

Hallmarks of a Controlling Group

- It is generally best to avoid loaded words like “cult” or “brain-washing” since there are so many definitions and connotations associated with those terms.
- Instead better to focus on whether or not a group uses forms of thought reform and controlling practices.

Several studies on methods controlling groups use to create dependency and compliance of their followers. Notable are Robert Lifton's Eight Themes of Thought Reform, Margaret Singer's Six Conditions of Thought Reform, and Steven Hassan's BITE model

Singer's Six Conditions

- Keep the person unaware of what is going on and the changes taking place
- Control time and physical environment
- Create sense of powerlessness, fear and dependency
- Suppress old behavior and attitudes
- Instill new behavior and attitudes
- Put forth a closed system of logic

The degree in which the above conditions are met in large part determines the success of the thought reform program. (Taken from: Cults in our Midst, Margaret Singer, 2003 Rev. Ed., 64-69)

Lifton's Eight Themes

- Milieu Control
- Loading the Language
- Demand for Purity
- Cult of Confession
- Mystical Manipulation
- Doctrine Over Person
- Sacred Science
- Dispensing of Existence

(see: <http://www.freeminds.org/psych/lifton2.htm> for an explanation of these themes and how the Watchtower uses all eight techniques)

Hassan's BITE model

- Behavior Control
- Information Control
- Thought Control
- Emotional Control

(see: <http://www.freedomofmind.com/resourcecenter/articles/BITE.htm> for an explanation of these areas of control)