

Collaborative Writing

ECS 3167 Webinar

Handout

Collaborative writing comes in many different forms. Researchers Andrea Lunsford and Lisa Ede in their study *Singular Texts / Plural Authors: Perspectives on Collaborative Writing*, identified 7 different patterns of behavior that constitute collaborative writing, arranged in decreasing levels of participation.

1. Team or group plans and outlines. Each member drafts a part. Team or group compiles the parts and revises the whole.
2. Team or group plans and outlines. One member writes the entire draft. Team or group revises.
3. One member plans and writes draft. Group or team revises.
4. One person plans and writes draft. This draft is submitted to one or more persons who revise the draft without consulting the writer of the first draft.
5. Team or group plans and writes draft. This draft is submitted to one or more persons who revise the draft without consulting the writers of the first draft.
6. One member assigns writing tasks. Each member carries out individual tasks. One member compiles the parts and revises the whole.
7. One person dictates. Another person transcribes and revises.

Compare the following two quotes and decide which project you would rather have been a part of:

In collaborating on writing this book we searched for a single voice—a way of submerging our individual perspectives for the sake of the collective “we.” Not that we denied our individual convictions or squelched our objections to one another’s points of view—we argued, tried to persuade, even cried at times when we reached an impasse of understanding—but we learned to listen to each other, build on each other’s insights, and eventually to arrive at a way of communicating as a collective what we believe. Hence, this book is not separated into parts that we wish to attribute to one or the other of us, even though each of us took the primary responsibility for different parts. There may be stylistic differences from one section to the next, but the book as a whole is the product of our joint efforts and interchange of ideas.

--Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, Jill Mattuck Tarule. *Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind*. Basic Books, 1997.

A Kinsey Institute sex survey that could help researchers understand how AIDS spreads was delayed for almost a decade because two of its authors fought over whose name should appear first on the title page.... Publication was scheduled in 1980, when an intense dispute broke out about whose name should appear on the title page.... The survey languished for years, unavailable to most researchers, until [an Institute Director] persuaded the authors to settle their differences. "What Revolution?"

Managerial role

1. Managers should provide the time and resources for the group to meet, to agree on key issues and strategies, and for natural leaders in various areas of expertise to emerge.
2. Managers should design a task that calls for or invites collaboration; the team needs to work together in order to complete the task effectively. The kinds of tasks that call for or invite collaboration are of three kinds: **a) labor-intensive** – needing to be divided into smaller subtasks in order to be accomplished effectively and efficiently – appropriate when all group members have same areas of expertise, **b) specialized** – needing multiple areas of expertise, appropriate when group members bring different professional strengths, **or c) synthesized** – needing divergent perspectives brought together into a solution acceptable to the whole group or an outside group – appropriate when group members represent different agencies or organizations.
3. Managers should provide the time and resources for the group to evolve their own norms of conduct and negotiate their own authorities and responsibilities. In facilitating such negotiations, managers and teams should consider four areas of authority – within the group itself, within the profession, within the task, within the writing. –allow leaders to evolve at various stages as appropriate.
4. Managers should allow for and encourage creative conflict and protect minority views.
5. Managers should allow for peer and self-evaluation during and after the assignment.
6. Managers should ask participants to monitor and evaluate individual and group performance and to reflect on the processes that made for effective – or ineffective – collaboration.)