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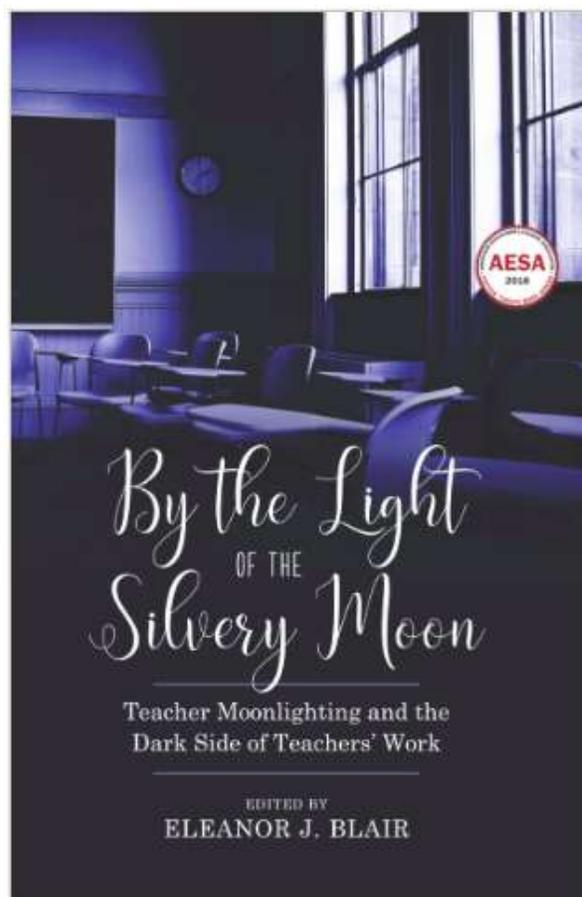
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In *By the Light of the Silvery Moon: Teacher Moonlighting and the Dark Side of Teachers' Work*, Eleanor J. Blair crafts a comprehensive examination of the complicated phenomenon of teachers' work outside of their classrooms. This edited volume includes a collection of previously published and unpublished research articles on teacher moonlighting as well as thoughtful analysis by the editor. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative research methods, *Silvery Moon* relates insightful research along with thought-provoking discourse that will surely engage readers from a wide range experience in education. Practitioners, school leaders and education researchers alike will find useful knowledge in this text examining an elusive facet of the life of a professional teacher.

*Silvery Moon* is a well-crafted and enjoyably informative read. It begins with a superb Foreword by Dr. Richard Wisniewski, Dean of Education Emeritus at The University of Tennessee. Wisniewski was the supervising professor of the volume's editor when she was



a graduate student at UT and when her interest in the subject of teacher moonlighting was just being piqued. He praises Blair's acumen as a writer and researcher. He remarks that teacher moonlighting is "such a common practice that we simply assumed it was part of what being a teacher required" (p. xiv). This feeling of overlooking the commonplace continues as an important thread throughout the book. Blair writes in her introduction that widespread acceptance of teacher moonlighting shouldn't negate critical examination of the practice, however. "Moonlighting is so familiar to teachers that we don't recognize that the high levels of moonlighting among educators are a very strange phenomenon. Attempts to study moonlighting have failed from attempts to make what is commonplace appear disconcerting and worthy of serious consideration by policymakers, researchers, or members of the profession" (p. 9). She then sets the stage for reasoned discourse on the subject of teachers' outside work by highlighting several foundational studies on the subject before discussing the present state of moonlighting in today's increasingly gig economy. Blair uses the last chapters of her book to tell stories of teachers' moonlighting and examine the causes and effects of these "side hustles" on both their well-being and their ability to adequately perform their primary jobs as educators.

A mercurial concept to define, "moonlighting" has largely avoided the concentrated eye of educational research. It was therefore extremely helpful for Blair to situate the term broadly: "anything beyond their contractual teaching responsibilities should be considered teacher moonlighting" (p. 2). By casting the net wide, activities such as coaching, sponsoring clubs, tutoring, and even working summer jobs are included in this examination of teacher work. Under this large umbrella, the ratio of teachers engaging in the practice of working outside their contractual arrangement varies from 15% to 71% (p. 2).

The rate at which teachers choose to seek additional employment is one focus of *Silvery Moon*. The exact percentage varies from study to study depending on the year and sample, but all referenced research confirms that this practice is one of consequence for teachers. . One of the key ideas presented throughout the book's studies is that while moonlighting is somewhat of a norm for teachers in American schools, the subject is still discussed in hushed tones among those who practice it; and it is rarely a focus of research.

By far the strongest aspect of *Silvery Moon* is the way in which the phenomenon of teacher moonlighting is examined from a variety of perspectives. In addition to teachers' survey responses regarding their employment outside of teaching, the reader is also treated to interviews and autoethnographic accounts from coaches, former teachers, and in-service educators who engage in multiple types of moonlighting behavior. From these interviews, the reader gains insight into not only the motivation behind teachers' decisions to moonlight, but their perceptions of the effects their outside employment had on their instruction and overall quality of life. These qualitative pieces help to explore the complicated realities of teacher moonlighting and illustrate the individuals behind some of the statistical measures of the experience. *Silvery Moon* also includes several studies that utilize data from larger regional or nationally-represented surveys. These studies help to provide quantitative figures on moonlighting that reveal the scope of the issue. These data are then illustrated by the personal accounts featured in other chapters.

Personally, I found the two firsthand accounts of teachers' moonlighting experiences to be particularly powerful. One interviewee, Sabriya, who came to teaching later in life, related how her experiences with moonlighting provided some extra financial flexibility. "The moonlighting allows you to take advantage of some things that you could not necessarily do, because you didn't have

enough money.... I can participate in extraordinary events, affairs, and be okay with it, because I have the extra money to do that” (p. 205). She went on to relate how moonlighting is still treated as a secretive aspect of teaching. “Most people don’t know. I mean, it’s not anything you just hurry up and tell everyone, *I have a part time job*. You don’t do that. You do what you need to do to sustain your lifestyle. You keep it kind of quiet. You don’t brag on it” (p. 209).

In another autoethnographic account, the teacher reflected on her time moonlighting as a bartender. The teacher vividly described the tension between her two worlds and how that stress eventually drove her to quit her moonlighting job. Interestingly, she also eventually left her job as a classroom teacher. She explained that her decision fit the norm for many teachers who moonlight, saying, “I suspect this may be in part because these teachers [who moonlight] see that other jobs offer them a sense of empowerment that is not offered to them in school” (p. 196).

Reading these stories, one comes to understand that teacher moonlighting is a complex phenomenon. The underlying assumption that teachers moonlight because of financial needs is on several occasions confirmed, but alternative causes are also examined. For example, in one research study, teachers were asked if they would give up their second jobs if their teaching salaries were increased to make up for those wages. Most said they would not (p. 6)! *Silvery Moon* devotes adequate time to explaining the concept of moonlighting to the reader, but the majority of the text is focused on understanding the phenomenon from cause to effect. The nuances of why teachers work outside of their schools takes center stage, but the differences between job types and attitudes towards that

work is also addressed. Several studies highlight the better-known negative effects of teacher moonlighting such as exhaustion, missed time in lesson preparation, and professional isolation. However, attention was also paid to some often ignored positive effects of teacher moonlighting: expanded contextual references that can be used with students, enhanced confidence and self-esteem, and personal satisfaction. Including personal accounts and research studies, the contributors examined all sides of this complex issue, providing readers a well-rounded education on the subject by the end of the book.

Overall, *Silvery Moon* is a welcome addition to the field of teacher career research that offers a balanced and comprehensive look inside a facet of education that has been sadly neglected. Practitioners, school leaders, and researchers would benefit greatly by digesting the lessons presented by Blair and her colleagues. Only by better understanding the challenges that drive teachers to seek supplemental employment may we hope to one day make meaningful changes to their situation. In her conclusion, Blair wrote, “Increasing teacher’s salaries will not stop teacher moonlighting and it will not produce happy teachers. Lasting changes in the teaching profession should emphasize improved working conditions and recognition of the problems inherent in the ‘doing’ of a teachers’ work” (p. 228). *Silvery Moon* makes clear that the phenomenon of teacher moonlighting is but a symptom of some larger problems in American education, namely, teacher pay and teacher support. Only when these systematic problems are brought to light and addressed can the issue of teachers seeking outside employment begin to be understood.

## About the Reviewer

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