JESSICA STATSKY wrote the following essay about children's competitive sports for her college composition course. Before reading, recall your own experiences as an elementary student playing competitive sports, either in or out of school. If you were not actively involved yourself, did you know anyone who was? Looking back, do you think that winning was unduly emphasized? What value was placed on having a good time? On learning to get along with others? On developing athletic skills and confidence?

Children Need to Play, Not Compete

Jessica Statsky

Over the past three decades, organized sports for children have increased dramatically in the United States. And though many adults regard Little League Baseball and Peewee Football as a basic part of childhood, the games are not always joyous ones. When overzealous parents and coaches impose adult standards on children's sports, the result can be activities that are neither satisfying nor beneficial to children.

I am concerned about all organized sports activities for children between the ages of six and twelve. The damage I see results from noncontact as well as contact sports, from sports organized locally as well as those organized nationally. Highly organized competitive sports such as Peewee Football and Little League Baseball are too often played to adult standards, which are developmentally inappropriate for children and can be both physically and psychologically harmful. Furthermore, because they eliminate many children from organized sports before they are ready to compete, they are actually counterproductive for developing either future players or fans. Finally, because they emphasize competition and winning, they unfortunately provide occasions for some parents and coaches to place their own fantasies and needs ahead of children's welfare.

One readily understandable danger of overly competitive sports is that they entice children into physical actions that are bad for growing bodies. Although the official Little League Web site acknowledges that children do risk injury playing baseball, it insists that "severe injuries . . . are infrequent," the risk "far less than the risk of riding a skateboard, a bicycle, or even the school bus" ("What about My Child?"). Nevertheless, Leonard Koppett in *Sports Illusion, Sports Reality* claims that a twelve-year-old trying to throw a curve ball, for example, may put abnormal strain on developing arm and shoulder muscles, sometimes resulting in lifelong injuries (294). Contact sports like football can be even more hazardous. Thomas Tutko, a psychology professor at San Jose State University and coauthor of the book *Winning Is Everything and Other American Myths*, writes:

> I am strongly opposed to young kids playing tackle football. It is not the right stage of development for them to be taught to crash into other kids. Kids under

Statsky right away **identifies the issue** — whether organized competitive sports benefit children — and **takes a clear position** on it, using precise language that makes her seem knowledgeable and thoughtful.

In the last three sentences of paragraph 2, Statsky **forecasts her argument**, identifying the order of her main reasons for taking the position she does. To keep readers on track and introduce the argument supporting these four reasons, she begins paragraphs 3, 5, 7, and 8 with topic sentences that echo the language she uses in this paragraph.

In paragraphs 3 and 4, Statsky supports her first reason: that competitive sports can physically harm young children. She holds readers' attention by amassing key terms for physical injuries.

> the age of fourteen are not by nature physical. Their main concern is self-preservation. They don't want to meet head on and slam into each other. But tackle football absolutely requires that they try to hit each other as hard as they can. And it is too traumatic for young kids. (qtd. in Tosches A1)

As Tutko indicates, even when children are not injured, fear of being hurt detracts from their enjoyment of the sport. The Little League Web site ranks fear of injury as the seventh of seven reasons children quit ("What about My Child?"). One mother of an eight-year-old Peewee Football player explained, "The kids get so scared. They get hit once and they don't want anything to do with football anymore. They'll sit on the bench and pretend their leg hurts . . ." (qtd. in Tosches A1). Some children are driven to even more desperate measures. For example, in one Peewee Football game, a reporter watched the following scene as a player took himself out of the game:

> "Coach, my tummy hurts. I can't play," he said. The coach told the player to get back onto the field. "There's nothing wrong with your stomach," he said. When the coach turned his head the seven-year-old stuck a finger down his throat and made himself vomit. When the coach turned back, the boy pointed to the ground and told him, "Yes there is, coach. See?" (Tosches A33)

Besides physical hazards and anxieties, competitive sports pose psychological dangers for children. Martin Rablovsky, a former sports editor for the *New York Times*, says that in all his years of watching young children play organized sports, he has noticed very few of them smiling. "I've seen children enjoying a spontaneous pre-practice scrimmage become somber and serious when the coach's whistle blows," Rablovsky says. "The spirit of play suddenly disappears, and sport becomes joblike" (qtd. in Coakley 94). The primary goal of a professional athlete — winning — is not appropriate for children. Their goals should be having fun, learning, and being with friends. Although winning does add to the fun, too many adults lose sight of what matters and make winning the most important goal. Several studies have shown that when children are asked whether they would rather be warming the bench on a winning team or playing regularly on a losing team, about 90 percent choose the latter (Smith, Smith, and Smoll 11).

To support her second reason — **psychological damage** — Statsky cites authoritative sources, quoting, summarizing, and commenting on them.

Winning and losing may be an inevitable part of adult life, but they should not be part of childhood. Too much competition too early in life can affect a child's development. Children are easily influenced, and when they sense that their competence and worth are based on their ability to live up to their parents' and coaches' high expectations — and on their ability to win — they can become discouraged and depressed. Little League advises parents to "keep winning in perspective" ("Your Role"), noting that the most common reasons children give for quitting, aside from change in interest, are lack of playing time, failure and fear of failure, disapproval by significant others, and psychological stress ("What about My Child?"). According to Dr. Glyn C. Roberts, a professor of kinesiology at the Institute of Child Behavior and Development at the University of Illinois, 80 to 90 percent of children who play competitive sports at a young age drop out by sixteen (Kutner).

Statsky makes a smooth transition to her third reason.

This statistic illustrates another reason I oppose competitive sports for children: because they are so highly selective, very few children get to participate. Far too soon, a few children are singled out for their athletic promise, while many others, who may be on the verge of developing the necessary strength and ability, are screened out and discouraged from trying out again. Like adults, children fear failure, and so even those with good physical skills may stay away because they lack self-confidence. Consequently, teams lose many promising players who with some encouragement and experience might have become stars. The problem is that many parent-sponsored, out-of-school programs give more importance to having a winning team than to developing children's physical skills and self-esteem.

This first sentence in this paragraph, which introduces Statsky's fourth reason, may be the most challenging assertion in the essay for many readers. Statsky risks losing some of her readers by offending them, but she tries to keep them aboard by promising specific horror stories as support.

Indeed, it is no secret that too often scorekeeping, league standings, and the drive to win bring out the worst in adults who are more absorbed in living out their own fantasies than in enhancing the quality of the experience for children (Smith, Smith, and Smoll 9). Recent newspaper articles on children's sports contain plenty of horror stories. *Los Angeles Times* reporter Rich Tosches, for example, tells the story of a brawl among seventy-five parents following a Peewee Football game (A33). As a result of the brawl, which began when a parent from one team confronted a player from the other team, the teams are now thinking of hiring security guards for future games. Another example is provided by an *L.A. Times* editorial about a Little League manager who intimidated the opposing team by setting fire to one of their team's jerseys on the pitching mound before the game began. As the editorial writer commented, the manager showed his young team that "intimidation could substitute for playing well" ("The Bad News").

The argument takes a new direction as, in paragraphs 9 and 11, Statsky describes two practical, tested alternatives to overly competitive children's sports teams. She may well have become concerned that readers would tire of her criticisms and that she needed to mention more positive possibilities.

Although not all parents or coaches behave so inappropriately, the seriousness of the problem is illustrated by the fact that Adelphi University in Garden City, New York, offers a sports psychology workshop for Little League coaches, designed to balance their "animal instincts" with "educational theory" in hopes of reducing the "screaming and hollering," in the words of Harold Weisman, manager of sixteen Little Leagues in New York City (Schmitt). In a three-and-one-half-hour Sunday morning workshop, coaches learn how to make practices more fun, treat injuries, deal with irate parents, and be "more sensitive to their young players' fears, emotional frailties, and need for recognition." Little League is to be credited with recognizing the need for such workshops.

In response to her awareness that some readers will resist, if not dismiss, her argument, Statsky acknowledges the value many parents place on training their children for a life of competition and struggle. After conceding some wisdom in this value, however, she suggests that it is one-sided and shortsighted for children in this age range.

Some parents would no doubt argue that children cannot start too soon preparing to live in a competitive free-market economy. After all, secondary schools and colleges require students to compete for grades, and college admission is extremely competitive. And it is perfectly obvious how important competitive skills are in finding a job. Yet the ability to cooperate is also important for success in life. Before children are psychologically ready for competition, maybe we should emphasize cooperation and individual performance in team sports rather than winning.

Many people are ready for such an emphasis. In 1988, one New York Little League official who had attended the Adelphi workshop tried to ban scoring from six- to eight-year-olds' games — but parents wouldn't support him (Schmitt). An innovative children's sports program in New York City, City Sports for Kids, emphasizes fitness, self-esteem, and sportsmanship. In this program's basketball games,

every member on a team plays at least two of six eight-minute periods. The basket is seven feet from the floor, rather than ten feet, and a player can score a point just by hitting the rim (Bloch). I believe this kind of local program should replace overly competitive programs like Peewee Football and Little League Baseball. As one coach explains, significant improvements can result from a few simple rule changes, such as including every player in the batting order and giving every player, regardless of age or ability, the opportunity to play at least four innings a game (Frank).

Authorities have clearly documented the excesses and dangers of many competitive sports programs for children. It would seem that few children benefit from these programs and that those who do would benefit even more from programs emphasizing fitness, cooperation, sportsmanship, and individual performance. Thirteen- and fourteen-year-olds may be eager for competition, but few younger children are. These younger children deserve sports programs designed specifically for their needs and abilities.

In her conclusion, Statsky firmly reasserts her position and reasons for it, while again limiting its scope to younger children and conceding that it may not apply to older ones.

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Statsky lists eleven sources, all of which are cited in her essay — that is, identified and referenced to this alphabetical list of sources. The sources not only provide material for her argument, but also contribute to her authority because readers can look over the list and get an impression about whether the sources as a group seem reputable and trustworthy.

RICHARD ESTRADA was the associate editor of the *Dallas Morning News* editorial page and a syndicated columnist whose essays appeared regularly in the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and other major newspapers. He was best known as a thoughtful, independent-minded commentator on immigration and social issues. Before joining the *Dallas Morning News* in 1988, Estrada worked as a congressional staff member and as a researcher at the Center for Immigration Studies in Washington, D.C. In the 1990s, he was

appointed to the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform. Following his death at the age of forty-nine in 1999, the Richard Estrada Fellowship in Immigration Studies was established in his honor.

Estrada wrote this essay during the 1995 baseball World Series in which the Atlanta Braves played the Cleveland Indians. The series drew the public's attention to the practice of dressing team mascots like Native Americans on the warpath and encouraging fans to rally their team with gestures like the "tomahawk chop" and pep yells like the "Indian chant." The controversy over these practices revitalized a longstanding debate over naming sports teams with words associated with Native Americans. Several high schools and at least one university, Stanford, have changed the names of their sports teams because of this ongoing controversy. A coworker remarked that in his newspaper columns, Estrada "firmly opposed separating the American people into competing ethnic and linguistic groups." As you read this essay, think about his purpose in writing this position essay and how it seeks to bring different groups together.

Sticks and Stones and Sports Team Names

Richard Estrada

When I was a kid living in Baltimore in the late 1950s, there was only one professional sports team worth following. Anyone who ever saw the movie *Diner* knows which one it was. Back when we liked Ike, the Colts were the gods of the gridiron and Memorial Stadium was their Mount Olympus. 1

Ah, yes: The Colts. The Lions. Da Bears. Back when defensive tackle Big Daddy Lipscomb was letting running backs know exactly what time it was, a young fan could easily forget that in a game where men were men, the teams they played on were not invariably named after animals. Among others, the Packers, the Steelers and the distant 49ers were cases in point. But in the roll call of pro teams, one name in particular always discomfited me: the Washington Redskins. Still, however willing I may have been to go along with the name as a kid, as an adult I have concluded that using an ethnic group essentially as a sports mascot is wrong. 2

The Redskins and the Kansas City Chiefs, along with baseball teams like the Atlanta Braves and the Cleveland Indians, should find other names that avoid highlighting ethnicity. 3

By no means were such names originally meant to disparage Native Americans. The noble symbols of the Redskins or college football's Florida State Seminoles or the Illinois Illini are meant to be strong and proud. Yet, ultimately, the practice of using a people as mascots is dehumanizing. It sets them apart from the rest of society. It promotes the politics of racial aggrievement at a moment when our storehouse is running over with it. 4

The World Series between the Cleveland Indians and the Atlanta Braves reignited the debate. In the chill night air of October, tomahawk chops and war chants suddenly became far more familiar to millions of fans, along with the ridiculous and offensive cartoon logo of Cleveland's "Chief Wahoo." 5

The defenders of team names that use variations on the Indian theme argue that tradition should not be sacrificed at the altar of political correctness. In truth, 6

the nation's No. 1 P.C. [politically correct] school, Stanford University, helped matters some when it changed its team nickname from "the Indians" to "the Cardinals." To be sure, Stanford did the right thing, but the school's status as P.C. without peer tainted the decision for those who still need to do the right thing.

Another argument is that ethnic group leaders are too inclined to cry wolf in alleging racial insensitivity. Often, this is the case. But no one should overlook genuine cases of political insensitivity in an attempt to avoid accusations of hypersensitivity and political correctness. 7

The real world is different from the world of sports entertainment. I recently heard a father who happened to be a Native American complain on the radio that his child was being pressured into participating in celebrations of Braves baseball. At his kid's school, certain days are set aside on which all children are told to dress in Indian garb and celebrate with tomahawk chops and the like. 8

That father should be forgiven for not wanting his family to serve as somebody's mascot. The desire to avoid ridicule is legitimate and understandable. Nobody likes to be trivialized or deprived of their dignity. This has nothing to do with political correctness and the provocations of militant leaders. 9

Against this backdrop, the decision by newspapers in Minneapolis, Seattle and Portland to ban references to Native American nicknames is more reasonable than some might think. 10

What makes naming teams after ethnic groups, particularly minorities, reprehensible is that politically impotent groups continue to be targeted, while politically powerful ones who bite back are left alone. How long does anyone think the name "Washington Blackskins" would last? Or how about "the New York Jews"? 11

With no fewer than 10 Latino ballplayers on the Cleveland Indians' roster, the team could change its name to "the Banditos." The trouble is, they would be missing the point: Latinos would correctly object to that stereotype, just as they rightly protested against Frito-Lay's use of the "Frito Bandito" character years ago. 12

It seems to me that what Native Americans are saying is that what would be intolerable for Jews, blacks, Latinos and others is no less offensive to them. Theirs is a request not only for dignified treatment, but for fair treatment as well. For America to ignore the complaints of a numerically small segment of the population because it is small is neither dignified nor fair. 13

Making Connections to Personal and Social Issues: Name-Calling

As children, we may say, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me." Most children, however, recognize the power of words, especially words that make them feel different or inferior.

Make a list of words that are used to refer to groups with which you identify. Try to think of words associated with your ethnicity, religion, gender, interests, geographic region, or any other factor. (Are you perhaps a redneck Okie good ole boy religious fanatic?) Which of the words on your list, if any, do you consider insulting? Why? Would you consider someone who called you these names insensitive?

With two or three other students, discuss your name-calling lists, giving examples from your list. Tell when, where, and by whom you or others in your group have been called these names. Then discuss how these names belittle, condescend, hurt, and insult. Consider what other effects you have felt from name-calling. Some people have speculated that this kind of behavior is motivated by the desire to isolate and establish power over other people or groups. With this power comes more influence and opportunity, purposefully creating inequality. In other words, the name-caller's gain is your loss. Speculate about this view of name-calling in light of your own experience.

Analyzing Writing Strategies

1. Like most writers taking a position, Estrada **states the position** early. To identify it and keep it in view as you learn more about his argument, underline the final sentence in paragraph 2 and the first sentence of paragraph 3. In those sentences, circle Estrada's key terms: *ethnic*, *mascot*, and *ethnicity*. Then search paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 to determine whether Estrada gives you enough information to let you know unmistakably what the key terms mean. To find out, write your own brief definition of these terms.
2. Reread paragraphs 11 and 12, where Estrada offers hypothetical **examples** of three team names for ethnic groups. Underline each example. Then decide how these examples support Estrada's position. Given his readers, subscribers to the *Dallas Morning News*, how convincing do you think the examples are likely to be? What reactions would you expect from his readers? Write a few sentences about your insights.

Commentary: Presenting the Issue and Plausible Reasons

Although the title of his essay implies its subject, Estrada does not identify the **issue** explicitly until the end of the second paragraph. He begins the essay by remembering his childhood experience as a football fan and explaining that, even as a child, he was made uncomfortable by the practice of naming sports teams for Native Americans. In paragraphs 2–4, he lists team names (Washington Redskins, Kansas City Chiefs, Atlanta Braves, Cleveland Indians, Florida State Seminoles, Illinois Illini) to remind readers how common the practice is. Then, in paragraph 8, he relates an anecdote about a father who not only feels uncomfortable but also feels personally ridiculed as a Native American when his son's school celebrates Braves' victories with Indian costumes and tomahawk chops. Estrada uses this anecdote to demonstrate that the issue is important and worth taking seriously.

Estrada presents the issue in this way to appeal to the readers of his column in the politically conservative *Dallas Morning News*. He apparently assumes that unless he can convince his readers that the issue of sports teams' names is significant, many readers would dismiss it as unimportant or as advancing a liberal agenda. Therefore, Estrada tries to make his readers empathize with what he calls a real-world issue, one that actually hurts kids (paragraph 8). When you present the issue of your own essay, you also may need to help readers understand why it is important and for whom.

Presenting the issue is just a beginning. To convince readers, Estrada has to give the **reasons** that he believes naming sports teams for ethnic groups is detrimental. He gives two: because it treats people like team mascots and it singles out a politically weak group. Moreover, to be convincing, the reasons have to seem plausible to readers; and if readers are convinced by the support Estrada provides to show the effects of treating people like mascots, then they will be inclined to agree with Estrada that the practice is wrong. Similarly, if readers are convinced also that naming sports teams for Native Americans unfairly singles out a politically weak group, then they would be even more likely to agree with Estrada's conclusion.

Considering Topics for Your Own Essay

List some issues that involve what you believe to be unfair treatment of any group. For example, should a law be passed to make English the official language in this country, requiring that election ballots and drivers' tests be printed only in English? Should teenagers be required to get their parents' permission to obtain birth-control information and contraception? What is affirmative action, and should it be used in college admissions for underrepresented groups? Should colleges publish guidelines for discussions in classes to protect any group from either blatant or inadvertent discrimination? Should telling jokes about any group be banned from workplaces?

AMITAI ETZIONI (b. 1929) has written numerous articles and books reflecting his commitment to a communitarian agenda, including, most recently, *My Brother's Keeper: A Memoir and a Message* (2003) and *From Empire to Community: A New Approach to International Relations* (2004). Professor of sociology at George Washington University for many years, he is also Director of the Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies there.

The following essay was originally published in 1986 in the *Miami Herald*, a major newspaper that circulates in South Florida. The original headnote identifies Etzioni as the father of five sons, including three teenagers, and points out that his son Dari helped Etzioni write this essay — although it does not say what Dari contributed.

Before you read, think about the part-time jobs you held during high school — not just summer jobs but those you worked during the months when school was in session. Recall the pleasures and disappointments of these jobs. In particular, think about what you learned that might have made you a better student and prepared you for college. Perhaps you worked at a fast-food restaurant. If not, you have probably been in many such places and have observed students working there.

Working at McDonald's

Amitai Etzioni

McDonald's is bad for your kids. I do not mean the flat patties and the white-flour buns; I refer to the jobs teen-agers undertake, mass-producing these choice items. 1

As many as two-thirds of America's high school juniors and seniors now hold down part-time paying jobs, according to studies. Many of these are in fast-food chains, of which McDonald's is the pioneer, trend-setter and symbol. 2

At first, such jobs may seem right out of the Founding Fathers' educational manual for how to bring up self-reliant, work-ethic-driven, productive youngsters. But in fact, these jobs undermine school attendance and involvement, impart few skills that will be useful in later life, and simultaneously skew the values of teen-agers — especially their ideas about the worth of a dollar. 3

It has been a longstanding American tradition that youngsters ought to get paying jobs. In folklore, few pursuits are more deeply revered than the newspaper route and the sidewalk lemonade stand. Here the youngsters are to learn how sweet are the fruits of labor and self-discipline (papers are delivered early in the morning, rain or shine), and the ways of trade (if you price your lemonade too high or too low . . .). 4

Roy Rogers, Baskin Robbins, Kentucky Fried Chicken, *et al.* may at first seem nothing but a vast extension of the lemonade stand. They provide very large numbers of teen jobs, provide regular employment, pay quite well compared to many other teen jobs and, in the modern equivalent of toiling over a hot stove, test one's stamina. 5

Closer examination, however, finds the McDonald's kind of job highly uneducational in several ways. Far from providing opportunities for entrepreneurship (the lemonade stand) or self-discipline, self-supervision and self-scheduling (the paper route), most teen jobs these days are highly structured — what social scientists call "highly routinized." 6

True, you still have to have the gumption to get yourself over to the hamburger stand, but once you don the prescribed uniform, your task is spelled out in minute detail. The franchise prescribes the shape of the coffee cups; the weight, size, shape and color of the patties; and the texture of the napkins (if any). Fresh coffee is to be made every eight minutes. And so on. There is no room for initiative, creativity, or even elementary rearrangements. These are breeding grounds for robots working for yesterday's assembly lines, not tomorrow's high-tech posts. 7

There are very few studies on the matter. One of the few is a 1984 study by Ivan Charper and Bryan Shore Fraser. The study relies mainly on what teen-agers write in response to questionnaires rather than actual observations of fast-food jobs. The authors argue that the employees develop many skills such as how to operate a food-preparation machine and a cash register. However, little attention is paid to how long it takes to acquire such a skill, or what its significance is. 8

What does it matter if you spend 20 minutes to learn to use a cash register, and then — "operate" it? What "skill" have you acquired? It is a long way from learning to work with a lathe or carpenter tools in the olden days or to program computers in the modern age. 9

A 1980 study by A. V. Harrell and P. W. Wirtz found that, among those students who worked at least 25 hours per week while in school, their unemployment rate four years later was half of that of seniors who did not work. This is an impressive statistic. It must be seen, though, together with the finding that many who begin as part-time employees in fast-food chains drop out of high school and are gobbled up in the world of low-skill jobs. 10

Some say that while these jobs are rather unsuited for college-bound, white, middle-class youngsters, they are "ideal" for lower-class, "non-academic," minority youngsters. Indeed, minorities are "over-represented" in these jobs (21 percent of fast-food employees). While it is true that these places provide income, work and even some training to such youngsters, they also tend to perpetuate their disadvantaged status. They provide no career ladders, few marketable skills, and undermine school attendance and involvement. 11

The hours are often long. Among those 14 to 17, a third of fast-food employees (including some school dropouts) labor more than 30 hours per week, according to the Charper-Fraser study. Only 20 percent work 15 hours or less. The rest: between 15 and 30 hours. 12

Often the stores close late, and after closing one must clean up and tally up. In affluent Montgomery County, Md., where child labor would not seem to be a widespread economic necessity, 24 percent of the seniors at one high school in 1985 worked as much as five to seven days a week; 27 percent, three to five. There is just no way such amounts of work will not interfere with school work, especially homework. In an informal survey published in the most recent yearbook of the high school, 58 percent of seniors acknowledged that their jobs interfere with their school work. 13

The Charper-Fraser study sees merit in learning teamwork and working under supervision. The authors have a point here. However, it must be noted that such learning is not automatically educational or wholesome. For example, much of the supervision in fast-food places leans toward teaching one the wrong kinds of compliance: blind obedience, or shared alienation with the "boss." 14

Supervision is often both tight and woefully inappropriate. Today, fast-food chains and other such places of work (record shops, bowling alleys) keep costs down by having teens supervise teens with often no adult on the premises. 15

There is no father or mother figure with which to identify, to emulate, to provide a role model and guidance. The work-culture varies from one place to another: Sometimes it is a tightly run shop (must keep the cash registers ringing); sometimes a rather loose pot party interrupted by customers. However, only rarely is there a master to learn from, or much worth learning. Indeed, far from being places where solid adult work values are being transmitted, these are places where all too often delinquent teen values dominate. Typically, when my son Oren was dishing out ice cream for Baskin Robbins in upper Manhattan, his fellow teenworkers considered him a sucker for not helping himself to the till. Most youngsters felt they were entitled to $50 severance "pay" on their last day on the job. 16

The pay, oddly, is the part of the teen work-world that is most difficult to evaluate. The lemonade stand or paper route money was for your allowance. In the old days, apprentices learning a trade from a master contributed most, if not all, of their income to their parents' household. Today, the teen pay may be low by adult standards, but it is often, especially in the middle class, spent largely or wholly by the teens. That is, the youngsters live free at home ("after all, they are high school kids") and are left with very substantial sums of money. 17

Where this money goes is not quite clear. Some use it to support themselves, especially among the poor. More middle-class kids set some money aside to help pay for college, or save it for a major purchase — often a car. But large amounts 18

seem to flow to pay for an early introduction into the most trite aspects of American consumerism: flimsy punk clothes, trinkets and whatever else is the last fast-moving teen craze.

19 One may say that this is only fair and square; they are being good American consumers and spend their money on what turns them on. At least, a cynic might add, these funds do not go into illicit drugs and booze. On the other hand, an educator might bemoan that these young, yet unformed individuals, so early in life driven to buy objects of no intrinsic educational, cultural or social merit, learn so quickly the dubious merit of keeping up with the Joneses in ever-changing fads, promoted by mass merchandising.

20 Many teens find the instant reward of money, and the youth status symbols it buys, much more alluring than credits in calculus courses, European history or foreign languages. No wonder quite a few would rather skip school — and certainly homework — and instead work longer at a Burger King. Thus, most teen work these days is not providing early lessons in the work ethic; it fosters escape from school and responsibilities, quick gratification and a short cut to the consumeristic aspects of adult life.

21 Thus, parents should look at teen employment not as automatically educational. It is an activity — like sports — that can be turned into an educational opportunity. But it can also easily be abused. Youngsters must learn to balance the quest for income with the needs to keep growing and pursue other endeavors that do not pay off instantly — above all education.

22 Go back to school.

Making Connections to Personal and Social Issues: Job Skills

Etzioni argues that working at McDonald's (or any other fast-food place) does not teach the kinds of skills and habits required for success in jobs requiring personal initiative and self-monitoring. He points out that at McDonald's workers never get to practice "entrepreneurship [initiative, risk-taking, speculation, self-promotion] . . . or self-discipline, self-supervision and self-scheduling" (paragraph 6). He asserts that there is "no room for initiative, creativity, or even elementary rearrangements" (paragraph 7).

With two or three other students, describe in turn the most McDonald's-like job you have held. Then, in turn again, describe a job (if you've had one) that gave you practice in even one of the work virtues Etzioni mentions and explain how it did so. (If you have never held a job, talk about why you have focused your priorities elsewhere.) Finally, describe for each other the ideal job or career you envision for yourself and how you think your work or other out-of-school experience has — or has not — helped prepare you for it. (You may have noticed that your work on the writing assignments in this course enables you to practice many of the virtues in Etzioni's list.)

Analyzing Writing Strategies

1. To see how Etzioni makes use of statistics (numbers) to **support** his argument, underline the statistics in paragraphs 2, 10, 11, 12, and 13. Underline also any

references to the sources of these statistics. Reviewing these, how would you explain Etzioni's repeated reliance on statistics? How might his intended readers, parents of teenagers reading the *Miami Herald* newspaper, have been influenced by the statistics? Write a few sentences about your insights.

2. A responsible writer taking a position on an issue does not define an issue and assert a position on it and then walk away. On the contrary, the writer knows that an argument for a position does not begin until **reasons** are given, and Etzioni gives several. Underline the most direct statements of Etzioni's reasons, the first sentence in paragraphs 6, 15, and 16, and the last sentence in paragraph 20. Then, for yourself, make a concise list of these reasons, reducing each one to no more than four or five words. From the point of view, first, of high school students and, then, of their parents, identify the one reason likely to be most convincing and the one likely to be least convincing. Explain briefly why you made these choices. Finally, try to think of another reason Etzioni might have offered to support his position.

Commentary: Anticipating Readers' Likely Objections

At key points throughout his essay, Etzioni acknowledges readers' likely objections and then **counterargues** them. In paragraph 3 he acknowledges that some readers will believe that McDonald's-type jobs are good because they teach teenagers to become "self-reliant, work-ethic-driven, productive youngsters." Although he suggests that he shares with his readers these standards for evaluating jobs for teenagers, Etzioni makes clear that he disagrees about the value of jobs exemplified by McDonald's.

In paragraph 8 he acknowledges that Charper and Fraser's research finding that "employees develop many skills" seems to directly contradict his own claim that fast-food jobs "impart few skills that will be useful in later life" (paragraph 3). He handles this objection by accepting as fact Charper and Fraser's finding but counterarguing that the kinds of skills learned by fast-food workers are the wrong skills: "highly routinized" skills (paragraph 6) that prepare young people to work on "yesterday's assembly lines, not tomorrow's high-tech posts" (paragraph 7).

Similarly, in paragraph 10 Etzioni acknowledges as "impressive" Harrell and Wirtz's statistic showing that students who work twenty-five hours or more per week in high school are employed four years later at a higher rate than those who do not. He then counterargues, however, by noting that "many who begin as part-time employees in fast-food chains drop out of high school and are gobbled up in the world of low-skill jobs." He concludes this refutation by implicitly comparing McDonald's-type jobs to the school tracking system that separates "(non-academic)" and "college-bound" students (paragraph 11). Instead of providing minority youngsters with an opportunity to advance, he argues, such jobs "perpetuate their disadvantaged status" because they "provide no career ladders, few marketable skills, and undermine school attendance and involvement."

Etzioni has his readers very much in mind as he writes this essay. He anticipates how they might respond to his argument. Writers have three options in anticipating readers' objections: They can simply acknowledge readers' concerns, they can accommodate them by making concessions, or they can try to refute them. Etzioni chooses this third option. When you write your essay, you will face these same choices.

Basic Features: Arguing Positions

A Focused Presentation of the Issue

Writers use a variety of strategies to present the issue and prepare readers for their argument. For current, hotly debated issues, the title may be enough to identify the issue. Estrada's allusion to the familiar children's chant in his title "Sticks and Stones and Sports Team Names" is enough to identify the issue for many readers. Statsky gives a brief history of the debate about competitive sports for children. Many writers provide concrete examples early on to make sure that readers can understand the issue. Statsky mentions Peewee Football and Little League Baseball as examples of the kind of organized sports she opposes.

How writers present the issue depends on what they assume readers already know and what they want readers to think about the issue. Therefore, they try to define the issue in a way that promotes their position. Estrada defines the issue of naming sports teams after Native Americans in terms of how it affects individuals, especially children, rather than in terms of liberal or conservative politics. Similarly, Stabiner presents the issue of single-sex education in terms of how it can improve the lives of girls — especially disadvantaged girls — and the opportunities available to them.

A Clear Position

Very often writers declare their position in a thesis statement early in the essay. This strategy has the advantage of letting readers know right away where the writer stands. Etzioni announces his thesis in the first sentence. Statsky places her thesis in the opening paragraph, and Estrada puts his in the second paragraph. Moreover, all of the writers in this chapter restate the thesis at places in the argument where readers could lose sight of the central point. And they reiterate the thesis at the end.

In composing a thesis statement, writers try to make their position unambiguous, appropriately qualified, and clearly arguable. For example, to avoid ambiguity, Estrada uses common words like *wrong*. But because readers may differ on what they consider to be wrong, Estrada demonstrates exactly what he thinks is wrong about naming teams for ethnic groups. To show readers he shares their legitimate concerns about hypersensitivity, Estrada qualifies his thesis to apply only to genuine cases of political insensitivity. Finally, to show that his position is not based solely on personal feelings, Estrada appeals to readers' common sense of right and wrong.

Plausible Reasons and Convincing Support

To argue for a position, writers must give reasons. Even in relatively brief essays, writers sometimes give more than one reason and state their reasons explicitly. Estrada, for instance, gives two reasons for his position that naming sports teams for ethnic groups is detrimental: It treats people like team mascots, and it singles out politically weak groups. Statsky gives four reasons for her opposition to competitive sports for children: They are harmful to the children both physically and psychologically, discourage most from participating, and encourage adults to behave badly.

Writers know they cannot simply assert their reasons. They must support them with examples, statistics, authorities, or anecdotes. We have seen all of these kinds of support used in this chapter. For instance, Statsky uses all of them in her essay — giving examples of common sports injuries that children incur, citing statistics indicating the high percentage of children who drop out of competitive sports, quoting authorities on the physical and psychological hazards of competitive sports for young children, and relating an anecdote of a child vomiting to show the enormous psychological pressure competitive sports put on some children. Stabiner supports one reason that she so favors single-sex education — that it benefits poor students and minorities the most —

by pointing out the facts that Latina and African American girls at a single-sex New York City high school go on to four-year colleges at a much higher rate than their counterparts at coed schools.

Anticipating Opposing Positions and Objections

Writers also try to anticipate other widely held positions on the issue as well as objections and questions readers might raise to an argument. The writers in this chapter counterargue by either accommodating or refuting opposing positions and objections. Estrada does both, implying that he shares his readers' objection to political correctness but arguing that naming sports teams after ethnic groups is a genuine case of political insensitivity and not an instance of hypersensitivity. Stabiner refutes the objections of several national organizations to her position that now is the time to try single-sex schooling. Etzioni refutes parents' and students' belief in the benefits of working at McDonald's by arguing that such work does nothing more than train "robots" for "yesterday's assembly lines."

Anticipating readers' positions and objections can enhance the writer's credibility and strengthen the argument. When readers holding an opposing position recognize that the writer takes their position seriously, they are more likely to listen to what the writer has to say. It can also reassure readers that they share certain important values and attitudes with the writer, building a bridge of common concerns among people who have been separated by difference and antagonism.