Writer's Statement about "'Write' and Wrong: An Analysis of the Linguistic Differences in Men's and Women's First-Year Technical and Engineering Writing"

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Like most people, I didn't know what I wanted to do after high school. Up until my junior year, I thought maybe I'd major in English; I enjoyed reading, and I knew I wrote well, so it seemed as good a plan as any. In my junior year, however, I took an engineering class on a whim with a couple of my friends, and that plan changed entirely. Although I was good at reading and writing, I was also good at math and science, and so I decided to go down the engineering route instead.

When I learned that I would be doing an involved research paper in ENC 1102H, I was not as distressed or as intimidated as some of my peers. For me, the most difficult part of the research project was not the writing of the paper; I had already written several lengthy research papers in high school. Rather, the difficult part of this project was determining what I wanted to do the research on and how I would collect the data. I was required to do my research project on writing in my career field, which was engineering. I was not familiar with the genre of engineering writing, but I wanted to find a topic that I would enjoy researching.

After some brainstorming, I focused on the stereotype that engineers can't write. I thought it would be interesting to look into, especially since I write well myself. While I chose to explore this aspect as my research project, I felt I needed to narrow it down in order to make it more feasible. Because I'm a female engineer in a male-dominated field of study, I thought to include gender as a variable in my investigation. When researching for my annotated bibliography, I found several sources that indicated a relation between the two, which got me more excited to actually investigate. One of my favorite parts of this project was looking through these sources to find quotes to help support my point and weaving them into my Review of the Literature.

One of the difficulties I ran into in doing my research was finding documents written by an all-female team, as women are largely outnumbered by men in engineering classes. I was forced to instead look at majority-female and majority-male groups instead. Another problem I had was widening the pool of data. I knew that I couldn't analyze just one document from one project, as any trends I noticed could potentially be trends caused by the project topic. In order to prevent this, I

asked a friend from a different university for additional writing samples. The samples weren't strictly samples of "engineering writing"; rather, they were lab reports, and so I switched my focus from strictly "engineering writing" to the more general "technical writing."

While I knew my immediate audience would be my professor, Dr. Galbreath, I also kept in mind the fact that other people could be reading my paper eventually. I also knew that neither my professor nor most of that extended audience would be engineers, and so I did my best to make my paper about engineering writing accessible and understandable to non-engineers. It wasn't too hard, as I have only just started learning the genre of engineering writing myself, but it was something I was conscious of as I was writing.

In writing this paper, I had hoped to call attention to how a reluctance to change could prove detrimental to the future of engineering publications. Despite the rising shift in the demographics of engineers, however, it is unlikely that the genre of engineering writing will change any time soon. The system currently in place is effective, and has been established through decades of precedent. For now, it is important for engineers to learn and conform to the current standards for the genre of engineering writing if they hope to get published.