

# Moonlighters: A Product of Deprivation or Aspiration? Double emploi : esclavage ou épanouissement

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Article abstract

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# Moonlighters: A Product of Deprivation or Aspiration?

**Muhammad Jamal**  
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**Ronald L. Crawford**

*This study explores the nature of relationships between moonlighting and several dependent variables, such as need fulfillment in work and non-work, mental health, participation in voluntary organizations, job performance, absenteeism, anticipated turnover and flex-time and short work week preferences.*

Moonlighting, or multiple job holding, has occupied a rather ambivalent place in the management literature. Surveys of company policies on moonlighting show a range from blanket prohibition through *laissez-faire*, with most companies reporting only implicit restrictions honoured largely in the breach (Davey & Brown, 1978). A poll of executives in 25 organizations, reported to have substantial rates of moonlighting, found all apprehensive about possible ill effects, such as fatigue, injuries, absenteeism, malingering, and conflict of interest, yet a surprising number indicated willingness to hire moonlighting employees from other firms (Habbe, 1957).

Systematic research on people who moonlight has been extremely limited. The prevalence of multiple employment has been estimated by the U.S. Department of Labour (1976) and Statistics Canada (1976) at 5-6% of the non-farm labour force. However, these statistics should be regarded as extremely conservative. Government statistics are based upon such information as employers' reports of regular earnings from which taxes have been withheld, but thereby exclude investments, many kinds of self-employment, and cash or barter transactions (Crawford, 1978). The same government sources also indicate that moonlighting is significantly more frequent among males, people with multiple dependents, low wage earners, married men, and previously married women (Hayghe & Michelotti, 1971; Kopp, 1975). Wilensky concurs with those findings, suggesting that moon-

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lighting is a function of opportunity, need or aspiration, awareness of available employment, and possession of marketable skills (Wilensky, 1963).

The question of motivation for moonlighting is particularly interesting. Economic reasons seem to play a dominant role in moonlighting. Low income workers must moonlight to make ends meet, while the more fortunate may use side earnings to support a higher standard of living (Michelotti, 1975; Shishko & Rostker, 1976). However, others have reported non-fiscal reasons for moonlighting (Miller & Sniderman, 1974; Mott, 1965; Mullally, 1976). Some people enjoy the freedom and challenge of being their own boss; others seek relief from boredom and alienation in their primary job, the opportunity to apply skills or training not fully utilized in their usual position, or the chance to develop broader abilities in new fields. For some, the payoff appears to be fun: the gratification of doing work which they really enjoy but find too unremunerative or risky as a full-time career.

The sequelae of moonlighting, for the worker and the primary employer, have been addressed only in an anecdotal fashion. Many potential outcomes, both desirable and undesirable, have been suggested. Harmful or undesirable consequences of moonlighting which are commonly mentioned include physical stress and fatigue, degradation of mental health or social relationships, deterioration of performance on the primary job, and related problems of tardiness, absenteeism, accidents, and turnover. Improved satisfaction with work and off-the-job conditions, an enhanced sense of well-being, better work and work-related behaviour are benefits which might accrue through moonlighting. However, little empirical research has been done to find out which notion of moonlighters (desirable vs. undesirable) is supported by data in the real world of work. The present study was undertaken to fill this gap in the management literature. Specifically, the main objective of the present research was to compare moonlighters and non-moonlighters on a number of outcome variables such as need fulfillment in work and non-work, mental and emotional health, participation in voluntary organizations, job performance, absenteeism, turnover and flex-time and shorter work week preferences.

## **METHOD**

The sample for the present study was drawn from business organizations in a western Canadian municipality. Initially, 30 companies employing large numbers of rank-and-file workers were contacted; only 6 were able to participate. Care was taken that no industry be over-represented in the study. Participating companies represented the cement products, electrical

equipment, woodworking, and advertising industries, and ranged in size from 100 to 300 employees. All rank-and-file workers in the 6 companies were included in the sample.

Data were gathered by a structured questionnaire. Approximately 900 questionnaires were distributed and, with one follow-up, 404 (45 percent) usable questionnaires were received. Response rate varied from 35 percent to 68 percent across companies. A majority of the respondents were married (68%); male (76%); over age 35 (68%); had a high school education or less (79%); belonged to a union (53%); and had been raised in large cities (71%).

## **MEASURES**

### **Moonlighting Status**

Moonlighting status was determined by asking respondents whether or not, at the time of the survey, they were engaged in a second job outside the company. Those who were working in paid jobs outside the company were labelled 'moonlighters', and those who were not engaged in a second job were called 'non-moonlighters'.

### **Need Fulfillment**

Need fulfillment in work was assessed using a ten-item scale developed initially to measure the five dimensions described in Maslow's theory of need hierarchy (Mitchell & Moudgill, 1976). Need fulfillment in non-work was assessed using a modified version of the Mitchell and Moudgill scale (Jamal, Baba & Mitchell, 1979). Items in the Mitchell and Moudgill scale were re-worded to orient respondents to non-work activities.

### **Mental Health**

Measures of mental health comprised workers' responses to a 54-item questionnaire developed to tap Kornhauser's six dimensions of mental health: manifest anxiety, self-esteem, hostility, sociability and life satisfaction (Kornhauser, 1965). Following Kornhauser, a composite index of mental health was constructed by combining scores on the six dimensions of mental health. The composite index was used in the present study. Internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) for the six indices ranged .60 to .92, and for the composite index the estimate was .93 by using Guilford's formula for the reliability of the combination of composites.

Validity of the mental health measures was investigated by comparing global judgements by seven clinical psychologists of the mental health of a sub-sample of respondents (N = 32) with the respondents' composite scores as well as by comparing the composite index scores of half the full sample of respondents (N = 192) with their scores on a second short form mental health scale developed by Quinn (Quinn, 1972). Development of the questionnaire and a full discussion of reliability and validity data are reported elsewhere (Jamal, Barnowe & Mitchell, 1977; Jamal and Mitchell, 1980).

### **Social Involvement**

Social involvement was operationalized in terms of reported participation in voluntary organizations (e.g., union, church or ethnic groups, civic or social clubs). Measures were obtained for each individual of the number of voluntary organization memberships, executive positions held, meetings attended (in the two months previous to answering the questionnaire), and hours each individual spent in voluntary organization activities (in the four weeks previous to answering the questionnaire).

### **Reported Absenteeism**

Absenteeism was assessed by asking each worker how many times he was absent from work (in the four months previous to answering the questionnaire). This measure has been found to be highly correlated with actual incidents of absenteeism (Beehr & Gupta, 1978).

### **Job Performance**

Job performance was assessed with three questions involving a worker's perception of his performance in comparison to his co-workers, a worker's perception of how his supervisor rates his performance in comparison to his co-worker's, and a worker's perception of how his co-workers rate his performance in comparison to their performance. These measures were derived from the Porter and Lawler study (1967) of managerial effectiveness. Self-reported measures of job performance have been found to be reasonably correlated with the supervisory ratings of job performance (Baird, 1977; Heneman, 1974).

### **Anticipated Turnover**

Anticipated turnover was assessed by asking each worker to give his or her probability of staying with the same company two years from the day the questionnaire was answered. This measure has been reported as a rea-

sonably valid measure of turnover (Kraut, 1975; Miller, Katerberg & Hulin, 1979).

### **Flex-Time and Short Work Week Preference**

Preference for flex-time and short work week was measured by asking each worker to indicate his or her preference on a five-point Likert-type scale of 'strongly favour' to 'strongly disfavour'.

## **RESULTS**

Given the large number of dependent variables used in the study and the statistical significance of several of the relationships examined, product-moment correlations among the variables were computed and analyzed for evidence of possible overlaps. The intercorrelation matrix is reported in Table 1. The nature of the intercorrelations suggests several things. Participation in voluntary organizations is best represented by three rather than four variables, hours spent in meetings, and meetings attended being highly correlated ( $r = .74$ ;  $p < .01$ ). 'Hours spent in meetings' was considered a better indicator of voluntary effort than simply the number of meetings attended by an individual and was retained for further discussion in the paper. Other correlations in the matrix which were statistically significant and relatively large in absolute terms ( $r > .35$ ) were meaningful within the conceptual framework of the study. The mental health variable was viewed as an indicator of overall adjustment of workers at jobs, and the measure correlated to a fairly high degree with many other dependent variables in the study. Need fulfillment in work and anticipated turnover emerged as correlated measures of current satisfaction and expected behaviour but were each relatively uncorrelated with non-work variables. Need fulfillment in non-work correlated highly only with the mental health measure. Job performance was highly correlated with mental health, need fulfillment in work, anticipated turnover and reported absenteeism. Flex-time preference and short work week preference were also highly correlated. These dependent variables were retained, therefore, for further analysis.

One-way analysis (ANOVA), with unequal cell frequencies, was used to examine the differences between moonlighters and non-moonlighters on several dependent variables. Results are reported in Table 2. No significant differences existed between moonlighters and non-moonlighters on six of the eleven dependent variables. Moonlighters were not significantly different from the non-moonlighters in terms of need fulfillment in work and non-work, quality of mental health, reported absenteeism, job performance

**TABLE 1**  
**Correlations Among Dependent Variables\***

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
1. Mental Health	1.0											
2. Need Fulfillment — Work	.53	1.0										
3. Need Fulfillment — Non-Work	.35	.30	1.0									
4. Organization Memberships	.44	.24	.02	1.0								
5. Executive Positions	.42	.30	.09	.51	1.0							
6. Meetings Attended	.46	.19	.19	.34	.28	1.0						
7. Participation Hours	.52	.25	.19	.45	.42	.74	1.0					
8. Anticipated Turnover	-.56	-.66	-.15	-.26	-.22	-.20	-.19	1.0				
9. Reported Absenteeism	-.23	-.29	-.12	-.01	-.05	-.01	-.03	.32	1.0			
10. Job Performance	.44	.55	.11	.31	.28	.19	.29	-.51	-.38	1.0		
11. Flex-time Preference	-.10	.01	.00	-.11	-.05	-.07	-.09	-.05	.13	-.05	1.0	
12. Short Work Week Preference	.02	.04	.21	.00	.00	-.04	-.05	-.04	.07	-.08	.51	1.0

NOTE: N = 400

\*r = .08 p < .05

r = .10 p < .01

r = .16 p < .001

TABLE 2

**Moonlighting status related to mean need and fulfillment, mental health, participation in voluntary organizations, reported absenteeism, job performance, anticipated turnover flex-time and shorter work week preference scores**

<i>Dependent Variables</i>	<i>Moonlighting Status</i>		<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
	<i>Non-moonlighters (N = 341)</i>	<i>Moonlighters (N = 62)</i>		
Need Fulfillment				
Work	29.63	29.24	0.05	ns
Non-Work	33.20	31.26	1.65	ns
Mental Health	194.29	201.03	0.84	ns
Participation in voluntary organizations				
Memberships held	1.80	2.60	10.89	.001
Positions held	0.59	1.13	13.73	.001
Participation hours	3.81	6.03	4.99	.01
Reported Absenteeism	1.38	1.29	0.12	ns
Job Performance	7.90	7.90	0.00	ns
Anticipated Turnover	2.88	2.79	0.28	ns
Flex-time Preference	3.33	3.65	2.80	.09
Short Work Week Preference	3.61	4.25	19.26	.001

and anticipated turnover. Surprisingly, moonlighters reported more social participation (number of memberships), held more executive positions, and spent more hours in voluntary organizations than non-moonlighters. On the average, moonlighters were more favourable to flex-time and shorter work week arrangements than non-moonlighters.

## DISCUSSION

The absence of significant differences in need fulfillment, mental health, and job-related behaviour between moonlighter and non-moonlighter rank-and-file workers failed to support clearly either the popular expectations of pathological outcomes or the hypotheses relating outside work activities to greater personal fulfillment. In the aggregate, both groups appear to function equally well on the primary job, and are undistinguished either by problems related to moonlighting or obvious benefits from it.

Several possible explanations could account for the lack of anticipated differences. One is that moonlighting, as practiced by most workers, is sub-



stantially an epiphenomenon. That is, outside work may be maintained at sufficiently low levels of effort and involvement that it generally has no real impact on other areas of function. The 5-10 hours per week that the average moonlighter devotes to his/her outside job could often be allocated from time customarily spent watching TV, or window shopping, or performing the same activity as a pure hobby. A related possibility is that the experience of moonlighting produces changes in workers' outlooks and habits that compensate for potential problems. Using time more efficiently, redefining the amount of work one can do without becoming fatigued, and rationalizing new sets of priorities are but a few examples.

Selective factors influencing who seeks or continues after hours may also be operant. A working hypothesis for future research could be that individuals are recruited into moonlighting in proportion to their levels of energy, stamina, ability to compartmentalize and deal separately with life demands (Dubin, 1956). In other words, people able to cope with increased requirements may be more likely to involve themselves in outside employment. Some support for that proposition is given by the findings regarding participation in voluntary organizations and work scheduling preferences. Moonlighters, even after working on both jobs, are still more active in clubs, teams and other groups, and if given more freedom might well extend the difference. A reverse mechanism may also be at work: a lot of people may initially admire the extra earnings or other benefits which moonlighters tout, but are turned off if the increased demands match poorly with their life demands and capabilities.

The generalizability of the findings of the present study to other occupational groups, such as low paid and marginal workers or managers and professionals, may be limited. People at the low end of the occupational ladder, in addition to low wages, are both frequently the most vulnerable to business, seasonal and other fluctuations and the most likely to contract chronic illnesses and other problems (Hollingshead & Redlich, 1958). For these people, work is work, to be taken whenever available, and both the element of choice and the concept of moonlighting as an optional extra activity might have little meaning. At the opposite end of the occupational spectrum, two kinds of conceptual problems pertain: an extended definition of the primary employment, and different kinds of moonlighting opportunities. In the first instance, managers, executives, and professionals are commonly allowed or encouraged to teach, consult, write or perform other services, often on company time, while the same activity by rank-and-file workers would be considered moonlighting. When a manager teaches an extramural college course, that can be accounted as "public relations" or "community service". (By the same token, however, the salaried manager typically forfeits the shelter of limited work hours.)

An additional problem in studying moonlighting among managers, professionals, and other high level white-collar workers is the sheer range of activities encountered. This problem arises because of the very meaning of what constitutes moonlighting. Some examples will clarify this point. One businessman owns and manages an apartment building from which he derives rental income and will realize a substantial capital gain. Another has invested in a diversified and active portfolio of stocks and bonds. Yet another has incorporated an antique shop in his wife's name, but helps out there regularly. Each of these people devotes ten or more hours per week to his second job, but which, if any, are moonlighters? In our opinion, all three qualify, but that in turn implies a very inclusive definition of moonlighting and may create substantial conceptual and methodological problems. If asked if they moonlight, for example, most would say not, and each would have good reasons for avoiding full disclosure.

The preceding point suggests one final direction for future investigation. An umbrella definition of moonlighting is valuable for some purposes, such as achieving equity in company rules. However, the possibility that there are major differences between kinds of moonlighting, in the demands they place upon the workers or their primary employers or the classes of people most or least suitable for those endeavours, should not be overlooked. Further research into those differences might enable more complex but also more realistic approaches with people who moonlight.

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## Double emploi: esclavage ou épanouissement?

Le double emploi (ou le fait de recevoir un revenu supplémentaire à côté d'un emploi principal) est communément reconnu comme un phénomène courant. Cependant, ses effets sur la santé, le bien-être et l'efficacité au travail des employés n'ont jamais été réellement approfondis. Certains travaux ont déjà suggéré que le double emploi était source de tension auprès des employés et de compromis quant à leur engagement au travail et leur fonction. D'autres discussions ont considéré ce phénomène comme la source de satisfaction légitime et bénéfique que ne peut fournir le travail principal. En réalité, de nombreuses compagnies dépendent de la disponibilité du double emploi provenant d'autres firmes et cela sans se soucier des résultats.

Les résultats obtenus ici le furent à travers une enquête effectuée auprès d'employés manuels de six firmes industrielles en utilisant un questionnaire qu'ils devaient compléter. Les employés faisant double emploi furent automatiquement identifiés par le biais d'une question concernant les revenus additionnels.

Le taux de double emploi qui s'est dégagé de l'étude fut de 15% soit trois fois supérieur à celui rapporté dans les statistiques gouvernementales. Les comparaisons entre tenants et non-tenants de double emploi ne révèlent aucune différence significative quant au besoin d'accomplissement sur le lieu du travail principal ou à l'extérieur, sur la santé mentale, la performance au travail, l'absentéisme ou la possible mobilité d'emploi. Des différences significatives se dégagent seulement quant à l'activité sociale volontaire et des préférences concernant des prévisions de travail plus flexibles, dans les deux cas favorisant ceux qui ont un double emploi.

Les résultats démontrent le peu d'inquiétude au niveau de la direction des compagnies quant aux conséquences néfastes du travail à l'extérieur. Les raisons possibles à cela incluent la sélection naturelle des niveaux d'engagements extérieurs sans graves conséquences et le développement de la part des tenants de double emploi d'expériences supplémentaires les aidant à mieux s'organiser et à sauver temps et énergie. Les implications relatives à des études futures dans d'autres types d'organisation, de couches démographiques différentes sont également prises en considération.

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