

The Making of a Moonie

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The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing? is a 1984 book written by British sociologist Eileen Barker, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, United Kingdom, ISBN 0-631-13246-5.

The book describes the religious conversion process to the Unification Church, whose members are sometimes informally referred to as "Moonies".

Barker spent close to seven years studying Unification Church members. She interviewed in depth and/or gave probing questionnaires to Unification Church members, ex-members, "non-joiners," and control groups of uninvolved individuals from similar backgrounds, as well as parents, spouses, and friends of members. She also attended numerous Unification Church workshops and communal facilities.^[1]

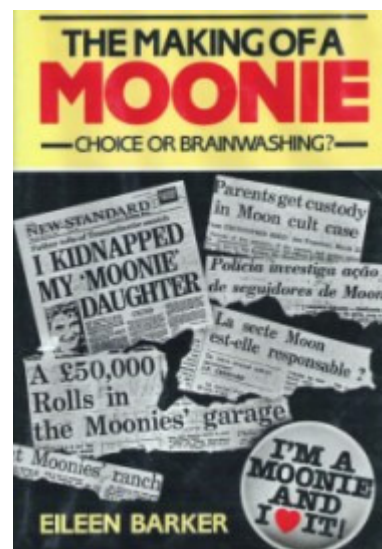
Barker writes that she rejects the "brainwashing" theory as an explanation for conversion to the Unification Church, because, as she wrote, it explains neither the many people who attended a Unification Church recruitment meeting and did not become members, nor the voluntary disaffiliation of members. Reviewers have quoted her conclusions: "I have not been persuaded that they are brainwashed zombies,"^[1] and "Moonies are no more likely to stagnate into mindless robots than are their peers who travel to the city on the 8.23 each morning."^[2]

In 2006 Laurence Iannaccone of George Mason University, a specialist in the economics of religion, wrote that *The Making of a Moonie* was "one of the most comprehensive and influential studies" of the process of conversion to new religious movements.^[3] Australian psychologist Len Oakes and British psychiatry professor Anthony Storr, who have written rather critically about cults, gurus, new religious movements, and their leaders have praised *The Making of a Moonie*.^{[4][5]} It was given the Distinguished Book Award for 1985 by the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.^[6]

References

- Review (http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1282/is_v38/ai_4580948), William Rusher, *National Review*, December 19, 1986.
- NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS - SOME PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION (<http://web.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/diskus/chryssides.html>) George Chryssides, *Diskus*, 1997.
- The Market for Martyrs (<http://faculty.arec.umd.edu/cmcausland/RALi/The%20Market%20for%20Martyrs.pdf>), Laurence Iannaccone, George Mason University, 2006, "One of the most comprehensive and influential studies was *The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing?* by Eileen Barker (1984). Barker could find no evidence that Moonie recruits were ever kidnapped, confined, or coerced. Participants at Moonie retreats were not deprived

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of sleep; the lectures were not “trance-inducing”; and there was not much chanting, no drugs or alcohol, and little that could be termed “frenzy” or “ecstatic” experience. People were free to leave, and leave they did. Barker’s extensive enumerations showed that among the recruits who went so far as to attend two-day retreats (claimed to be Moonie’s most effective means of “brainwashing”), fewer than 25% joined the group for more than a week and only 5% remained full-time members one year later. And, of course, most contacts dropped out before attending a retreat. Of all those who visited a Moonie centre at least once, not one in two-hundred remained in the movement two years later. With failure rates exceeding 99.5%, it comes as no surprise that full-time Moonie membership in the U.S. never exceeded a few thousand. And this was one of the most New Religious Movements of the era!”

4. Oakes, Len "By far the best study of the conversion process is Eileen Barker’s *The Making of a Moonie* [...]" from *Prophetic Charisma: The Psychology of Revolutionary Religious Personalities*, 1997, ISBN 0-8156-0398-3
5. Storr, Anthony Dr. *Feet of clay: a study of gurus* 1996 ISBN 0-684-83495-2
6. Past Winners (<http://www.sssrweb.org/PastWinners.cfm>)

External links

- TV program about the book (http://www.onlineclassroom.tv/sociology/catalogue/classic_collection/eileen_barker_-_the_making_of_a_moonie)

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