



FROM THE RESEARCH BENCH

What is claim entailment? Does the source support the sentence?

Claim entailment tests whether a source supports the exact sentence beside its citation. Check scope, direction, magnitude, time, and conditions.

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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Claim entailment asks whether the cited evidence supports the proposition as written, including its subject, population, setting, intervention or association, outcome, direction, magnitude, timeframe, and qualifiers. It is different from source relevance, authority, citation correctness, and completeness. This article uses Greenberg's bounded citation-network study to explain how citation bias, amplification, and invention can strengthen a belief as it travels, then builds a synthetic claim-to-evidence audit with entails, partial, contradicts, and no-evidence dispositions. The audit, safe wording, and scope tests are author synthesis. They do not claim that an automated language model replaces source reading or that a citation establishes truth by itself.

Keywords: Claim Entailment · Citation Entailment · Evidence Review · Citation Verification · Source Criticism · Overclaim

A source can be famous, relevant, and correctly linked while still failing to support the sentence beside it. The study may concern a different population. The result may be descriptive while the sentence says caused. A condition may disappear. A small association may become a general rule after three rounds of summarising.

Claim entailment is the test of whether the evidence supports the proposition as written. The question is not whether the source is about the same topic. It is whether the subject, scope, relation, outcome, direction, magnitude, time, and conditions survive.

The evidence-over-anecdote article owns the wider question of what evidence survives a decision. This page owns the smaller interface between one sentence and one cited source.

What does claim entailment mean?

Read the claim and the evidence as two separate objects. A claim is a proposition that a reader could agree with or dispute. An evidence sentence is the passage, table, result, or source statement offered to support it. Entailment asks whether the latter supports the former without silently adding a bridge.

Table 1 What does claim entailment mean?

Review question	What it tests	Common failure
Relevance	Is the source about the same topic or mechanism?	Topic match is treated as proof
Authority	Is the source appropriate for this kind of statement?	A respected source is treated as universal authority
Citation correctness	Does the link or reference identify the intended work?	A related work is cited by accident
Completeness	Are important contrary or qualifying sources missing?	One citation is presented as the whole literature
Entailment	Does this evidence support this exact proposition?	Scope, direction, or condition changes

Table from this essay. Sources and interpretation are given in the article.

The distinctions matter because a source can pass the first four and fail the fifth. A citation can be correct and relevant while its wording is still too strong.

What can citation drift do?

Greenberg studied a complete citation network around a specific biomedical belief. In that bounded example, he identified citation bias, amplification, and invention as ways a belief can acquire authority as it moves through papers. The network contained 242 papers, 675 citations, and 220,553 supporting paths for the belief examined (Greenberg, 2009). That is a source-specific result, not a rate for business writing.

The transferable warning is narrow: citation is a social transmission path as well as a pointer to evidence. A hypothesis can be repeated without its condition. A result can be detached from its sample. A proposed mechanism

can become a causal verb. A bounded example can become “research shows.” The fix is to compare the written sentence with the source sentence before the citation chain becomes the evidence.

How does a claim-to-evidence audit look?

The table is synthetic. Its sentences are written to expose common scope changes, not to quote or represent any author.

Figure 1 The synthetic claim-to-evidence audit

ID	Claim sentence	Evidence sentence	Relation	Missing or changed field	Permitted wording
C-01	The intervention increased activation for all customers.	In the trial sample, activation was higher for eligible self-serve accounts.	Partial	Population and eligibility	“Activation was higher in the eligible trial sample.”
C-02	The workflow caused faster sales.	Teams using the workflow completed the measured stage sooner in the observed comparison.	Partial	Design and causal verb	“The observed comparison was associated with shorter stage time.”
C-03	The paper proves that the mechanism works.	The authors propose the mechanism and report evidence consistent with it.	Partial	Proof and alternative explanations	“The findings are consistent with the proposed mechanism.”
C-04	The effect was 20 percentage points.	The estimate was 20 points with a wide interval that includes smaller effects.	Partial	Uncertainty	“The point estimate was 20 points; uncertainty remains material.”
C-05	Citation distortion never changes decisions.	The bounded network study describes amplification and invention of authority.	Contradicts	Direction	“The study documents ways citation can amplify authority.”
C-06	The source supports a claim about German enterprise buyers.	The source studies a different population and setting.	No evidence	Population and context	“No support for the German enterprise claim from this source.”

Author's synthetic claim-to-evidence audit grounded in Greenberg (2009). Source and claim sentences are illustrative; relation labels, missing qualifiers, and permitted wording are author synthesis.

The word partial is not a failed review. It is a useful result. It tells the writer which field must be narrowed: population, condition, causal relation, outcome, magnitude, time, or certainty. A contradicts verdict blocks the sentence as written. A no evidence verdict says that this source cannot carry the claim, even if another source might.

Which parts of a claim need to survive?

Use a fixed scope card:

- Who or what: unit, population, sample, firm, buyer, or data object.
- Where and when: setting, market, institution, period, and observation window.
- What relationship: description, association, prediction, mechanism, intervention, or cause.
- Which outcome: construct, event, unit, measurement, and direction.
- How much: estimate, range, uncertainty, and practical scale.
- Under which conditions: eligibility, treatment version, comparison, moderator, and exclusions.

The source does not need to use the same words. It needs to support the same proposition or a narrower one. Translation introduces another risk: a German sentence may add certainty or generality that the English source does not carry. Check the relation after localization, not only the nouns.

How should a team repair a failed entailment check?

- 1 Copy the claim into a review row and underline its scope-bearing words.
- 2 Locate the source passage, table, result, or limitation that is supposed to support it.
- 3 Mark entails, partial, contradicts, or no evidence.
- 4 Name the missing or changed field.
- 5 Rewrite to the narrowest wording that survives, or find a source that actually carries the claim.
- 6 Preserve the verdict and locator in the ledger before publication.

Do not fix a partial source by adding a second citation that discusses the missing field unless the combined evidence is explicitly assembled and the sentence says what each source contributes. Do not turn a citation into a causal design, a benchmark, or a current company result.

A citation is not ready because it is nearby. It is ready when the sentence can be read beside its source without the source becoming stronger by implication.

The source-verification article owns the receipt and identity checks that precede the entailment judgment.

REFERENCES

Greenberg, S. A. (2009). How citation distortions create unfounded authority: analysis of a citation network. *BMJ*, 339, b2680.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.b2680>

END OF ESSAY

HOW TO CITE THIS ESSAY

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