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**Abstract**

This qualitative study explores how life science postdocs' perceptions of contemporary academic career rationales influence how they relate to collaboration within research groups. One consequential dimension of these perceptions is the high value assigned to publications. For career progress, postdocs consider producing publications and especially first author publications essential. This strong focus on publications is influential for how postdocs prefer to organize the socio-epistemic processes of their research work. To ensure first authorship, avoid authorship conflicts and keep the number of co-authors low, they articulate a preference for working mainly individually. Existing collaborations and support relationships are frequently assessed in terms of whether they will have to share or lose authorship. Hence, while formally, the life sciences have become more collaborative, postdocs report that in their day-to-day practices, they try to avoid collaboration. By drawing attention to this tension, the author aims to contribute to a growing debate about incentive systems in academic science and their unexpected negative side effects. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)