In discussing framing effects and negated parity claims, it was suggested that even though the interpretation of these claims depends on the application of common, everyday conversation rules, such claims are actually difficult to process. Negation is not a natural way of thinking. There appears to be a transformation of such claims to their corresponding affirmative, or their antonym (Fiedler and Hertel 1994; Brewer and Lichtenstein 1975). Thus, it is hypothesized that the biasing effects of superiority claims are less likely when the parity claims are not made in such a linguistically complex format. A simplified linguistic structure will be more easily integrated with other advertising information, making it less susceptible to framing effects. Take the Aleve example previously discussed. The parity claim was made in a negated form, with the implied comparison referent being the sponsor (i.e., “Advil isn’t stronger...” implied “Advil isn’t stronger than Aleve”). Stating the comparison referent eliminates one source of potential confusion. Further simplification would also prevent consumers from inferring the pragmatically implied antonym by which “Advil isn’t stronger...” necessarily implies “Advil is weaker than Aleve.” The phrase “Aleve isn’t stronger or weaker than Advil,” which explicitly refers to parity performance, is less likely to lead to unsubstantiated inferences.

H2: Consumers are less likely to generate false attribute superiority inferences from the complete comparison version of the parity claim than from the negated parity version.

While the previous simplification is easier to comprehend, the sentence structure may appear awkward in the context of other advertising copy. Another form of simplifying comparative parity claims is by using a comparison of equality phrase. Such a phrase conveys an equivalent meaning by including an adjective or an adverb, as in