

# Working at mcdonalds: critical response



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## Working at McDonald's by Amitai Etzioni

In “ Working at McDonald's” Amitai Etzioni argues that holding a part-time job at McDonald's is bad for American High School students. He contends that such 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” (Etzioni, ). Although Etzioni is a reputed writer whose arguments are well presented, he does not support his position with adequate research data, and does not sufficiently emphasize that the number of hours of work is the major factor in this debate.

Amitai Etzioni enjoys a highly reputed position as a social commentator, intellectual, writer and academician. He has served as a senior advisor in the Carter Administration, taught at Columbia University, Harvard and the University of California at Berkeley and is currently a professor of International Relations at the George Washington University (Huffington Post, 2013). As such, his essay is supported by his impeccable credentials as a writer and makes his position credible.

Etzioni's contention that “ As many as two-thirds of America's high-school juniors and seniors now hold down part-time paying jobs” (Etzioni, ), and a large part of these are in fast-food chains is substantiated by data from the National Center for Education Statistics from 1992 (ResearchBrief, 2005). However, Etzioni goes on to refer to only two studies in his essay: a 1980 study by A. V. Harrell and P. W. Wirtz and a 1984 study by Ivan Charner and Bryna Shore Fraser. Both these studies actually show positive outcomes for school students with part-time jobs. Etzioni refutes the findings of these studies, but his arguments appear to be largely based on personal opinion.

His contention that the few, insignificant skills gained are not marketable or beneficial for career advancement, is not supported by any data or research. Again, Etzioni states that the money earned is frittered away on consumer goods, but does not substantiate his claim. However, studies not quoted by Etzioni do support his claims and show that most students who work part-time “ do not save much of their earnings for college; instead, many simply treat their earnings as spending money rather than investments for their futures” (News Service, 2011).

As far as working hours are concerned, Etzioni contends that “ There is just no way such amounts of work will not interfere with school work, especially homework” (Etzioni, ). However, he fails to correlate specific working hours with outcomes, and does not adequately stress that it is long working hours that have adverse effects. This is the crucial factor in the debate. Studies show that students who hold a job and work up to 15 hours a week are those who do best in High School. It is only when the working hours extend to more than 15 hours on an average that the negative effects kick in. Long working hours mean that “ those who spend long hours on the job have poorer grades and lower college aspirations, and are more likely to smoke cigarettes and use illicit drugs” (News Service, 2011). It is the number of working hours which decide whether part-time work is good or bad.

Etzioni is a reputed writer whose argument deserves respect. He quotes studies which oppose his views and refutes their findings. However, he does not support his own contentions with sufficient evidence. This makes a large part of the essay appear to be a personal opinion piece. Moreover, Etzioni take part-time work to be completely adverse for High School students and does not make the crucial differentiation between reasonable and extended

working hours.

Works Cited.

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