CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTER: DOCUMENT CODING AND CONTENT ANALYSIS, METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

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In August, September and October 1998, the University of Oregon Survey Research Laboratory (OSRL) conducted a coding and content analysis project for the Conflict Resolution Center (CRC) of Eugene, Oregon. This project assists in the larger evaluation of the second New Community Meeting (NCMII) in the Eugene region.

I. DATA SOURCES

The coded documents comprised:

1. Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce monthly newsletters from January 1997 to September 1998. The November and December 1997 issues were combined.
2. City Club of Eugene monthly newsletters from January 1997 to September 1998.
3. Occasional membership newsletters from Citizens for Public Accountability, dated November 1995 (*CPA Update and Action Alert*) and February 1998 (*CPA News*). Dates are approximate, as most documents were undated.
4. Occasional membership newsletters from Friends of Eugene, dated January 1996 (two-page member letter), February 1997, March 1998, and May 1998 (*Agenda for a Livable Eugene*). Dates are approximate, as most documents were undated.

II. DATA REDUCTION AND DATA COLLECTION

The coding process involved the following steps:

1. CRC provided OSRL with photocopies of documentary sources to be coded.
2. CRC highlighted and marked passages, sentences and phrases in each document which were pertinent to the coding's subject matter.
3. As a reliability check, OSRL research assistants completely examined each document to assure that all pertinent passages, sentences and phrases were highlighted and marked,

after a briefing on NCMII scope, goals, and context. This resulted in about 18 passages
added for coding (approximately 5 for the Chamber of Commerce, 6 for the City Club,
2 for Citizens for Public Accountability, and 5 for Friends of Eugene).
4. The unit of analysis to be coded was the passage, phrase or sentence, excluding titles.
5. CRC provided OSRL with a list of subject headings and keywords from which to begin
developing a coding scheme.

The documents' marked passages, sentences and phrases were coded in three dimensions.
Each passage was coded for the **tone** of the reference, **whom or what** it referred to, and the
issues mentioned. Lists of these codes are provided below.

Tone of Reference

-1 Don't listen or
    respect
 0 Neutral
 1 Listen or respect

-1 Alienate or polarize
 0 Neutral
 1 Cooperate

-1 Lack of citizen
    participation or
    involvement
 0 Neutral
 1 Citizen participation
    or involvement

Whom or What

1. Chamber of Commerce
2. Business Owners
3. City Council/City
4. Planners
5. Developers
6. The Community
7. Decision makers
8. Elected Officials
9. Environmentalists
10. Citizens for Public
    Accountability

11. City Club of Eugene
12. Eugene Citizen's
    Involvement
    Committee
13. Eugene Delta Planning
    Rotary Club
14. Eugene Planning
    Commission
15. Friends of Eugene
16. Lane Council of
    Governments

17. Lane County Labor
    Council
18. Regional Economic
    Development
    Committee
19. Lane Shelter Care
20. League of Women
    Voters
21. Neighborhood Leaders
    Council
22. Oregon Country Fair

Issues Mentioned

1. Growth management
2. Public policy
3. Quality of life
4. Environmental
    protection
5. Environmental
    degradation

6. Education
7. Economy
8. Development
9. Leadership
10. Land use planning
11. Land use

12. Alternate
    transportation
13. Governing
14. Natural resources
15. Non-specific

One seasoned coder, Karen Lystra, met with Lynne Fessenden and Gayle Landt for briefings on NCMII and its relation to the coding project. After intensive review of the documents, she designed, developed, and tested the coding scheme, and subsequently trained two additional coders, Natasha de Haas van Dorsser and Niame (no surname). Each coder independently coded a complete document set. After coding, they conferred and compared results. Differences between the two were resolved in discussion. This process occurred several times. Differences that could not be resolved between the coders were resolved by the OSRL Director, Patricia Gwartney. Coder differences were rare (about 5-10 differences in all), and only one passage required independent resolution.

Altogether, 517 passages, sentences and phrases were coded simultaneously on the three dimensions: 341 from twenty Chamber of Commerce newsletters, 91 from twenty-one City Club of Eugene newsletters, 51 from four Friends of Eugene newsletters and 34 from two Citizens for Public Accountability newsletters. Note that any given passage, phrase or sentence could be coded for multiple issues, organizations, or tones.

Dr. Gwartney transferred these 517 passage codes into an Excel spreadsheet data file suitable for creating banner tables and further data analysis. Each coded passage is a row in the data file. The columns in the data file define information about each passage:

1. Identification number (001-517);
2. Document type (1 = Chamber of Commerce, 2 = City Club, 3 = Citizens for Public Accountability, 4 = Friends of Eugene);
3. Month and year, coded 1-21 for the inclusive months January 1997 - September 1998, with the two documents prior to this period coded 0;
4. Whom or what (see codes page 2);
5. Issues mentioned (see codes page 2); and
6. Tone of reference (see codes page 2).

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

OSRL conducted univariate and bivariate statistical analyses and prepared graphics to examine the coded data for levels and trends over time. Before presentation of the findings, two explanatory notes are in order. First, the Chamber of Commerce's coded phrases are roughly twice as numerous as the other three groups combined. This can easily sway results and mask important findings for the other groups. Thus, where appropriate, results are presented proportionally, in order to provide a common denominator.

Second, in several analyses documents were combined for Friends of Eugene and Citizens for Public Accountability. This was suitable because both groups had few documents available to code (4 and 2, respectively); because the six total documents from the two groups formed a continuous dated series when combined; because the tone and substance of the two organizations' documents are similar; and because the two organizations have numerous members in common. Where the two organizations' patterns of findings differ, the results are presented separately.

A. Overall

The Chamber of Commerce's twenty newsletters averaged 17 coded passages per month, ranging from a low of 7 in several months to a high of 50 in April 1998 (see Table 1). The average Chamber of Commerce newsletter contained 4 negative tones of reference, 12.5 positive statements, and 0.5 neutral. Statements with negative tones of reference include "don't listen, respect," and "alienate, polarize." Negative statements also could have included a "lack of citizen participation and involvement," but no such statements were found to code. Statements with positive tones of reference include "listen, respect," "cooperate" and "citizen participation and involvement."

Table 1: Phrases Coded in Monthly Newsletters, by Group

Phrases per Month Coded	Chamber	City Club	Friends+Citizens
Average number per month	17.0	4.3	14
Average positive per month	12.5	3.7	6.3
Average neutral per month	0.5	0.1	0
Average negative per month	4.0	0.5	7.8
Total phrases coded, all months	341	91	85

The City Club of Eugene's twenty-one newsletters averaged 4.3 coded statements per month, ranging from zero in several months to 22 in July 1998. The average City Club newsletter contained 0.5 negative statements, 3.7 positive, and 0.1 neutral. The six combined Friends of Eugene and Citizens for Public Accountability newsletters averaged 14 coded statements, ranging from a low of 10 to a high of 22 in February 1998. Their average newsletter contained 7.8 negative statements, 6.3 positive, and zero neutral.

B. Tone of Reference

For the tone of reference concerning **listen/respect**, 67 statements in all were coded and over half of these, 37, were attributed to the Chamber of Commerce (see Banner Table 1). Only 6 statements in all concerned a failure to listen/respect, and 5 came from the Chamber. Of the positive statements, concerning listening and respecting, 53% were attributed to the Chamber, 36% to the City Club, and 11% to the environmental groups, Friends of Eugene and Citizens for Public Accountability. Proportional to their total number of coded statements, far more from the City Club concerned listening and respecting than in the other groups; specifically, about 25% of the City Club's phrases concerned listening and respecting, compared to 11% for the Chamber and 8% for Friends and Citizens combined.

Below are two examples of listen/respect statements:

> The two things Oregonians agree they absolutely do not want are urban sprawl and high density residential development. ... Most everyone agrees we should manage growth. In fact the lead statement of the Eugene Chamber's Guiding Principles on Growth states,

"As [growth occurs], we should plan for that growth with a regional perspective which ensures quality of life, a vital economy, and a clean environment. (Chamber of Commerce, 9/97, page 1.) *Coded as: Listen/Respect Community on Development.*

It's time for us to leap across the chasms that divide us and truly create a community that celebrates diversity and shares common purposes. (City Club of Eugene, 5/97, page 2.) *Coded as: Listen/Respect Community on Non-specific.*

Two thirds of the 6 negative comments concerning don't listen/respect occurred before August 1997, while 61% of 61 positive comments about listening and respecting occurred after March 1998 (see Banner Table 3). Half of the negative comments referred to the community in general, while one third of the positive comments also referred to the community and 16% referred to the City Council. On issues mentioned, two of the 6 negative comments referred to growth management. Over four-fifths of the issues for negative comments were non-specific (44%), and 11% referred to public policy issues.

Below is one example of a statement illustrating don't listen/respect:

At the time of the election on the bridge issue a few years back, when the Chamber advocated improving the Ferry Street Bridge, we meant adding capacity, either by widening the existing bridge or adding a second traffic lane. When we asked several local politicians if they supported improving the bridge, they all said "yes." But it became clear in the debate that what they meant by "improvement" did not necessarily mean adding capacity for automobiles. (Chamber of Commerce, 6/97, page 3.) *Coded as: Don't Listen/Don't Respect Elected Officials on Alternative Transportation*

For the tone of reference concerning **alienate/cooperate**, 366 statements in all were coded (71% of all statements), and 73% of these, 267, were attributed to the Chamber of Commerce. Proportional to their total number of coded statements, the environmental groups had more statements coded as alienating or polarizing, at 35% of all the statements in this group (twice their proportion of all statements, 16%). Two-thirds of the Chamber's and the City Club's statements in this group concerned cooperation, while about one-third of the environmentalist groups' statements concerned cooperation.

Over half of the 134 alienating comments were made before August 1997, while 61% of the 219 cooperation-related comments were made after March 1998 (see Banner Table 4). The alienating comments most often referred to the City Council (42%), elected officials (17%), and decision makers (16%). The cooperating comments most often referred to the community (16%), business owners (14%), the Chamber of Commerce (14%), Friends of Eugene (6%), and Citizens for Public Accountability (5%).

The four samples below illustrate alienating statements:

We wonder how this huge, resource-intensive, toxic chemical consuming, $1.3 billion plant [Hyundai] could possibly be considered a clean, quiet, safe "campus industrial" use that is compatible with wetlands and adjacent residential uses. The problem lies with our

outdated zoning code. (Friends of Eugene, 1/96, page 1.) *Coded twice, as: Alienate Business on Development and Alienate Decision-makers on Planning.*

There are those who believe a strong local economy and quality of life are mutually exclusive goals. They are urging local leaders to take swift and extreme steps to halt any future growth. The Eugene Chamber strongly believes that we can have a vital economy without sacrificing the outstanding quality of life we all value. (Chamber of Commerce, 2/97, page 5.) *Coded as: Alienate Environmentalists on Quality of Life.*

When regulatory agencies assure businesses of one thing but suddenly do something else, businesses feel like the sprawled out Charlie Brown. That is why the Eugene Chamber has made business regulation a key public policy priority. (Chamber of Commerce, 4/97, page 4.) *Coded as: Alienate Decision-makers on Public Policy.*

As sound and sensible as these provisions appear, we cannot assume that they will be adequately or even minimally enforced. DEQ (the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality) has yet to decide how strong it will stand by its own ruling. (Citizens for Public Accountability, 11/95, page 2.) *Coded as: Alienate Decision-makers on Environment.*

The three samples below illustrate cooperative statements:

The Chamber's support for Hyundai has been an issue of fairness. As long as Hyundai conforms with existing laws, land use zoning and regulations, it should be permitted to do business. (Chamber of Commerce, 2/97, page 9.) *Coded as: Cooperate with Business on Development.*

How can the University [of Oregon] and the community work together to create healthier neighborhoods, particularly in the areas surrounding the university? (City Club of Eugene, 2/97, page 3.) *Coded as: Cooperate with Community on Quality of Life.*

CPA will continue to work to ensure that citizen preferences for protecting Eugene's livability as expressed in the growth management study are implemented. (Citizens for Public Accountability, 2/98, page 1.) *Coded as: Cooperate with Community on Growth.*

For the tone of reference concerning **citizen participation/involvement**, 84 statements in all were coded (16% of all statements), and none concerned a lack of citizen participation and involvement. Proportional to their total number of coded statements, the City Club had far more references than the other groups, at 38%.

Nearly two-thirds of the citizen participation and involvement phrases occurred after March 1998 (64%). One quarter of these referred to public policy issues, 17% referred to land use planning, and 7% each to growth management and quality of life, but 29% were non-specific on issues mentioned. One-fifth of the citizen participation and involvement phrases referred to the community in general (21%), and 8% each referred to the Chamber of Commerce and business owners, while the remaining references were widely distributed across 19 other organizations and groups.

Three samples of community participation statements are provided below:

> As it has since it was founded in 1902, the Eugene Chamber works to support business. Today's Chamber does so in a more inclusive manner which has produced a stronger, more diverse, more active organization that better represents the entire community. (Chamber of Commerce, 1/98, page 3.) *Coded as: Participate with Community on Non-specific.*

> With a grant from 1000 Friends of Oregon, FOE's [name] has helped start a new group -- Lane County Land Watch. Land Watch will monitor and provide citizen input on county issues of land use planning and environmental protection. (Friends of Eugene, 3/97.) *Coded twice, as: Participate with Community on Land Use Planning and Participate with Community on Environment.*

> The Eugene Chamber has joined University of Oregon students, the City of Eugene, several community churches, and Marist High School to conduct the West University Clean-Up on Saturday, October 18. (Chamber of Commerce, 10/97, page 16.) *Coded as: Participate with Community on Quality of Life.*

C. Whom/What

Each of the coded passages, sentences and phrases referred to a particular social group or organization. These references varied markedly by which organization's newsletter was coded. For the Chamber of Commerce, 15% of all 341 phrases referred to the City Council, 15% referred to the Chamber itself, 11% to business owners, 7% to the community in general, 5% to Friends of Eugene, 5% to "decision makers" in general, and the remaining 42% were distributed across 16 other groups.

An example of the Chamber of Commerce's references to the Eugene City Council is provided below:

> In a letter critical of the City's Growth Management Study, public input process, the Eugene Chamber Executive Vice President [name] told the City Council "the usefulness of this process to making good public policy is at best limited and at worst negligible." (Chamber of Commerce, 1/97, page 5.) *Coded twice, as: Alienate City Council on Public Policy and Alienate City Council on Growth Management.*

For the City Club, 46% of all 91 phrases referred to the community in general, 10% referred to the City Council, 8% to "decision makers" in general, 7% to elected officials, and 6% to business owners, with the remaining 23% distributed across 17 other groups.

The two environmental groups' references are quite distinct and, thus are presented separately. For Friends of Eugene, 26% of all 51 phrases referred to the community in general, 18% to the

City Council, 16% to elected officials, 14% to planners, and 12% to business owners, with the remaining 14% distributed across 17 other groups.

An example of Friends of Eugene's statements about elected officials is provided below:

> If elected officials continue to flaunt our land use laws and encourage such rampant speculation, in a few years Eugene will look a lot more like Orange County. (Friends of Eugene, 3/98.) *Coded as: Alienate Elected Officials on Governing.*

In Citizens for Public Accountability's newsletters, 21% of all 34 phrases concerned City Council and 21% concerned elected officials. Another 18% referred to "decision makers" in general, 12% to business owners and 12% to the community in general. The remaining 16% were distributed across 17 other groups.

D. Issues Mentioned

The top issues mentioned by the Chamber of Commerce were development (20% of all phrases), public policy (14%), land use planning (12%), growth management (10%), alternative transportation (9%) and environmental protection (7%). One-seventh of all Chamber of Commerce phrases were coded "non-specific" in issue content. (See page 2, Banner Table 1.)

An example of the Chamber's references to alternative transportation is provided below:

> The Chamber has endorsed the regional draft Transportation Plan (TransPlan) Update because it provides a realistic strategy that provides some increases in road capacity for automobiles, while making it easier for people to use other modes of transportation if the choose to do so. (Chamber of Commerce, 6/98, page 1.) *Coded as: Listen/Respect Planners on Alternative Transportation.*

For the City Club, fully 43% of all phrases were coded "non-specific" in issue content. The other top issues mentioned were alternative transportation (10%), land use planning (8%), the economy (8%), quality of life (7%), and growth management (7%).

An example of the City Club's statements on growth management is provided below:

> "Planners joke that there are two kinds of growth people don't like -- sprawl and density," writes [name], Director of the [Oregon] Department of Land Conservation and Development. ... His comment captures the dilemma, our perpetual discontent with the options before us. (City Club of Eugene, 8/98, page 2.) *Coded as: Listen/Respect Planners on Growth Management.*

An example of a non-specific statement by City Club is provided below:

> What is not okay is when we do not know how to disagree. It is not okay when authorities resort to force, and people doing civil disobedience resort to violence. For

some reason, some in our society have decided it is acceptable to act out our frustrations, angers, and disagreements through violence. (City Club of Eugene, 7/97, page 3.) *Coded twice, as: Alienate City on Non-specific and Alienate Environmentalists on Non-specific.*

For the two environmental groups, no phrases were coded non-specific, but their patterns are quite different. For Friends of Eugene, the top issues mentioned were public policy (20%), growth management (18%), development (18%), and land use planning (16%). Citizens for Public Accountability's top issues were environmental degradation (27%), public policy (21%), growth management (15%), development (9%), and land use (9%).

Two examples of Friends of Eugene's statements on growth management are provided below:

> We are very pleased that the City's growth management study (GMS) is underway. Under the name "Shaping Eugene's Future," the city conducted several public forums on December 6 and 7. (Friends of Eugene, 1/96, page 2.) *Coded as: Listen/Respect City on Growth Management.*

> We have been busy with our appeal to the Land Use Board of Appeals over the compatibility of the Hyundai factory with the "campus industrial" zoning for the site. (Friends of Eugene, 1/96, page 1.) *Coded as: Alienate Business on Land Use Planning.*
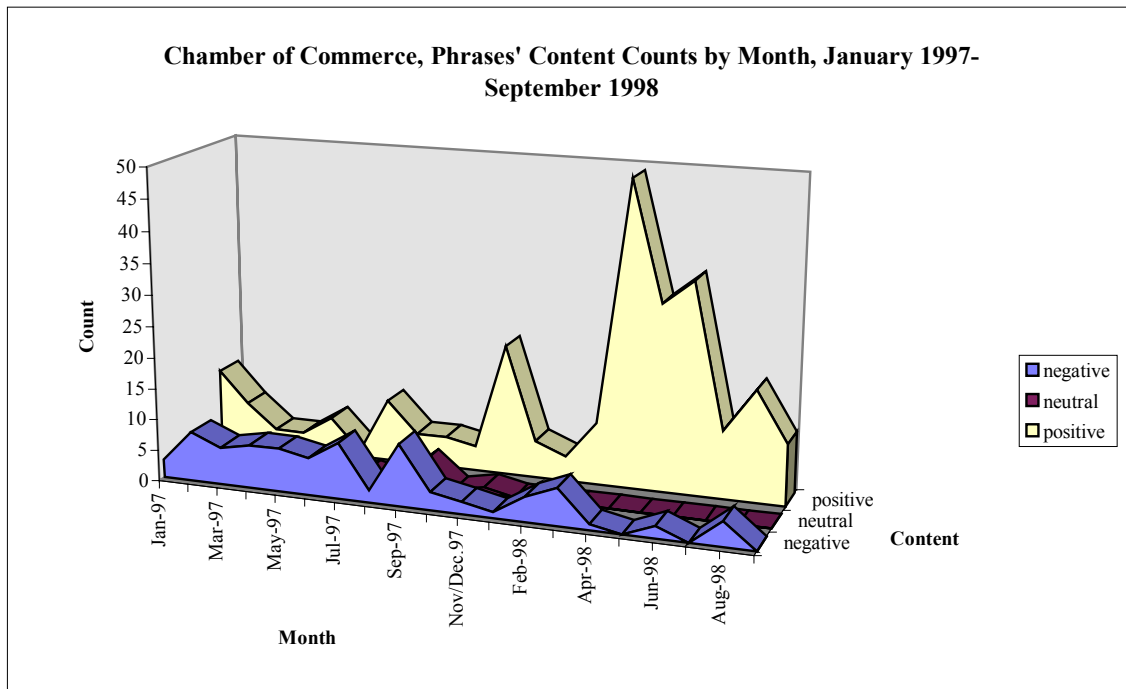
E. Change Over Time

As mentioned above, the phrases coded for organization newsletters became steadily more positive over time (see Banner Table 2). For example, over half of the alienate/polarize comments occurred before August 1997 (54%) and two-thirds of the don't listen/respect comments occurred at the same time. Over 60% of all positive comments occurred in or after March 1998: 61% of listen/respect, 61% of cooperate, and 64% of citizen participation/involvement phrases.

These changes over time are clearly visible in the Graphs 1-6, for which all three tones of reference were combined. Graphs 1-3 show the counts of each newsletter's passages, sentences and phrases over time. Since the count of each group's phrases was so different, however, they were also percentaged to form a common metric, presented in Graphs 4-6. Whether in counts or percentages, however, the patterns are clear: for each group, positive comments increase steadily over time and negative comments decrease.
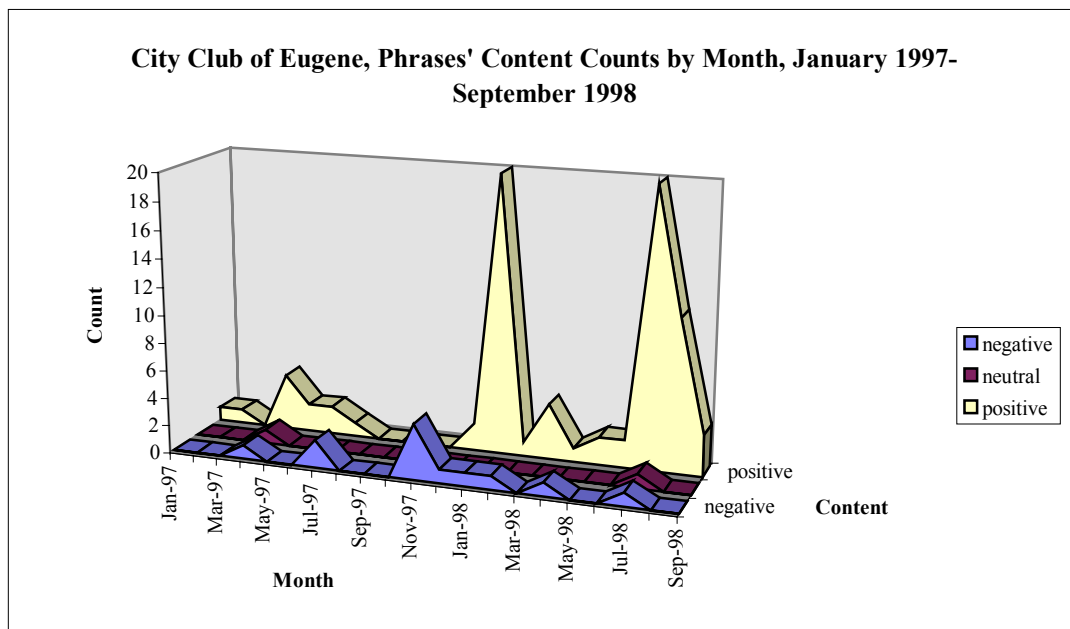
Comparing 1997 and 1998, all groups' newsletters showed substantial increase in the number of positive statements and substantial decreases in the number of negative statements per month. For example, the Chamber of Commerce averaged 7.0 positive statements per month and 5.7 negative statements per month in 1997, but 19.1 positive statements and 2.0 negative statements per month in 1998. In 1997, the City Club averaged 1.1 positive statements per month and 0.7 negative statements per month, but in 1998 it averaged 9.0 positive statements and 0.4 negative statements per month. Similar changes are seen in the environmentalists' member letters. The

three publications before 1998 averaged 3.7 positive and 9.0 negative statements, while those in 1998 averaged 9.0 positive and 6.7 negative statements.
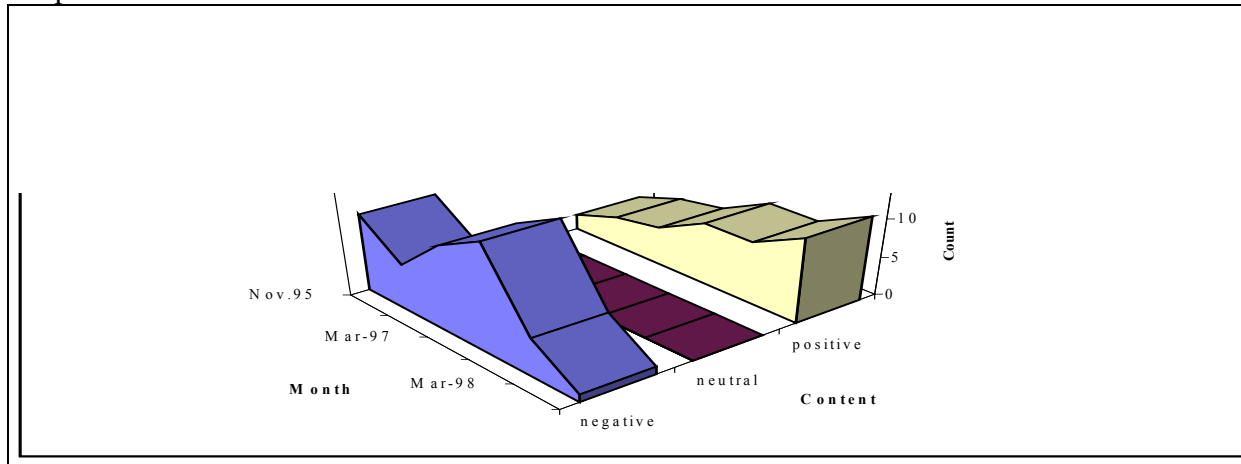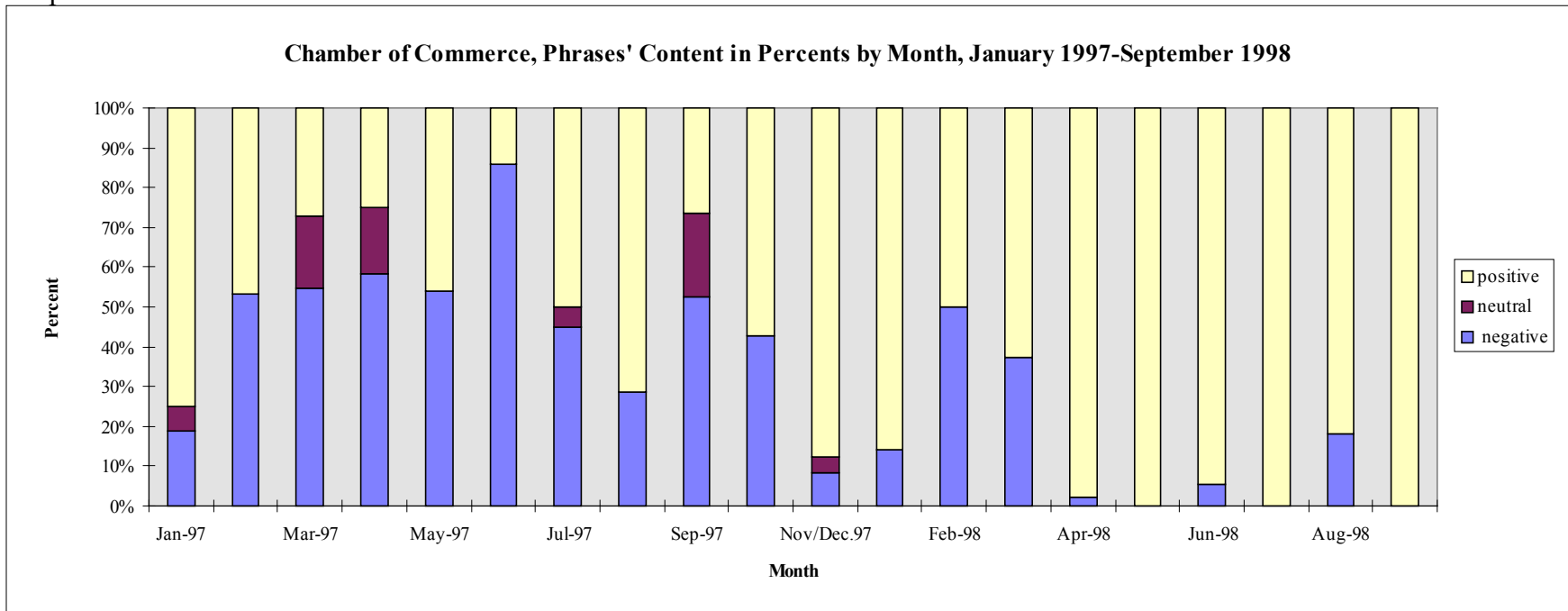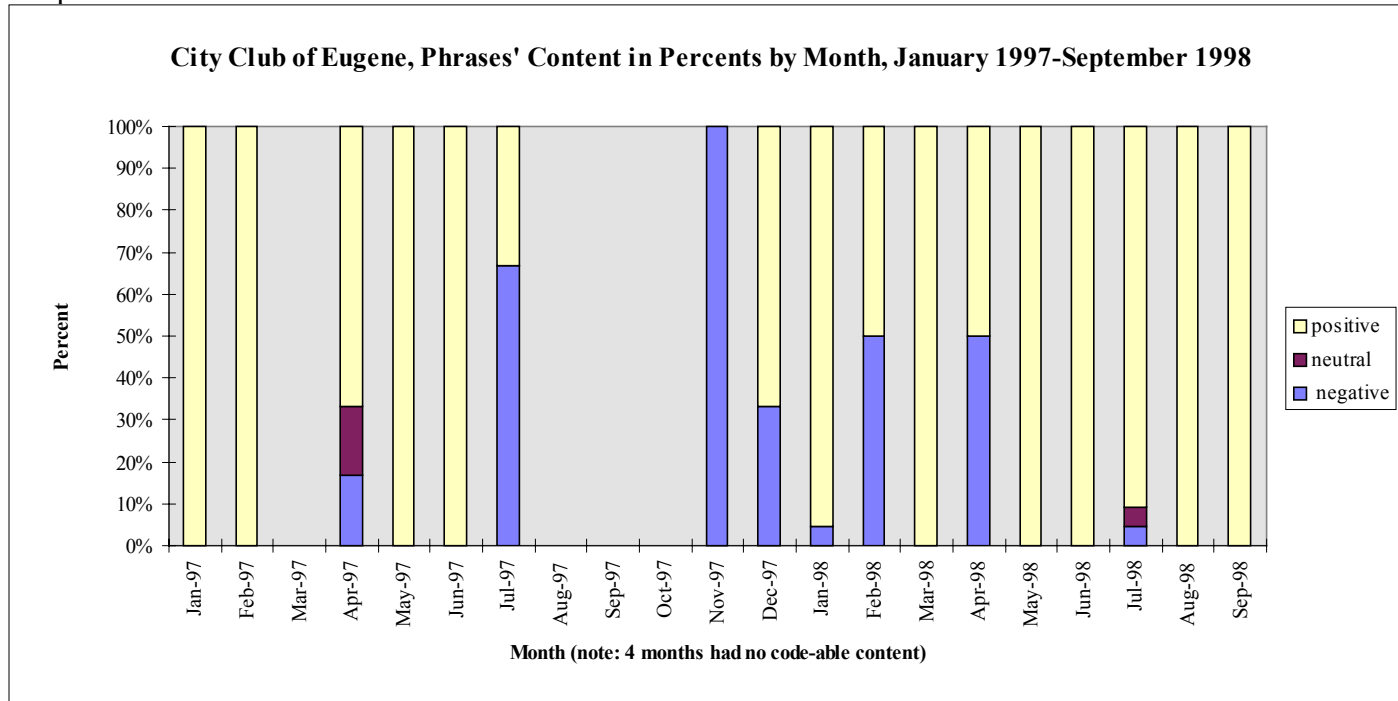
Graph 1:

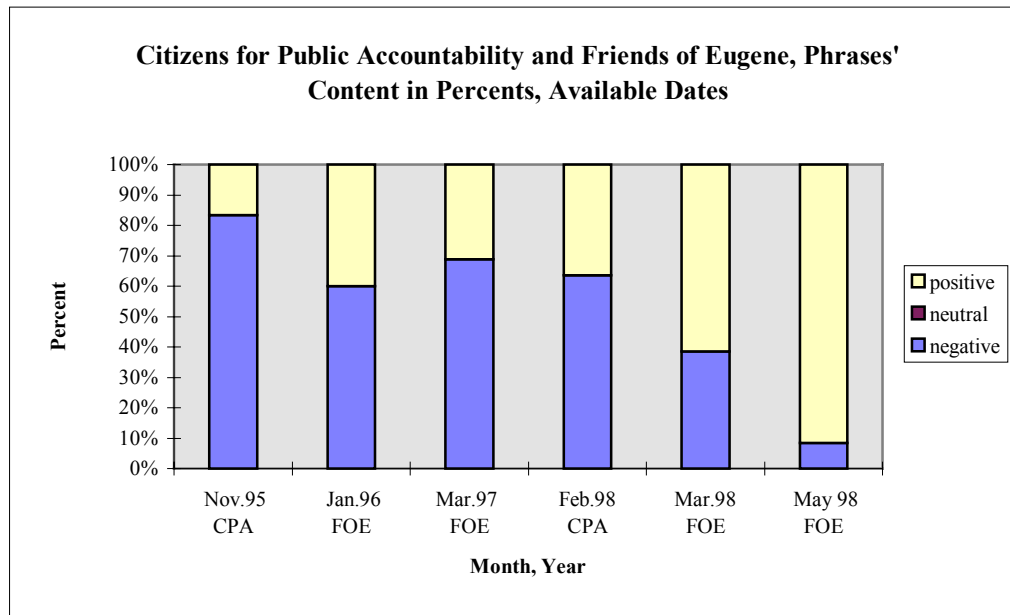**Chamber of Commerce, Phrases' Content Counts by Month, January 1997-September 1998**

Graph 2:

City Club of Eugene, Phrases' Content Counts by Month, January 1997-September 1998

Graph 3:

Graph 4:

Chamber of Commerce, Phrases' Content in Percents by Month, January 1997-September 1998

Graph 5:

City Club of Eugene, Phrases' Content in Percents by Month, January 1997-September 1998

Graph 6:

**Citizens for Public Accountability and Friends of Eugene, Phrases'
Content in Percents, Available Dates**

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis presented here has demonstrated a notable decline in negative passages, phrases and sentences in business' and environmentalists' membership newsletters over about two years. This change occurred at the same time that NCMII was in progress. The change, however, could have been attributable to other events and conditions. It is not possible to disentangle causality to explain the change in civility; that is, it is not possible to say for certain if NCMII was the cause of the improved regard seen in business' and environmentalists' newsletters from January 1997 to September 1998. The change itself, however, is indisputable and dramatic.