

Measuring taken-for-grantedness

(using the Toulmin Model of Argument)

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May 8, 2023

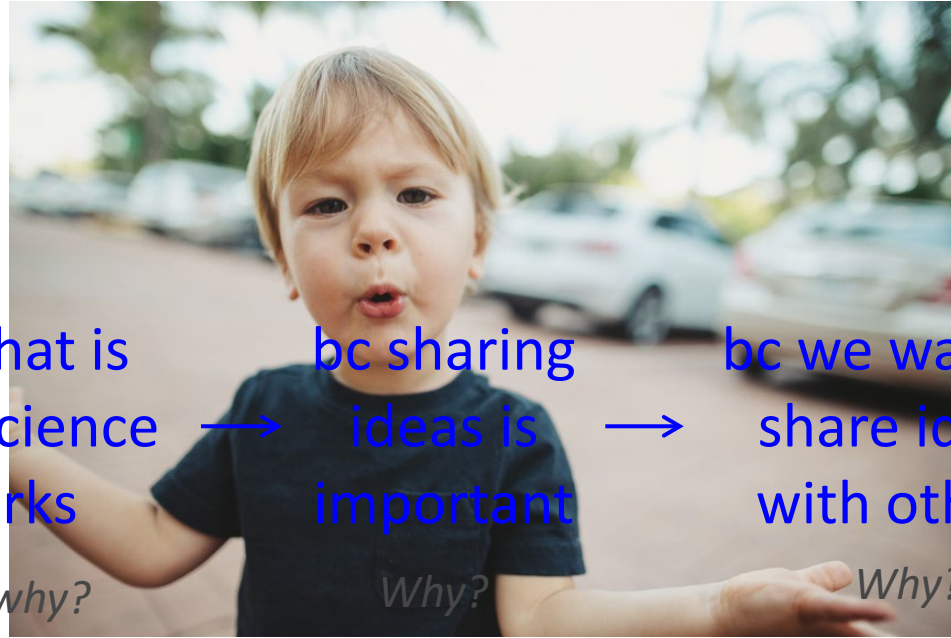


Why?

b/c science is a collective effort...oh forget it, go play on your iPad

b/c that is how science works

But why?



bc sharing ideas is important

Why?

bc we want to share ideas with others

Why?

Why do you go to conferences?

to present research

Why?

increasing taken-for-grantedness



Taken-for-grantedness as a type of legitimacy

Substantive legitimacy judgments

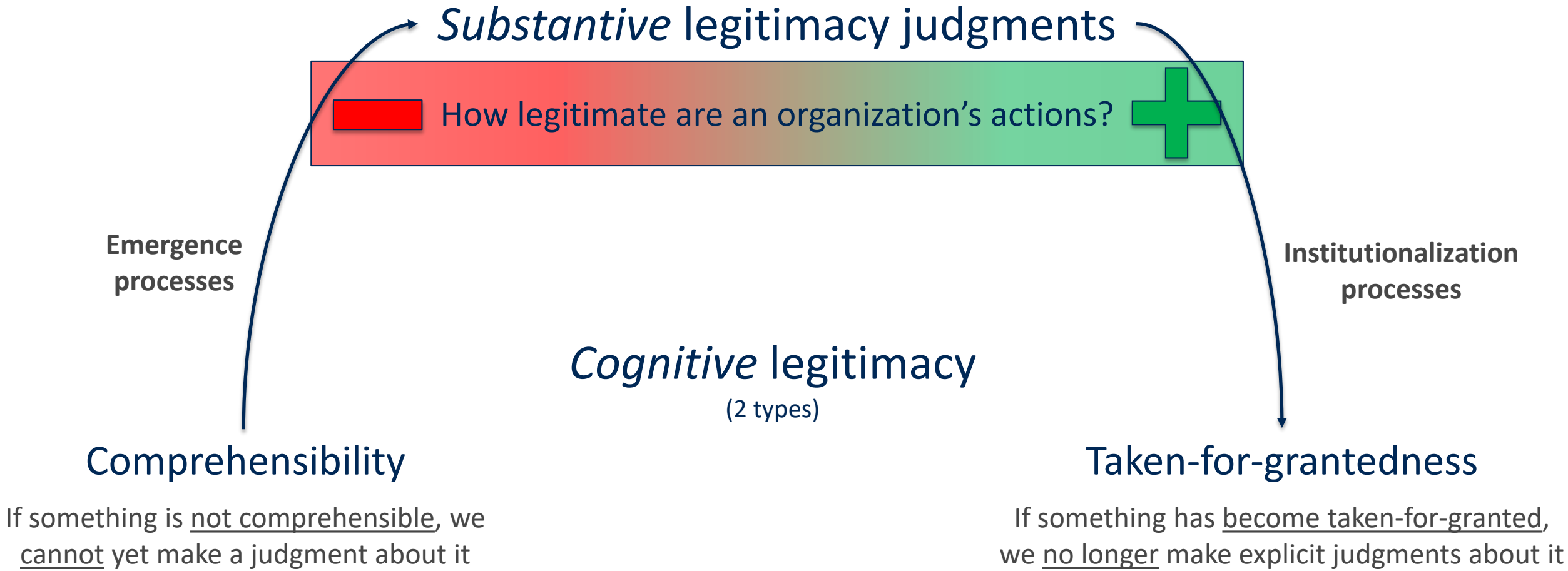
 How legitimate are an organization's actions?



Cognitive legitimacy

Not a judgment independent of these substantive legitimacy concerns,
but rather, *determines if we make judgments in the first place*

Taken-for-grantedness as a type of legitimacy



Taken-for-grantedness as a type of legitimacy

“To the extent that it is attainable, taken-for-grantedness represents both the most subtle and the most powerful source of legitimacy. If alternatives become unthinkable, challenges become impossible.”

(Suchman 1995, p. 583)

So what? Well, if we can know if an idea is taken-for-granted or not, then we might be able to:

1. Better understand the degree to which people question the fundamental assumptions that undergird an institution
2. Say something more generally about the stability of an institution, including its maintenance and likelihood of change

Taken-for-grantedness as a type of legitimacy

But there are challenges to measuring if something is taken-for-granted:

1. **Direct measurement** changes the measurement itself
 - *How can I measure the taken-for-grantedness of an idea when asking you about it changes your taken-for-grantedness?*
2. **Indirect measurement** may be better
 - One common approach is to observe and measure behavioral conformity, and infer taken-for-grantedness...but this has inferential problems
 - I advocate inferring taken-for-grantedness from someone's language
 - a) As researchers, we are often not as deeply embedded within an institution
 - b) As a result, we can better recognize ("see") the assumptions that underlie it
 - c) If so, we can observe the degree to which someone talks about those assumptions as a way to infer their level of taken-for-grantedness

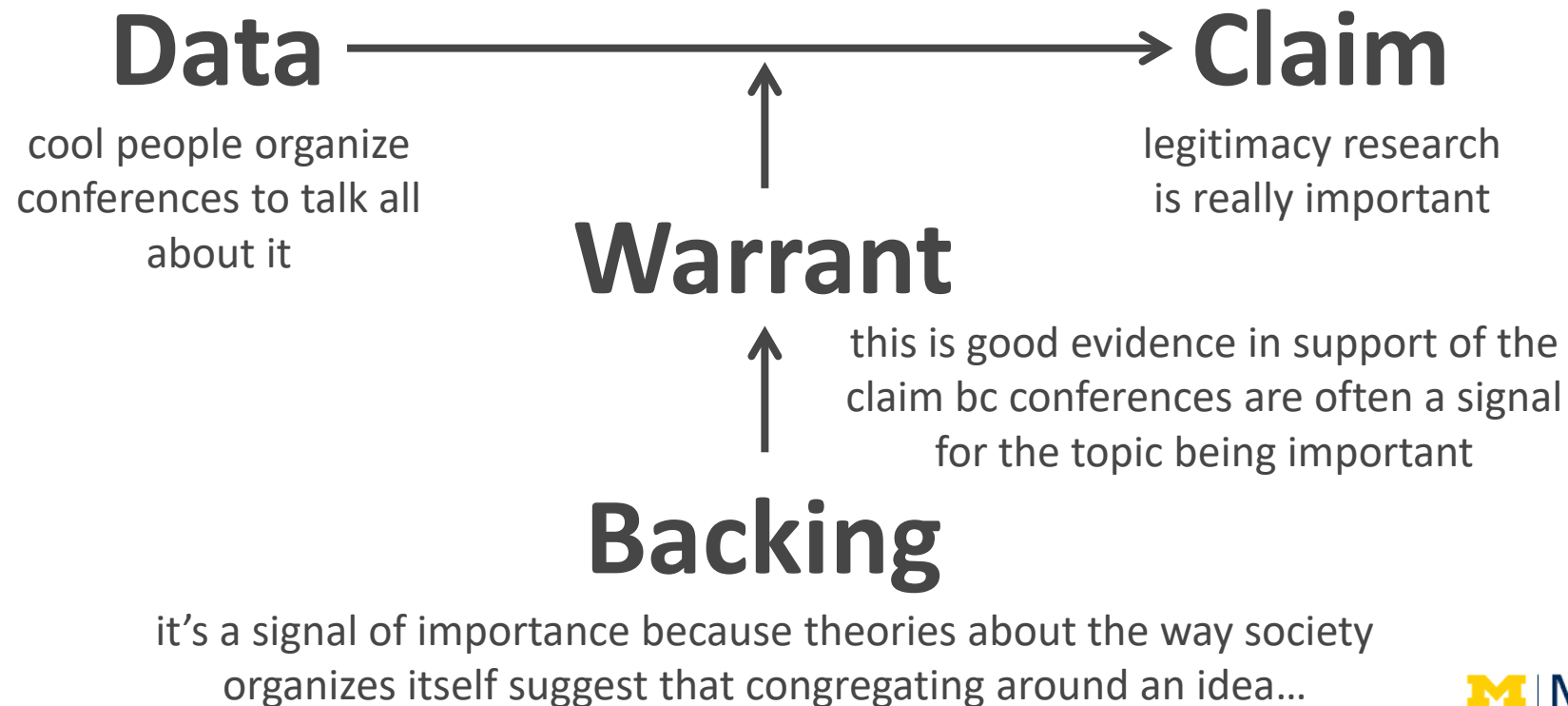
The Toulmin Model of Argument

A model of how people explain/justify things in normal life

1. In a world where every idea or belief is perfectly taken-for-granted, there would be no need for explanation
2. But most of the time we need to explain ourselves.
According to Toulmin, we start with a **claim**...

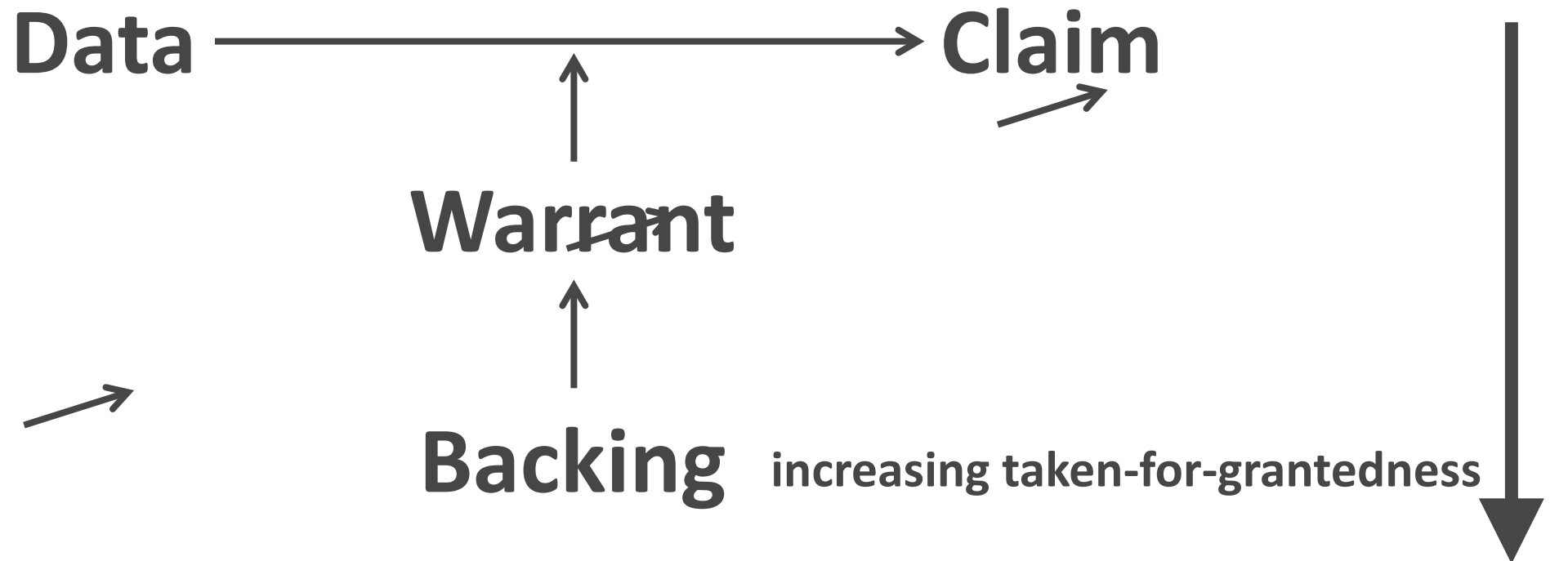
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The Toulmin Model of Argument

A model of how people explain/justify things in normal life



Harmon (2019, ASQ)

What happens when a prominent leader tries to reaffirm the assumptions underlying an institution that we all take for granted in order to be more transparent and bolster confidence?



Harmon (2019, ASQ)

$$\frac{\text{\# of paragraphs containing backing}}{\text{total \# of paragraphs in speech}} = \text{Backing ratio (0 - 1)}$$

Backing
or no?

Speech

Unit of Analysis = **SPEECH**

Chairman Ben S. Bernanke

At the Fourth Economic Summit, Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, Stanford, California

March 2, 2007

Globalization and Monetary Policy Unit of Data Collection = **PARAGRAPH**

My topic this evening is the implications of ongoing global economic integration “globalization” for short--for U.S. monetary policy. At the broadest level, globalization influences the conduct of monetary policy through its powerful effects on the economic and financial environment in which monetary policy must operate. As you know, several decades of global economic integration have left a large imprint on the structure of the U.S. economy, including changes in patterns of production, employment, trade, and financial flows. Other than by contributing to general economic and financial stability, monetary policy can do little to affect these structural changes or the powerful economic forces that drive them. However, to make effective policy, the Federal Reserve must have as full an understanding as possible of the factors determining economic growth, employment, and inflation in the U.S. economy, whether those influences originate at home or abroad. Consequently, one direct effect of globalization on Federal Reserve operations has been to increase the time and attention that policymakers and staff must devote to following and understanding developments in other economies, in the world trading system, and in world capital markets.

A narrower question, but one that is critical for monetary policy makers, is whether the increased openness of the U.S. economy has in some way affected the ability of the Federal Reserve to meet its congressional mandate to foster price stability and maximum sustainable employment. On this issue, some analysts have argued that globalization hinders monetary policy--for example, by reducing the ability of the Federal Reserve to affect U.S. interest rates and asset prices or by diminishing the role of domestic factors in the inflation process.

You will not be surprised to hear that the Federal Reserve System is quite interested in the implications of globalization for the conduct and effectiveness of monetary policy. Members of the Board staff have conducted extensive research on the topic, and the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco--which is deeply engaged in Asia-Pacific issues--has been a leader in this area as well. The Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas has created a Globalization and Monetary Policy Institute, which will support the study of globalization’s effects on policy and the economy, and a number of other Reserve Banks have undertaken similar efforts.

Harmon (2019, ASQ)

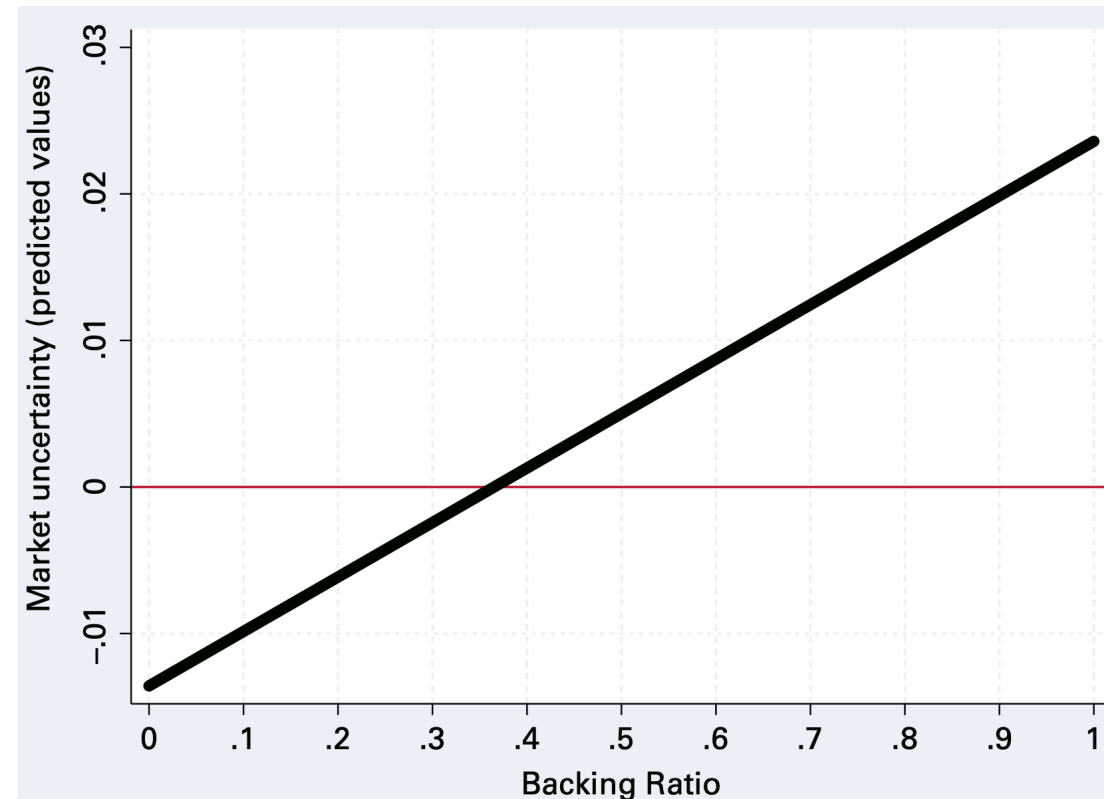
FINDING: The more Fed tries to bolster confidence by reaffirming the foundations of their institution, the more it creates market-level uncertainty.

Banking level uncertainty
(0 – 1)

Why? Talking openly about assumptions, even if we are reaffirming them, brings them to mind:

- 1) reopening their contingent origins (Garfinkel 1967),
- 2) making them appear less objective (Schutz 1967), and
- 3) revealing to people “that there are other possible, attractive alternatives” (Zucker 1977, p. 728)

...and this disrupts the taken-for-grantedness of the institution, thus creating more uncertainty.





"Ladies and gentlemen, we have completed our safety checks and the plane is safe to fly."



Steven Mnuchin @stevenmnuchin1 · 23 Dec 2018

Today I convened individual calls with the CEOs of the nation's six largest banks. See attached statement.

The banks all confirmed ample liquidity is available for lending to consumers and business markets.

Treasury secretary startles Wall Street with unusual pre-Christmas calls to top bank CEOs

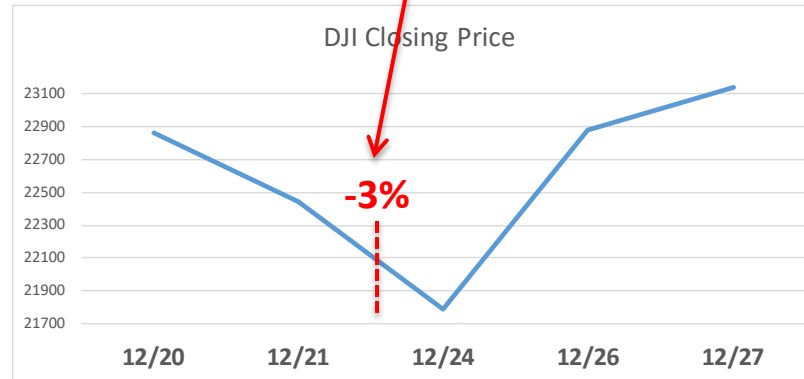
By [Damian Paletta](#) and [Josh Dawsey](#)
December 23, 2018

The Washington Post

Treasury Secretary Steven [Mnuchin](#) startled the markets on Sunday by issuing a statement declaring that the nation's six largest banks had ample credit to extend to American businesses and households.

President Trump has been furious that [efforts by Mnuchin to inspire confidence in the market have so far failed.](#)

[“Suggesting you might know something that no one else is worried about creates more unease,”](#) said Diane Swonk, economist at Grant Thornton.



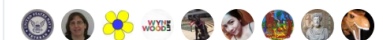
Garrett M. Graff
@vermontgmg

Follow

Mnuchin statement is like the Defense Secretary tweeting out of the blue, "Don't worry, I checked and all of our nuclear submarines are *definitely* still loyal to the USA." Um, I wasn't worried that they weren't —until you just said something. Now I have follow-up questions....

6:16 PM - 23 Dec 2018

1,261 Retweets 4,974 Likes



If you're interested in reading more about these ideas

Introduces the Toulmin Model

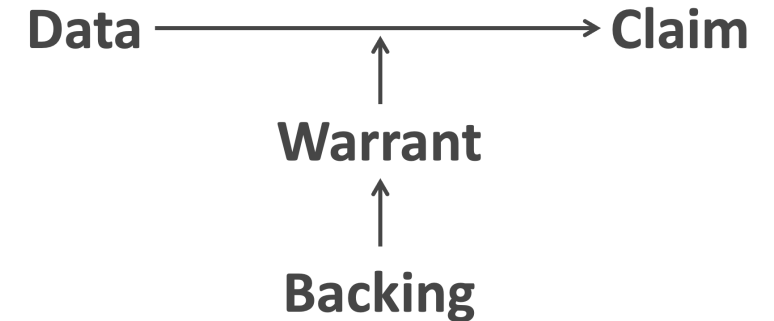
- Toulmin (1958)

Lays out expanded theoretical arguments

- Harmon, Green, & Goodnight (2015) *Academy of Management Review*
- Harmon (2019) *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*

Empirical papers that have used the Toulmin Model:

- v. Werder (1999) *Organization Science*
- Green, Li, & Nohria (2009) *Academy of Management Journal*
- Harmon (2019) *Administrative Science Quarterly*
- Harmon, Rhee, & Cho (2023) *Strategic Management Journal*



Thank you!

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