that negation is a natural way of thinking, as it involves “shifting focus from the cause to the effect, and reframing in terms of negation” (Fiedler and Hertel 1994, p.134).

In an advertising context, Lowrey (1998) found that syntactically complex claims, claims in a negated form, were less persuasive than simple claims (Study 2). The impact of sentence complexity was not due to an inability to process the information, as the level of comprehension for simple and complex claims did not significantly differ. However, in Lowrey’s and other studies subjects do tend to make more recall errors when claims are presented in complex than in simple format (cf. Jacoby, Nelson and Hoyer 1982).

**Summary Discussion**

Given the complexity of parity claims in negated form, the potential for misinterpretation, and their persuasive weakness, why do such claims continue to appear in comparative advertisements? The fact is that these claims are rarely found without accompanying superiority information (Wyckham 1987). They may be paired with comparative superiority claims, or with puffery. Visual cues or other elements may also accompany the claims in order to facilitate an interpretation that benefits the sponsor. Thus, parity claims in negated form are never truly intended to be interpreted as such. They are used to the extent that they allow the advertiser to make claims about attributes that are important to consumers in a way that has not, at least until recently, been legally challenged.

The following sections present the empirical work on combined comparatives. Study one investigates paring of negated parity claims with puffery statements and the interpretive biases that result when these are featured in a single ad. Study two investigates combined comparatives of different directions (parity and superiority) and