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## RESEARCH

Find an outside source (a website, article, or book) about your concept. (Consult Chapter 14: Finding Sources to help you explore.) The author(s) of the source may have a different understanding of the causes. Summarize the main points of the source, then answer the following questions:

- Does the source suggest a cause for the phenomenon?
  - If not, does the source imply or assume a cause?
  - Does the source account for the most direct cause?
  - Does the source account for indirect or multiple causes? Hidden causes?
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## Public Resonance

Some topics automatically resonate with public concerns, while others seem more difficult to connect with. Local or intensely personal topics, for instance, may seem less linked to broader concerns. Imagine how your topic involves others who are not directly associated with it. Use the following questions to help generate a sense of public resonance for your topic:

- What are the effects of this phenomenon?
- Whom does it affect? How does it affect them?
- How does it affect people indirectly?
- How does my position or understanding relate to popular perspectives on the topic?

Jack's topic of cult membership might seem to affect only specific people—cult members, their families, maybe the communities surrounding a cult. But Jack goes further than that and imagines the broader and subtler factors:

### How does it affect people indirectly?

If people are drawn to cults through deep loneliness, then cults potentially relate to everyone—that is, anyone who cares about family, friends, the quiet neighbor, etc. Our days are filled with constant inattention to others. Most people choose their narrow paths (their jobs and their small circle of friends) and leave everyone else. Many of us will go weeks without truly acknowledging anyone outside of our little circles. Rarely do we invite the quiet guy from work out with us; rarely do we call our cousin to see how she's doing. We leave lonely people behind us every day.

Jack discovers that cults might relate to everyone. He can now explore this idea even further, examining the messages that popular culture sends to people: that we must have intense social engagement to achieve happiness and fulfillment, that solitude should be avoided, that excitement and purpose should define every minute of our lives. Jack would then be exploring the culture surrounding cults. He would be thinking like a sociologist and assuming that any one behavior is linked to a broad system of attitudes, messages, and group behaviors.