

## Description of Faulty Appeal to \_\_\_\_\_

Key word: **unqualified**.

This error occurs when a person who isn't an authority on a subject is used to prove or disprove a point.

This fallacy also occurs when the topic under discussion is controversial among respected authorities and someone appeals to the opinion of only one authority or group.



### Examples:

1. "We just need to flush the toilet and it will be unclogged. My friend said that's what to do."
2. Mrs. Jones: "Doctor, would you look at my son? I think he's sick."  
Doctor: "I'm a veterinarian, ma'am."

3. The advertisement for Lustre-Crème on the right. Why is this a faulty appeal to authority? Celebrities are often used to sell products, but what makes them an authority? Was Marilyn a chemist? Did Lustre-Cream cause her hair to be beautiful or was she born with beautiful hair genes? Did she really use Lustre-Cream at all?



4. From the second Presidential debate between Bush and Kerry:

**Charles Gibson, Moderator:** "Senator Kerry, the next question is for you, and it comes from Elizabeth Long."

**Elizabeth Long:** "Senator Kerry, thousands of people have already been cured or treated by the use of adult stem cells or umbilical cord stem cells. However, no one has been cured by using embryonic stem cells. Wouldn't it be wise to use stem cells obtained without the destruction of an embryo?"

**Senator Kerry:** "Like Nancy Reagan, and so many other people—you know, I was at a forum with Michael J. Fox the other day in New Hampshire, who's



suffering from Parkinson's, and he wants us to do stem cell, embryonic stem cell. And this fellow stood up, and he was quivering. His whole body was shaking from the nerve disease, the muscular disease that he had. And he said to me and to the whole hall, he said, 'You know, don't take away my hope, because my hope is what keeps me going.' Chris Reeve is a friend of mine. Chris Reeve exercises every single day to keep those muscles alive for the day when he believes he can walk again, and I want him to walk again. I think we can save lives...."

5. A Faulty Appeal to authority is even used in pet food commercials where Lassie promotes a particular pet food or in the picture to the right. This dog surely knows what he is talking about. He's dressed in a suit and holding a pointer!



6. From an Ohio newspaper, the Akron Beacon Journal which printed a series of articles attacking homeschooling: "... there are huge, untested segments of the home-school population that may be failing, according to many researchers."

It means nothing when a reporter writes, "many researchers say. . . ." We can find "many researchers" willing to say there are space aliens living among us. A reporter needs to name the researchers he is quoting and explain their credentials. Otherwise, he is using a Faulty Appeal to Authority.

7. "The majority of scholars think that the historical Jesus was just a really good teacher."

This is a faulty appeal to authority, because the topic under discussion is controversial among respected authorities and yet the person speaking is appealing to the opinion of only one group.

8. "Experts claim that the Republicans will never win the White House for the next twenty years."
9. "Sources close to the President say that Bush lied about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, so that he would have an excuse to invade Iraq."



Do we normally crucify our good teachers? "He's been chosen Teacher of the Year! Let's string him up!!"

## Description of Appeal to the \_\_\_\_\_

Key word: **popular**.



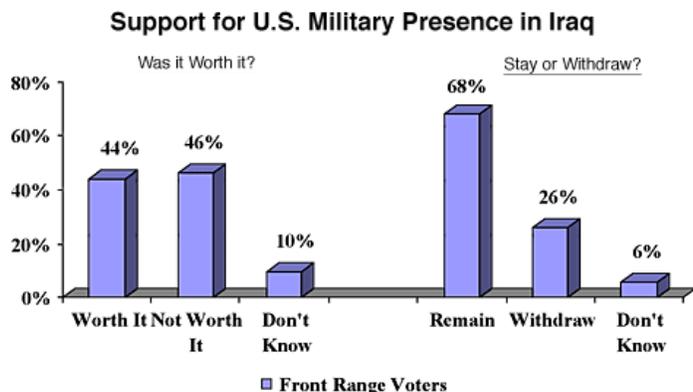
This is when we claim that something is right because many other people agree or because it's popular. This fallacy is also known as "band wagon," as in jumping on the band wagon.

It should be apparent why appealing to popularity is fallacious. Public opinion or popularity is not a good gauge for what is true or false. To err is human. Also, humans are social creatures, so often someone accepts something just to "fit in."

### Examples:

1. In the 1800's there was a widespread belief that bloodletting cured sickness.
2. Mary: "Why do I have to be public schooled, if home school kids get better educations?"  
George: "Because more than 80% of the world's population is public schooled, so therefore, it is better."

3. [See graph to the right.] "We should remain in Iraq. Look 68% of the people support staying, so it must be the right thing to do."



4. "But officer, I don't deserve a ticket. Everyone goes this speed. If I went any slower, I wouldn't be moving with traffic."

5. "Dad, I should get an allowance. People say that children who get allowances learn how to be more responsible with money than someone who doesn't get an allowance."

6. "Everyone knows that the Earth is flat, so why do you persist in your outlandish claims?"

7. "The majority of people in the world is opposed to the war in Iraq Therefore, the war in Iraq is unjust."

8. Pepsi advertisements: "it's the drink of the new generation."

9. In his book Up from Slavery, Booker T. Washington explained that the period following the Civil War, many people became teachers thinking it would be an easy



way to make a living. One such fellow went from village to village, teaching for a while and receiving pay for it.

As he entered one town, the people asked if he taught that the earth is round or flat. He replied that he was prepared to teach either way, based on the preference of a majority of his patrons!

10. "Gay marriages are just immoral. 70% of Americans think so!" While the opinion of most Americans might be relevant in determining what laws we should have, it certainly doesn't determine what is moral or immoral.
11. "Microsoft Windows is the best operating system. Everyone should get a PC, not a Mac. Sixty million people can't be wrong."



"Put me down for whoever comes out ahead in your poll."