

To conclude that the nickel caused the rash is a faulty causal relation. He may be allergic to something; he may have measles. As a writer, you must ~~carefully~~ examine all possible causes before determining that y is the result of x .

- Leaping to a conclusion (sometimes called *hasty generalization*) results when you do not consider enough data before forming a judgment. This is a common error: we commit it every time we form an opinion based on one or two instances. For example, the senate scandal featuring Pamela Wallin that occurred during Stephen Harper's years in office is not proof of the assertion "The Conservative government is full of crooks."

3. Fully support your statements.

You must provide proof of what you say in the form of examples, facts, statistics, quotations, anecdotes, and so on (see Chapter 19). If you begin with the assumption that your reader disagrees with you, you will be more likely to provide adequate support for your points.

The essay that follows demonstrates writing that discusses causes and effects. The writer uses a variety of supporting evidence to develop her points.

The Slender Trap

Trina Piscatelli

Starvation is not a pleasant way to expire. In advanced stages of famine, as the body begins to consume itself, the victim suffers muscle pain, heart disturbances, loss of hair, dizziness, shortness of breath, extreme sensitivity to cold, physical and mental exhaustion. The skin becomes discoloured. In the absence of key nutrients, a severe chemical imbalance develops in the brain, inducing convulsions and hallucinations. (Krakauer 198)

Every day, millions die of hunger. The symptoms of starvation are so horrific that it seems unthinkable anyone would choose this way of death. How is it possible that in the Western world, one in two hundred young women from upper- and middle-class families practises starvation as a method of weight control? How do young women become so obsessed with being thin that they develop anorexia nervosa? To cause such a fearsome and potentially fatal condition, the influencing factors must be powerful indeed. And they are powerful: the psychological pressures of adolescence, the inescapable expectations of family and peers, and the potent influence of the media.

A tendency to perfectionism, lack of identity, and feelings of helplessness are three aspects of a young woman's psychology that can contribute to the development of anorexia nervosa. Young women who exhibit perfectionism are particularly susceptible to the disease because they often have unrealistic expectations about

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their physical appearance. These expectations can lead to feelings of helplessness and powerlessness, and some young women with these feelings see starving themselves as a means to empowerment. Their diet is often the only thing they can control, and they control it with a single-mindedness that astonishes and horrifies their families and friends. As well as the need for control, anorexia in young women can be caused by a weak or unformed identity. Confused about who they are, many young women define themselves by how closely they approximate our society's notion of the ideal woman. Unfortunately, for the past half-century, Western society's ideal female image has been that of an unrealistically thin young woman. When women focus on this impossible image as the ideal and strive to starve their bodies into submission, they suffer emotional and physical damage.

In addition to an unstable psychological state, family and peer pressure can contribute to a fragile young woman's development of anorexia nervosa. By emphasizing physical appearance, by criticizing physical features, and even by restricting junk food, family members can push a young woman over the cliff edge that separates health from illness. A home environment in which physical appearance is overvalued can be destructive for young women. Surrounded by family members and friends who seem to be concerned primarily about appearance, a young woman can begin to feel insecure about how she looks. This uncertainty can produce the desire—and then the need—to look better. And better means thinner. This flawed logic underlies the disease in many young women. A family or peer group that overvalues physical appearance is often also critical of physical flaws. Critical comments about weight and general appearance, even when spoken jokingly, can be instrumental in a young woman's desire to be thin. Ironically, food restrictions imposed by parents can also contribute to anorexia in young women. Restricting the consumption of junk food, for example, has been known to cause bingeing and purging, a condition associated with anorexia.

While a young woman's developing psyche and the pressures of those close to her can exert tremendous influence, the root cause of the "thin is beautiful" trap is a media-inspired body image. Television, fashion magazines, and stereotypical Hollywood images of popular stars provide young women with an unrealistic image of the ideal female body. While only 5 percent of North American females are actually underweight, 32 percent of female television and movie personalities are unhealthily thin (ANRED sec. 6). The media's unrealistic portrayal of a woman's ideal body can cause a young woman to develop a sense of inadequacy. To be considered attractive, she feels she must be ultra-thin. Television's unrealistic portrayal of the way young women should look is reinforced on the pages of fashion magazines. Magazine ads feature tall, beautiful, *thin* women. Media images also perpetuate the stereotype that a woman must be thin in order to be successful. Thanks to television and movies, when we think of a successful woman, the image that comes to mind is that of a tall, well-dressed, *thin* woman. This stereotypical image leads impressionable young women to associate

success with body weight and image. When internalized by young women, these artificial standards can result in the development of anorexia nervosa.

- 5 If the media do not begin to provide young women with a positive and healthy image of femininity, we will see no lessening in the numbers of anorexia victims. If our cultural ideal of female beauty does not change to reflect a range of healthy body types, the pressures to realize idealized and unhealthy physical standards will continue, and young women's feelings of helplessness and inadequacy will persist. In order for anorexia to become less prominent among young women, healthier associations must replace the existing connections among beauty, success, and thinness. Young women must realize that self-inflicted starvation is not a means to empowerment, but a process of self-destruction.

Works Cited

ANRED: Anorexia Nervosa and Related Eating Disorders Inc. 2004.
Web. 13 June 2004. <<http://www.anred.com/causes.html>>.

Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild*. New York: Villard, 1996. Print.

Questions for Discussion

1. Using the outline format on page 69 as your guide, identify the main parts of this essay. Indicate them in the margin, as we have done in the previous essay on pages 168–69.
2. What two supporting points does the author use to develop the main point of paragraph 2? (See sentence 5, which serves as a transition between the two supporting ideas.)
3. What kind of development does Piscatelli use in paragraph 3?
4. Study the concluding paragraph carefully. The author's treatment of her summary and memorable statement is unusual and interesting. Sentence 2 of the conclusion summarizes the three main points that have been developed in the essay but in an original, unpredictable way. Underline the clauses of this sentence, and write above each clause the number of the main point it reinforces.

Develop each of the following thesis statements by adding three good main points. **Exercise 13.3**

1. Obesity, a common problem in North America, is the result of three major factors: _____

