clear distinction between herself and the conservation movement, referencing "conservationists" in third person throughout the article, as in these examples:

An emerging view among conservationists is that the successful management of protected areas (PAs) must include the cooperation and support of local people. (p. 557)

Among conservationists, there has been increasing awareness of the needs of impoverished local people who live adjacent to PAs and depend on these resources for their livelihoods. (p. 558)

Only in the conclusion and footnotes do first-person pronouns appear, as in these examples (emphasis added):

*We* can also agree that poverty amelioration should be a goal worldwide. (conclusion, p. 567)

*We* need only note the current US budget deficit, the inaction on acid rain and the dilution of the Clean Air Act to demonstrate that this [choosing to use resources unsustainably] is the prevalent form of decision making. Why should *we* expect poor people to make “better” choices than *we* do? (footnote, p. 568)

However, these pronouns include the authors in either the community of researchers or the community of world citizens—not necessarily in the community of conservationists.

In other texts from both types of forums, the distinction between insider and outsider is preserved intermittently. In SF1, she alternates throughout the text between including and excluding herself—and, presumably, her primary audience of academics—in/from the world of conservation advocacy and implementation. In a number of instances, she uses the pronoun *we* to assign agency (emphasis added in all examples):

In practical terms, *we* would like to think that *we* are knowledgeable about how to plan and execute conservation activities ... (p. 95)

The lesson is that if *we* do not pay attention to both policy and field-based incentives, *we* are unlikely to achieve success. (p. 98)

Yet, sometimes on the same page, she switches to the third person in assigning the same type of agency (emphasis added):

These shortcomings are largely due to a belief among *conservationists* that what *they* are doing is conservation—when, in fact, *they* are really doing large-scale social interventions in complicated settings. (p. 95)

*Conservationists* have not learned to take consumption patterns and desires into account adequately. (pp. 105–106)

Alternate first- and third-person references aside, Brandon’s choice of topic in SF1 appears to align her more strongly with an outsider perspective. Steeped in hard-nosed criticism of various aspects of the conventional wisdom among conservationists, the article was especially appealing to its immediate audience of natural scientists. (The conference at which Brandon presented the prepublication version of the chapter was attended predominantly by biologists.) Brandon explained that

biologists are generally put off by what they see as a lack of realism in conservation: “The biologists tend to like what I say because what I say for the most part resonates with the world they see. That it’s not all nice and wonderful and easy and that this stuff [conservation] is really hard.” They also appreciated the broad scope of Brandon’s chapter, her attempt to analyze as she put it, “the whole idea of sustainability,” an idea, she noted, that many biologists struggle with. By her own admission, she “covered a lot of territory squashed into one place” which was another feature (density) that made the chapter appealing to the biologists in her audience.

Finally, AF1 also illustrates Brandon’s dual insider/outsider identities through alternating first- and third-person references to conservationists (emphasis added):

An illusion exists among *conservationists* that what *they* are doing is conservation—when the case studies make it clear that they are really doing large-scale social interventions in complicated settings. (pp. 416–417)

But *we* have lost sight of what *we* are really trying to do with parks. In trying to make them socially acceptable and “accepted,” *we* are holding parks responsible for curing structural problems such as poverty, unequal land distribution and resource allocation, corruption, economic injustice, and market failures. (p. 418)

Brandon’s roles and the features of her discourse in the scholarly and advocacy forums of conservation are not identical. When participating in advocacy forums, she tends to be drawn into much more internal negotiation and, in many cases, significant revisions to accommodate her NGO managers’ concerns about the political implications of publishing self-criticism. She also varies in the extent to which she acknowledges her own commitment to the cause of conservation. However, my study also shows that Brandon’s discourse is deliberately consistent in purpose, an illustration, perhaps, that the boundary dividing advocacy and research in conservation is becoming increasingly blurred.

## ADVOCACY REGARDLESS OF FORUM

Brandon uses all the forums for her work—both scholarly and advocacy—for the purposes of advocacy. This was a dominant theme both of my analysis and of Brandon’s responses to my interview questions. This trend is manifested in a number of ways in Brandon’s discourse.

As Brandon explained, she expected AF1 and, more broadly, the book AF1 was published in, to have a significant impact on how conservation was being practiced. First, she thought her own organization at the time, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), would be influenced by it: “I thought it would make some kind of change in how TNC did business or conceived of things or something like that.” Second, she

thought that, after being translated and distributed to conservationists in Latin America (where the nine parks that were the focus of the book's case studies are located), the book would "really ... have major ripples throughout Latin America."

This overriding goal of impacting the practice of conservation by influencing not only her colleagues at TNC but the broader world of conservation practitioners, especially in Latin America, influenced many of Brandon's rhetorical choices as contributing author and editor of the book. She named park managers repeatedly and frequently linked her points to the types of work they do, as in the following examples:

Upon taking the job, a park manager's first sensation has to be a tremendous sense of, What have I gotten myself into? (p. 417)

Park managers can increase support for parks, and minimize local conflict, by helping to identify the reasons for scarcity ... (p. 430)

She was also careful to use simple sentences and minimal jargon, something, she explained, she has tried to do in everything she writes: "It doesn't matter if it's a journal ... I try really hard, if I can, to have simple sentences." In this particular book, as editor she insisted on adding summary paragraphs at the end of every section despite her coeditor's objection that these were redundant. She wanted to include "synthetic materials" to keep readers "on track." She described the book's writing as "workmanlike," observing that "in the first chapter, [which she wrote], it's like 'Okay, we have 9 case studies and 13 themes. I'm going to go through each one of these 13 themes and I'm going to give you an idea about what the topic is, what we found there, and a little bit about what it means.'" In her view, these features of the text make it more accessible to readers beyond her community of scientists and other technical experts who are accustomed to reading more specialized discourse, and thus were intended to boost the text's impact in the broader world of conservation advocacy and implementation.

Brandon also noted that the community of conservation advocates and implementers—not academics—were the primary audience for AF2. She and her coauthors had planned a separate book for the academics. With this primary audience in mind, Brandon focused on making the writing simple, direct, and accessible "so the people in Latin America would be able to follow it," because she felt like "that was [her] constituency." She described the process of accommodating her various audiences in some detail:

We recognized a lot of the terms were going to be jargony for some of our audience and so [we tried to make it] a simple, straight story that wasn't too long ... and divided in sections. We were trying to make it so you knew where you were going. A detailed table of contents so that you would be able to be guided through the whole thing. I think we started with it like in three chapters and then we kept on breaking it into more chapters to make them shorter—each chapter was shorter so that it was a little

bit more self-contained. But we were very consciously trying to simplify things. None of that was done by anybody else. It was all us trying to go “All right, how do we guide the reader through it.” And I think we also tried to pay attention to topic paragraphs and a first sentence—we weren’t always good with it, but that was very, I know that was explicit in the writing.

Indeed, the report appears to be designed to meet the needs of many different types of readers. As Brandon noted above, the table of contents is highly specific, listing not just chapters but major sections within chapters. A three-page summary of the report’s contents is included before chapter 1. Summaries of study data are available at three different levels of detail: “Brief descriptions of the projects at each case study site are included in Box 1.1 and their locations are shown on Map 1.1. Summaries describing and analyzing each case study, and site maps, are included in the appendix. Extended versions of these summaries are available from the authors” (p. 4). The descriptions in Box 1.1 include just three or four sentences per case study. Descriptions in the appendix, in contrast, are much more detailed. Each is several paragraphs long, covering the following standard categories per site: area name and size, project name, implementing organization, responsible government agency, funding amount and source, project scope, region, project activities, and evaluation. A professional-quality map is also included for each study site. In addition, boxes are used frequently throughout the report (23 total) as a rudimentary device for dividing details useful to some but not all readers from the main body of text.

Another important rhetorical pattern linked to the advocacy orientation of AF2 is its forward-looking rather than evaluative presentation of the study. The authors move from summarizing information and describing their findings to interpreting their findings and prescribing appropriate ways to act on them early in the text, instead of waiting until the final chapter to draw lessons from the study. The early chapters, to be sure, are predominantly descriptive. Chapter 2 describes the basic features of ICDPs, drawing on examples from the case studies, and chapter 3 continues in a descriptive mode, providing extensive descriptions of three contrasting ICDPs in order to illustrate the diversity of these types of projects. As early as chapter 4, however, the mode becomes more deliberative and prescriptive. Here the authors argue, among other things, that buffer zones (lands adjacent to protected areas where use is partially restricted to provide an additional layer of protection) are considerably problematic in their implementation, and that ICDPs yet have much to learn from the field of rural development. In chapter 5 they argue that ICDPs succeed more at fostering development than conservation. Chapter 6 shifts back to a predominantly descriptive mode, drawing on study data to explain different methods of involving local communities in ICDPs. Chapter 7 is more deliberative, arguing for certain types of involvement by supporting organizations. Chapter 8 builds on the central claim of chapter 5 by arguing that ICDPs should be judged on explicit conservation outcomes. Chapter 9 is similarly prescriptive in that it offers several recommendations for improving ICDP design and execution.



A related rhetorical feature is the authors' frequent use of the imperative mood to direct readers in acting on the report's results. The following are two examples (emphasis added):

It is not enough, then, for the social and economic development components of ICDPs to avoid the pitfalls of rural development; the ICDPs *must also organize* their activities to enhance—or at least not threaten—nearby protected areas. (p. 29)

To facilitate the identification, dissemination, and adoption of sound technical practices, appropriate social and institutional arrangements *must also be established*. (p. 33)

The imperative mood is used regularly throughout the report—it is not only found in the final chapter's recommendations section.

Problematizing the notion of a distinct boundary between academic and advocacy discourse in conservation, Brandon explained that AF2 was widely read and referenced in both scholarly and advocacy forums: "It's pretty much cited in almost anything about people-kinds of issues and conservation projects" and "had very high impact in conservation organizations ... as well as in academia," she said. Even a prepublication draft of the report, which was distributed broadly within the report's three sponsoring organizations and also among some of Brandon's colleagues in the field, is still in circulation. Brandon commented that in her travels since writing the report she has often run into people who still "have xeroxed copies [of the pre-publication draft], not even the ones that we sent, that had like a cardboard cover stapled to it, a heavier weight."

The authors' original plan was to produce two separate publications—a shorter report for readers in the field and a book-length treatment of the subject that "would be much more the thing for academic value and a bigger-picture kind of a framework." The report was published first, and before the authors were able to start work on the book "the report [had] already made the crossover into the academic world." Consequently Brandon et al. decided that, while "a book would be nice for our glory," it was no longer needed because "the messages already got there" (i.e., to the academics).

The report was seen as a seminal work on the topic of integrating conservation and development for at least two reasons. First, it was groundbreaking. As Brandon pointed out, "it was the first thing published that was sort of a broad, sweeping review [of the subject]. There was nothing else out at the time." Second, it was published at a time when conservation was just beginning to emerge as an academic discipline. In the early '90s, a time, Brandon noted, when conservation biology—the most established conservation discipline—was itself a new field, academics were just beginning their attempts (still ongoing) "to define academic disciplines that would cover ... the social aspects of established disciplines." So because, in Brandon's words, her report was "aiming to be somewhat interdisciplin-

ary,” it caught the interest of readers in many different disciplines linked to conservation.

Shifting to scholarly discourse, we see that Brandon’s purpose of influencing and guiding advocates and implementers of conservation is unwavering, even when she uses an academic forum to publish her work. She appears to believe that many researchers at advocacy organizations—some of her colleagues at the Center in particular—are publishing their work in prestigious scholarly forums in order to impress current and potential donors and generate positive media coverage (in the media outlets of the US and other developed countries) for a particular conservation issue, but are not doing enough to reach people in the field:

Unfortunately we’re still on this thing where, “What impresses [the director of the Center] and [the organization’s main benefactor]?” Well, [articles in] *Science* and *Nature*. And ... in the press they are picked up, and they get to one audience .... But if I’m out talking to people who are park managers and I’m like ... “Did you hear about this big thing in *Science* recently?” and they all go “Huh?”

In her own work, she seems to be committed to overcoming this problem. For example, Brandon envisioned the audience for SF1 as being much broader than the conference of academic scientists to whom she presented a prepublication draft. Like most of her scholarly discourse, she explained, she wrote SF1 not because she “was looking for things to pad [her] CV” but because she was “looking to try and do things that are going to get out there and somehow make a difference.” Making a difference in 1992—the year the conference took place—meant targeting a different audience than it does now. Back then, she had international NGOs, the World Bank, and the donor community in mind as a primary audience, with the idea that “strategic thinking about how we need to do these things has to come from above.” Now, 10-plus years later, she believes the same type of book should also be targeted to the user community, i.e., park management professionals and authorities in developing countries who only recently have become a viable audience for these kinds of publications because they now have the technical capacity and training to understand and implement this kind of knowledge.

Similarly, Brandon explained that her primary audience for SF2 was not the academic community but rather the NGO community: “I thought that the article, because it was shorter [than AF2, where her research was initially published], it would hit the development community [the World Bank, etc.] by and large, [and] would have a better impact at improving project quality.” In the months and years following SF2’s publication, however, she was surprised to see that it had a significant impact on the academic community and, to her disappointment, minimal impact on the practitioners: “It was really well received and looked at by the wrong people. I shouldn’t say wrong—by my non-target audience.” The article is frequently cited, she explained, by academics in fields like international agriculture

and development sociology, but rarely by authors in NGOs, especially conservation NGOs. Occasionally, Brandon told me, she will check the references of a relevant publication to see if SF2 or AF2 (both based on the same research) is cited. Generally, academics cite SF2 and authors in advocacy organizations cite AF2, despite her desire to reach nonacademics with SF2.

Brandon's audience of advocates and implementers guided a number of SF2's rhetorical features, including the text's emphasis on the practicalities—as opposed to the theory—of executing successful projects integrating conservation and development objectives. Drawing on firsthand observation and analysis of these types of projects, Brandon and her coauthor carry their discussion beyond the expository sections introducing the ICDP concept to include an extensive consideration of how the “performance” (p. 562) of ICDPs might be improved. A key rhetorical device in this section is the unanswered question. The authors pose over 30 questions at various points in their discussion that are left unanswered, presumably because project designers must confront them on a case-by-case basis. For instance, in a passage where they discuss balancing the need to research a project versus the need to act to stave off irreparable environment damage, the authors ask: “What is the appropriate trade-off between information gathering and urgency? How can these be balanced? What does this trade-off mean for selecting sites? Should areas where the problem is urgent be excluded from the ICDP approach?” (p. 563). The same rhetorical pattern is repeated at least seven more times before the article ends. It appears to show that implementers—individuals and groups on the front lines of conservation—in addition to academics are a primary audience for this text.

For similar reasons, she wrote SF2 with a “checklist-y” structure (her term), which she described as a “really nonacademic” feature. The following passage is an illustration:

These systems within indigenous cultures are prone to breakdown ... under the following conditions, if: (i) there is a substantial increase in the local population; (ii) the area available for exploitation is substantially reduced; (iii) a few commodities increase in value and become more heavily exploited. (p. 565)

Several similar passages appear throughout the text, and they were included for the specific benefit of people in the field doing conservation and development work. As Brandon explained, she used lots of lists as a way of saying “Okay, everyone doing these projects ... I'm assuming you're not going to read [a long book on project design] so here are the seven things you've got to do.”

Finally, Brandon explained that, in an attempt to reach the people on the front lines of conservation, she tried to be more “direct” in her writing, especially in describing negative examples of projects to support her points. She also tried to make the article “really clear” and avoided making too many assumptions about what her readers knew. Finally, she kept the focus on practice rather than theory. As she ex-

plained, “If I was writing it to try and get tenure I would have couched it in completely different ways. I would have tried to tie it to some theoretical basis.” She reflected on the irony that her first article in the premier journal of her discipline was so devoid of academic theory: “If I’d been in grad school and you’d said ‘Oh, what’s the first article you’ll ever do in *World Development*?’ I would have said ‘Oh, it’s got to be political ecology ... and here I do something that’s devoid of any theory at all, which would have been shocking to me in graduate school.’”

## CONCLUSION

This study investigates the ways in which researchers such as Brandon represent a new mode of mission-oriented knowledge production that takes place on, and is redefining, the boundary that divides forums of advocacy and research in conservation. My close analysis of and interviews about Brandon’s published discourse in scholarly and advocacy forums illuminate features of the discourse in these two types of forums that appear to be more or less stable.

The results of my study suggest that the internal reviews of research reports within advocacy organizations are often intense, complicated, and frustrating processes for NGO scientists who may often be caught between adhering to the discursive norms of science and accommodating the political interests of their organizations. Because advocacy-forum publications function, either explicitly or implicitly, as evidence of both the sponsoring organization’s policies and efficacy, their authors may find themselves expressing their work in a more nuanced fashion than they might prefer. Scholarly forums, not surprisingly, offer more freedom for NGO researchers to engage in discourse about conservation without concerning themselves as much with what the political consequences might be.

Another finding is that NGO researchers may assume a disinterested, objective persona when engaging in scholarly discourse more often than they do in advocacy discourse. This is not a particularly surprising fact, given that science is culturally defined in part by a norm of disinterestedness. However, instances where Brandon’s dual persona as objective observer versus committed advocate were manifested in her rhetorical choices suggest that the discourses of scholarly and advocacy forums in conservation are meaningfully distinctive.

At the same time, this study indicates that, at least in terms of rhetorical purpose, the boundary between advocacy and scholarly discourse in conservation may be shifting. The overriding purpose of Brandon’s discourse in both scholarly and advocacy forums is to further the cause of conservation by communicating her work to those who are in a position to implement it. This was evident in Brandon’s comments on her work, in which she consistently noted her goal of reaching a particular audience of implementers. It was also evident in her rhetorical choices for the texts—she appears to be continually concerned with making her discourse as

accessible as possible to a broad audience so that her ideas and research can have a magnified impact on how conservation projects are designed and executed. Again, this particular feature of her discourse is not all that surprising when associated with publications in advocacy forums, but because it appears to be equally prominent in her scholarly discourse, it illustrates what may be a shift in how the discourse of research in conservation is delineated from other spheres of rhetorical activity.

These conclusions are certainly limited by the fact that this study included only a single researcher at a single organization. Yet, because Brandon's organization is one of the world's largest and most influential conservation NGOs, especially in terms of its resources and accomplishments in the area of research, the results of this study, I believe, provide a valuable indication of trends in the discourses of conservation science and advocacy. As scientific and technical fields become increasingly intertwined with political advocacy, growing numbers of researchers will continue to leave the academy to work in support of causes they believe in, such as conservation. In doing so, they are likely to confront rhetorical challenges their academic training and experience have not prepared them for. To better prepare new researchers to meet these challenges, they should not just be taught to design, execute, and communicate research properly in their particular disciplines; they should also be taught to investigate the context that leads to arguments in their fields, to understand how arguments can be effectively structured to persuade audiences in the various forums connected to research and advocacy, and to analyze and respond effectively to the dynamics of information control within organizations whose mission includes advocacy.

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Neil Lindeman is an assistant professor in the Technical and Professional Writing Program at San Francisco State University. His research focuses on the intersection of science and advocacy in the public sphere.

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