SUGAR, SMOKE AND SHOCK: A RHETORICAL STUDY OF THE NEW YORK CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT’S “POURING ON THE POUNDS” AND “QUIT SMOKING TODAY” PUBLIC HEALTH ADVERTISEMENTS

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Communication.

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ABSTRACT

In 2009 the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene released two Public Service Advertisements regarding health initiatives entitled ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ and ‘Quit Smoking Today’ (New York Times, 2009). Both campaigns were documented by news media as “controversial” and “graphic” in nature, even “shocking” (New York Times, 2009, p. 2; New York Daily News, 2010, p. 1). An expert in advertising techniques, Dr. Steven Dahl contends that shock methods of advertising are comprised of three components; information, fear and surprise (Dahl 2003). The framework of this study is set first by analyzing the campaigns as shock according to Dahl’s components, then using a triangulated system of data analysis to assess the efficacy of applying the shock framework to these campaigns. Data analysis involves evaluating the visual components of the campaigns as shock and assessing the reactions of media and consumers to these government endorsed public service announcements. Textual Analysis (Hart & Daughton, 2005) of the campaign posters, which was deductively framed by Althusser’s (1971) Subject Positioning Theory and Dahl’s (2003) shock components revealed numerous condensations, tensions and ideological values represented in the posters. A Thematic Analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) of news articles and consumer commentary revealed twenty-five themes across the campaigns. The results support that Dahl’s shock components were strongly imbedded in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ advertisements which displayed high levels of information, fear and surprise across all three data sets. The ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign showed only minimal ratings of fear, while levels of information and surprise were high in the analyzed data sets. Conclusively both campaigns may be labeled as shocking and controversial but the minimal use of fear appeals in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign illuminates possibilities for the expansion of Dahl’s shock advertising framework.
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Introduction

In August of 2009 a subway campaign launched by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOH) caught the attention of health officials nation-wide (Eisner, 2001). Featured in over 1,500 subway cars, costing over 270,000 dollars and developed to run for a three year period, the advertisements are situated amid one of the most trafficked subway systems in the world (Chan, 2009). The poster’s ads feature human fat being poured into a clear glass from a “cola” bottle, a sports drink bottle or a tea bottle. A question featured in the foreground reads in bold text, “Are you pouring on the pounds?” Featured directly under the advertisement is a single declarative statement; “don’t drink yourself fat.” In an attempt to decrease the growing number of obese New Yorkers, the campaign works to encourage consumers in choosing milk, seltzer or water as alternatives to sugar-filled beverages (Garfield, 2009). An illustration of the campaign’s impact is summarized in Bob Garfield’s Advertising Age column; “Putting aside the careless and amateurish art direction (what’s with the highball glass?), the message is loud and clear. But it is also literally nauseating (Garfield, 2009, p. 1).”

Only a few months earlier, Sarah Perl, Assistant Commissioner for the New York City Bureau of Tobacco Control, presented legislation to the New York City Council making “graphic” anti-smoking posters mandatory at the point-of-sale where tobacco products are sold (Reuters, 2010, p. 1). Each poster represented one of three ailments; a decaying tooth, scarred lungs or stoked brain scan. In the text of each poster a statement was made regarding the ailment, for example, “Smoking causes lung cancer, quit smoking today” (NYCDOH, 2011). Initially approved and passed by the city government, the campaign was met with opposition from tobacco retailers and private organizations (Consumerist, 2010). As a result, three major tobacco corporations filed a lawsuit against New York City regarding the point-of-sale law (Wall
Street Journal, 2010). On December 30, 2010, Circuit Judge Jed Rakoff ruled in favor of ‘big tobacco’ citing previous federal legislation barring state and city governments from going beyond nationally issued health warnings on tobacco products (New York Daily, 2010). By this point in time the advertisements had accumulated national acclaim and subsequent ridicule/support from their viewers.

The NYCDOH public service advertisements (PSA) embody numerous characteristics of shock advertising; including appeals to fear, information, and surprise (Dahl, 2003). Aside from the initial reactions of journalists, the campaigns have attracted little interest from communication specialists or advertising analysts in their short existence. The lack of scholarly inquiry into these campaigns presents a justification for research on two levels: media influence on public health trends, and the affects of shock advertising strategies when employed by government entities. This study uses three tiers of analysis: image analysis of the posters to assess these campaigns as exemplars of shock advertising, thematic analyses of media articles and reader reactions to the campaigns. The first tier analyzes the advertisements through the framework of Dahl’s (2003) shock approach as artifacts in constant interaction with the public; this is done using an interpretive method of analysis often recurring in popular culture theory (Davies & Harre, 1990). The second and third tiers utilize Boyatzis’ (1998) thematic analysis, first of six news articles (three for each campaign), and finally, analysis of reader commentaries to these articles. Thematic analysis uses both deductive and inductive coding systems to categorize media and consumer reactions first as shock and then to see what other themes emerge (Frey, Botan, Friedman & Kreps, 1992). This portion of the research is designed to deductively frame Dahl’s (2003) theory of shock components within news media and reader reactions.
Historical Overview

A 2008 report, released by the NYCDOH, projected that over 75% of New Yorkers are either obese or over-weight (Chan, 2009). From these reports, which continuously re-emerged between the years 2003-2009, New York City Major Mike Bloomberg began efforts to collaborate with D.C. officials and the NYCDOH to “crack down” on the city’s “fat.” (Bennet & Seifman, 2009). After a failed bill in the New York State House of Representatives, designed to implement a tax on sugar-loaded beverages, the NYCDOH concluded that a PSA ought to be designed. Developed by the Bandujo Marketing Group, the original marketing research targeted lower-income, minority transit users (NYCDOH, 2009). Cited in The New York Times of August 19, 2009, the campaign’s strategists proclaimed the target audience as “health illiterate” and “in need of government guidance” (Chan, 2009, p. 2).

Further studies conducted by the city’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene found that a competitive Public Service Advertisement garnering shock and remaining informative would best reach citizens (Chan, 2009). The decision stemmed from collaboration between New York University marketing studies and consultations with numerous national advertising firms (Chan, 2009). A secondary study, originally featured by the NYC Department of Transportation, suggested that subways offered the most effective and cost efficient means for advertising to the minority and lower-class target demographics (Chan, 2009). Through the creative work of Bandujo, and a generous private donation, the “Don’t Drink Yourself Fat” campaign was initiated on a three year plan. The first poster advertisement, released August 30, 2009, was placed in over one-thousand subway cars throughout downtown Manhattan and is currently being featured on four billboards from Time Square to Central Park. The NYCDOH last updated
their campaign in July of 2010, introducing a YouTube video featuring a white male drinking liquid fat from a clear glass (NYCDOH, 2010).

In numerous online blogging communities and news board forums, New Yorkers immediately began to recognize, criticize and praise the efforts of the NYCDOH. Likewise, corporate entities and industrial interest groups responded negatively to what they considered the biased representation of sugary beverages (Chan, 2009; Lofton, 2009). A counter-campaign was launched by the Center for Consumer Freedom, in conjunction with the American Beverages Association (ABA), in October of 2009 (Bennet, et. al., 2009). The counter-campaign promotes moderation in consumption of sugary beverages and exercise, proclaiming the city’s campaign to be “one-sided” (Das, 2009). Ignoring the counter-attack, the NYCDOH launched a second wave of the campaign in December of 2009 featuring a YouTube.com video of a man drinking fat from a soda bottle (Das, 2009). Even in the face of threats of legal action from the ABA, city officials have refused to discontinue the campaign or change strategy.

In similar fashion, the NYCDOH launched its ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign in August of 2009. As part of a long standing health initiative by Mayor Bloomberg, the campaign sought to discourage teenagers from purchasing tobacco products at the point-of-sale (New York Daily, 2010). In order to ensure the effective placement of these advertisements, the City of New York passed legislation that would fine tobacco retailers $2,000 if the ads were not displayed or displayed incorrectly (Reuters, 2010 p. 2). Immediately the New York Association of Convenience Stores (NYACS) filed a formal petition with the city government requesting the reversal of the legislation (New York Daily, 2010). The NYACS’s president, James Calvin, issued a statement to the New York Daily News indicting the campaign’s infringing nature by stating, “Our customers are turned off by them [signs], disgusted by them, nauseated by them”
Months later the tobacco conglomerates RJ Reynolds, Phillip Morris and Lorillard would file a formal lawsuit against the point-of-sale legislation. Requesting an expedited trial, the NYCDOH felt confident in their stance according to a legal representative in June of 2010 (New York Daily News, 2010). On December 30, 2010, Judge Rakoff surprised the city and ruled in favor of the tobacco companies (Wall Street Journal, 2010). As a result of the ruling, the NYCDOH was ordered to discontinue the fining of store owners who chose not to use campaign posters. To get a fuller understanding of the campaigns, the following introductory section will line out the campaign trajectories.

**Campaign Trajectories**

The chronology of each campaign provides unique insight into the historic events surrounding them stem. First, both campaigns were endorsed by the same city government and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. This feature is crucial when realizing the similar production obstacles and evidence premises behind both PSAs. Second, the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign was the first documented shock-based PSA to warn against sugary beverages (New York Times, 2009, p. 2). Third, the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ PSA was the only campaign to ever have been forced upon the indirect agent of blame, the sellers of tobacco products. As outlined in Basil Katz 2010 Reuters article, the NYCDOH point-of-sale law obligates tobacco retailers to post the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ posters directly behind the sales counter (p. 2).

To provide a context for analysis and theme identification of both campaigns, a timeline was constructed featuring dates, summary and sources for events. The following chronology
maps list these events, first for the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign, then for the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign.

**Chronology Map: “Pouring on the Pounds” Campaign**

June-July 2008- Bloomberg, the NYCDOH and the NYSDOH begin advocating, pressuring legislation to increase taxes on sugary-beverages (specifically empty calorie beverages) (New York Times, 2008).

August 2008 – The NY State House of Representatives votes down the proposed tax hike on sugary-beverages, citing past health codes and consumer backlash as reasons for the vote (nys.gov, 2008).

January 2009 – The NYCDOH begins working collaboratively on a project to curb consumption of empty calorie beverages in NYC. The NYC marketing firm, Bandujo Advertising, is hired (New York Times, 2009).

February 2009 – After final project designs have been approved, a generous $270,000 donation is granted the project by a private trust entitled the FUND FOR PUBLIC HEALTH IN NEW YORK (New York Times, 2009).

August 30, 2009 – The NYCDOH reveals its’ ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign to be featured in over 1,500 subway cars and billboards throughout New York City, specifically on Manhattan Island and Brooklyn (New York Times, 2009).

August-September 2009 – Within a week of the campaign over 115 search queries are directly linked to the campaign online. Reactions to the campaign vary among audiences (New York Post, 2009).
October 2009 – The American Beverages Association launches a formal complaint, not a lawsuit, against the NYCDOH through the state of New York. The brief cites misrepresentation and product copyright infringement due to the bottles represented in the advertisements (New York Post, 2009).


**Chronology Map: “Quit Smoking Today” Campaign**

June 24, 2009 – Sarah Perl, Assistant Commissioner of the New York City Bureau of Tobacco Control, announces proposed legislation by the Bureau of Tobacco, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and as advocated by the Community Partnership for a Smoke Free New York that is to be voted on by the New York City Health Board and City Council as early as September 2009. The legislation details that convenience store owners, or any organization involved in the sale of tobacco products, must display “city provided…designed” tobacco warning public service advertisements (Newsday.com, 2009).

June 24, 2009 – President James Calvin of the New York Association of Convenience Stores releases a press statement in opposition to the new amendment, citing the 2002 Federal decision to force store owners to sell tobacco products behind the counter as a sufficient restraint (New York Daily, 2009).

August 3, 2009 (9:15pm ET) - The proposed amendment to City Health Code, rooted in the 2002 Federal legislation, is passed by the City Health Board and Commission. The law
requires the city’s warning “signs” to be placed in view, next to tobacco products. The City Commission announces that an $80,000 budget for the store signs attached to the proposal, passed. It is projected that the initial campaign will span eight months with the unveiling of the campaign to be announced (Consumerist, 2010).

August 3, 2009 (10:00pm ET) – The NYACS announces it is formally petitioning the ‘point-of-sale’ mandate by the NYCDOH. NYACS President, James Calvin, stipulates that such an act violates the free enterprise of his over 12,000 constituents in NYC. It is also brought to light that a $2,000 fine will be leveled against any stores not displaying the signs (Reuters, 2010).

August 20, 2009 – Over 20 anti-smoking groups file an amicus brief to support the NYCDOH’s decision (Wall Street Journal, 2009).

December 2009 – The NYCDOH unveils the “Quit Smoking Today” campaign, designed by Global Strategies Group, and begins packaging and delivering the advertisements to local stores that sell tobacco products (Consumerist, 2010).

June 3, 2010 – The three largest tobacco companies in the US file suit against the City of New York, citing the malicious, ill-informed advertisements as a direct attack on their businesses. Phillip Morris, Lorillard and RJ Reynolds all claim the forced ‘point-of-sale’ code violates the first amendment (Reuters, 2010).

December 29, 2010 (3:00pm ET) – Judge Rakoff rules the “Quit Smoking Today” campaign to be a violation of the 1965 Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act. He orders that any documented violations resulting in fines paid are to be reimbursed and that vendors are free to use the PSAs if desired (Consumerist, 2010).

In summary, there are numerous thematic similarities that entangle both campaigns; the use of legislation, hiring of private marketing firms, product advocates backlash and their year of release. In contrast, the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign still thrives via YouTube expansion where as the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ ads have been ruled in violation of previous Federal laws. These historical occurrences elaborate upon the campaigns’ intent and consequently their beginnings, affects and conclusions as shock PSAs.
CHAPTER ONE:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Framing Shock Advertising

Because outlining a comprehensive definition of shock advertising is difficult, a historical overview of the development and evolution of shock advertising is necessary to provide insight into why these forms of media are considered to be effective advertising (Lasn, 1999; Venkat & Noba, 1995). Two trends prove to be pivotal in the research on shock advertising; developments in social psychology concerning consumer behavior, and an aggressive consumer fascination with fear and violence as reflected in the mid-to-late 1990s media (Dahl, Frankenberger & Merchandra, 2003). Dahl (2003) concludes that these trends have inundated society with a form of advertising that encourages “graphic imagery” and “socially provocative” discourse as standards for effective product and service promotion (p. 20).

Socially, shock is defined by an artifact’s ability to violate social norms on any of four levels; persons, objects, ideas or actions (Sherif & Sherif, 1969). Sherif (1969) defines these separately, persons being the interpreters of and mediators of meaning in objects, actions or ideas (p. 141). Objects are defined as the symbolic artifacts of a social norm and are assigned meaning by the interpellation of persons and ideas (Shierif & Sherif, 1969, p. 141). Ideas are argued as the pre-requisite to actions; concepts that encourage or persuade a culture to develop protocols for systems of social interaction (p. 143). Action is the result of social interaction, where objects are constructed as symbols and tools for the practice of society and consequently become norms (Kellner & Best, 2001; Sherif & Sherif, 1969). The violation of these norms is articulated as in contrast to what is “socially acceptable behavior, meaning that customs, moral or traditional law,
encompasses and embodies the form of social normalcy” (Sherif, et al, 1969, p. 143), thus these violations are abnormal and therefore, shocking.

*Analyzing Frameworks: What Makes It Shock?*

Establishing the framework by which shock advertisements are perceived is important for two reasons; it encourages critical evaluation of the artifact in a specific context while also providing insight into the effectiveness of Dahl’s shock components (Dahl, et al 2003). Researcher attempts to identify concrete measures of shock effects have been dependent on the method and context of each advertisement (Dahl et al 2003; Waller & Erdogan, 2002; Waller, 1999). It may be anticipated that for every form of media (television, radio, blog, cellular phone etc) there is also a list of potential reactions based on their use in shock advertising. The unique design and targeted demographics of the NYCDOH campaigns support an investigation of the creative processes used in these campaigns to uncover the department’s intent.

Shock advertising is described earlier in this work as a violation of social norms, and though this is accurate, it is not comprehensive. Defining shock advertisements, Dahl (et al, 2003) contended that three components must be in balance: fear, information, and surprise. Every day the average consumer is witness to over 3,000 advertisements which feature some element of shock (Lasn, 1999). With this statistic in mind, researchers are finding that surprise moderates between information and fear in creating a shock response (Waller, 1999; Steinsmeier-Pelster, Reisenzein, & Martini, 1995). The competitive nature of advertising to “out surprise” consumers is a deliberate attempt to garner attention through any means necessary (Waller, 1999; Venkat & Abi-Hanna, 1995). Among discerning practitioners of controversial advertising this is not an attempt to be radical and undignified, but rather an effort to be noticed.
A total rejection of societal norms would be an imbalance, causing dissociative identification (Steinsmeier, et al, 1995; Burke, 1983). The lack of research defining the parameters of shock advertising raises questions as to whether or not this commercial tactic is a legitimate form of marketing practice or a mere “gimmick” (Dahl, et al, 2003, p.3).

The classic examples of Benetton and Calvin Klein are no longer the standouts of controversial advertising. Schuster and Powell (1987) historically document the use of controversy to highlight products such as cigarettes and alcohol (p. 4-7). Waller and Erdogan (2002) contend that the nature of addictive products, such as those studied by Schuster and Powell (1987), are often the target of controversy before the advertisements are even revealed to the consumer (p. 12). Shock advertising has recently been utilized by organizations in non-profit and public service oriented fields (Eisner, 2001). The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in NYC serves as an example of how government agencies and interest groups are beginning to employ shock techniques in order to gain access to consumers. The present study employs the work of Darren Dahl, a shock expert and advertising analyst, concerning Public Service Advertisements (PSAs) in two ways. The primary use of Dahl’s framework is as a guide in assessing the NYC campaigns as shock advertising in terms of information, fear and surprise (Dahl, et al 2009; Steinsmeier, et al 1995). The second use of Dahl’s work extends from his findings on PSA campaigns. Dahl’s (2003) research describes counter-marketing as an effective tool for communication to mass audiences, specifically on issues of public safety and well-being (p. 8).

Dahl’s study (2003) used an experimental design featuring three poster PSAs as dependent variables. To measure the effectiveness of shock ads, the study used a Likert scale survey with seven items to determine believability. Using 105 randomly selected college
students, Dahl’s experiment questioned participants on their recall, recognition and attention to each advertisement. Results of the study indicated that the balanced shock advertisement was over 40 percent more successful in all three measures than either information or fear-based campaign ads (Dahl et al 2003, p. 10). In conclusion, the study indicated that retention and reaction were similar properties when used in public service advertisements that utilized controversial tactics (Dahl et al, 2003. p. 14). The results of Dahl’s work (2003, 1999) correspond to Waller’s (2004) work on controversial marketing. Waller (2004) contended that the product rarely becomes the artifact of controversy; the method does (p. 5). This study argues that the two components, the advertisement as method and the product it promotes or rebukes, are not mutually exclusive but instead require a degree of convergence in the positioning of the consumer through the message of the advertisement, through balanced formations of fear, information and surprise.

Dahl’s Components Defined

The identification of shock in advertising is reliant on an audience’s reaction (Steinsmeier, et. al., 1995). In short, if the audience does not render an advertisement as surprising, informative and fear provoking it cannot be deduced as shock. The following review of literature defines fear, information and surprise based on studies conducted by Dahl and backed by Waller and Lasn.

Fear

Dahl (2003) constructs fear as a subliminal form of intent in advertising production, this postures the consumer between a have and have not dilemma (Dahl, 2003, p. 5). Dahl (2003) contends that it is the “absence” of a desired norm that enables the power of fear in advertising
The use of dissociation is significant when analyzing the construction of fear in controversial advertising. Sherif and Sherif (1969) believe that the dichotomy of a dissociative dilemma is what motivates social bodies to recognize objects, ideas and actions as important. It is not the dramatic characterization of the campaigns that dictates the ads as fearful; rather it is the purpose of the advertisement in connection to its potent and dramatic message that instigates apprehension. Dahl argues that polarized, either/or fallacies, such as the campaigns present, instill a sense of fear in consumers (Dahl et al, 2003).

**Information**

Dahl’s (2003) definition of information directly involves the stimulus experienced in fear. Specifically, receivers are confronted with the message and in turn must cognitively address its components in a manner that associates with their pre-existing comprehension of the topic (Dahl et al, 2003 p. 2). In cases where the consumer is ignorant to the topic, stimulus remains incomplete and recall becomes improbable (Dahl et al, 2003 p. 2).

As mentioned in earlier studies on shock strategies, media sources will often favor government initiatives in reporting the warrants attested to the advertisement (Lasn, 1999; Waller 1999). As observed by Waller (2003), this reaction is likely an attempt to disenchant the government agency and edify the public (p. 4). More importantly, Dahl (2002) argues that information-based responses given to an artifact testify to its origins as shock by intensifying the need to precisely identify the intent and educational value imbedded in it (Dahl, et. al., 2003).

**Surprise**

Dahl (2003) and Waller (1999) contend that surprise is a reactionary tenet of controversial advertising, rarely a textual component alone (Dahl et al, 2003 p. 271; Waller, 1999
This indicates that the convergence of each tenet facilitates surprise as a stimulus, not simply the image or body copy of the advertisement but a collective comprehension. Consequently, the stimulus of surprise influences the consumer to focus on the content of the advertisement for a reasonable explanation of the norm violation presented (Dahl et al., 2003 p. 271).

These campaigns encourage, and arguably force, the evaluation of conflicting norms illuminated by the power public campaigns of this nature possess (McGuire, 1978; Hall, 1985; Sherif et. al., 1969; Dahl et. al., 2003). The influence of an advertisement that violates social norms is determined by audience information processing abilities (McGuire, 1978, p. 5). In measuring the effectiveness of an advertisement, information processing is dependent on demographic and situational analysis as both tenets relate to consumer levels of identification. Burke (1983) argued that meaning is a congregational phenomenon that involves the consubstantiation of secular and often contradictory identities. This study views Burke’s frame as an operational theory to posit consumer reactions and constructed meanings, to assess whether the campaigns function as shock advertising.

Using Dahl’s three identified components of shock, four questions were postulated to assess the development, practicality and intricacies of these components in action. Specifically in reference to the aforementioned NYCDOH campaigns, the following questions were designed to deductively review the campaigns as shock and analyze the campaign’s consumer reactions.

**Research Questions**

Four research questions will be addressed:
RQ1: Do the “Pouring on the Pounds” and “Stop Smoking Today” campaigns meet Dahl’s criteria of shock?

RQ2: What are the rhetorical similarities and differences in the 2009 NYCDOH campaigns against smoking and empty calorie beverages?

RQ3: How did the news media frame these campaigns?

RQ4: Did reader responses accept or reject the framing of these campaigns by the media?
CHAPTER TWO: METHODS

This study utilizes both inductive and deductive approaches to research through a triangulated system of analysis between three distinct data sources. Data will be analyzed both deductively utilizing Dahl’s (2003) three components of shock and inductively. An inductive, grounded theory approach will complement the insights gained through application of Dahl’s (2003) framework as it is a preferred method for minimizing data bias and conclusive positioning during analysis (Frey, et. al., 1992). The use of textual/image and thematic methods becomes a unique method of data analysis, a trifocal-like study known as triangulation. The Triangulation system of data analysis is preferable to a single method study for three reasons: it results in significant reductions in research biases; it minimizes inadequacies and misinterpretations of single method research while enriching information (Beckett & Turner, 2010).

By utilizing two methods for the NYCDOH campaigns, the study encourages a thorough inspection of public health advertising methods through a parallel, multi-tiered system of analysis. The following descriptions explain the study methodology in finer detail with each method discussed in terms of artifacts/participants and procedures.

In terms of RQ1, Dahl’s (2003) components of shock are used deductively in the first section of data analysis to establish the framing of both campaigns as shock. This is done by discussing the media reactions and government statements that label the campaigns as a form of shock advertising. Each campaign is discussed and warranted based on information, fear and surprise; featuring direct quotations from media, professional and government sources.

The textual analysis includes use of Louis Althusser’s (1971) theory for interpretive positioning as a means to analyze the intent and perspective of the campaign’s producers (Hart &
The analysis of each campaign ad is framed by RQ 2, regarding the rhetorical similarities and differences of the campaigns. This section requires a deductive approach to research, positioning the campaign from the producers’ perspective first and the consumer as secondary. The method used for data collection and inquiry to Subject Positioning stems from Hart and Daughton’s image criticism method (Hart & Daughton, 2005). The final section of research involves a coding system of referential units (Boyatzis, 1998) as a means of describing audience reactions known as thematic analysis. This method provides a grounded study of media framing and consumer reactions concerning the NYCDOH’s shock campaigns. Dahl’s previously identified components of shock (fear, information, surprise) will be deductively applied to research findings. Using both an inductive and deductive approach, within the study, further alleviates potential for misinterpretations of data and elaboration (Beckett and Turner, 2010).

**Artifacts/Participants**

The first tier of analysis involves the analysis of the three August 31, 2009 NYCDOH campaign posters and their body copy as well as the three December 30, 2009 campaign posters, entitled “Pouring on the Pounds” and “Quit Smoking Today.” First, the campaigns will be analyzed in terms of the deductive application of Dahl’s shock characteristics: fear, information and surprise. Then the advertisements will be analyzed deductively through Althusser’s (1971) theory using Hart’s (et al, 2005) textual analysis method. The beverage posters change only the bottle from which the fat is being poured. Conversely, the anti-smoking campaign features three entirely different “effects” posters; a decayed tooth, X-rayed lungs and an MRI brain scan (NYCDOH, 2011). The images being analyzed can be viewed in the results chapter of this study complete with photo descriptions that include their body copy.
Thematic Analysis will be applied to two data types in this study. First, six news board sites all accessed through the inter-web. Each campaign is evaluated through three news media sites that feature both body copy related to the campaign, images of the campaigns ads and commentary forums for readers. These commentary sections are accessed free of charge and allow for domestic-wide review. The sites utilized in gathering reader feedback and criticism include:

“Pouring on the Pounds”

Lisberg (2009); Chen (2009); Bennet and Siefman (2009)

“Quit Smoking Today”

Gendar (2010); Morran (2010); Katz (2010)

As of March 1, 2011 a total of 335 responses had been documented between all six sites within seven days of each campaign’s release. Using Boyatzis’ method, these posts will be coded thematically and analyzed to create referential units for the purpose of answering the aforementioned research questions.

 Procedures

In the second section of research an interpretive analysis of the August campaign will use subject positioning to deductively describe the importance of role affiliation and spotlighting in the imagery of the PSA (Althusser, 1971). Spotlighting occurs when an artifact gears itself towards a specific demographic; role affiliation is a combination of class stratification and cultural identities ascribed to a subject by the producer of an artifact. This system provides a means of describing roles in terms of ideology, presenting attributes that depict sub-cultures
emerging in the participants’ design concept (Davies & Harre, 1990). Three components will be discussed: the use of demographic spotlighting, the use of role affiliation as a tool for persuasion and non-linguistic cues of subject-positioning. These three components are described differently by Rodrick Hart (et al, 2005) who likens spotlighting as a component of ideology, role affiliation as a condensation (the labeled identity of an individual and how it is approached in an image) and believes that non-linguistic cues are tensions postulating arguments for change. Hart’s method for Image/Textual Analysis is used deductively to provide replicable steps for future studies.

Louis Althusser devised Subject Positioning Theory (SPT) as a means of explaining social movements that circulate around inter-cultural artifacts (Davies & Harre, 1990 p. 21). As an example, Althusser (1971) discusses the attributes of pride, nationalism and devotion arising within the people of Soviet Russia as a result of the gross use of communist symbolism throughout the 1950s and 1960s (p. 42). The use of SPT as a critical theory for image-based criticism began in the late 1970s with the emergence of discourse theory used to critique films (Carpentier & Decleen, 2007 p. 2). This study utilizes Althusser’s theory to uncover the ideological force, rhetorical condensations and cultural tensions that underlie the NYCDOH’s shock campaigns.

Providing a form of construct validity, Althusser’s theory sets a template for interpreting human interaction with symbols; grounded in perceptual psychology and cultural studies (Davies and Harre, 1990 p. 5). Althusser (1971) argues that images, as artifacts of culture, are crucial to the development of societal norms and an interruption of existing social standards requires an internal interpellation by the subject (p. 67). Thus, subjects construct their identity through a process of psychological discourse between the artifact and their existing notions of culture. To
impede, alter or redefine an established cultural norm requires the artifact to be intrusive, argumentative and exist in a condensed form (Hart and Daughton, 2005; Althusser, 1971).

Davies and Harre (1990) establish two criteria for efficient subject-positioning: the subject must first engage the other (the image) by investing thought and the subject must find the artifact’s represented ideology as an articulation of existing norms (Davies & Harre, 1990, p. 126). Althusser’s theory contends that shifts in identity can only occur through a de-centering rhetorical message embedded in the artifact (Weedon, 1987). Through identifying the social and symbolic root of an artifact the position from which subjects are engaged can be formally identified as well as the tenets in the image that actively de-center (Davies & Harre, 1990, p. 126).

Rodrick Hart and Susan M. Daughton, in their 2005 book Modern Rhetorical Criticism, provide three questions for framing image criticism; these will be used to guide the inquiry and analysis processes with Althusser’s theoretical premises as cues:

1. Does the visual image carry ideological force? (p. 189)

Hart and Daughton (2005) argue that cultures “achieve distinction” based on the articulated beliefs that manifest in their icons. Analysis using this question supports that the idea of “visual innocence” is nonexistent in cultural images; every image has an underlying purpose. It is when these purposes are realized that an artifact is granted ideological force. In respect to Subject Positioning three things must be identified; cultural norms interrupted, clandestine belief systems represented and or blatant belief systems represented (Davies & Harre, 1990). Here each image will be deconstructed, and cross-compared among their campaigns’ images to construct an emergent code for identified themes.
2. What condensations can be found in the visual image? (p. 191)

Using the example of synecdoche, Hart and Daughton (2005) found that images are forced to make clandestine arguments in support or opposition to their topic. Two characteristics are evident in iconic images: they contain a specific ideology or idea while also reducing interpretations to avoid vague identifications by consumers. Weedon (1987) contends that two variations exist in subject-rhetorical images; arguments (framed as associative, dissociative or transcendent (Cheney, 1981) and descriptions of cultural norms. These components will be documented for each image as existing or not.

3. What significant tensions can be found in the visual image? (p. 193)

Hart and Daughton (2005) contend that images of an iconic nature will do well to “contain” their tensions. In some instances the conflict presented in the image can be misinterpreted as antithetical to its original intent. Althusser (1971) argues that containment fails in images that persuade. To answer this question, codes identified in Hart and Daughton’s question one will be cross-analyzed with each image in their respective campaign and the other to identify similarities and differences in the centering of the receiver.

“Because the past is often conflict-ridden it produces symbolic tensions. The critic seeks out those tensions as guides to a complex world the visual has tried to simplify” (Hart & Daughton, 2005, pg. 195). As a method of deductive research, each question is answered by reflecting on its subject in relation to Dahl’s shock components. Question one relates ideology to the role of the consumer and characteristics of ideologies being spotlighted.
In the third section, a system of Thematic Analysis (Frey, et. al. 1992) will use referential units. The coding system will embrace an emergent and manifest form of exploratory research, locating themes and patterns in commentator’s online posts (Bowers, 1970).

This analysis will be conducted inductively utilizing Richard E. Boyatzis’ (1989) method for inductive thematic coding. Boyatzis’ system involves five stages in the dissection, analysis, outlining and coding of data. All research presented in the Thematic Analysis section of the results chapter evaluates commentary that occurred within seven days of the articles release as a parallel form of data analysis.

The first step involves reviewing the chosen bio-data and reducing this raw information into a shortened outline form. Boyatzis warns that this information may or may not be shorter than its original form (p. 69), what’s important is that the information is synthesized and familiarized in the mind of the researcher (Boyatzis, 1998). Second, the sample will be segmented into subsamples and analyzed sequentially. Data analysis will result in the identification of themes within subsamples. This step in the analysis process does not require detailed descriptions of each theme, rather a generic recognition of emergent patterns. Boyatzis encourages the researcher to span the data numerous times until potential themes have been exhausted.

The third step is comparing these themes across subsamples; two actions are required: examining the list of themes and comparing them to subsamples and rewriting the list of themes in a more condensed form based on reoccurrence. The fourth step involves condensing these finalized themes into applicable codes that represent the accumulated subsamples. The final step in Boyatzis’ method uses validity tests to determine the effectiveness of the thematic codes in
measuring and analyzing the subsamples. This is done in this study by comparing recognized themes with previous research in shock reactions (Dahl et al 2003).
CHAPTER THREE:
DAHL’S COMPONENTS AND THE NYCDOH

A rush of articles in regional print media was published upon the NYC Health Department’s unveiling of the “Don’t Drink Yourself Fat” campaign. An initial search query of three major news outlets (The New York Times, New York Daily News and New York Post) revealed a total of sixteen campaign related articles between the dates of August 30th, 2009 and September 4th, 2009. These news agencies were chosen in relation to their proximity to the campaign and reader response. In these articles, cited health experts made reference to the advertisements as “shocking” and “vivid” (Chan, 2009). For example, Cathy Nonas, a dietician on the development program for the campaign, portrayed the intentions of the creators of the advertisement in an article in The New York Times from August 31, 2009, “We are hoping that the biggest effect is, first of all, shock” (p. 3).

Similarly, the “Quit Smoking Today” campaign attracted the attention of national media in December 2010 after a circuit court decision ruled the city’s mandatory ‘point-of-sale’ display to be in violation of the 1965 Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act (New York Daily, 2010). Prior to the unveiling of the campaign, criticism erupted over the controversial legislation signed by city officials and the seemingly discriminatory, forced display of the ads upon tobacco retailers (Frazier, 2009). Only after the introduction of the posters to over 12,000 convenience stores in Manhattan, did consumers begin to voice concern over the images presented. Unlike the NYCDOH campaign against empty calorie beverages, few articles (one from the New York Daily News in June 2010) used expert testimony to back or disavow the campaign. Instead the campaign received extensive dialogue from pro-smoking lobbyists and consumers through online forums. In his December 30, 2010 ruling Judge Jed Rakoff outlined the ads as “controversial”
but conclusively found that though the intent of the campaigns was to provide a service in
detracting youth from tobacco use the 1965 FCLA must be upheld (New York Daily, 2010, p. 2).

Framing these campaigns as shock requires focus on both the evolution of the
advertisements and their cultural meaning (Eisner, 2001). In this section of data analysis, existing
news media on the NYCDOH campaigns are reviewed under the critical lens of the shock
paradigms fear, information, and surprise. This format provides a deductive perspective of the
campaign as a legitimate form of shock advertising, bolstered by the textual and thematic
analyses in later sections. Developed in the following sections, illustrations from news media
sources are utilized to warrant each component. Aside from consumer reactions, which are
discussed through this study’s thematic analysis section, the news outlets of New York City were
the first to respond to the unveiling of each campaign.

*Fear*

Dahl (2003) outlines two criteria for fear in shock advertising (p. 10). First, a dissociative
strategy emerges where an either/or dilemma is faced by the viewer (Dahl, 2003). This can take
the form of a have/ have not dilemma or a live/die dilemma. Second, shock appeals to fear often
involve the absence of a desired norm; this is to say that what should be is not apparent in the
advertisement (Dahl, et al, 2002). Dahl (2003) contends that these appeals will involve an
emotional reaction and be coded as such by the viewer (p. 10).

In an expression of fear, Dr. Kelley D. Brownell of Yale University remarks on the
“Pouring on the Pounds” campaign saying, “I have a feeling that this could have a pretty potent
effect — the ads are dramatic” (Chan, 2009, p. 1). This statement represents fear in two manners;
by using the term “potent” to describe the impact of the campaign upon receivers and likening
the ads as “dramatic”, Brownell recognizes that consumers will be entertained, attentive and moved emotionally by the ads. In the same manner, following a ruling from District Judge Jed Rakoff, attorney Floyd Abrams used the term “disgusting” to describe the NYCDOH’s “Quit Smoking Today” campaign (CBS News, 2010 p. 3). Sherif and Sherif (1969) believe that the dichotomy of a dissociative dilemma is what motivates social bodies to recognize objects, ideas and actions as important, precisely as the NYCDOH campaigns do (p. 119). Collectively Brownell’s statement embodies a reaction of apprehension. By referencing the powerful and performance oriented nature of the campaign, Brownell distinguishes its difference from the norm. The spotlighting of the campaign as abnormal, in comparison to non-controversial advertising, conveys a transition from what is expected to what is new and misunderstood.

The same perspective on the campaign is illustrated through a New York Post article from October of 2009. Bennet and Seifman’s “Soda Splash-back” features a quotation from Sarah Longwell, a spokeswoman for the Center for Consumer Freedom, using the term “demonizing” to describe the beverage campaign (Bennet & Steifman, 2009, p. 2). This perception is unique in two manners. First, the use of the term emerges from an anti-campaign organization. The Center for Consumer Freedom, as referenced in the historical section of this study, responded to claims by the American Beverage Association with a “pro-moderation” health campaign in September of 2009. Their counter-advertising demonstrates the proliferating affect that the NYCDOH beverage campaign had on exterior agencies. Second, in comparison to the terms used by Chan (2009), the word “demonizing” conveys a stronger assimilation to fear through the use of metaphor. The word “demonizing” constructs a dissociative identity that alienates the campaign as offensive and misguided.
Similarly, Bruce Golding, a columnist for the New York Post, portrays the “Quit Smoking Today” campaign as a “gruesome” and a “graphic” display of government intervention (Golding, 2010 p. 1). Burke (1983) argues that these tactics rhetorically confirm boundaries and as a result de-center the convergence strategy of one message to create divergent interpretations of the topic and two distinct opinions (p. 14). The textual and thematic analyses of these campaigns aids in describing and defining these reactions as shock with further examples of the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign’s unique appeals to fear.

**Information**

Dahl’s (2003) work defines information as a form of shock and a reaction to shock (p. 12). As a form of shock, information can be viewed as dichotomous to an accepted norm; conveying information that is not widely known or generally unaccepted. As a reaction, viewers attempting to make sense of an image may find the need for information as a fulfillment or logical explanation of the shock image (Dahl, 2003).

Between the “Quit Smoking Today” and “Pouring on the Pounds” NYCDOH campaigns, the quality and quantity of factual, poignant information is lacking on both sets of posters. All six of the posters feature distinct claims regarding the topic, but warranted information can only be found by accessing the featured websites for each campaign. A majority of the consumer-related information is presented by the news media while reporting on the campaigns.

In all six reviewed news articles on the NYCDOH campaigns, information used by the advertisement’s creators is featured from the respective websites. As an example, myfoxny.com features information from the Department of Health in their December of 2009 article: “The
Health Department points out that one 20-ounce bottle of regular soda can have as many as 250 calories and more than 16 teaspoons of sugar.

Comparatively, Chan’s (2009) article from *The New York Times* includes a list of calorie information alongside expert testimony from university professionals. However, in contrast, a majority of the documented news releases pertaining to the “Quit Smoking Today” campaign neglect to include either expert testimony or data concerning smoking as hazardous. Few articles even address the medical issues encompassing the campaign (PR Newswire, 2010; O’Connor, 2010; CBSNews, 2010). Primarily the articles provide critical insight as to the acceptance of this campaign as shock. As an example, an article released by the New York Daily News in June 2010 discusses the original lawsuit filed by tobacco corporations as stating the posters “do not describe the risks of smoking in purely factual terms” (Gendar, 2010 p. 1).

**Surprise**

Not merely a textual component alone, surprise moderates between fear and information (Dahl, 2003; Waller, 2004). It requires that both information and fear exist, even in low levels, before a viewer can be surprised. As a cognitive stimulus, fear and information collectively construct a reaction of surprise as the recognition of norm violations (Dahl, et al, 2002, p. 8). Verbally and non-verbally the stimulus of surprise can take numerous forms; however this study uses the declaration and observation of norm violation as a representative form of surprise.

Numerous examples stem from the NYCDOH campaigns. In Chan’s (2009) article, American Beverage Association (ABA) spokesman Kevin Keane speaks to the surprise of the NYCDOH campaign: “The ad campaign is over the top and unfortunately is going to undermine meaningful efforts…” (p. 2).
In another section of the article, the ABA is noted as proclaiming the ad “sensational” rather than substantive (Chan, 2009, p. 2). These interpretations of the campaign illustrate the surprise of organizations outside of the campaign. As mentioned earlier, the quick response of New York news media provides a first-hand look at the initial reaction to the campaign. Dahl’s work discusses the importance of primacy as it relates to reaction (Dahl, 2008). Arguably the first reaction is one of little reflection regarding the content of the ad, rather these are more often than not “raw” and genuine responses (Dahl, 2008, p. 157).

Further examples embody much of the same content. Bennet and Seifman’s (2009) article features the term “hyperbolic” as a description of the campaign twice. In means of categorizing the advertisements as shock, the term employed by Bennet does little to provoke certainty; however, it does define the audience reaction when matched with posted commentary from readers. One response to Bennet and Seifman’s (2009) article described the exaggeration of the campaign as “an overt attempt to muster a response” and later concludes by stating “it obviously worked” (p.14). Similarly, the use of terms such as “gruesome,” “nauseating” and “disgusting” to describe the “Quit Smoking Today” campaign illustrates an attraction to the posters, although negative and unpleasing as surprising reactions (O’Conner, 2010; Golding, 2010).

A final synthesis of literature supports the NYCDOH campaigns to be examples of shock advertising, incorporating the attributes of fear, information, and surprise. Campaign messages are interpreted as attention-seeking and gimmick ridden. However, this superficial analysis of the campaigns and reaction to them is without proper definition or analysis. Thus within the context of this study, the campaigns will be further analyzed to confirm this assessment using a deductive review of Dahl’s work through structured textual analysis of the posters and thematic analysis of both media articles and reader assessments of the campaigns.
CHAPTER THREE: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

This section of data analysis uses a deductive approach to research, assessing images as identified by Althusser (1971) and a method for textual analysis provided by Hart and Daughton (2005). Providing a form of construct validity, Althusser’s theory sets a template for interpreting human interaction with symbols; grounded in perceptual psychology and cultural studies (Davies and Harre, 1990 p. 5). Althusser (1971) argues that images, as artifacts of culture, are crucial to the development of societal norms and an interruption of existing social standards requires an internal interpellation by the subject (p. 67). Thus, subjects construct their identity through a process of psychological discourse between the artifact and their existing notions of culture. To impede, alter or redefine an established cultural norm requires the artifact to be intrusive, argumentative and exist in a condensed form (Hart and Daughton, 2005; Althusser, 1971).

As a subject encounters an artifact, two incidences automatically occur; confrontation is unavoidable and the artifact affects the subject regardless of the artifact’s intensity (Davies & Harre, 1990). This study also evaluates the affects of the campaigns through historical comparative and content analysis. These two methods describe, to a degree, the judgment of subjects in confronting images. An assessment of the image is necessary to the consumer, to disparage or reinforce the societal norms condensed in the image. Davies and Harre (1990) discuss the traits that compose the repertoire of a social norm as being the visual arguments that people must evaluate when confronted with an unfamiliar artifact (p. 14). These characteristics include hyper-textualized concepts, rules or norms that define the cultural course of the artifact. An exchange between the artifact’s repertoire and the subject’s knowledge of the culture creates an identity in the image’s consumer. Weedon (1987) describes this process as “centering,” where
the subject assesses existing traits in his/herself in contrast to the artifact’s (p. 34). In the case these traits correspond efficiently and without conflict, the subject may align with the artifact’s message easily. Should the artifact present a conflicting message, Weedon argues a de-centering occurs in the perception of the subject (p. 34). De-centering constructs a sense of difference between the cultural norms of the subject and the cultural message presented by the artifact; this often creates disparity between the consumer and the argument of the artifact as well. This disparity often results in apprehension, and in some cases disdain, towards the culture reflected in the artifact. Davies and Harre (1990) argue that it is possible, and frequent, for subjects to shift their perceptions into mediated categories of culture due to their confrontation with the artifact; meaning that intrusive encounters can lead to the reconstruction of ideologies (p. 2).

Regarding the controversial imagery presented in both NYCDOH campaigns, analysis of the images reveals a clear cultural message that reshapes pre-existing norms. This chapter will uncover those revelations by discussing each tenet of Hart and Daughton’s method in relation to Althusser’s theory. Before discussing the results of this chapter, a description of each campaign’s advertisements will be reviewed. Both campaigns use a formulaic model for each of their three advertisements. This being the only difference within each campaign, the results section will consider the method for analysis as a structure; here similarities and differences between campaigns will be analyzed.

The following advertisements were featured in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds campaign launched in 2009. Notice that the only difference occurring within the campaign is the type of container being used.
Description: At the bottom left side, body copy states “Don’t Drink Yourself Fat” in capitalized, bold, pink print. In smaller, black print the copy states “Cut back on soda and other sugary beverages. Go with water, seltzer or low-fat milk instead.” To the right, a logo for the city of New York and small copy stating “Department of Health and Mental Hygiene” rests in the corner. Above the copy, center page is a ‘high-ball’ glass with a light, orange substance filling and spilling out of the glass. The substance is denser than a normal liquid, similar to putty. The substance (what we know to be fat) is being poured out of a container, similar to either a Snapple, Coca Cola or Gatorade bottle. To the right of the glass is the bottles top (cap). Upper-center, mid page in bold, capitalized letters reads “Are you pouring on the pounds?” All words are black font, with the exception of “pounds” printed in pink. Note that even the “?” is printed in black font. The background of the poster is white with a shadow from the glass. A hand is pouring the liquid into the glass, it seems to be a Caucasian, male hand (stereotypically, given the finger nails are trimmed shortly). The following two images feature the varying bottles.
Figure 2 Cola Bottle (NYCDOH, 2011)

Description: A bottle is featured that represents a dark cola, with a red label.

Figure 3 Gatorade Bottle (NYCDOH, 2011)

Description: The bottle featured represents a yellow liquid being poured from a sports drink design container, presumably a lime/lemon flavored sports drink. The following advertisements were featured in the point-of-sale campaign entitled ‘Quit Smoking Today.’ Notice that the only difference occurs in the images used to exemplify the implications of smoking.
Description: Top left NYC logo (acronym), MRI scan of human brain centered on the page, showing highlighted red area (presumably something bad, actually (taking medical knowledge, an aneurism), the words “Smoking causes stroke quit smoking today call 311 or 1-866-NYQUITS” are featured as the body copy with “Smoking” and “Quit smoking today call 311 or 1-866-NYQUITS” featured in yellow print. “Causes stroke” is in white text and replaced in the other ads with their aligned ailment; “Lung Cancer” and “Tooth Decay.” The campaign’s website is featured in white text, “www.nysmokefree.com” The background is black. All body copy, with the exception of the url, are capitalized. “Smoking,” “causes lung cancer,” “quit smoking today,” “call 311 or 1-866-NYQUITS” are tiered each below the other.
The first cue in Hart and Daughton’s method asks, “Does the visual image carry ideological force?” This question is represented through three subordinate tenets; the underlying purpose of the message, the cultural norms interrupted and the clandestine belief systems that may be ascertained. Initial inquiry into the campaign’s images reveals a clear ideological force across all six posters. The health appeals of both campaigns demonstrate an agenda designed to
promote healthy decision-making. The obvious difference between the two revolves around the topic of each campaigns, one promotes substituting empty-calorie beverages for more healthy drinks, the other attempts to eliminate smoking. As an example, the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign instructs subjects to replace “sugary drinks with water, seltzer or low-fat milk” whereas as the title of the anti-smoking campaign, ‘Quit Smoking Today,’ illustrates its’ ideological force.

The violation of cultural norms is an essential element to Weedon’s (1987) argument for reconstructive de-centering (p. 37). For both campaigns, the existence of this feature is readily evident and crucial to understanding how controversial advertising can generally foster ideological change (Schuster & Powell, 1987). In ‘Pouring on the Pounds,’ the norm violation manifests in two ways, a violation of industrial imagery and consumer expectancies. In similar fashion, both NYCDOH campaigns violate a public norm on a health level with the anti-smoking ads revealing three different medical images and the empty-calorie campaign featuring three images that reveal a fat-like substance being poured into a clear glass. The violation of industrial image norm occurs in the use of three beverage bottles very similar in shape to those of familiar corporate models, from which the fat-like substance is poured. This feature was considered in the ABA’s commentary to the New York Times (2009) but no legal action was ever taken. These images are a direct example of de-centering, where the norm of corporate symbols (such as the model of a beverage container) is violated in the eyes of a subject. Simply put, this image presents a familiar symbol in an unfamiliar way, a difference that the subject will easily recognize.

In addition to the familiar containers, consumers are also confronted with the fat-like substance in an atypical manner. As opposed to simply slapping a pound of human fat down in
front of the viewer, the campaign uses movement to attract attention. The over-spill of the substance, its’ vein-like features within the substance and the clear high-ball glass stand centered in the advertisement, forcing the subject to confront the image prior to reading the text. Consider the classic Coca Cola advertising slogan, “Refreshing.” A more typical construction of beverages as tasty and satisfying is replaced with an image that creates two conflicting representations for the viewer to reconcile. This provokes de-centering to an either/or rationale; the image consumer accepts the unfamiliar categorization, recognizes the implications of consuming such beverages or transcends the message. In the case that the viewer rejects the message, a de-centering still occurs. When the viewer rejects the re-conceptualization of a familiar image, similar re-conceptualizations in other campaigns can also be rejected (Davies & Harre, 1990 p. 2). Weedon (1987) also acknowledges that image viewers rarely experience re-exposure without refining their judgments (p. 15). This suggests that viewers may be conditioned as more or less accepting of the image’s condensations with repeated exposure. In contrast, should the message be accepted certain degrees of belief are ascribed; meaning the consumer can tread towards acceptation or rejection gradually. In either decision a level of reaffirmation or reconstruction occurs as a result of confronting the image.

The third finding describes the hidden cultural systems that are indirectly targeted through the campaigns. In both sets of posters, two distinct cultures are rhetorically attacked; the corporate and the public. Both campaigns suggest the relevant corporations, Coca Cola, Snapple and Gatorade, and eliminates them from the rhetorical act; effectively silencing them. By not using brand icons or directly mentioning each brand, the posters imply the suggested targets. Such clandestine approaches to industry- centered counter-marketing are taken as offensive by their targets (New York Times, 2009). These attacks position the viewer amid the suggested
corporate image as presented by the NYCDOH (the bottle or container) and its original corporate-endorsed message. It is possible that some viewers’ cultures may be alienated by the images. Walter Wymer (2010) argues that cultural boundaries often cause incongruence between public service messages and minority publics (Wymer, 2010 p. 21). Wymer specifically mentions how certain sub-sects of Mexican-American cultures find obesity less an indicator of health-related issues and more as a feature of authority or power (p. 22). The anti-smoking campaign indirectly attacks sub-cultures that approve of smoking; the traditional Turkish-Muslim practice of Hookah as an example. The ‘Quit Smoking Today’ ads also support an array of arguments that incorrectly identify certain ailments with smoking. As an example, by targeting tooth decay as an ailment associated to smoking, subjects who have experienced tooth decay for alternative reasons may feel otherized and discriminated against by the NYCDOH. The implications of the one-sided medical representations are discussed in greater detail later in this study, however it must be understood that all three medical ailments have alternative causes and consequently the arguments in the ads may be interpreted as attacks upon non-smokers. Waller (2004) contends that these misinterpretations are a result of the controversial nature of shock products; including contraceptives, alcohol and cigarettes (p. 5).

The second cue asks, “What condensations can be found in the visual image?” Hart and Daughton (2005) define condensations in terms of arguments against norms and the approach of the image towards the subject (p. 214). Kenneth Burke (1983) advanced that arguments presented against cultural norms approach subjects in three manners; association, dissociation or transcendence (p. 35). Often these condensations involve emotional appeals, elevating the intensity of the argument to reaffirm the proposed approach; an attempt to construct cohesive identity (Burke, 1983). As an example, the emotional appeal of the sugary beverage campaign
stems from an evaluation of fat; acting to make the subject self-conscious of their image and health. This may best be warranted by the statement featured in the copy of the ad, “Are you pouring on the pounds?” The empty-calorie appeal acts as an associative strategy to the mass public, using models of popular beverage containers that are frequently consumed. As the substance of fat and the containers are both known within American Culture (source), their use together constructs a norm that associates with the identity of the target subject; these subjects are New York subway travelers most accurately associated with vast network of cultures. As this association is constructed, the subject identifies themselves as either obese, in relation to the image of fat, or a consumer, in relation to the container.

There are a few textual components in either campaign that could be extrapolated to be transcendent. As an example, viewers of the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ posters may see their favorite beverage being represented in a negative way and write it off as nothing more than hype or misinformation. Consumers of the ‘Quit Smoking Today Campaign’ may simply relate the information as indirect, not about them, and go on without notice.

The third option is dissociation, where the subject finds no connection to the image, its text or suggested argument. The ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign involves a dissociative approach in three manners; the exclusive nature of the targeted audience, as a controversial product, and the medical images used in the poster. The argument expressed advances that smoking is bad on three levels; it causes tooth decay, lung cancer and stroke. The specificity of each ailment causes a level of dissociation at the outset of the subject’s confrontation. It is unlikely that every smoker in New York City has experienced or encountered lung cancer, tooth decay and or stroke as direct results of tobacco consumption. This grants the subject the ability to disengage the argument of the campaign on grounds of fact. Furthermore, the point-of-sale
advertisements were in posted in view of all convenience store customers; this means that even non-smokers were confronted with the images and their messages, thus indicating the same ability to dissociate from the information for an entirely different set of reasons; graphic imagery, irritation, political ideologies and so on (New York Daily, 2010). In this way the campaign has the potential of bolstering identities that believe smoking does not cause the ascribed ailments and thus find the campaign to be erroneous.

As a controversial product, Waller (1999) analyzes numerous items thought to be in limbo with consumers solely due to their nature (p. 4). Examples illustrated by Waller (1999) include; condoms, birth control, sex toys, male enhancements, alcohol and tobacco products (p. 4). The ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign features smoking tobacco as the central product for scrutiny, inviting the controversy as a means to ascribe fear, encourage information and ignite surprise through provoking images. Dissociation may occur if the viewer finds the use, consumption or advertising of tobacco to be controversial ideologically. This means that a viewer who recognizes the substance to be controversial from the beginning has no reason to associate with the product for the purpose of opposing tobacco. The belief system of these viewers would find the ads to be unnecessary on the grounds of relevance (Schuster & Powell, 1987; Dahl, et al, 2003).

The rationalizing of the images for non-smokers, dissociated by either controversy or use, stands as another way dissociation occurs in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign. For viewers who find the nature of tobacco to be displeasing, unappealing, or irrelevant, the graphic ads may serve to disassociate them further from the campaign’s message. The text of the advertisements, “Quit Smoking Today,” exists as a command, uninviting and straight forward. When put in relation to the nature of the images, stroke, tooth decay and lung scarring, the viewer could find
this aggressive rhetoric to be over-the-top and tactless. As a result, a viewer that could have served as an opinion leader to the campaign’s message is lost.

In conclusion, two observations are made that construct both campaigns as dissimilar under the second cue. The first observation involves the dissociative rhetoric of the anti-smoking campaign in juxtaposition to the associative text in the sugary beverage campaign. The second observation contends that diverse appeals to fear also exist in both campaigns. The command-oriented nature of the anti-smoking campaign is exhibited in its’ bold, body copy title, “Quit Smoking Today.” Following a claim that smoking leads to one of three ailments, the posters advance an unequivocal command that neither directly identifies nor questions the subject. As the statement does not confront the subject with textual identifiers, a dissociative nature of identity is created. In addition, the images presented in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ posters leave little room for anyone beyond current smokers, family of victims or victims of the three ailments to identify with the campaign. It may also be argued that the absence of tobacco products in the image make it difficult for smokers to directly identify with the campaign.

The ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ posters use the body copy in an associative manner by asking the subject a direct-reflective question; “Are you pouring on the pounds?” Two observations concerning the text reinforce the associative observation. First, the use of the word “you” directly confronts the subject, allowing no leeway between the receiver and the suggested direction of the message. In this manner the subject must be de-centered by addressing the question in relation to the image. Second, the phrase “pouring on the pounds” provides an alliterated memory cue compounded with a graphic image. Using these components provides added pressure to the subject, a demand from the advertisement to be recognized and processed.
In short, the subject is directly identified through the text of the poster and must reason the graphic, visual proponents of the text alongside the image.

Using different appeals to fear, both campaigns confront the subject with psychologically provoking condensations. The ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ posters use the fat-like substance as a cue to pre-existing information on obesity. In the instance that a consumer has not experienced prior health messages against the consumption of sugary beverages, the viewer might reason the ad to be disingenuous and or incomplete, but fear seems elusive. The ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign uses fear in a more direct way, due to the direct mention of each ailment in the body copy of the poster. Using a fear appeal that associates smoking to death, the anti-smoking campaign creates a direct link to each ailment and tobacco use through text, such as “smoking causes stroke,” and vivid imagery of the proclaimed ailment (NYCDOH, 2011 p. 1). This tactic confronts the subject with more than a violation of social normalcy but also the reality, if anything the thought, of mortality through the substance’s use. There is also no referent within the ads, featuring ambiguous and descriptive tactics.

As Weedon (1987) argues, de-centering is a counter-active process and as such requires little more than argument against an existing norm (Davies & Harre, 1990). Althusser contends that so far as the image’s argument attempts to construct a new meaning in a familiar way of the viewer’s culture, the potential of a favorable reaction is high (Davies & Harre, 1990 p. 4). These tenets in mind, the appeals to fear act as de-centering tactics in two ways; one as an attack on a cultural tenet, the other as an attack on human nature (Weedon, 1987). The sugary beverage campaign uses existing norms concerning empty calories and creates an explicit connection between such products and obesity. Two of the three point-of-sale posters use the fear of death to
provoke shifting, a result of being de-centered. The ads featuring the scarred lungs and stroked brain scan are more likely to be interpreted with fear than the decaying tooth.

The final cue asks, “What significant tensions can be identified in the visual image?” Hart and Daughton (2005) find that tension revolves around social or political violations of the norm, suggesting that images of power make arguments for or against the norm (p. 243). In Davies and Harre’s (1990) analysis of Subject Positioning Theory, arguments are crucial to facilitating de-centering but often it is the unintended tensions that produce the most recognizable counter-reactions. Aside from the observed arguments discussed in the second cue of these results, two underlying tensions become visible in the textual analysis of these campaign’s images; misinformation and racial bias.

As similarities, the lack of cogent information to validate each campaign becomes a point of contention from which the viewer may construct arguments for dissociation. However, the very existence of the posters may be extrapolated to be overbearing to the average citizen. The age-old counter argument of “who gave you the right?” could be used by the subject to dissociate their confrontation. This observation is best warranted through the analysis previously discussed regarding cues one and two; however it may be argued that this mentality is a consequence of information deficiency. The ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign does little more than offer alternatives and a shocking image, there is no empty-calorie information provided in the advertisement. Similarly, the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign offers only a claim that said ailment is caused by smoking. There is no warranted information in either campaign. As a result of the ill-proposed arguments in each poster, subjects may confront the PSAs with hostility or concern for the generalizations they carry.
Diversely, the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign provokes an even more serious tension through its visual images. The use of a ‘White-Caucasian’ hand in all three of the advertisements has the potential of causing substantial public outcry and social backlash. Weedon (1987) argues that ability of a visual argument to de-center the subject relies on its containment (p. 5). By containment, Weedon is referring to the norms over-stretched, and in some cases forgotten, by the framers of the image. There are other races in New York City; as a result of using a single race to make the argument of sugary beverages leading to obesity the campaign draws attention to the question of race. This allows for tensions to arise in the form of questions; “Are whites more obese than blacks?” Waller’s (2003) work on controversial images indicates that this is a fine balancing act for shock advertisers, to stretch the limits only far enough that the subject is de-centered not to the point that other social issues that were unintended are confronted by the subject. In the case of the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign, it’s clear that a social norm is violated to a tense state; the norm of obesity is challenged and the image’s negligence brings race into its stature as well.

In summary, the use of Subject Positioning Theory brings to light numerous tenets of the NYCDOH’s public health advertisements. Two categories of observation seem to best describe the locus of each campaign; discriminatory undertones and identity construction. Using Burke’s (1983) analysis on rhetorical messages and their use of associative and dissociative strategies illuminates the subject’s interaction with the imagery and text; in doing so numerous implications emerge that condone and support the NYCDOH’s tactics. In like manner, Weedon’s (1987) insight to Althusser’s work helps to highlight the discriminatory tones against subcultures and race that prevent containing the tensions inherent in each campaign. These
observations provide substantial deductive data to elaborate on the use of shock tactics by government agencies.
CHAPTER THREE:
THEMATIC ANALYSIS RESULTS

The final method for data analysis used Boyatzis’ (1998) five step system for Thematic Analysis on six news media artifacts; each containing an article with information on their respective campaigns and a commentary section for readers. Three articles were selected for each campaign based on the volume of posts by readers and the vicinity of the news organization to New York City. A closer proximity was thought to ensure accuracy and reliability of reporting, adhering to the cultural focus of this study. The following six articles were selected for the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ and ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaigns:

- Basil Katz, “Tobacco Companies Contest NY Anti-Smoking Signs” - Reuters Online, June 3, 2010
- Chris Morran, “Judge: NYC Can’t Make Cigarette Sellers Post Anti-Smoking Ads” – The Consumerist Online, December 30, 2010
- Sonja Sharp, Edgar Sandoval, Alison Gendar, “Phillip Morris, RJ Reynolds and Lorillard sues city over posters, says they are unconstitutional” – June 4, 2010

Two criteria were necessary for articles and commentary to meet the objectives of the study. First, the content had to be relevant to the campaign; commentary had to be directed towards the
campaign or features discussed in the article. Second, the information provided in the article and commentary had to be traceable; meaning that facts in the article needed to be backed up with source information and commentary could not be accepted into the data set if posted by an anonymous user. All six news forums require an email account for reader registration and posting.

The use of Boyatzis’ (1998) method was coupled with a parallel time structure, limiting the analysis of commentary to one week after the original post date of the article. The time constraints were originally introduced as a way of containing the volume of commentary between all six news forums and as means of documenting initial reactions to the campaign; however it was discovered that post eight days of the forums existence often spam-like comments began to take over the forums. In total 224 comments were excluded after the parallel time frame was implemented; 103 from the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ section and 121 from the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ section. Between both sections, 109 total comments were analyzed after various spam and marketing posts were disqualified from the time frame eligible data.

Prior to data analysis, a tabulation system was developed using a spreadsheet program; each of Boyatzis’ steps were documented in separate columns for all six of the news articles and six commentary sections. This allowed for an easily decipherable analysis and reference system during the coding and comparative analysis portions of the study. As Boyatzis’ method hinges on the validity of identified themes, the importance of comparative internal analysis between articles and commentary of each campaign was joined with an external comparison of themes between both campaigns. The use of the spreadsheet system made these comparisons methodologically consistent and easily replicable.
This results section follows a consistent format for describing each section of the thematic analysis; media framing of shock and reader commentary. In the data review of article framing each campaign’s articles are analyzed based on similarities and differences before contrasting both campaigns. In similar fashion, commentary from each campaign is first analyzed for similarities and differences before comparing the data sets between campaigns.

Rejected Data Samples

Boyatzis contends that an inductive analysis of content involves the total emergence of the researcher into the data set, familiarizing the content, structure and locus of the artifact with the direction of study (Boyatzis, 1998 p 24). This study, requiring focus on two separate campaigns, relied on synthesizing content by highlighting key adjectives describing reactions to the campaign’s imagery and text as well as noting diverse pleas and discrepancies with the local government of New York City, producers and products. It was during this step in analysis that data samples falling outside the parallel time frame were excluded. As an example, one post made by JoJoNYC stated, “ain’t no thang buta chickn wang” (Reuters, 2010). These types of nonsensical responses were dismissed based on the previously established criteria; relevance and trace. As a second objective, data samples that were judged as relevant were highlighted down to key phrases that brought insight to the study. It is through these 109 comments that emergent themes were identified in step two.

The media articles were also judged based on the established criterion of relevance but also included the criterion of source information, per these criterion dozens of media sources featuring commentary were excluded. These sources become important facets to the validity of this analysis and provide necessary information that commentators often referenced in their
posts. Without having analyzed the content of the news articles a significant portion of the commentary data would have been indecipherable. One example features commentator Tal Barzilai stating, “an imposed tax would just make them go out of state” (New York Times, 2009). Had the article not been analyzed first, mind you in the same order a commentator would have to operate, the researcher would have little use for a comment regarding taxation when looking for shock commentary. However, as will be discussed later, these comments play an integral role in the identification and coding of themes.

As directed by Boyatzis’ method, the reoccurrence of themes is to be a subliminal focus of the objective researcher, focusing priority on emergent themes. During the process of synthesis all highlighted verbiage and topic shifts were reevaluated three times to add validity to the study. Thus, each article and section of commentary, a total of twelve data sets, was evaluated thrice; making a total of thirty-six synthesis laps.

Initial Review: Data Results

In the second step of thematic analysis highlighted texts are grouped into emergent themes. In this section of the study’s findings themes will be discussed in relation to their respective campaign by first looking at news articles and then commentary. The final portion of this section will discuss the common emergent themes identified in the articles and commentary between both campaigns.

Boyatzis encourages researchers to document emergent themes carefully for the purpose of easy referencing while coding process begins (Boyatzis, 1998 p. 24). This tip proved useful when using the spreadsheet method, as a result each comment and paragraph in the articles
exposed topics for consideration that ultimately were coded into more concise units with definitions. The finalized codes will be discussed in step four of this results section.

In the three selected ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ articles, 30 initial themes were documented during analysis. Beginning with Sewell Chan’s New York Times article, the themes of *graphic imagery, in-your-face tactics, desire for shock* and *sensationalism* are projected repeatedly (New York Times, 2009). Chan quotes Dr. Kelly D. Brownell as saying, “I have a feeling this could have a pretty potent effect- the ads are dramatic” (p. 2). His article also quotes NYCDOH Dietician Cathy Nonas stating, “We are hoping that the biggest effect, first of all, is shock” (p. 1). Both professionals serve as information sources throughout the article while also conveying the graphic nature of ads as “impressive” and “in-your-face” effective (p. 1). Similarly, New York Daily writer Adam Lisberg approaches the graphic nature of the advertisements with government testimony. Lisberg quotes NYC Associate Commissioner Geoff Cowley as stating, “Just trying to be positive and encouraging doesn’t always get people’s attention, if you get in people’s faces, that does” (New York Daily, 2009 p. 1). Nonas is also featured in New York Daily’s coverage of the campaign as a strong supporter of the “shocking” ads (p. 2).

Other emergent themes included *private donors, government intervention, Mayor Mike Bloomberg, health department expenditures* and *calorie health information*. As an example, Chuck Bennet and David Seifman discuss New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg’s defense of the campaign by quoting his reaction to claims of hyper-reactive PSAs; “If you want to drink sugared drinks, you’re going to have a weight problem, and maybe the government should tax it to keep you from doing it” (New York Post, 2009 p. 2).
The ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign also illustrated similar initial themes between the selected news articles. A total of 18 emergent themes were recorded between these artifacts, many with the tendency to overlap as found similar in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ articles. Themes included; diseased imagery, campaign effectiveness, point-of-sale violations, free-speech violations, inaccurate information and government intervention. As an example of the emergent information theme, Reuters (2010) article on the anti-smoking campaign cites the tobacco law suit as proclaiming the advertisements to be anything but “purely factual” (p. 2) and “deceptive.” Free speech themes were identified in each of the three ‘Quit Smoking Today’ articles and often reference Judge Jed Rakoff’s decision to overturn the city’s point-of-sale law.

The commentary portion of the emergent themes step found 84 initial themes between the 53 comments analyzed in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ forums. As was done with the news articles, each theme was highlighted and documented in a spreadsheet before condensing them in step three of Boyatzis’ method. Among the data the following themes arose; informational intent, smokers uniting, Bloomberg indicts, campaign approval and disapproval. One example of campaign approval directly notes the influence of major beverage sellers and the campaign’s effectiveness; as such the single post was highlighted for two emergent themes. On September 2, 2009 vigorfish posted, “finally the state is pushing back against big money companies” (New York Daily, 2009 p. 5). In total, 23 of the analyzed comments from the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign featured multiple themes and were consequently highlighted and documented for each one.

In the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ forums a list of 87 initial themes were noted between 56 comments. The following themes are examples of those findings; smoker discrimination good, government intervention bad, free speech good, campaign ineffective, health promotion good and
Bloomberg indicts. As an example of smokers uniting against the campaign, one forum member named ‘markcwells’ states, “Smokers need to start standing up for themselves this is ridiculous” (Reuters, 2010 p. 8). Another forum member, from the New York Daily (2010), suggests, “Quit selling poison and start selling real cigarettes, like Europe” (p. 3). Their comment indicates a totally separate perspective of the article’s content and follows directly after a string of four posts regarding the graphic imagery of the point-of-sale ads.

The diversity of approaches and opinions relating to the campaigns and article content provided a smorgasbord of coding possibilities but in order to make the data analysis replicable condensing themes was necessary. Boyatzis’ (1998) third step calls for a comparison between the initial emergent themes to condense and categorize similar data to make findings more nomothetic.

Themes, Definitions and Coding Data

In order to avoid tainting the objective role of the researcher, each condensed theme was required to have at least three supporting definitions. The role of definitions in this research refers to the commentators post as a supporting material for the existence of the theme. As an example, the theme of Anti-Government Regulation was identified 18 times in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ forums. In order to accrue an accurate definition of the theme, three of the commentators’ posts were evaluated and condensed to identify the appropriate definition. This process was required of each condensed and finalized theme.

In this section of the results both the coded themes for the news articles and commentary are first defined before their relevant application is revealed. Each theme is coded using an alphabetical label and features its corresponding definition. Following the introduction of
themes, both campaigns are analyzed as to their identified themes, similarities and differences.

The first set of documented themes comes from the news articles, note that the alphabetical order is non-traditional; this was done for visual purposes during the spreadsheet method.

Section One: Article Codes and Definitions

A = Explicit Imagery: campaign images are graphic, demonizing and offensive in nature.

B = Demographic Intent: campaign information as targeted to minority ethnic groups

C = Producer/Seller Restrictions: legal parameters over-ridden by government action.

D = State Expenditures: expressed concern over costs of campaigns, often compared to the need for other initiatives.

E = Informational Intent: campaign information was seen or projected as biased, nonfactual and inaccurate

F = Pro-Information Sentiment: article portrays, interviewee supports the campaign’s use of information and accuracy of facts.

X = Bloomberg Indict: article portrays negatively or condones the actions of NYC Mayor Mike Bloomberg.

H = Anti-Government Intervention: article, interviewee perceives government efforts to be out of place or intrusive.

K = Pro-Government Sentiment: article, interviewee perceives government action as positive and or necessary.
L= Alternative Legislation: suggests alternate forms of legislation to solve the topic/problem.

Of the ten themes identified between both campaign’s news articles, the themes of *State Expenditures*, *Bloomberg Indict*, *Pro-Government Sentiment*, *Demographic Intent* and *Alternative Legislation* were not found in the anti-smoking campaign. Among the articles analyzed for the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign, the theme of *Seller/Producer Restrictions* was not identified.

*Pouring on the Pounds: Article Themes*

Using these codes, 31 total counts were made between all three beverage campaign articles. Among these were the following themes; *Explicit Imagery, Informational Intent, Pro-Information, Pro-Demographic Intent, Anti-Government Intervention, Pro-Government Sentiment, Bloomberg Indict, State Expenditures and Alternative Legislation*. The recurrence of these themes is featured in the table below, indicating how often each theme was identified and which themes were identified per article. As an example, in Table 1 below, Chan’s article from the New York Times (2009) was found to have five instances where *Explicit Imagery* is commented on; this is represented as A5.

**TABLE 1**

‘Pouring on the Pounds’ Article Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Article:</th>
<th>Theme Codes &amp; Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>A5, E1, F1, D1, B3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Daily</td>
<td>A6, B1, F1, D2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Post</td>
<td>A4, H2, K1, L1, X2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Between the news articles the only similar theme is the mention of *Explicit Imagery*. Also noted is the theme of *Informational Intent* as it stands alone in the New York Times (2009) article. Found only in the New York Post, the themes of *Anti-Government Intervention*, *Pro-Government Sentiment*, *Bloomberg Indicts* and *Alternative Legislation* present the only use of these four themes between both campaigns; with the exception of *Anti-Government Intervention* coded twice in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ Reuters (2010) article. The themes of *Demographic Intent*, *State Expenditures* and *Pro-Information Sentiment* were documented between the New York Times (2009) and New York Daily (2009) articles but not in the New York Post (2009).

Aside from being the only similar theme between all three ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ articles, *Explicit Imagery* was also the most frequently documented theme. Noted fifteen times in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ articles and five times in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ articles, *Explicit Imagery* was prevalent in all the analyzed news features with the exception of Basil Katz’s (2010) Reuters article.

**Quit Smoking Today: Article Themes**

Regarding the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ articles, a total of 16 code counts were identified. The frequency and themes embedded in these artifacts are listed in the same manner as Table 1 below. The theme of *Producer/Seller Restrictions* is concurrent in all three articles, differentiating the topics of both campaigns; ‘Quit Smoking Today’ s’ lawsuit and “Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign revealing. *Producer/Seller Restrictions* are also the most common theme between these articles, featured six times as opposed to *Explicit Imagery’s* five mentions.
TABLE 2
‘Quit Smoking Today’ Article Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>News Article:</th>
<th>Theme Codes &amp; Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reuters</td>
<td>H2, C2, E2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumerist</td>
<td>C3, A2, 1F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Post</td>
<td>A3, C1, E1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison between both campaign’s articles revealed four similar themes; *Explicit Imagery, Informational Intent, Pro-Information Sentiment* and *Anti-Government Intervention*. Because these themes are similarities between both campaigns, examples are given to clarify their direction. As an example of *Pro-Information Sentiment*, the New York Daily article features a quote from Geoffrey Cowley saying, “The fat campaign aims to reduce obesity and diabetes by showing New Yorkers just how much sugar is in the drinks they grab off bodega and deli shelves” (New York Daily, 2009 p. 3). This same theme emerges in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ articles, expressing the campaign to be “educational” (Reuters, 2010 p. 2) and “preventing consumer deception” (Consumerist, 2010 p. 1).

Regarding *Anti-Government Intervention*, Sarah Longwell, who represented the Center for Consumer Freedom in the New York Post article (2009), commented on the advertisements as an attempt to “sway” public opinion in a misguided direction. Longwell states, “New York is still America, right? And in America we have the freedom to make our own choices about what we eat and drink. Somebody has to tell city officials we can eat whatever the heck we want” (New York Post, 2009 p. 2). The ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign features numerous quotes from convenience store supporters and tobacco companies irate at the thought of government
forced displays. One example comes from the New York State Convenience Store Association’s President James Calvin stating, “the government may not force private parties to carry [their] message” (New York Daily, 2010 p. 3).

*Informational Intent* may best be summated by Longwell’s comment to the New York Post when she called the NYC Department of Health the NYC Department of “Hype” (p. 2). The same sentiment regarding campaign information is expressed in R.J. Reynolds’ official lawsuit, as cited by Reuters (2010) it states, “These signs do not describe the effects of smoking in purely factual terms. Instead… vivid images at the point-of-sale” (p. 1).

The most frequently cited theme, *Explicit Imagery*, is depicted in five of the six articles analyzed in this study and often features the use of terms like “graphic,” “explicit,” “controversial” and even “grotesque.” Kevin Keane, spokesperson for the American Beverages Association comments on the images of the anti-soda campaign by stating, “The ad campaign is more focused on the sensational than substance” (New York Times, 2009 p.3). Even Judge Rakoff’s decision against the NYCDOH’s point-of-sale laws remarks on the “vivid” and “forced” imagery of the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign (Consumerist, 2010 p. 2).

*Section Two: Commentary Thematic Analysis*

Between all six news articles reviewed, a total of 335 comments had been posted on the forums. Of these comments, ranging from minutes after the articles posting online to fourteen months after, a sum of 224 posts were disqualified from the study due to the parallel time frame of one week and spam marketing posts within the forums. Separately, the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign had 121 comments dismissed while the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign was
discredited 103 posts. The remaining posts were analyzed as part of this study, leaving 56 ‘Quit Smoking Today’ reader comments and 53 for ‘Pouring on the Pounds.’

After condensing the initial emergent themes, fifteen categories were constructed from the data. These categories are separate from the article analysis and feature an entirely different alphabetical categorizing method. However, each category was constructed in the same manner as the news article categories. The following list indicates the theme’s alphabetical coding, label and definition.

**Commentary Codes: Definitions and Labels**

A= Discrimination (producer/Consumer): reader perceives the campaign or images as intrusive on the rights or free will of the public(s).

B= Anti-Campaign Sentiment: reader perceives the purpose or intent of the campaign to be misled.

C= Pro-Campaign Sentiment: reader perceives the campaign to be beneficial and or effective.

D= Anti-Imagery: reader perceives the nature of the campaign images or text to be intrusive.

E= Pro-Imagery: reader perceives the imagery or text of the campaign to be positive and purposeful.

F= Pro-Information: reader finds the campaign’s informational appeals to be accurate and satisfactory.

G= Informational Intent (questionable): reader perceives the campaign’s information to be inaccurate, nonfactual or misdirected.
H= Anti-Government Regulation: reader perceives the intent and action of the campaign to be imposing upon the rights or free-will of the public.

K= Pro-Government Action: reader finds the campaign to be purposeful regarding the topic of the advertisement.

J= State Expenses (questionable/wasteful): reader perceives the expense of the campaign to be misappropriated and or unnecessary.

M= Alternative Legislation (suggestion): reader believes the problem, as seen by the topic, to be best fixed through other measures.

Z= Alternative Cause/Blame: reader believes the issue is caused by other means, not the topic in question.

X= Bloomberg Indict: reader believes the campaign to be invasive and or agenda oriented on the part of NYC Mayor Mike Bloomberg.

W= Pro-Discrimination (Anti-Smoker): reader believes that discrimination is acceptable towards the identified associate of the topic problem.

R= Use of Humor: reader uses humor as a form of communication to exhibit their opinion on the topic.

Following the initial coding process, a reassessment of the data revealed 154 total codes in the reader commentary. In the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign a sum of 76 codes were documented and 78 in the anti-sugar forums. To be made clear, these counts are not individual themes rather the number of times a theme was viewed in the content after coding. The themes of Pro-Government Action and Alternative Cause/Blame were found to be exclusive only to the
‘Pouring on the Pounds’ commentary; whereas the themes of Pro-Discrimination and Humor were only found in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ forums. The following table indicates the code counts and themes identified in each article.

**TABLE 3**
Reader Commentary Codes and Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beverage Articles</th>
<th>Theme Codes &amp; Frequency</th>
<th>Anti-Smoking Articles</th>
<th>Theme Codes &amp; Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York Post</td>
<td>C1,K1,H3,A1,X2</td>
<td>Reuters</td>
<td>H7,A7,F2,C6,W7,B2,E5,G3,J1,X1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8 Code Count)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(41 Code Count)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Daily</td>
<td>H7,A1,X2,Z1,F1,D2,G2,C1,K1</td>
<td>New York Daily</td>
<td>W2,E1,B1,G2,H1,D1,F1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18 Code Count)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(10 Code Count)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>2J, 8H, 7D,6M,6C,4A,2E,3F,11G,2B,1Z (52 Code Count)</td>
<td>Consumerist</td>
<td>C1,A1,R2,M1,X1,B5,H6,D5,G2,E1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>(25 Code Count)</td>
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The most frequently observed theme between both data sets was *Anti-Government Regulation* with a sum of 33 code counts; eighteen in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ commentary and 15 in ‘Quit Smoking Today.’ This code features sentiment concerning the over-regulatory feel and forceful rhetorical strategy of the NYCDOH. A reader named Nostraden from the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ data states, “Why attack smokers, NY should be sued for discrimination”
Another commentator, *Deltasigpb*, from the same forum exclaims, “What is really sad is the invasion by the government on our personal rights” (p. 8). The same sentiment is echoed in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ forums. One reader dubbed *Phishaw* asks, “Why do we need the state or the city to tell us what to do?” (New York Times, 2009 p. 7). Another reader from the New York Daily (2009) remarks on the beverage campaign in this way, “The health Nazis led by Bloomberg are out of control” (p. 9).

The remaining mode themes had significant frequency differences between campaigns, as the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign featured thirteen codes of the theme *Informational Intent* the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ forums only seven instances where information was questioned by commentators. Remarkably, *Anti-Campaign Sentiment*, distinguished from other themes by its direct reference to the necessity of the campaign regarding the targeted substance, was documented eight times in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ forums and only twice in the sugary beverages data. In fact, *Pro-Campaign Sentiment* was more frequently observed in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign than its opposing theme being documented eight times. The theme of *Anti-Imagery*, defined as an expression of disdain towards the ads by the reader, was documented nine times in the soda data and six times in anti-smoking forums; however, still being outnumbered by *Anti-Government Regulation* posts. A reader posting as *Barbara* describes her reaction to the anti-sugar campaign’s images by saying, “these images are disgusting and do little more than offend people” (New York Times, 2009 p. 7). A forum participant for the Consumerist (2010) article, dubbing themselves *haggis for the soul*, described the anti-smoking campaign by saying, “Think of the poor children exposed to these gross graphic posters” (p. 4).

As a dissimilar feature, the theme of *Pro-Discrimination* was only observed in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ forums but was also excluded from the Consumerist (2010) commentary. This
code is identified by the commentator’s direct discriminatory rhetoric targeting smokers. In total the code was documented nine times between the Reuters (2010) and New York Daily (2010) forums. A commentator named Panyhi expresses Pro-Discrimination when stating, “Why do you have to expose everyone to your nasty a$$ habits?” (Reuters, 2010 p. 5). Another comment from a reader called Maxis24 does much the same in writing, “Should I sacrifice my lungs to benefit you jerks? These ads are tying actions to consequences” (Reuters, 2010 p. 7). These reactions may also be labeled as Pro-Government Action, but due to their direct rhetoric towards smokers these codes were not condensed. Interestingly, Pro-Government Action was not documented in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ forums. Had these two themes been condensed as one, it could be said that the anti-smoking posts were significantly more aggressive towards smokers than the lack of confrontation towards the obese in the anti-sugar forums.

**Data Validity: Revisiting Dahl and Waller**

The final step in Boyatzis’ method requires the researcher to reassess the data regarding the identified themes. In this way the recognized themes are granted a level of accuracy if the codes are easily configured among the data samples. Frey (et al 1992) considers this type of re-evaluation to be a form of face validity, defined by its reliance on the data (Frey, Botan, Freidman and Kreps, 1992 p. 235). Admittedly, face validity is one of the weakest forms. In this study a second type of validity is also prevalent, defined by Frey (et al 1992) as “establishing the accuracy of a measurement technique or research procedure from theoretical propositions and predictions,” (p. 313) construct validity relies on previous research to justify themes uncovered in content analysis. Using the works of Waller (2002), Dahl (2003), Phau and Pendergast (2001), as well as Schuster and Powell (1987), themes documented in this study provide additional and accurate insight to controversial advertising studies. Five distinct characteristics, highlighted in
each of these studies, were found to be common among the content analysis of the news articles and commentary forums for both campaigns.

The first trait, identified by Schuster and Powell (1987), contends that controversial advertising is rooted in the perceived nature of the product being marketed (p. 4). In this way the commentary themes of Informational Intent, Pro-Imagery and Anti-Imagery are validated within the anti-smoking forums. The very nature of cigarettes is questioned, supported and or debated within the data of these themes. As an example, a post by JKHamilin simply states, “There is no safe or healthy level of cigarette smoke it’s a bad habit end of story” (Reuters 2010, p. 4). The second construct, conceived by Waller and Erdogen (2002), argues that an addictive nature fuels a product’s perception of being controversial. Themes documented in the analysis of the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ news articles indicate this construct to be comparatively valid; specifically in the themes of Demographic and Informational Intent. Concerning the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ articles and commentary, Dahl’s (2003) research highlighted the traits of surprise and information as being common among controversial ads, between both campaigns numerous themes exhibit these traits. Explicit Imagery, Pro-Information and Informational Intent are all expressed between the news articles of both campaigns and support Dahl’s discovered traits. The commentary themes of Anti-Campaign Sentiment, Anti-Imagery and Pro-Discrimination not only adhere to Dahl’s (2003) constructs of surprise and information but also are validated by Phau’s (et al 2001) discovery of sensitivity and fear as being prominent traits of controversial ads.

In summary, Boyatzis’ method has revealed numerous insights to the way by which news media framed and readers perceived the 2009 NYCDOH campaigns. Among the news articles ten diverse themes were identified, including the most frequented theme of Explicit Imagery. In total forty-seven code counts were identified among all six news articles. The commentary data
uncovered fifteen themes with a total of 154 code counts, the most frequent theme being *Anti-Government Regulation*. On one hand the subjective nature of news coverage is reinforced with directional reporting and argumentative structure leaning towards bias. On the other, a clear voice of opposition from the subjects themselves. These findings suggest a much different picture than the opinions painted by NYCDO H staff members.
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

Using Dahl’s (2003) three components of shock to frame the NYCDOH’s campaigns revealed that fear, information and surprise exist to some extent in each of the six poster advertisements as well as in media and reader responses. It was found that these components took different forms, approaches and levels in each poster. This section discusses results in terms of the textual and thematic analysis data of each campaign aligned them with their respective research question.

RQ1: Do the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ and ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaigns meet Dahl’s criteria of shock?

As the framing analysis for this study, Dahl’s (2003) work outlines three criteria which determine an advertisement to be shock (p. 5), fear, information and surprise. In this section of the results, the NYCDOH campaigns entitled ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ and ‘Quit Smoking Today’ were found to have all three criteria. Levels of information in both campaigns were found to be high, although presented in varying forms. The sugary beverage campaign features body copy that describes the affects of empty calorie consumption; adding up to ten pounds per year (NYCDOH, 2011). This information was backed by health experts through news media articles and government press releases. Information repetition served to warrant the ‘high’ assessment of the information strategy for this campaign. Similarly, the information presented by the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign was backed by medical research and Judge Rakoff’s verdict during the December 2010 trial. The sources of each campaign’s information, whether through commentary, poster text or expert testimony have initially high credibility adding to their appeal.
Levels of fear were different in each campaign. Dahl’s (2003) approach defines fear through dilemmas, a presented dichotomy not limited to death and life but various cultural dichotomies as well (p. 5). Although the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ ads presented a dilemma between health and obesity, the level of fear was not comparable to the level of the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign. Featuring images of mortality, a cancerous lung and stroked brain scans, the anti-smoking campaign also featured a low caliber appeal to fear in the ‘tooth decay’ advertisement. In contrast, the sugary beverage campaign, which merely changes the containers featured in each ad, does not use a high stakes dilemma to position the viewer associatively. Instead, the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign appeals more towards an aesthetic dilemma of fear; where image and health moderately collide.

Requiring the existence of information and fear, the level of surprise within each campaigns was documented as moderate. The low level of fear in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign is assisted by the high level of information in the copy of each poster, giving the viewer a low to moderate level of fear in the image compounded with strong health information. As a result the level of surprise is high in confronting the image alongside the health message. ‘Quit Smoking Today’ presents the opposite for two of its three posters; high levels of surprise as a result of high information and high projections of fear in the media articles. The exception lies in the ‘tooth decay’ poster which presents all of the necessary components to be labeled as shock but due to its lack of a terminal dilemma, receives a moderate rating.

Levels of shock are important when reviewing the reactions of viewers; however they are not relevant to whether or not the campaigns may be classified as shock. Dahl (et al, 2002) contends that the simple existence of these three components, whether by the creators of the artifact or interpreters, regardless of magnitude is enough to classify an artifact as shock. With
this in mind, grounded in a review of literature on the campaigns and data analysis of the campaigns conclusively define them as shock under the criterion established by Dahl.

RQ2: What are the rhetorical similarities and differences in the 2009 NYCDOH campaigns against smoking and empty calorie beverages?

Research question two relies on the information discovered through textual analysis using Hart and Daughton’s (2005) framework. In this section of the results, three similarities were found in the visual ideologies presented by each campaign. There were also differences between campaigns in their use of associative and dissociative identification tactics. Lastly, the racial and information tensions in each of the posters were discovered to be draw-backs to the campaigns.

First, three distinct ideologies are presented visually by each of the posters; the images interrupt a social norm, the images represent a norm in negative ways, and the images attack two groups of people. Both campaigns illustrate a social norm that is to be interrupted through the images on the posters; ‘Quit Smoking Today’ interrupts the norm of health with images of ailments, whereas ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ interrupts a refreshing beverage with liquefied fat. Each of the campaign posters was also found to negatively represent both the target audience and a corporate sphere of interest. The sugary beverages campaign uses containers in a clandestine way, attacking each of the three suggested companies as pouring on the fat. The ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign also targets sugary beverage drinkers as consumers of liquefied fat by featuring the substance being poured from beverages bottles by a human hand, a negative portrayal of consumers that confronts their complicity in the consumption of high fat beverages. The ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign targets tobacco products directly, and thus negatively portrays tobacco as the cause of lung cancer, tooth decay and strokes. In conjunction with the
attack on tobacco retailers and producers, the anti-smoking campaigns present current smokers in a negative manner. Rhetorically, these findings indicate that a dilemma is used to create a gap between those who smoke and those who do not, those who consume sugary beverages which could lead them to ‘pour on the pounds’ and those who do not. The ads attempt to create disparity among groups; while suggesting that one option is better than the other.

The second set of textual data reveals that the campaigns use divergent strategies to create identity with the viewer. ‘Quit Smoking Today’ uses a dissociative tactic, using the commanding rhetoric “Smoking causes stroke. Quit smoking today.” These sentences first make a declaration of negative connotations towards smoking; then they command the smoker to stop making choices that have serious health consequences. This dissociative strategy, stating that what is right or healthy is not what the viewer is doing, brings with it an authoritative command designed to compel smokers to take desired action. In contrast, the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign illustrates associative tactics. First, the use of a human hand, although a sub-textual tension, creates an association between the white-male viewer and the topic of fattening beverages; possibly as a reaffirmation of the white-male as the ‘generic’ human. Second, the text used in the posters directly confronts the viewer with a reflective question followed by information as opposed to the commanding tone of the anti-smoking posters. Rhetorical strategies are always contingent on the selected target audience and these campaigns are no different. Historical analysis found that the target audience of the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign was originally teenagers attempting to loot or purchase cigarettes, thus a commanding tone was thought to be proactive (source). Similarly, the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign featured significant demographic research and serves as an example of a generic dynamic framework for approaching PSA construction.
Last, the tensions identified in the textual analysis of each campaign are generically represented in two findings; racial sub-tones and information queries. The ‘Quit Smoking Today’ and ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaigns both use information in an unwarranted and questionable manner. The anti-smoking campaign declares that smoking causes all three of the represented ailments, which, while conclusive is not exhaustive. Medical research supports that these ailments are caused by other carcinogens as well (Waller & Erdogan, 2002). Similarly, the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign posits that up to ten pounds of fat can be added every year by drinking sugary beverages. As represented by commentary in the thematic analysis section, people with certain types of metabolisms would not experience these results. Rhetorically these features are considered conditional to circumstance (source) and although not untrue these informational tips are not comprehensive to say the least.

Second, the instance of racial bias is expressed only in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign. Only cited by Mayor Mike Bloomberg and the NYCDOH as an instigating factor in the campaign’s development, the high obesity rates of Brooklyn and lower-class levels of New York City, which are predominantly minority groups, were initially targeted by city health researchers (New York Times, 2009, p. 3). This makes the representation of a white-male hand in each of the campaign’s posters substantial. The image of a white hand allows for a positive association toward the targeted behavior by white-males, but dissociates, through exclusion, other races. This finding indicates a racial bias communicated rhetorically that might disenchant the audience the campaign intended to reach.
RQ3: How did the news media frame these campaigns?

The thematic analysis sections were divided between the content of six selected news articles and their commentary forums. The first research question sought to identify the various interpretations of the news media regarding the campaigns. In this section of the data, a total of ten coded themes were identified. It was found that these themes represented variations of response and reinforcement of Dahl’s (2003) shock components.

Among the themes identified in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign, four were not included in the framing of the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign by news media. These findings represent a major difference between the campaigns and signify the diverse reasoning of the news media when evaluating the details of these PSAs. The ‘Quit Smoking Today’ authors presented the NYCDOH’s point-of-sale legislation and ads in a negative light, where as the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ articles at times indict Mayor Mike Bloomberg as well as the NYCDOH. Conclusively, the media was hostile towards both campaigns. The anti-smoking campaign artifacts also neglect to discuss the state sponsored costs of the campaign. These themes indicate a negative view by the writers reporting on the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign; authors, while avoiding executive criticism and upholding a disinterest in state funding of the campaign. In contrast, the only theme excluded from the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign was that of producer/seller restrictions. This observation is reasonable given that there was not point-of-sale legislation related to the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign.

Generally the media themes frame the campaigns similarly as explicit imagery. Explicit imagery was found to be prevalent in five of the six artifacts and code counted eleven times over all the media artifacts. This finding directly correlates with Dahl’s (2003) components of shock;
where fear, information and surprise are expressed in reaction to the campaigns. This indicates
that five of the six news media authors framed the campaign as shock and consequently found
the campaign’s creators to be embracing a form of shock advertising. Similarly, the themes of
pro-information and informational intent revealed Dahl’s (2003) information component to be a
point of both contention and support among writers, indicating a dilemma that fostered shock
theory while also displaying the general disdain of media opinion leaders towards the campaigns.
Further analysis revealed that these information challenges and approvals, often represented by
data from campaign websites or outside experts, were targeted towards the government;
especially when information was seen to be inadequate or misleading. Anti-government
sentiment exemplifies a questioning of the intent and agenda of the NYCDOH in their
campaigning for anti-sugary beverages and anti-smoking initiatives; data analysis in the
commentary section further demonstrates this mentality among readers.

RQ4: Did reader responses accept or reject the framing of these campaigns by the media?

Data analysis of campaign commentary revealed a list of fifteen themes identified
through thematic analysis (source). Representing various levels of acceptance and rejection, each
theme signifies a point of contention that either supports or disavows the NYCDOH’s shock
campaigns. This discussion requires, first, the reckoning of themes exclusive to each campaign;
followed by the findings common to both campaigns.

Each campaign featured two unique themes. In the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ commentary,
readers expressed pro-government sentiment regarding the advertisements and indicated that they
saw a need for decreasing consumption of sugary beverages. The anti-sugary drinks commentary
also featured a theme of alternative cause/blame that described multiple causes for obesity
beyond sugary beverages. These comments were often coupled with defense of drinking the targeted beverages and blame upon advertising strategies of soda companies for targeting lower income brackets. The exclusive nature of these two themes suggest that while readers may have accepted the intent of the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ campaign, some also rejected its message as ambiguous and unwarranted.

The ‘Quit Smoking Today’ readers voiced discriminatory opinions against pro-smokers, urging further government sanctions against tobacco companies and smokers at large. The pro-discrimination theme was unique to the anti-tobacco campaign and indicates a divide in the issue of smoking not only in public but as a cultural practice. This unique theme fits directly into the analysis provided by Waller (1999) regarding the shocking nature of controversial products (p. 12). As a result of this deductive observation, the once culturally accepted leisure pastime of smoking has become a contested topic with many advocating for new cultural roles against smoking. As a second exclusive theme, humor was used on two documented occasions in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ commentary. Making light of the advertisements, both posts negated the effectiveness of these campaigns concerning their placement in convenience stores and the target audience of teenagers. These findings reveal that readers may have indeed accepted the message of the anti-smoking campaign while also rejecting its method and intended demographic.

Between commentary data sets, campaign messages were not the most prioritized topic among readers. With thirty-three documented code counts, Anti-government regulation was found to be the most common response in both data sets. Often these comments pointed to the NYC government as opposed to the NYCDOH and even indicted Mayor Mike Bloomberg. This would lead to the general conclusion that the public disfavors the notion of dietary control but favors tobacco regulation; notions not far from the observed dominant themes identified in the
news articles. The second, most popular theme was *anti-imagery* featured in both campaigns and out code counted by *Anti-government regulation*. This theme reinforces Dahl’s (2003) components of shock as posts included sentiment describing the campaigns as explicit and ill-mannered visually and informatively. The surprise of these advertisements is echoed by numerous readers while also being rated as typical of the NYCDOH. Collectively these reactions indicate that while the campaigns are in fact shocking, the reaction to the campaigns is generally negative, focusing on government over-regulation and distasteful imagery.
CONCLUSION: DAHL AND NEW YORK CITY

The effectiveness of these campaigns has yet to be adequately assessed; however, the deductive analysis coupled with the inductive research in this study support the conclusion that Dahl’s (2003) components of shock are imbedded in the NYCDOH’s campaigns. As indicated by NYCDOH Health Director Cathy Nonas, the strategy of shock was in fact their intent; without doubt this was accomplished (New York Times, 2009). Yet before the effectiveness of these campaigns can be assessed, there are three implications concerning future research that must be verified.

First, it would be beneficial to conduct a financial audit of sales records for tobacco and sugary beverage products following the release of these campaigns. Effects of these campaigns cannot be decisively assessed without market proof that sales figures dropped in New York City. Second, a more focused study should be conducted regarding the ambiguity of fact claims in the ‘Quit Smoking Today’ campaign to determine how audiences react to explicit imagery coupled with over-generalized factual statements. The identified themes of pro-information and informational intent in the data analysis of this study suggest that features of Dahl’s second component require stricter elaboration in order to be more precisely identified, specifically, the process by which viewers assess and rate information. Finally, Dahl’s (2003) component of fear appears more generic in nature and as a result is less identifiable among commentary reactions and media frames. It would be advised that studies regarding shock advertising and levels of fear be conducted as a means of describing the nature and scope of this component. In doing so, more formidable analysis may be done regarding the effectiveness of shock as a method for advertising. As a second rationale, it is possible that Dahl’s components are too precise;
suggesting the reaction of shock to be more general. It could be that extreme reactions of surprise alone composite shock.

In conclusion, New York City’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has definitively constructed shock advertisements in the ‘Pouring on the Pounds’ and ‘Quit Smoking Today’ public service advertisements. Comprised of fear, information and resulting in surprise, these campaigns express all of Darren Dahl’s (2003) tenets for shock. Without a doubt, campaigns of this nature are unlikely to disappear. Instead, it would be proactive to account this phenomenon as something to stay, evolve and become a staple for government agencies and marketing strategy at large. It is safe to say that this evolutionary tendency of advertising will lead consumers to an eventual desensitization to shock advertising.
REFERENCES


