

Fallacies III

1. Hasty Conclusion

“Clearly Saddam Hussein must have been behind the September 11 terrorist attacks. What is the evidence? Well Hussein clearly has no moral scruples, he believes in the use of violence to achieve his objectives, and he has a sizable military and intelligence apparatus. For heaven sake, he is a man who used poison gas against his own people! And furthermore, he clearly has a motive to attack the United States.”

2. Small Sample Size

“I spoke to two officials in the Bush administration, and both stated that the United States will go to war against Iraq. So, there must be widespread agreement among most U.S. government officials on the need for war with Iraq.”

3. Unrepresentative Sample

“Nearly all of the students that I have talked to are opposed to war. So, the sentiment in favor of war in this country must be very small.”

4. Questionable Cause (*Post Hoc, Ergo Propter Hoc*)

“Doctors don't know anything and seeing one can shorten your life. Consider my Aunt Bertha. She went to see a doctor for the first time when she was 112 years old and the next year - poof! - she was dead.”

“George Bush was in office for eight months at the time of the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the attacks were Bush's fault and that his flawed foreign policies must have caused these attacks.”

5. Questionable Analogy

“Efforts to appease Hitler through negotiation only encouraged his aggression and led to war. Similarly, any effort to negotiate with Saddam Hussein will only encourage his proclivities toward aggression and war. The lesson here is that one must use force rather than negotiation to deal with vicious leaders.”