

may already have some guesses about the cause. But keep an open mind. Any phenomenon can be a consequence of many factors, both physical and abstract. Respond to the following Invention Questions, and refer back to your notes as you continue the process.

- What events or behaviors led to the phenomenon?
- What social conditions or prevailing attitudes led (or could lead) to the phenomenon?
- What economic conditions led to the phenomenon?
- What state of mind or psychological need may have led to the phenomenon?
- What are all the possible reasons someone would carry out this behavior?

Invention Workshop

Use one of the Invention Questions to initiate a discussion about your topic. Stay focused on the responses and keep asking questions so that your initial thoughts evolve. For example, in the following workshop, the participants take on Jack's topic: why people join cults. The conversation progresses because Jack keeps asking questions and others offer focused responses along the way. In the brief exchange, Jack moves from an obvious position to something more complex.

What State of Mind or Psychological Need May have Led to the Phenomenon?

JACK: These people are obviously sick—mentally ill.

DIANA: What kind of mental illness?

JACK: I don't know . . . probably some kind of schizophrenia or something.

DIANA: But a lot of the people who join cults are otherwise productive members of society—with jobs, families, homes, social responsibilities. I've even heard that some cults attract people who are smarter than average. It doesn't seem like these people are downright mentally ill—at least in the way most people talk about mental illness.

JACK: So if they aren't sick in some way, why would they possibly leave behind their families and friends, give all their money to a group of strangers, and lose their identities?

MARCUS: Well, I've heard that a lot of those people don't have friends—they're lonely.

JACK: How can people be lonely if they have families and jobs?

MARCUS: Working a job and supporting a family doesn't necessarily make someone truly connected to others. Think about midlife crises—where people run out and have wild flings or buy ridiculously expensive sports cars. They're obviously unfulfilled.