Students frequently resist participating in collaborative writing assignments because they fear they will be graded unfairly. In order to overcome this resistance, instructors must be able to explain how students will be assessed, using criteria that students consider valid. This paper argues that theories of fairness developed by social psychologists--called distributive, procedural, and group--could be a way to make this argument and to build a model for assessing collaborative writing, drawing on the results of a survey of first-year composition students who had completed collaborative assignments.

"'It isn't fair, it isn't right,' Mrs. Hutchinson screamed, and then they were upon her."

--"The Lottery," Shirley Jackson (302)

"Fair grading is something many students wish existed."

--Hazel, a participant in my study(FN1)

Collaborative writing puts many students in what they believe is a strange position. They are used to working alone, and now they have to depend on others to complete a task and to earn a reward. In this way, they are like Mrs. Hutchinson in Jackson's story, whose community is celebrating a harvest festival that ends with a sacrificial victim selected by lot. While students are not in as serious a situation as Mrs. Hutchinson, most feel the same sense of betrayal and danger when they think about grades. They attend college hoping to gain the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in their careers. Grades are not only the most obvious way to reach that goal, but also the most obvious barrier. When students submit writing to an instructor, some may feel like Mrs. Hutchinson when she reaches into the lottery box, knowing she may draw the black dot that marks her for stoning. These students are terrified that their teacher will use standards that unjustly devalue their work, making their fate seem as random as Mrs. Hutchinson's. To these students, just treatment, or "ensuring that each person receives what he or she is due," is an important concept (Cohen 1).

Researchers in composition studies often emphasize the importance of fairness. Edward White, for example, says, "if we [teachers] are not interested in fairness, we have no business giving assessments or using their results" (287). However, most composition research does not critically examine the fairness of grading systems. It merely says a grading system works because few students complain or because the system measures what the instructor expects.(FN2) Brian Huot raises this point when he challenges White's conflation of reliability and fairness. While Huot believes "consistency is a component of fairness, there is nothing within current assessment procedures which addresses, let alone assures, fairness" (88). If composition wants to try to add more concrete versions of fairness to our assessments, we need to look to other fields. Models of fairness have been developed in fields as varied as philosophy, economics, political studies, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and public policy (Cohen ix-xi). In this essay, I argue that social psychology provides the models composition can adapt in order to fairly assess
collaborative writing. (FN3)

While many compositionists have used philosophical definitions of fairness, social psychology seems to provide a better fit to the reality of the classroom. Grading is a practical action embedded in the social context of a class. Teachers know their students, and I think most of us want to maintain a pleasant relationship with them while we work together. In addition, face validity, where "the assessment ... seem[s] credible to students and other stakeholders," is a central part of fairness (Freeman 27). No matter how fair grading criteria are in theory, if students consider them unfair, the system will seem unfair. (FN4) Face validity is not, as Gertrude Conlan notes, a "substitute for other types of validity" (111). When dealing with resistant students, however, face validity is a good place to start.

While using social psychology as a theoretical base may make sense logically, I first needed to investigate whether this choice of theoretical lens could accurately describe students' thinking about fairness. Determining an appropriate theoretical lens was an essential part of my larger research project: an analysis of methods used for assessing collaborative writing done in First-Year Composition, focusing on determining what characteristics make the methods seem fair or unfair to students. Although many compositionists enthusiastically support collaborative writing, students often resist participating in these kinds of projects because they fear they will be evaluated unfairly. To respond to that fear, instructors must convince students that they will be graded fairly. Making this argument requires a detailed understanding of the assessment methods so that instructors can tell students exactly what each method measures, using terms that students accept.

In order to learn more about how students define fairness, I surveyed 134 students in ten classes taught by four different instructors, including myself, during 1999 and 2000. (FN5) The instructors answered a call for participants placed on a regional listserv. Three of them, including myself, were working as graduate teaching assistants at a research I university in the Carolinas. The fourth, in addition to being a GTA at the research I school, worked as an adjunct at a liberal arts university, also in the Carolinas. All instructors assigned the collaborative project at the end of the semester; three instructors assigned problem-solution papers, while the fourth allowed the students to choose the genre of argument they wrote.

After the students submitted their collaborative assignment, they completed a survey which asked about their involvement in the project as well as their opinion of the fairness of the assessment methods their teacher used (See Appendix for a copy of the student survey). (FN6) The survey asked two questions dealing with fairness as a general concept: "How do you personally define fair grading?" and "How does your instructor seem to define fair grading? By what means has he or she explained this belief?" (FN7) Students were asked to write at least three sentences in response to each question. After students completed their survey, or chose not to complete it, they sealed the survey in a manila envelope and signed the flap. The instructors gave the envelopes to me. If the seal was broken, the survey was discarded. The surveys completed by my own students were given to the administrative staff of the department in which I taught. When I submitted my final grades for the semester, I was given the surveys.
As I analyzed the students' responses, I developed a coding system that allowed each response to contain multiple criteria for defining fairness. For example, if a student wrote that both rewarding the effort put into completing the essay and evaluating the quality of the final draft are part of fair grading, both criteria were coded separately and given equal weight. Since most students did not rank their choices, I did not want to create a ranking that distorted their views. When I double-checked my analysis, I modified the codes to better reflect the data. In addition, I tested the system with another reader, both of us coding a random sample of fifteen surveys. We had an inter-rater reliability of 75 percent; we also discussed differences in our analyses and revisions to the codes.

This sample is limited to four teachers, all of whom taught in the same geographic area and worked in the same program. In addition to that limitation, the differences in each instructor's goals for their assignment may have affected the students' expectations and, thus, the definitions of fairness they presented in their answers to the survey. A larger study is needed to tell if these results, while very consistent within this group, can be applied to similar groups.

The rest of this essay will examine how the students' responses can be classified into and explained by three models of fairness developed by social psychologists: distributive, procedural, and group. For each model, I will also discuss problems each can cause when used to justify grades and suggest ways these problems can be overcome.

**Distributive Fairness**

Distributive fairness, the oldest of the three models, examines how materials, such as rewards, are divided among members of a group. J. Stacy Adams' 1965 elaborations on the model seem the most well known. Adams argues feelings of injustice and unfairness occur whenever a person "perceives that the ratio of his outcomes to inputs and the ratio of [another person's] outcomes to inputs are unequal" (280). The differences can become more or less important depending on each person's individual beliefs. People involved in this exchange of work for rewards can, if they feel mistreated, respond in several ways, such as altering the amount of time or the quality of work they put into the ratio, or distorting their perception of the work done by and rewards given to other participants (283, 290). A group of researchers led by Gerald S. Leventhal refined Adams' model by examining allocation preferences, the criteria people invoke to support or challenge the rules used to distribute resources, and that people develop based on their goals in a situation (201-02). According to this model, the more easily a distributive system allows a person to reach his or her goals, the more likely he or she will prefer that system. People act fairly when they care about fairness or when they consider group harmony more important than receiving awards (193, 211).

The students who participated in my study seem to have a definite preference for distributive fairness. Eleven categories in the coding system seem to reflect distributive fairness, with two of them emphasizing allocation preferences. These elements include "individual effort as part of the group," "effort" without any qualifiers, "improvement," "quality" of the essay, writing elements like "content" and "organization."(FN8) All of these categories either focus on something students create or on results they expect because of what they created.

"Individual effort as part of the group" refers to a student's attempts to act as an effective group member in order to complete the project; as Kim described, it is "a system in which the individual is graded for the amount of work they put in, [or] grading everyone's fair share of the
work." While this approach may seem to refer to a group, the students' responses emphasized their individual efforts, not the efforts of the group as a whole. For example, Edith wrote "Fair grading should be based on how much work, effort, and time each person put into the group." Daisy said that fair grading took into account "how all the members of the group played a role in the paper." Cordelia's answer was similarly direct: "knowing that each person is doing their part all the time and on time" (emphasis Cordelia's). The other responses dealing with individual effort, like those quoted here, emphasized these students' belief that they should be graded based on the amount they had contributed to the project, and, occasionally, the importance of those contributions to the final product.

As 46 mentions, "individual effort as part of the group" was the most common element in the students' definition of fairness. Measuring individual effort as part of a group, however, is hard if the instructor only evaluates a finished product. Because collaboratively written essays are often expected to present a unified voice and approach, the differences between group members can be obscured. Even if instructors tell students to work on the project only in class, they cannot monitor every group or every group member all the time. Since instructors cannot see what everyone does, an instructor's judgments of that effort may be inaccurate. Models of distributive fairness also do not explain how instructors should weight different kinds of individual contributions to group work. A student may be able to produce a professional-looking document in much less time than their collaborators could, a contribution which may deserve a large reward. However, the other group members may not agree that this person's work is more important than another person's work and consider any extra rewards unfair. In addition, no matter how observant instructors are, they cannot study the mental effort students put into a project, the thinking that is an important part of the writing process. These complications point out a central conflict in grading collaborative writing, "how to evaluate fairly both a student's contribution to writing the report and his or her commitment to the group process itself" (Bosley 160).

In order to balance these elements, teachers should use additional assessment methods besides just grading the paper. For example, process logs require students to record their work on the project and, in some cases, to reflect on how the members of their group have worked together.(FN9) Peer evaluation asks students to evaluate each other based on what they have seen. If students use these methods accurately, they can supplement the judgments instructors make about how much effort students put into the project. Because these methods involve changing procedures, making them also part of procedural fairness, I will return to them in the next section of this essay.

Not all respondents defined effort solely in terms of working for the group. "Effort unqualified" includes Addy's belief that "Fair grading is looking at an individual's work and basing it on effort." Although this statement seems similar to those classified under "individual effort as part of the group," Addy does not refer to the group at all. Heather's statement that "fair grading is receiving a grade based on how much time and effort I put into something" shows a similar mentality. Ansley ended his response with the claim that "effort should always count for something." One person insisted that effort matters more than quality.
Mentions of effort--whether "individual effort as part of the group" or "effort unqualified,"--appeared in approximately 52 percent of all responses. Obviously, this group of students considers effort the most important criterion for defining fairness. Yet trying to judge effort separate from product causes problems for teachers who only use distributive fairness. Distributive fairness assumes that perceptions of fairness are directly affected by the amount of effort, work, or time a person puts into a project. While this outcome can happen anywhere, effort does not always lead to quality writing. A student may work very hard on a paper but misunderstand the assignment. This student should not receive full credit if he or she does not fulfill the assignment's requirements, no matter how often the student revised. If teachers approached grading from a purely logical standpoint, this rule would always apply. However, classrooms are not places of straight exchange. Many teachers want to give students credit for trying, even if some mishandle the assignment. Distributive justice does not allow this variation. Acknowledging effort thus catches teachers in a paradox of sympathizing with the students' desires while trying to base grades on observable data.

Some of the respondents may know about this paradox. When asked about their instructor's view of grading, only seven respondents said their teachers considered effort. If a similar gap appears in larger populations, discussing effort may be a good place to start bridging differences between students' definitions of fair and instructors'. Teachers can talk with students about analyzing effort, showing why it is hard to judge and why students need to keep accurate records of their effort. Since this information will allow instructors to distribute the grades more fairly, students may be willing to be very careful when recording their effort.

Another possible way to make evaluating effort easier is to assign, or have students assign, specific roles to group members. Each role represents a set of tasks the student must fulfill in order to earn a passing or higher grade. (FN10) For example, the researcher would be responsible for finding sources the group needs, and the editor would be responsible for polishing the essay before it is submitted to the instructor. This approach matches the experience of many professionals. Nine of the fourteen collaborative writing groups Nancy Allen and her team studied "were made up of members whose backgrounds, training, and specialties differed," leading to division of labor (76). Assigning roles to students may also have pedagogical benefits. Kathleen Herbert argues it is a means of "ensur[ing] participation" (26). Yet some teachers may consider assigning roles too directive. Many undergraduates lack the background to specialize effectively; less structure gives these students a chance to develop skills and experience in several areas as well as to learn strategies for working in a group. Even if instructors do not assign roles, they can discuss various roles that can be taken within collaborative groups. (FN11) This discussion could lead to students choosing to take roles while still exposing them to every aspect of group work.

While forms of effort were the most common aspects of these students' definitions of fairness, several mentions of effort were linked with elements of writing, the skills and strategies instructors want their students to learn. The respondents named only two writing elements as part of their personal definitions of fairness: content and grammar. They said their instructor's definitions included the same elements, as well as organization. While the respondents referred to "content" and "grammar," they did not define exactly what those terms meant to them. Aldo, for example, said, "[the teacher] should mostly look at content and grammar." Olivia's definition
of fairness uses similarly generic terms: "grade by content and grammar." The students who did describe the elements of writing used words like "good," not an objective standard. Because the elements are not qualified, students and instructors may have different perceptions of their quality. Appropriate content, for example, varies based on what a particular reader likes or needs. If a reader does not like the content, it may seem less effective. Definitions of correct grammar can shift depending on the discourse community. These differing perceptions can cause students to feel they are treated unfairly, especially if they believe there is only one right way to create an essay.

Instructors may be able to change this assumption through temporarily recasting elements of writing in purely distributive terms. For example, content represents the knowledge and ideas students possess, which are goods they offer to the reader. The reader wants to use that information in some way, such as to complete a task or to learn more about a topic. If the writer develops the content thoroughly enough for a reader to use, the writer should get a reward. Content that does not meet a reader's expectations or that is too underdeveloped to use does not add much to the exchange and will not gain as much of, or any, reward. This argument makes content seem like something that can be objectively measured, even though it cannot always be. Teachers can then show how different rhetorical elements influence each other. For example, the same content can be clear when organized one way but incomprehensible when organized in another way. Discussing these complex interactions between rhetorical elements may show students that the elements of a piece of writing cannot be easily quantified, making it hard to define fair grading in purely distributive terms.

For this group of students, distributive fairness seems like a favored model. However, the need to measure individual effort and group process shows that it is not the ideal model. Procedural fairness helps correct some of these weaknesses.

**Procedural Fairness**

Leventhal's focus on allocation preferences reveals a shift in social psychology research on fairness from the distributive model to the procedural justice model developed by John Thibault and Laurens Walker. Working four years before Leventhal, Thibault and Walker examined how people perceived the rules that control legal proceedings. They found that the amount of control a system of procedures allowed people to retain affected how fair they felt the system was. The less control an outside authority or third party had, the more just the system seemed (1-2). The participants in Thibault and Walker's studies, who lived in several countries with different kinds of legal systems, considered adversarial approaches, such as the kind used in the United States, to be the most fair. In the adversarial approach, advocates present the participants' cases to a third party. The third party, without conducting additional research, makes rulings based on the information the advocates provide (113-115). While the participants preferred this approach, claimants will agree to give up some control if they lack time for extended debate, if a precedent for giving up control exists, or if the reward needs to be divided equally (7-8). To my knowledge, procedural fairness has mostly been used to analyze legal and employment situations. However, Ray Hull's survey of middle school students shows the power procedural fairness can have over students. According to Hull, "the less successful [students] are in [using a particular system of rules], the less trust they have in the validity of grading" (343). Hull does say that these perceptions can be altered, though it can be a long battle (343).
Procedural fairness was the second most common model used by students who participated in this study, with five categories of the coding system fitting under it. They include various rules or exceptions to rules, such as "other forms of assessment" besides grading the essay and "the essay meeting the teacher's expectations," usually presented in a rubric.(FN12)

Seven respondents reported that their definitions of fairness included the use of assessment methods besides just evaluating a finished product. Mostly, the students wanted some form of peer evaluation. Karma Rose said, "I think the peer review should play a vital part in the grading." Erwin recommended that instructors use individual interviews. Other students believed that the teachers' observations of the group should be part of the grade or recommended that the students self-report. Felix, for example, suggested that students attach a sheet to the essay that described what each group member did. This desire for additional methods may come, in part, from the context in which the respondents worked. All of the instructors who participated in this study used some form of assessment method besides grading the essay. As I argued earlier, these multiple assessment methods are necessary to account for the multiple goals that make up collaborative projects.

These additional assessment methods also help minimize a weakness in Thibault's model for procedural fairness: the possibility of excluding a stakeholder. Procedural fairness allows people to take one of two roles: decision maker or participant, with usually more than one participant involved in a situation. An individual student is one member of this decision-making pattern. The other parties are the instructor and the other group members: either the instructor or the other group members could fill the decision maker role, depending on the assessment method. Yet Thibault and Walker's model posits that those who will receive an award prefer to control the procedures, not surrender control to the reward giver. As a result, either the other group members or the instructor surrenders control when an individual group member is judged. If the other group members are unable to affect the evaluation process, students lose the ability to hold each other accountable. They have to assume the teacher, as outside arbitrator, will see everything everyone does and follow the rules for distributing grades. If the teacher does not see a group member fail to participate, that teacher will have difficulty proving he or she is acting justly by deducting points. On the other hand, instructors cannot be isolated from what goes on in their classrooms, especially when assessment is involved. They are responsible for making sure students learn the course's material; if a student does not understand or cannot apply it, that student should not pass the course. Through using multiple methods, everyone has a chance to offer evidence to support an evaluation.

Like peer evaluation, rubrics are another obvious representation of procedural fairness. They list criteria students can strive to meet. Twenty-eight participants said their instructor's definitions of fair grading included the use of a rubric or other guidelines, what Aldis called "by the book." Guidelines, to these respondents, included everything from a formal, written rubric to verbal instructions to a point system. Fifteen respondents learned about these guidelines in class. Most of these students seemed to understand their importance; O'Neil, for example, stated that "she [the instructor] describes to us what she expects in each essay, and, if we do not meet these requirements, we are simply asking ourselves to lose points."
Those students who wrote about using a rubric seem very aware of the standards their instructors used. However, the same number of students who heard the guidelines in class, fifteen, said that their teacher did not explain what constituted fair grading. Nine additional respondents either could not remember or were unsure of their instructor's standards. If other classes are similar, these results imply that all instructors need to make their expectations extremely obvious, even more than most instructors already do. Few teachers avoid or refuse to explain their grading criteria, and some students are absent or do not pay attention when grading criteria are discussed. Regardless, students who do not know how they will be evaluated may believe the instructor's policies are unfair even when the teacher is trying hard to be fair. Referring to criteria in multiple places--handouts, class discussion, online--should limit students' ignorance and ease their fears. The reminders will act as part of a continuous argument for the assessment method's validity (Huot 50).

Students can participate in this argument by helping construct rubrics. Several scholars--including Richard Speck, Richard Freeman and Roger Lewis, and Edward White--recommend involving students in the creation of rubrics (52, 40, 32-33). Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford argue student involvement in developing grading criteria for collaborative assignments is particularly important. By helping, students become invested in the procedure and can add their own ideas to it (24). This involvement should create the sense of control models of procedural fairness posit that people need.

**Group Fairness**

Thibault and Walker's procedural model seems to be the most accepted view of fairness among social psychologists. Tom Tyler, however, has criticized it for assuming that people remain in a situation only long enough to complete a transaction (830). Many situations last much longer than one meeting or one action. To address this weakness, Tyler proposed a group-value model of justice. It "assumes that people are concerned about their long-term social relationship with the authorities or institutions acting as third parties and do not view their relationship with third parties as a one-shot deal," but instead try to maintain a cohesive group (831). Methods for maintaining the group include: developing trust among the members, considering how individual goals will affect the group's future, and allowing people to remain at a particular social standing within the group. Any of these factors can lead people to surrender control over procedures (832).(FN13)

Morton Deutsch supports Tyler's critique. Deutsch argues researchers who have developed models of distributive fairness have not acknowledged the collectivist elements that run through their models, such as the need for generosity and egalitarian distribution (202). Instead, their models emphasize equity and merit, leading to systems that encourage social stratification (209). Deutsch ties this view explicitly to grades, saying they are "distributive good[s] of uncertain quality and unspecific meaning, which nevertheless [have] considerable importance because of [their] evaluative significance and artificially induced scarcity" (212). Deutsch believes a fair system of grading "would foster the view among students that they have a positive interest in the educational attainments of one another" (220). Instructors who use this system would create specific contexts in the classroom that help groups of students work together toward reaching their educational goals.
Group fairness may be the most important model to use in developing and grading collaborative projects. Neither distributive nor procedural justice models describe ways to manage extended interactions, such as those required to be a member of a class or of a collaborative group, while still treating individuals fairly. However, elements of group fairness— including "group effort," "not giving undeserved special treatment" to specific group members, fair treatment "varying by group," and "understanding the problems involved in group work"— were some of the least mentioned by the students who participated in my study. The participants also usually negatively judged these elements, a reaction which may cause them to resist group projects.

Out of seventeen respondents who mentioned group effort, only six said receiving a group grade was fair. Most said group grades were unfair. They allowed, as Joceyln said, "someone to slack and get the same grade as those who worked." Chandler agreed: "In collaborative essays, it is often unfair to award the same grade to all group members, regardless of the amount of work [done]." Even those who supported group grades qualified their support of them, usually saying the instructor should consider the individual's effort as part of a group. Ada, for example, said, "the teacher should take into consideration the group effort as a whole" but should also consider individual efforts. Others believed the appropriateness of a group grade depended on the group. Lisa argued, "If the group divides the amount of work unevenly by consent, as we did, it is fair to give everyone the same grade. We all put forth the same effort, and I think we should get the same grade. This may only apply to our group. Each group should be graded according to how the majority of them feel." Lisa's group seems to have divided the work unequally, but since the group members agreed with this approach, Lisa does not consider a group grade unfair. Kerry said fair grading "depends on the group. ... If it is the case that the people are just lazy, individual grading based upon evaluations is appropriate." If everyone does the same amount of work, Kerry recommended using a group grade. Chad suggested a similar procedure: "If the essay has a grade of B or less, [the teacher] may start looking at each person's work and grade each person's work as a separate unit." If the paper earned an A, a group grade was fine.

In addition to considering group grades unfair, many of the students' responses directly undercut the need to even consider group effort. Altha, for example, said that fair grading is "evaluating each student's work individually. No two students are alike, and that should always be considered." Sessus stated that "grading fairly involves individual reading. Individualism defines people and thus ultimately defines their writing." Neither of these students seems willing to let an individual's uniqueness be subsumed into the voice presented in a group paper. Cally's resistance to group work is even blunter: "All our group received the same grade, and that is not fair! One member of the group can't make the others do presentable work, but they are still punished with the same grade!" Cally, and students with similar opinions, may agree with Robin DeRieux, who sarcastically considers "THE DREADED GROUP PROJECT [to be] one of the most terrifying academic experiences known" because "suddenly the responsibility for your grade is placed in the hands of the most irresponsible, undependable people you know--other students" (10).

Students like these may distrust group fairness because they do not know how to work effectively in a group. Based on a study of fourth and fifth grade writers, Thomas Hilgers states that "effective joint authorship seems to require that authors have the skills necessary to meet the demands of both the writing task and the interpersonal situation" (114). In order to make sure
students have these skills, teachers who require collaborative assignments must train students in group dynamics, "the condition most crucial to successful collaboration and the one most difficult to achieve" (Ede and Lunsford 21). Aspects of group dynamics useful for collaborative projects include being able to recognize and use substantive conflict (as defined by Rebecca Burnett), knowing how to balance conflict with consensus, and understanding effective group behaviors and roles. Training--such as class discussion, assigned readings, or modeling--would allow students to gain these skills. They can be reinforced through ungraded assignments, where working together matters as much as, or more than, creating a perfect document. By holding off grades, instructors limit the pressure some students feel to find the answer which will earn them the highest grade. Instead, students can see what skills each member of their group possesses and experiment with using different methods for working together. Collaborative writing is a complicated activity. If an instructor requires it, he or she must be willing to help students manage that complexity, including teaching them how to help themselves. Instructors cannot just "add people and stir" (LeFerve 49).

While the participants in my study generally do not like group grades, they still want individuals to be treated the same. Thirteen students stated that teachers should not give undeserved special treatment to individual students. "Not giving undeserved special treatment" may seem to contradict an equally common criterion given by these students: "awareness of group problems." Responses discussing "awareness of group problems" fall into two groups. First, some respondents believed that teachers should acknowledge the inherent problems posed by group assignments, such as scheduling meetings, dividing the workload equitably, and blending individual writing and work styles. Aldo said teachers needed to remember that "the style [of a collaboratively written essay] may not be as good as it would be individually." Colby's request is more direct: "Take into consideration that it was a group effort." The other strain of comments classified under "awareness of group problems" described the unwillingness of some students to contribute to their group. Deanna tied everyone getting the same grade to equal involvement. Buck agreed: "Those who put their share in should get the same grade as the others."

The respondents' concerns over instructors overlooking the complexity of group work are justified. As Janis Forman and Patricia Katsky show, both group process and writing process can develop problems that affect the quality of the final product. While training may avert some of these problems, they may still occur. Teachers need to be able to learn what happened in groups and why it happened, and then be willing to adjust their policies when students deserve understanding. Instructors may be able to gain advance warning of group problems through using additional assessment methods besides just a final draft, such as a process log or peer evaluation. When handled correctly, these assessment methods can show instructors what happened during group work, limiting the chances of a student getting an unfair advantage while helping those dealing with legitimate difficulties. Perhaps the best approach to helping students solve group problems, however, is for instructors to tell students that they will help if the students cannot resolve the problem after trying several times. Once approached for help, instructors can guide students or groups.

Conclusion
While the pool of respondents is limited to classes taught by four teachers who assigned different projects, the consistency within its responses seems to imply that social psychology's models of fairness could make a useful base on which compositionists can develop more nuanced models
for fairly grading collaborative writing. While I cannot state definitively the parts of this model, I feel a useful and practical model would draw on elements from distributive, procedural, and group fairness. Distributive fairness says the amount of work students put into a project matters. Procedural fairness gives instructors a way to decide how the amount and kind of rewards given out should be altered because of differing amounts and quality of work. Group fairness helps students maintain the group and helps instructors remember that collaborative projects should teach students about group dynamics. Combined, these elements can help students believe that the assessment is credible, thus providing face validity.

Applying this model may require the development of new methods for measuring students' individual effort and participation in the group, perhaps similar to those developed by Beard and his collaborators for professional writing class. One way to measure effort, as described in the distributive fairness section of this essay, could be determining a way to quantify group roles, giving them all equal weight despite the differences in tasks and skills required by each role. Another new method that could be developed would allow instructors to measure elements of writing in purely distributive terms, perhaps through refining a rubric or developing a checklist. These new assessment methods would also need to increase an instructor's awareness of the group's effort, providing him or her with enough information to decide when to intervene with a struggling group. If such approaches can be successfully developed and applied in the First-year Composition classroom, instructors may be able to limit some of the anxiety associated with collaborative writing, creating a lottery where everyone wins.(FN14)

ADDED MATERIAL

Mark Sutton is Assistant Professor of English at Kean University, where he teaches courses in first-year composition, argumentation, professional writing, and collaborative writing. His research interests include the assessment of collaborative writing, the teaching of literature, and the stretch model of teaching basic writing. An essay, profiling the teachers of the students who participated in this study, is forthcoming in The Journal of Student-Centered Learning.

Footnotes
1. The students' responses have been silently edited for punctuation and to fit the syntax of surrounding sentences. Otherwise, the words are identical to what the students wrote on their surveys.
2. For some exceptions, see essays by Beard, Morgan, and Scheffler.
3. While most psychological texts do not use justice and fairness as exact synonyms, the latter term is better known to writing teachers, and both are very similar. Despite the compression of shades of meaning, I will use the terms interchangeably.
4. Perceptions of fairness can also affect students' judgments about the quality of instruction. Dennis E. Clayson and Debra A Haley's study of marketing students found that when students felt they were treated unfairly, they did not think they learned as much as they could in the course. For another test of this idea, see Herbert W. Marsh and J. U. Overall's "Validity of Students' Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness: Cognitive and Affective Criteria."
5. I developed the survey myself, in consultation with my dissertation director, Nancy Thompson, fellow graduate students enrolled in Nancy Thompson's Research Methods in Composition course, and Brian Sutton, a professional statistician with six year's experience conducting large scale surveys.
6. The instructors also completed a survey describing their reasons for teaching collaborative
writing and outlining the assignment they gave their students. Profiles generated from their answers will appear in my article "Three Teachers of First-year Collaborative Writing," forthcoming in The Journal of Student-Centered Learning.

7. I added these two questions to the survey after conducting a pilot study. Out of twenty-two respondents, fourteen mentioned fairness or honesty, or antonyms like lies or dishonesty, somewhere in their answers about the fairness of specific assessment methods. This frequency showed that getting an explicit definition of fairness from students was vital, instead of trying to infer it from their evaluations of specific assessment methods.

8. Other categories linked to distributive fairness include the "paper getting the grade it deserves," "improvement," "creativity," "time spent" working on the essay, and the "student getting the grade he or she wants." Due to space considerations, this essay will not discuss these categories in detail.

9. For more information on how process logs can measure and encourage group process, see Goldstein and Malone.

10. Joe Goeke raised and helped me work through this point.

11. For a discussion of some possible group roles, see Lay.

12. "The student understanding the reasoning behind the grade" and "all aspects of the project" (where the project also included an oral presentation) were other categories that seem part of procedural fairness, though space considerations prevent me from analyzing them in detail.

13. For an earlier view of fairness built on personal interactions between two people, see Robert J. Bies and Joseph S. Moag's "Interactional Justice: Communicative Criteria of Fairness."

14. In addition to the people whose help is acknowledged at specific points in this essay, I would like to thank my dissertation director, Nancy Thompson, and the rest of the committee (Christy Friend, William Rivers, and Carl Shirley) for their guidance during this research project. I would also like to thank Margot Banks, Sally Chandler, Charles Nelson, and the anonymous reviewers at Issues in Writing, all of whom offered advice that helped me turn a dissertation chapter into a stand-alone article. Most importantly, I would like to thank the students who participated in this study for taking the time to share their beliefs about fairness.

**Works Cited**


Appendix: Survey completed by students

Code: #######(FN*)

Pseudonym (optional): 

Number of people in your group (excluding yourself): ______

Number of drafts completed before your group submitted the essay for evaluation: ______

Approximately how many hours (please use whole numbers) did your group spend working together to complete the essay, excluding the time you worked independently. (up to the time you turned the essay in for evaluation)? ______

Approximately how many hours (please use whole numbers) did you personally spend on the essay (up to the time you turned it in for evaluation)? ______

How would you rate the amount of work you did on the essay? Circle your answer:

* Much more than other group members
* Slightly more than other group members
* Same as other group members
* Slightly less than other group members
* Much less than other group members

How do you personally define fair grading? Please write at least three to five sentences explaining your answer.

How does your instructor seem to define fair grading? By what means has he or she explained this belief?

Do you consider strictly grading the essay (meaning the document your group produces and submits to the instructor for a grade) a fair way of representing your contributions to the project?
Why or why not?
Do you consider [whatever assessment method(s) the teacher uses] a fair way of representing your contributions to the project? Why or why not? (FN*)
Which of the methods listed above, if any, do you feel works best for determining a fair grade? Why?
If you have to revise this essay after getting your instructor's comments, do you plan to (check one):
* Do not have to revise it____
* Work alone____
* Work with some members of your group____
  How many?____
* Work with your entire group____
  Why?
What was the most useful thing about writing an essay in a group? Why do you consider it the most useful?
What was the least useful aspect of writing an essay in a group? Why do you consider it the least useful?
Use the back of this sheet to add any further comments.

Footnotes
* This code, known only by me, helps me keep track of whose teacher the respondent is, as well as the calendar year the respondent completed the survey and the year of the study.
** Since I wanted to describe what was done in classes without requiring a particular approach, I changed this question to match the assessment method(s) the instructor used in his or her class.