

## Brief Report: Perceived Psychological Abuse and the Cincinnati Church of Christ

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The Cincinnati Church of Christ (CCC) is an affiliate of the [International Churches of Christ](#) (formerly known as the 'Boston Movement'), one of the fastest growing and most controversial new religious groups in the United States (Giambalvo & Rosedale, 1996; Yeakley, 1988). The purpose of this study was to compare former members of the CCC with graduates of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IV), a mainstream evangelical campus ministry, on the degree to which they perceived their group environments to be psychologically abusive, as measured by the Group Psychological Abuse Scale (GPA - Chambers, Langone, Dole, & Grice, 1994).

Fifty-four former CCC members and 49 IV graduates, all recruited by word-of-mouth were sent the GPA. Twenty-eight scales were returned by CCC subjects and 27 by IV subjects. None of the former CCC subjects were exit counseled or deprogrammed, and none received assistance from cult-educational organizations. T-tests were calculated to test for differences between the groups on the four subscales of the GPA: Compliance, Exploitation, Mind Control, and Anxious Dependency.

Table 1 shows the Means and Standard Deviations for both groups on the four GPA subscales.

| Table 1 CCC and IV Subjects' Means and Standard Deviations on GPA Subscales |             |                    |
|---|-------------|--------------------|
| Subscale/Group  | Mean        | Standard Deviation |
| <b>Compliance</b>   |             |                    |
| CCC   | <b>4.71</b> | .34                |
| IV  | 1.82        | .67                |
| <b>Exploitation</b>   |             |                    |
| CCC   | <b>2.89</b> | .67                |
| IV  | 1.48        | .37                |
| <b>Mind Control</b>   |             |                    |
| CCC   | <b>4.49</b> | .51                |
| IV  | 1.51        | .45                |
| <b>Anxious Dependency</b>   |             |                    |
| CCC   | <b>3.30</b> | .66                |
| IV  | 1.21        | .30                |

All t-tests were significant at the .05 level, indicating that the two groups differed on each subscale.

The primary limitation of this study is that subjects were not selected randomly from the populations of interest, a deficiency common to this and many other areas of study. Also, the GPA measures retrospective perceptions of psychological abuse. The degree to which these perceptions reflect the abusiveness or nonabusiveness of the group environments in question cannot be answered adequately until additional research is conducted.

### References

- Chambers, W. F., Langone, M. D., Dole, A. A., & Grice, J. W. The Group Psychological Abuse Scale: A Measure of the Varieties of Cultic Abuse. *Cultic Studies Journal*, 11(1), 88-117.
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- Yeakley, F. *The discipling dilemma*. Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1988.