

The Toulmin System of Argument

- **The Claim**—a conclusion or thesis of the argument.
- **Grounds**—a fact or reason that prompts someone to make a claim.
- **Warrant**—supports or authenticates the grounds.
- **Backing**—the support for the supporting warrant.
- **Qualifiers**—words that indicate the extent or scope of the claim.
- **Rebuttals**—the exceptions or counter arguments to the claim.

Dialogue Illustrating the Toulmin Model

"I'll just bet you that Michael O'Malley is a Catholic."

"Why do you say that?"

"Well, I know that he is an Irishman born in Southern Ireland."

"So what?"

"People born in Southern Ireland are almost certain to be Roman Catholics."

"What's your support for that statement?"

"Well, I read in the *London Times* the other day that 93 percent of Irish people born in the southern part of Ireland are Roman Catholics."

"Couldn't O'Malley be one of the seven percent who aren't Catholic?"

"Yeah, I suppose he could. And even if he was born a Catholic, he might now be a fallen-away Catholic. That's why I said that the Irish born in the south of Ireland are *almost* certain to be Catholics."