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COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH AND THE INDIVIDUALIST IDEAL OF HUMANITIES SCHOLARSHIP

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Abstract

Since the middle of the 20th century there has been an increased interest in collaborative research amongst scholars in diverse disciplines, institutions and locations. This is principally evidenced by the growth rate of multiply-authored research papers. Beaver and Rosen forecast "the virtual demise of the lone researcher" (1979:237), and Price made his now famous prediction in 1963 that "by 1980 the single author paper will be extinct" (Gordon, 1980:193). Although this prediction has not come to pass and, as Wray posits (2002: 166), is not likely to in the foreseeable future, Avkiran maintains that "collaborative research will probably continue as research content and methodology become more sophisticated, and academic survival becomes more dependent on publishing" (1997:173). This paper interrogates the prevailing assumption that collaborative research is quantitatively and qualitatively superior to individualist research and therefore deserves to be promoted across all disciplines and contexts. By critically indexing some of the studies carried out in the field, the paper observes that collaborative research is both disciplinarily and contextually determined. While it is reported, for instance, to be more suited to researches in the hard and social sciences, it is against the individualist ideal of humanities scholarship; and while it may result in improved research productivity in technologically developed societies, in developing nations, such as Nigeria, it is more likely to diminish research productivity. The paper concludes, however, that where the objective is not strictly for improved research productivity, there are accruable benefits, even to humanists, in research collaboration.

Keywords: Collaborative Research. Research Productivity. Humanities Scholarship. Co-authorship.

1. Introduction

Interest in collaborative research amongst scholars in diverse disciplines, institutions and locations has witnessed an unprecedented increase since the middle of the 20th century. Evidenced principally in the growth rate of multiply-authored research papers, Beaver and Rosen forecast "the virtual demise of the lone researcher" (1979:237), and Price made his now famous prediction in 1963 that "by 1980 the single author paper will be extinct" (Gordon, 1980:193). Although this prediction has not come to pass and, as Wray posits (2002: 166), is not likely to in the foreseeable future, Avkiran maintains that "collaborative research will probably continue as research content and methodology becomes more sophisticated, and academic survival becomes more dependent on publishing" (1997:173).

Research collaboration, with its attendant co-authorship of research findings or papers, has been the norm in the hard sciences, while humanities scholarship has been traditionally characterized by individual researches and single-authored publications.[1] However, collaborative research has also been increasingly enlisting the support of humanities scholars (Ede and Lunsford 1990, Cathy Davidson 1999). The general assumption is that it is a much more productive way, both qualitatively and quantitatively, of conducting research and deserves therefore to be promoted (Bayer 1982, Lawani 1986, Landry et al 1996, Godin and Gingras 2000, Abt 1984, Beaver 2001, Lee and Bozeman 2005). Although most of these studies were carried out in the hard and social sciences, some of them claim the veracity of their findings across all disciplines (Beaver, 1986). As a matter of fact, in today's increasingly interdisciplinary relations, the changing patterns of communication occasioned by new affordances of digital technology and growing application of scholarship to material socio-economic concerns, collaboration is fast becoming the preferred mode of scholarly investigation in many disciplines. Considering that "knowledge sharing among researchers is believed to be conducive to a significant increase in research effectiveness" (Abramo, D'angelo and Di Costa, 2009: 156), several policy makers, research institutions and funding agencies

promote collaborative research, providing conducive environments and resources for scholars to get together and engage in investigations of mutual interests and benefits, within and across disciplines, institutions, and national borders.

Many scholars have, however, interrogated the common assumption that collaborative research is quantitatively and qualitatively superior to individual researches. Some have demonstrated that the correlation of collaborative research to publications is essentially inconclusive (Avkiran 1997:175, Bridgstock1991:43, Abramo et al 2009:159). While some evidence a positive influence of collaboration on the quality of publications (Abt 1984, Adams et al 2005), others observe that collaborative research does not unconditionally lead to better and more productive research outputs (Dundar and Lewis 1998). As a matter of fact, some researchers suggest not only that collaborative research does not positively influence publications qualitatively and quantitatively, but that in some fields and environments, it actually results in lower productivity rates (Duque et al 2005).

Irrespective of the celebrated benefits of collaborative research and its scientific methods of investigation, some scholars do not view it as an adequate research method across all disciplines. According to Bridgstock, "different areas of research have different instrumental and technological prerequisites [and] ... there may be areas in which working with co-authors is advantageous, but not essential" (1991:46). For instance, many humanities scholars do not partake of the growing excitement over collaborative research. They view it instead as a practice that is more fitted to the hard and, to a large extent, social sciences. Sundry researches reveal that, in general, collaborative research is relatively unpopular in the humanities.[2] Ede and Lunsford observe that "everyday practices in the humanities continue to ignore, or even punish, collaboration, while authorizing work attributed to (autonomous) individuals" (2001:357). "After all," Davidson observes, "it is the latter that gets one tenure, fame, and outside offers" (1999: par. 10).

In this study, I examine the nature of collaborative research, its strengths and weaknesses, with the objective to determine, first, whether it is demonstrably correlated with the quality and quantity of research

output, especially as implicated in co-authored research publications; and second, whether it rightly deserves to be promoted across all disciplines, especially in the humanities. In this pursuit, I hope to attend to the following research questions: Does collaborative research really improve both the quality and quantity of research productivity across all disciplines? Is collaborative research responsive to contextual peculiarities and, therefore, unlikely to have the same impact irrespective of prevailing material and social contexts? My interest in this line of investigation is, I must confess, reasonably domestic: I wish to see why some humanities scholars at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, perceive the prospect of inserting evidence of research collaboration and co-authorship into the requirements for promotion of academics as an attempt by hard and social scientists to emasculate humanities scholarship, rob it of its classic individualist ideal, align it with the sciences and place humanities disciplines at some disadvantage. Indeed, some espy a design to enfeeble humanists through the growing promotion of applied and empirical researches. Thus, I would want to determine whether collaborative research, especially as evidenced in co-authorship, is a reliable instrument for the measurement of scholarly integrity in all academic disciplines; whether it is a reliable criterion in the appointments and promotions of academic staff, especially of humanities scholars.

II. What is Collaborative Research?

To collaborate in the execution of any project indicates a working engagement of two or more willing people on a mutually beneficial task. Collaborative research can therefore be defined as the engagement of two or more scholars in a particular research project that is of mutual interest and benefit to them. The objective could be to increase the quantity and quality of knowledge production through the coordination of specialist perspectives, procedures, apparatuses, experiences and competencies. In the first instance, it is presumed that collaboration occurs where the scholars involved not only share the same objectives and interests but are reasonably positioned to be able to contribute equitably; that is, they possess more or less the same intellectual stature. They should be, as Wray puts it, "epistemic equals" (159-160). Collaborative research is

also promoted as a more productive mentoring procedure whereby senior researchers collaborate with junior ones, such as postgraduate students and rookie researchers, and functionally demonstrate and pass on their expertise and methods to their mentees. In this sense, such engagements are essentially more beneficial to the students and young researchers but not to their more experienced mentors. In any case, it is presumed that the most attractive benefit to collaborators is improved epistemic productivity. Since collaborative research is adjudged most commonly by the publication of multiple authored papers, Avkiran defines it simply as "research papers written by two or more people" (1997:173). But who really qualifies to be credited in a multiply-authored publication? What must a contributor to a research project do to merit acknowledgement in a published paper as collaborator or co-author?

Naturally, one would expect that everyone named in a research publication as co-author is a 'collaborator' in that research project. On the other hand, it should not be expected that everyone involved, no matter how remotely, in every research project is acknowledged as a co-author. Understandably, a collaborator's contribution should be substantial. However, determining what constitutes a substantial contribution in a collaborative research is rather problematic because of the wide range of possible types of contribution that particular researches may demand. These could be administrative, theoretical or practical. A research assistant, for instance, might make very significant contributions to a research project but she is not usually considered a collaborator. A friend's informal suggestion might turn out to be the most substantial theoretical basis for a research publication but she may not be mentioned as co-author in the published research paper. On the other hand, an administrator or head of a unit who may have helped with funding and technical provisions but not in the actual execution of the research may end up being named a collaborator in a research publication. Bridgstock observes that "there can be 'honorary authorship' for various reasons, where an author has in reality made no substantial contribution to the paper. It might be, for example, that papers with two 'authors' were actually written by one, and a senior scientist's name added later" (1991:46-47). The point here is that, for whatever reasons, some 'co-

authors' either contribute insubstantially or not at all, and therefore hardly deserve to be credited with authorship.

III. Forms of Research Collaboration

Research collaboration can take diverse forms, ranging from a research partnership formed between two researchers in a particular faculty within same institution, to that between several scholars from different institutions, disciplines and countries; between academic institutions and industries. In view of the huge breakthroughs in information technology, researchers do not always need to physically get together in order to collaborate. Katz and Martin categorise all forms of collaborative research into two major levels: the inter- and the intra-: that is, between or within certain planes. In addition to these they observe that "a collaboration can be either homogeneous (i.e. unambiguously either the inter or the intra form of collaboration) or heterogeneous (that is, a mixture of the inter and intra forms of collaboration)" (1997:16). The table below captures most possible forms of collaboration.

Different Levels of Collaboration and Distinction between Inter and Intra Forms

	Intra	Inter
Individual	-	Between individuals
Group	Between individuals in the same research group	Between groups (e.g. in the same department)
Department same	Between individuals or groups in the same department	Between departments (in the institution)
Institution	Between individuals or departments in the same institution	Between institutions
Sector	Between institutions in the same sector	Between institutions in different sectors
Nation	Between institutions in the same	Between institutions in different

country countries

Courtesy: J. Sylvan Katz and Ben R. Martin (1997:34)

IV. Why Researchers Collaborate

As already stated, the most common position attributed to the encouragement of collaborative research is improved productivity. This not only benefits the individual collaborators but knowledge production generally. Lee and Bozeman, citing Beaver and Rosen (1978), list 18 factors that motivate collaboration amongst researchers:

> ... access to special equipment and facilities, access to special skills, access to unique materials, access to visibility, efficiency in use of time, efficiency of use of labor, to gain experience, to train researchers, to sponsor a protégé, to increase productivity, to multiply proficiencies, to avoid competition, to surmount intellectual isolation, need for additional confirmation of evaluation of a problem, need for stimulation of cross-fertilization, spatial propinquity, and accident or serendipity (2005: 676).

The nature of the research often determines the suitable form of collaboration to adopt or whether collaboration is desirable in the first place. Such researches that commonly invite collaboration include those that require different categories of competency that are much beyond the capability of an individual researcher. This kind of research has become increasingly prevalent because of the growing popularity of interdisciplinary engagements. Certain disciplines which hitherto existed independently are increasingly finding collaborative research attractive. In such cases researchers pool their individual specialised knowledge and skills together. Even within disciplines, collaborations between different scholars are often motivated by the need to improve quality of research

by bringing in new ideas, scope, methods or different perspectives on several research themes. Other motivations for collaboration may be economic (it is cheaper to get researchers together and share facilities and equipment that are too expensive, scarce or cumbersome to procure or move about for use by individual researchers) and even diplomatic (to improve international and intercultural relations and exchange).

V. Disadvantages of Collaborative Research

Regardless of the acknowledged merits of collaborative research it is not free of its own difficulties. Collaborative research in certain disciplines and subjects can be counterproductive and even impossible or undesirable. According to Avkiran,

> Actual collaboration and co-ordination of the authors' inputs may not be a smooth process. If a collaborative paper that ultimately attracts more citations takes considerably more time to produce, then some of the synergies of teamwork are lost. Some of the other potential problems of collaboration are the difficulty of research design and final write up when co-authors are from different disciplinary backgrounds... Collaboration can potentially restrict the creativity of individuals (1997: 174).

Sometimes what motivates collaboration is not any interest in the research itself. Some researchers would collaborate on anything so long as someone is putting some money down on it. Such researches often amount to a total waste of time and resources because they sometimes end up being unproductive. Additionally, some collaborative research publications are fraudulent and exploitative of postgraduate students and junior researchers.

Some scholars have observed that some research collaborations may have a negative impact on productivity. Lee and Bozeman argue that

> Staying in touch by various media, engaging in social ingratiation, waiting for others to comment, respond, or do their part of the research – these are just some of the factors

> taking time and energy even in the best collaborative relationships. Not all collaborations are ideal. Most active collaborators have had projects that were never finished or that had disappointing results because one or more of the collaborators did not live up to expectations (2005: 674).

Wray also cites a number of difficulties which collaborative research sometimes engenders. These include: "a diffusion of epistemic responsibility" which makes it difficult to precisely ascertain and credit individual responsibilities. This situation might lead to an erosion of the motivation of researchers to collaborate or produce, especially in the case of young scientists who are yet to distinguish themselves in their fields. Knowledge production in those fields that do not involve large collaborative projects is bound to be diminished because of potential funders' disinterest in individual researches and collaborative projects involving very few researchers. Strong research groups with regular access to funding might turn into a social network and begin to "serve political, rather than epistemic, ends" (2002:164-166).

VI. Evaluation of Research Collaboration or Co-authorship

In the past decades, many researchers have put the assumption that collaborative research positively impacts on productivity to the test by empirically evaluating the exact impact of collaborative activity on the performance of research systems. Based on the general equation of collaborative research with co-authorship of publications, the most common method deployed in this evaluation is bibliometry. The assumptions here are, first, that every collaboration ends in a co-authored publication; second, that those credited with authorship are those who contributed 'substantially' to the research. Of course, we know these assumptions to be untrue in many cases. Some collaborative research projects may lead to individual publications while some lead to no publications at all. We identified the practice of 'honorary co-authorship' where scientists not actively involved in a particular research are credited with co-authorship. Katz and Martin observe that "the investigation of several instances of scientific fraud has revealed how common the practice of making colleagues 'honorary co-authors' has become" (4).

We have also observed that, in addition to the problem of determining what constitutes substantiality, the practice of co-authorship is still largely problematic, such that a substantial contributor might not be acknowledged as a contributor, while an insubstantial or non-contributor may be credited with co-authorship for some social, political, logistic or even fraudulent reasons. In any case, is there a precise manner in which the contribution of co-researchers can be measured? Is it possible to quantify the contribution of every researcher in a collaborative relationship? In addition, as implied in bibliometric measurement, do all research collaborations result in co-authorship? For several reasons, collaborators might jointly initiate, test and exchange ideas, but publish their observations, findings, interpretations or deductions individually.

The dominant issue in the debate on collaborative research and multiple authorship is not essentially whether research collaboration has any merits or not, but whether it is demonstrably quantitatively and qualitatively superior to single-authored publications. Several methods, with differing efficiencies, have been deployed by researchers in estimating the validity, or otherwise, of this hypothesis. An interrogation of all of these methods demonstrates how difficult it is to arrive at an absolutely unqualified success in determining the relative superiority of collaborative research. One such method, which is posited as "a robust and comparable method of assessing academic quality and performance" of collaborative authorship is citation analysis (Avkiran 1997:175). This is simply a measurement of the number of times a published work is cited in relevant publications. This information is provided by some specialised databases such as the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and the Science Citation Index (SCI). However, there are a number of difficulties associated with this method that could result in "an artificial inflation of the total number of citations for a given paper" (176). For one, there is what could be described as negative citation, wherein authors cite publications not for their scholarly integrity, but more for a lack thereof. Secondly, authors might cite their own publications for no reason other than to increase their citation count (176).

One other method of comparatively determining the quality of multi- and single-authored papers is by calculating their rates of acceptance and rejection by the referees of reputable journals. Using this

method, a number of researchers have arrived at varied findings supporting, especially in the sciences, the claim that co-authored papers are more frequently accepted for publication than single-authored ones (Gordon 1980, Presser 1980, Zuckerman and Merton 1971). Although a number of these researches are rather inconclusive, the method itself does not really prove which mode of authorship is superior or inferior. As Bridgstock points out, "these studies throw light only upon the acceptance rates of papers; they tell nothing about the relative quality of the papers accepted, and subsequently published" (1991:39). There are a few reasons why the high rate of acceptance and subsequent publication of multiply-authored papers is no indicator of their relative superiority. In the first instance, it is very possible that, since most of these studies investigated publications in scientific journals, they demonstrate no more than disciplinary preference, with no indication as to the intrinsic quality of the accepted or rejected papers. Secondly, multiply-authored papers would naturally have gone through a pre-refereeing process, being pre-assessed by all the authors, prior to submission for publication in journals. Thus certain editorial and other infelicities on the grounds of which papers are rejected would have been sorted out by the co-authors.

A third method worthy of mention, which investigates the claim that collaborative research witnesses increased productivity, is simply by counting. Researchers merely take a count of researchers' publications in order to determine whether collaboration increased the productivity of these researchers. Lee and Bozeman employed this method in their study, using the publications of 443 individual academic scientists. They adopted two measures to the data collected: "a simple count of peer-reviewed journal papers (a normal count) and a fractional count in which co-authored papers are divided by the number of co-authors" (2005:675). They discovered that "when publishing productivity is measured by 'normal count' (a scientist's total number of publications), collaboration is a strong predictor of publishing productivity. When publishing productivity is measured by 'fractional count' (dividing credit by the number of co-authors), collaboration and publishing productivity are not significantly related" (693).

A fourth method, which strives to remedy the difficulties with bibliometric measurement, is the deployment of 'reported collaboration' rather than co-authored publications. Duque et al deployed such a method because "the study of co-authorship neglects many important forms of collaboration" (2005:757). It neglects the fact, for instance, that many collaborative engagements do not end in co-authored publications; they could lead to single-authored papers or no publications at all. They find that collaborative research by itself does not improve research productivity; that, as a matter of fact, peculiar environmental factors determine the productivity or otherwise of research collaborations (775).

What is apparent from the reported findings of these major research methods is that there is no reliably consistent procedure for calculating the intrinsic value of collaborative research, especially its correlation with productivity.

VII. Is Collaborative Research Sector Peculiar?

There is no doubt that the growth rate of collaborative research is high. However, many researchers observe that certain disciplines as well as certain research methods are inherently more receptive to collaborative research than others (Abramo et al 2009:170). As a matter of fact, collaborative research and co-authorship would be decidedly incongruous with a number of disciplines and modes of research. Although Landry, Traore and Godin argue that "collaboration is conducive to academic productivity", they observe that "some researchers have higher incentives to collaborate than do others," and "the effect of collaboration on productivity varies according to ... the field of research." Thus they posit that "scientists in the humanities (theology, philosophy, literature) were found to be less productive in collaboration than were others. This is probably due to the fact that their fields of research do not easily lend themselves to collaborative research" (1996:298). Wray not only posits that "collaborative research is more popular in the social sciences than in the humanities, but less popular in the social sciences than in the natural sciences," but he goes on to explain the reason for the differential: collaboration is only common in those research environments in which "substantial resources are required for which there is competition." Thus he explains "the lack of collaborative

research in the humanities, research fields where extensive resources are not required in order to research effectively" (2002: 159).

It would seem, therefore, that such disciplines and methods that privilege objective, quantitative or scientific investigations, such as the hard and some of the social sciences, are more attuned to collaboration than those that privilege subjective, qualitative and interpretive research methods, as is the dominant case in the humanities.

VIII. Is Collaborative Research Contextually Peculiar?

One other important issue to consider is whether research processes are significantly structured by contextual peculiarities. Most of the studies on the subject of collaborative research and productivity focus on research processes in North America and Western Europe. But is it tenable to presume that if one finds a strong correlation between collaboration and research productivity amongst researchers in, say, the United States, one will likely find same correlation amongst researchers in Nigeria? In other words, does collaborative research by itself, intrinsically, command a certain relationship with research productivity irrespective of the material environment where the research project is carried out? Lee and Bozeman interrogate "the strong belief among policy-makers and apparently most scientists that scientific collaboration has positive effects on scientific productivity" (693) and observe that the assumption is rather complicated: "In some cases, collaboration has a positive effect on productivity; in other cases, it has little discernible effect on weighted publication productivity; and, in still others, it may even have a suppressing effect" (2005:693). Instancing Duque et al (2005), they posit that "suppressing effects may be the most likely outcome in some cases in developing nations" (693). Duque et al (2005) themselves undertake a comparative study of scientists in less-developed parts of the world in order to test the cross-sectorial validity of this assumption. Drawing their sample of scientists from universities and research institutes from Kenya, Ghana and Kerala, in south-western India, they find that environmental peculiarities significantly impact on research productivity:

> The taken-for-granted policy assumption is that collaboration naturally leads to productivity and that Internet technologies will naturally facilitate both, independent of local context. This set of relationships is empirically supported in the developed world. In the less-developed contexts of our study, not only do these relationships break down, but they may even be reversed in some circumstances.
> ... [while] scientists from Kerala are the most productive, have the best access to e-mail, and report the fewest problems in their research – they are also the least collaborative. At the other extreme, Kenyan scientists are the least productive, have difficulty with e-mail access, and report the most research problems, but they manage to collaborate a great deal (2005:775).

IX. Is Collaborative Research Qualitatively and Quantitatively Superior?

Although the supposition is very strong among research policy makers in general that collaboration yields improved research productivity, many investigations reveal that determining the correlation of research collaboration and qualitative and quantitative productivity is "difficult" (Abramo et al 2009:157). Bridgstock's study, which purposely set out to examine the findings from some studies indicating that "the relationship between number of authors and paper quality is stronger in the harder sciences, such as physics and astronomy" (1991:44), examines publications in four journals – two of these "were selected as intermediate" (43) while the other two were in the "harder sciences, such as physics and astronomy" (44). He concludes that:

> ... no clear case exists for asserting that, in general, papers with more than one author are of higher quality. The evidence is roughly balanced between support for and contradiction of the theory. The evidence is more positive among the hard sciences, particularly astronomy and physics, but even here it is not unanimous (46).

Duque et al observe that collaborative research has been uncritically adopted as a "scientific value", such that it "led to a positive valuation of collaboration for its own sake" (756). However, even if, as many researchers have observed, collaboration does show a marked correlation with research productivity, there are variables within the collaborative process itself that may be responsible for the recorded productivity rather than the mere activity of collaboration. Lee and Bozeman identify a number of such variables likely to impact on productivity in collaborative research processes. These are: age, rank, status, research grants, contracts, gender, family relations, citizenship, job satisfaction, perceived discrimination, and collaboration strategies. They argue, for instance, that "the relationship between collaboration and productivity will be moderated by the researchers' strategies for collaboration: those seeking collaborators with complementary skills or strong scientific reputations will have the greatest productivity gains from collaboration and those seeking primarily to help students or junior colleagues will have fewer productivity gains" (677-680).

Thus, evidences from these studies strongly suggest that there is no empirical basis for the general assumption that collaborative research, as a rule, positively influences the quantity and quality of research productivity even in the natural and social sciences. Surely, there are lots of reasons to promote collaboration in certain kinds of research and in certain disciplines, but improved productivity does not seem to be ineluctably one of them. For instance, after observing the strong "presence of sectoral peculiarities" which accounts for abiding inconsistency in the degrees of correlation between collaboration and productivity in various fields of scientific research, Abramo et al submit, almost in resignation, that "there are sound and reasonable arguments remaining to support policy measures in favour of networking and collaborations among research groups. In particular, one of those arguments is that networking and collaborations help disseminate knowledge and research results more rapidly and pervasively" (2008:170).

X. Conclusion: The Individualist Ideal of Humanities Scholarship

So far, it has been reasonably established that collaborative research is not necessarily interlinked or synonymous with co-authorship, and that it is neither an efficient nor equitable yardstick for measuring research productivity. Research shows not only that productivity index of collaborative research is environmentally and disciplinarily determined, but that in the humanities and in developing economies, collaboration has either an insignificant or even negative correlation with the quality and quantity of research productivity. While collaborative research is comparatively more popular in the hard sciences than the social sciences, in the humanities it is rather unpopular. Even humanities scholars who now advocate for a space for collaboration in humanities research acknowledge its comparative inconsistency in relation to the hard and social sciences (Ede and Lunsford 2001:363-364). The reasons for this lie in the very nature of humanities disciplines themselves and the kinds of research they characteristically privilege. For the archetypal lone humanist researcher, whose work tools are no more than an equipped library and a word processor, 'collaborating' with other researchers via contact with their published works, needs neither special funding nor sophisticated equipment. As a matter of fact, physical collaboration for the typical humanist would be a distraction; it would negate her individualist ideal of achievement. Davidson observes that "a humanist often views collective academic life as antithetical to individual accomplishment" (Davidson, 1999: par. 10).

Ede and Lunsford complain about what they perceive to be "disjunctures or contradictions between theory and practice" (2001:356); between the pronounced death of the author – the social constructionist turn in postructuralist/postmodern critical thinking – and the persistence of the authority of the autonomous individual author in the academy:

> Since the mid-1980s we have been calling on scholars in rhetoric and composition, and the humanities more generally, to enact contemporary critiques of the author and of the autonomous individual through a greater interest in and

> adoption of collaborative writing practices ... Though we can certainly note some responses to this call at the level of scholarly and pedagogical practice, in general we would have to characterize these responses as limited" (355-356).

It would seem that since humanists are not actually opposed in theory to the socialisation of authorship, there might be a compelling reason why they resist it in practice. This could simply be that "success in the academy depends largely on having one's work recognized as an individual accomplishment" (Ede and Lunsford: 357). After all, there are several collaborative strategies and practices that humanists engage in, such as conferences, seminars and fellowships. The impediment seems to be the issue of co-authorship; the equitable crediting of intellectual output/production – how much credit should go to individuals in a co-authored paper and whether some individuals credited with co-authorship significantly contributed to the publications. As Avkiran notes, "a resume that is dominated by collaborative research publications can raise the question whether that person is capable of implementing the full research process without assistance" (182). This is in addition, of course, to whether the individual was even involved at all in the writing of the papers cited. There is also the more important question of whether the collaborative system is actually conducive for every kind of research.

However, should productivity be the only motivation for collaborative research, and co-authorship the only outcome of such engagements? And should the humanities continue to shun collaborative research because of the evidenced inconsistency in the correlation of collaboration and research productivity, as well as its perceived negation of the individualist ideal of humanities scholarship? As already demonstrated, collaborative research is neither all about productivity nor co-authorship. Thus, when the objective is not research productivity and the outcome is not co-authorship, would there be "sound and reasonable arguments remaining to support" collaborative research in the humanities? For instance, are the following benefits sufficient reasons for humanities scholars to embrace collaborative research?: "division of labour, complementary skills, time efficiency, intellectual stimulus,

intellectual renewal or new skills learned from collaboration, companionship and a sounding board to discussion of research, access to equipment, communication of new information, and new publishing opportunities" (Lee and Bozeman 676). In my opinion, these certainly are valid motivations. However, to return to my original context, it would seem that the privileging of collaboration in research activities in the humanities and the 'developing countries', such as the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, is inadvisable, especially where the objective is improved qualitative and quantitative productivity.

NOTES

1. The humanities comprise such disciplines as history, literature, languages, performing arts, philosophy, archaeology and linguistics. Unlike the sciences which emphasise objective and quantitative investigations of phenomena, the humanities disciplines undertake critical and theoretical analyses. Rather than the empiricism of the sciences, the humanities are open to contradictions and doubts; interrogate feelings, ideas and ethics, morality and societal values. Essentially, humanities scholarship is home to logical argument and criticism. Thus its methods and modes of enquiry are characteristically qualitative, subjective and interpretive.
2. This is peculiar to 'digital humanities' where humanities scholars need to utilise competencies, techniques and tools that reside in other disciplines, such as technology and computation.

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