

Baumgartner, POLI 195 Spring 2013

Shifting Frames of the Death Penalty

Reading: Decline, ch 4, shifting
frames over time

February 25, 2013

Feedback about speakers

- Ed Chapman: see web site
- Bill Dillon: see web site

Decline, chapter 4

- Background on this chapter's information
- 2000: Peter Loge contacts me to ask about how to reframe an issue, and says his issue is the death penalty, with the frame being that it is "a government program run by bureaucrats"
- I have a student looking for a senior thesis

Chapter 4, background

- Cheryl Feeley: does her thesis on this.
- Amber Boydstun: PhD student helps to supervise
- Suzanna De Boef: Professor (student of Prof. Stimson, of UNC), expert on time series statistics
- Cheryl later works for the Innocence Project, then goes to Georgetown Law School, now works for Holland & Knight, a large DC-based law firm

Cheryl's thesis

- Read every entry in the NYTimes Abstract (short, 2-3 sentences) for all articles listed in the subjects of “death penalty” or “capital punishment” from 1960 to present.
- Make a list of every distinct argument that was ever made
- Code each story into one of these categories
- She discovered 67 distinct categories
- Also coded for “pro-” and “anti-” death penalty

Figure 4.1: total stories

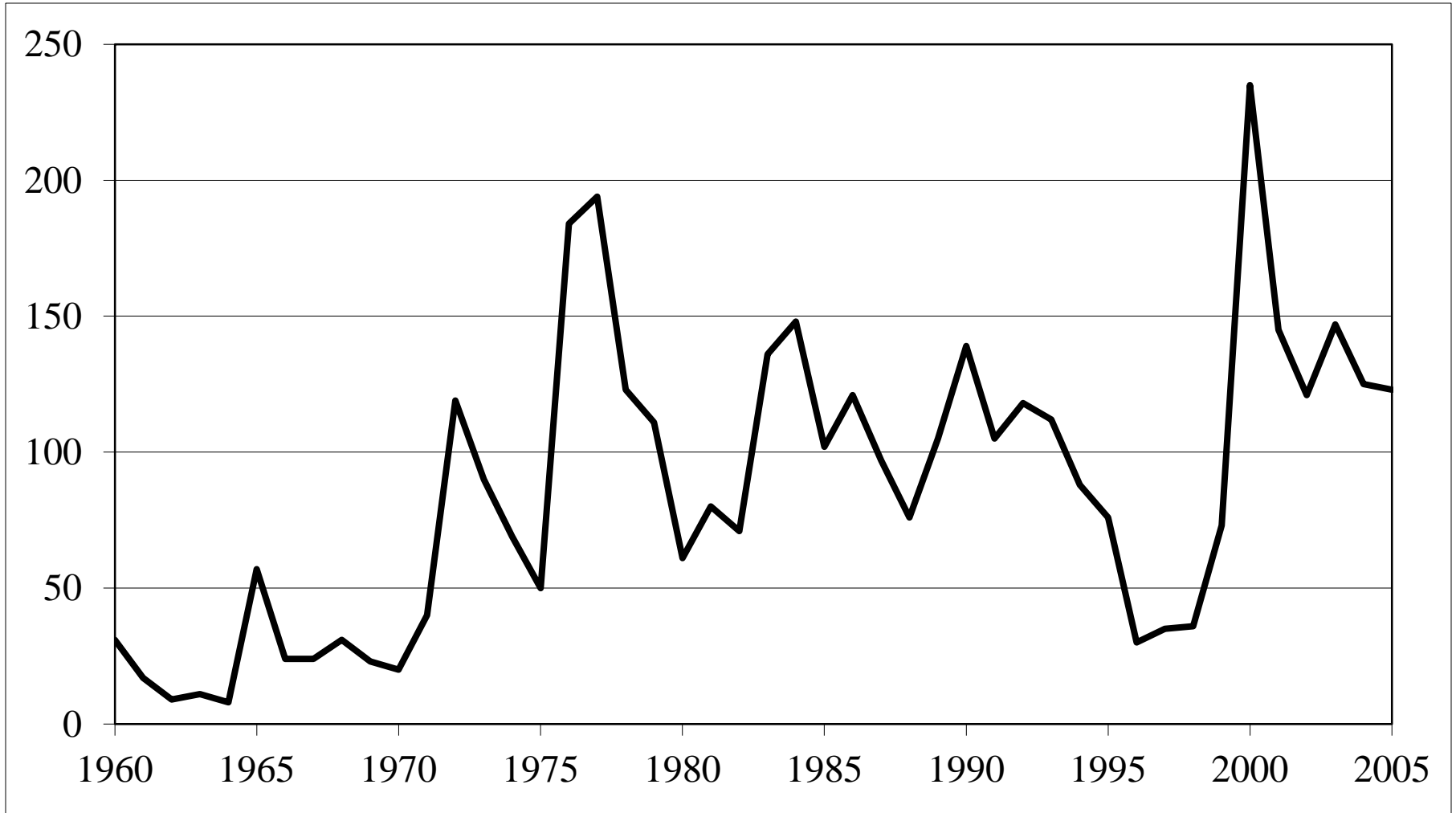


Figure 4.2: Front Page Stories

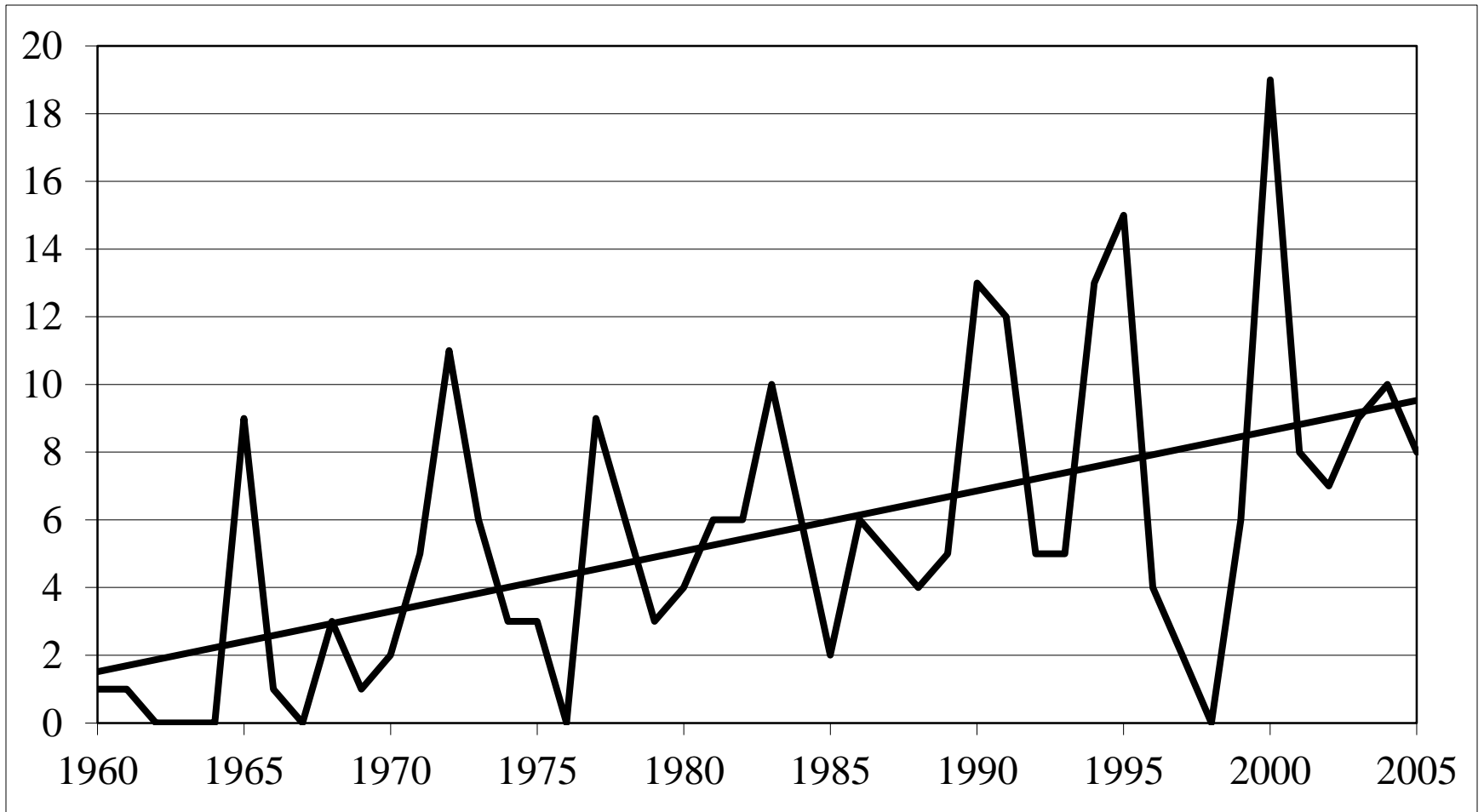


Fig 4.3: Number Pro- and Anti- Stories

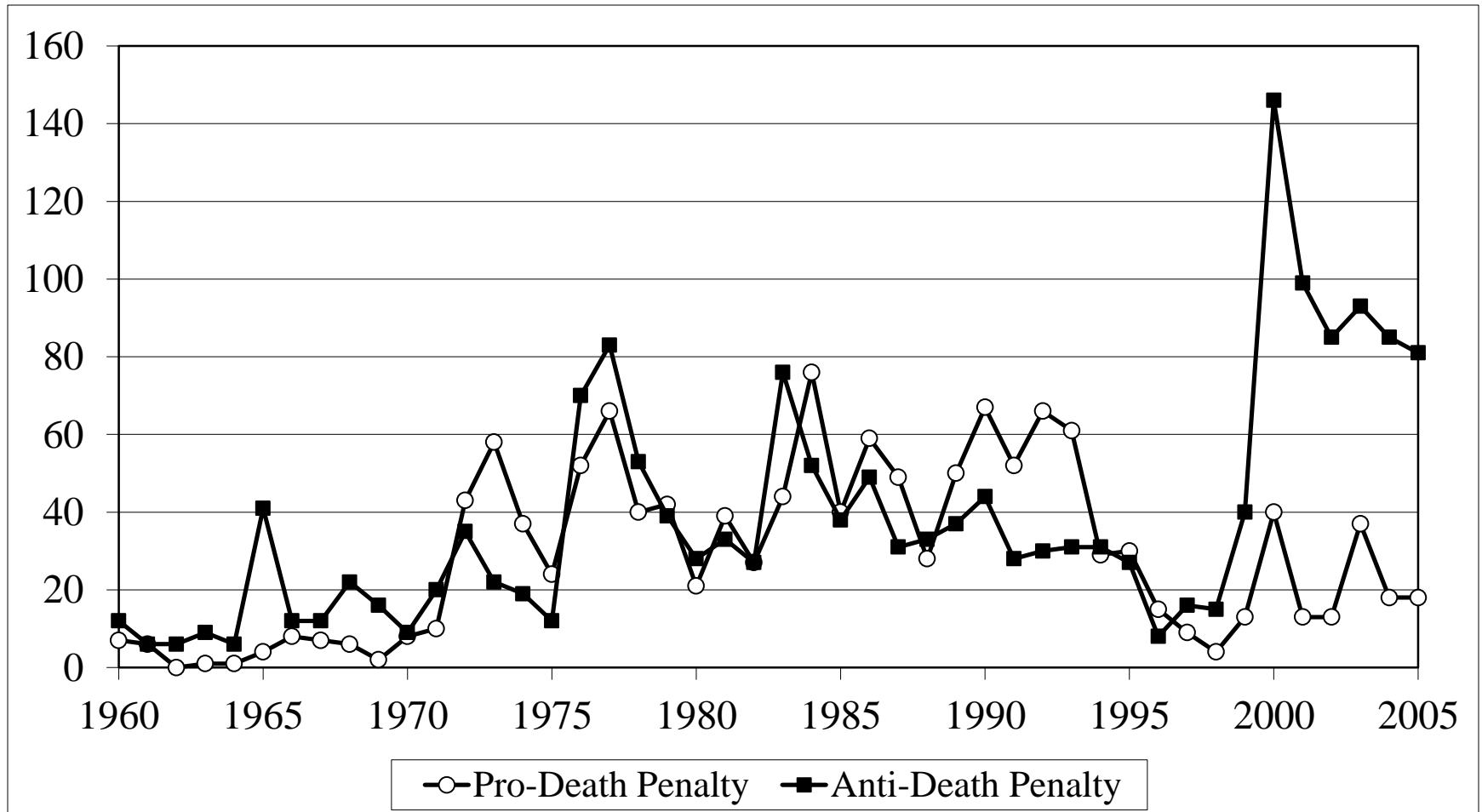


Fig 4.4: The “Net Tone”

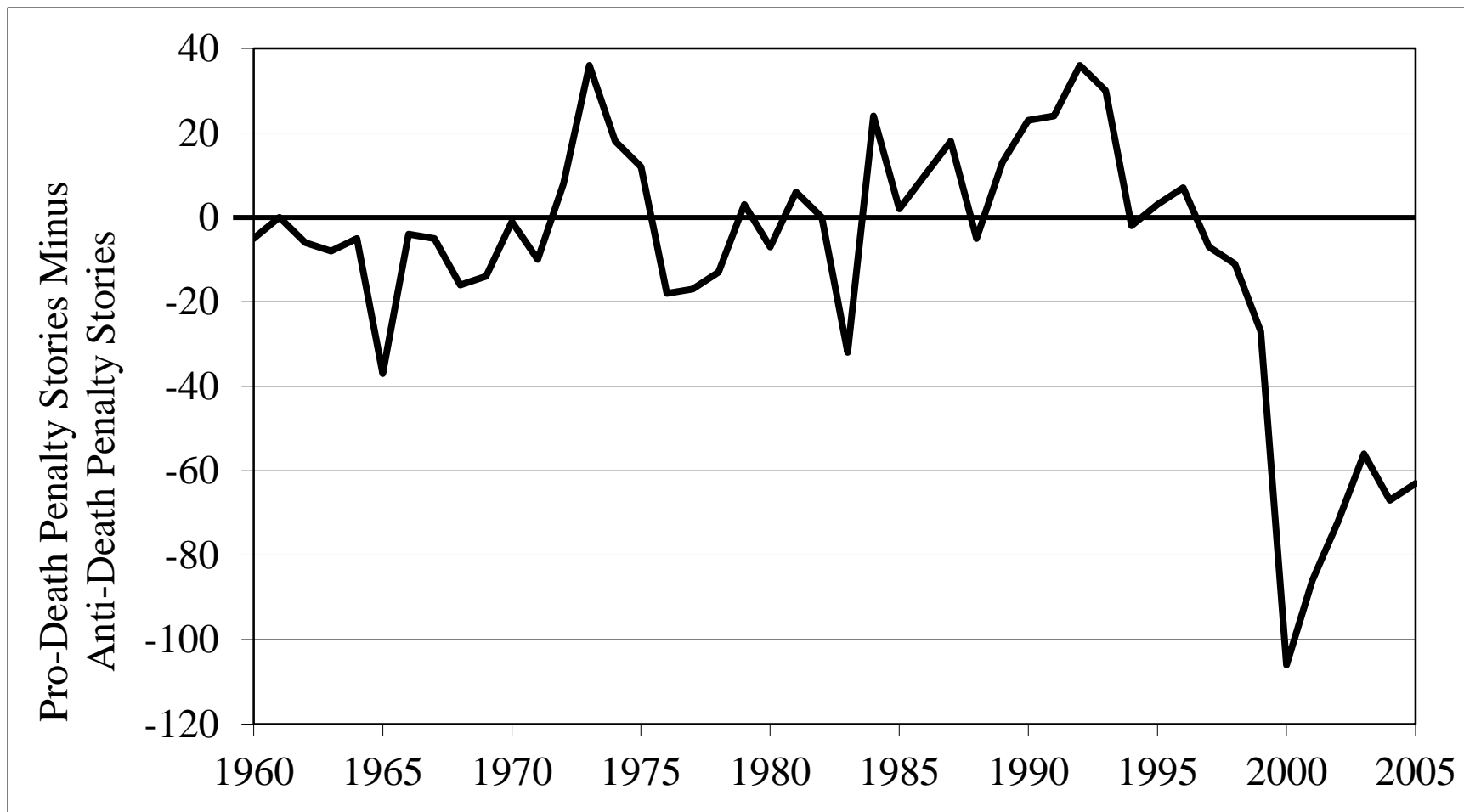


Fig 4.5: Topics of Attention

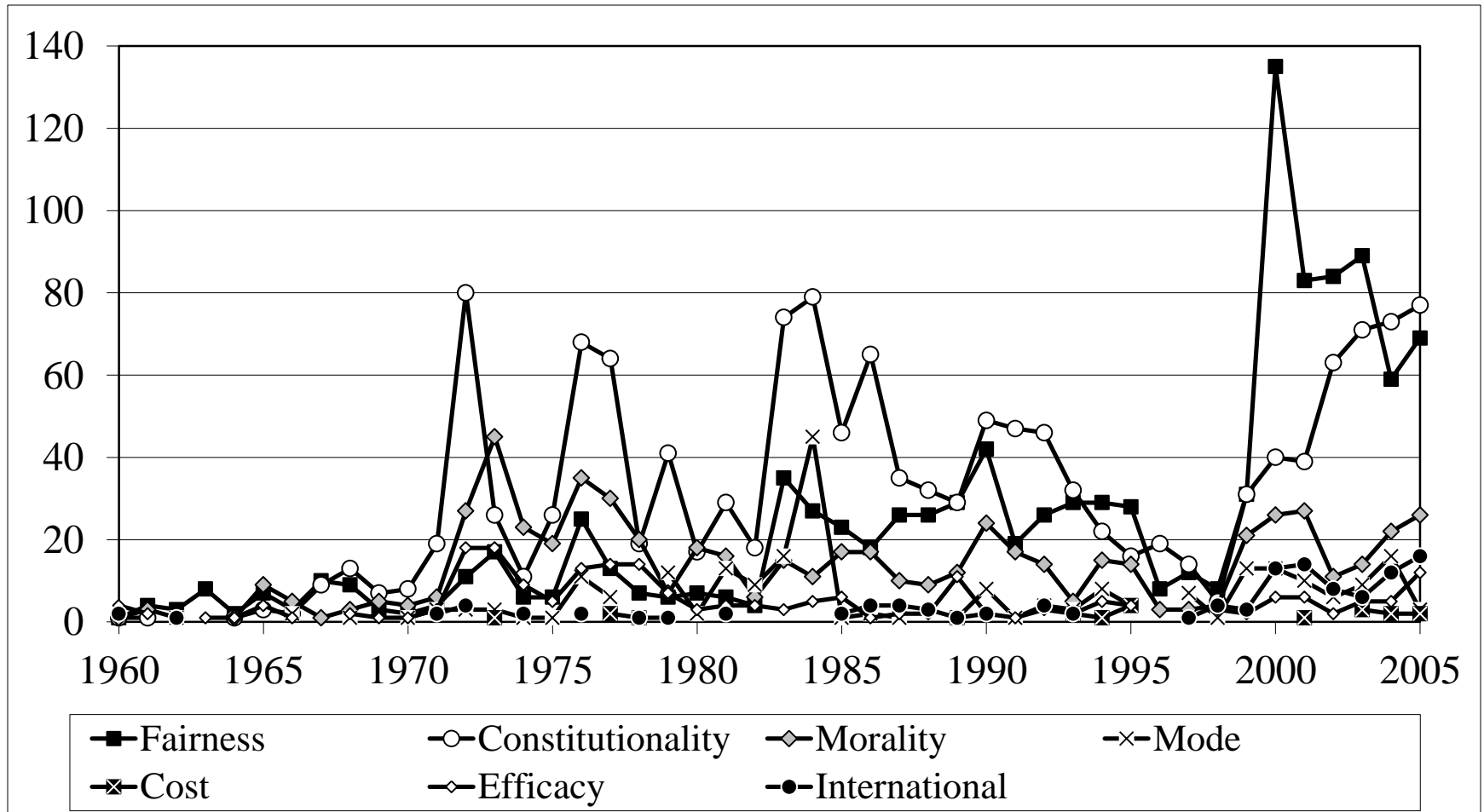


Fig 4.5: Innocence

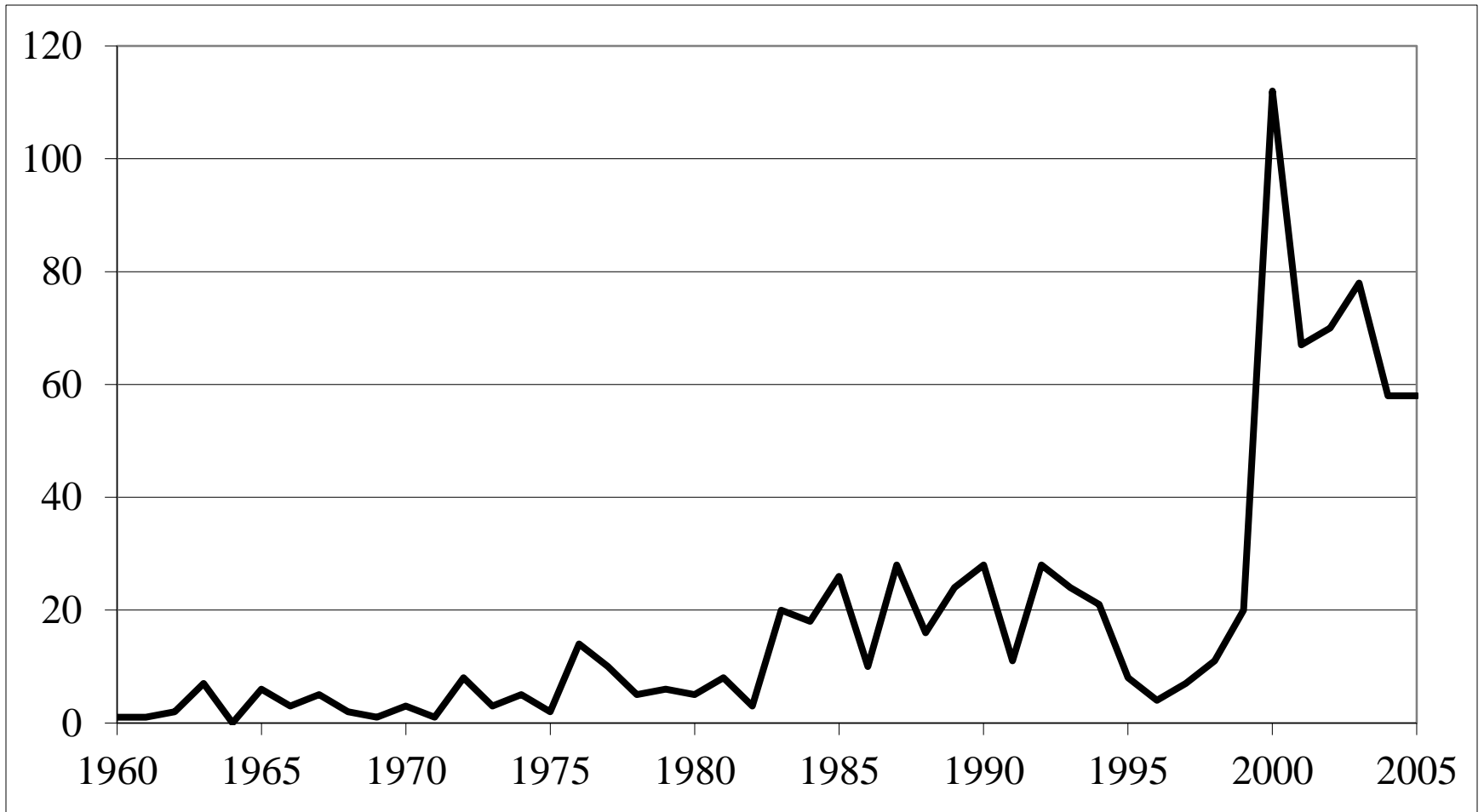


Fig 4.7: Topic determines the Tone

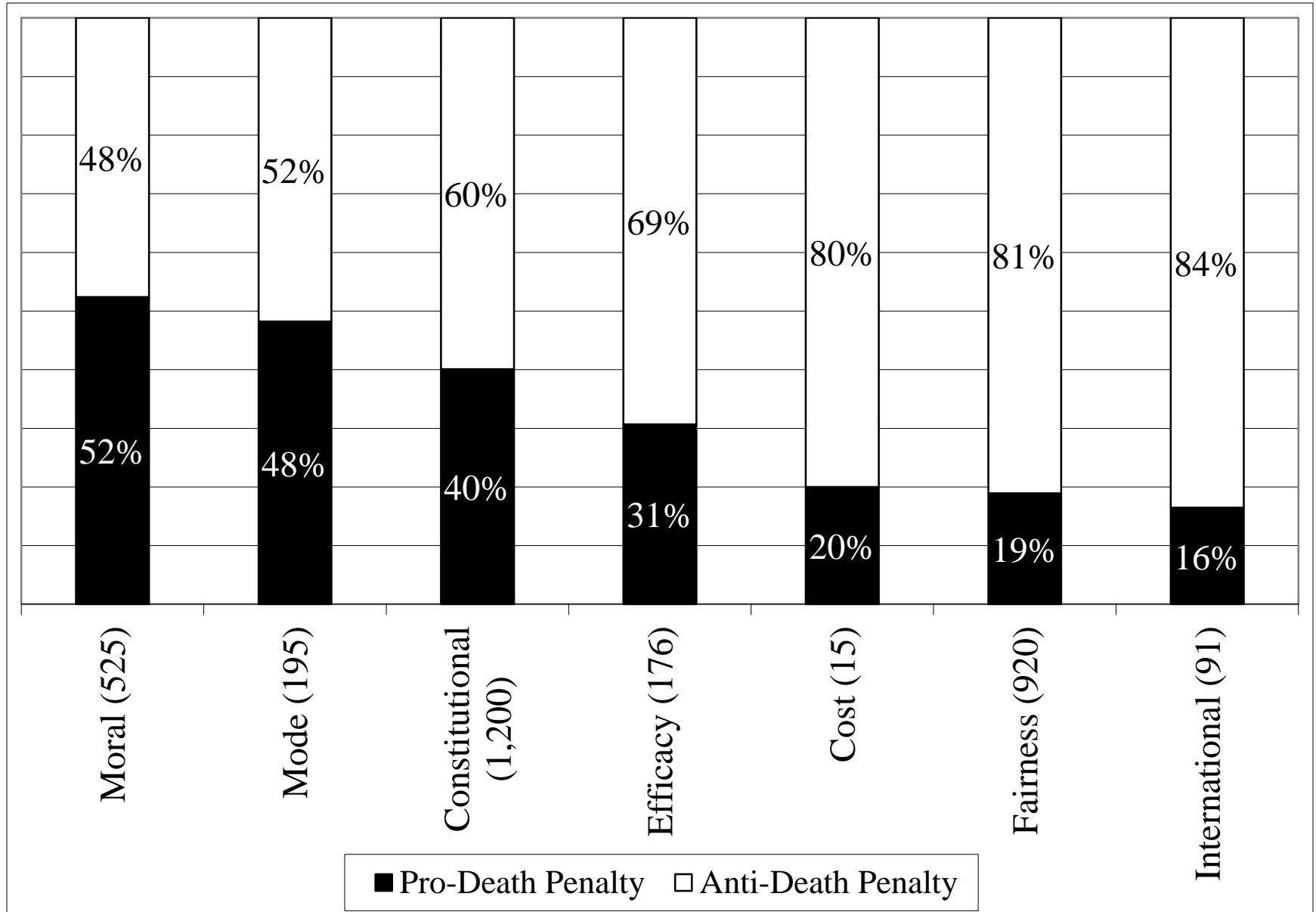


Fig 4.8: Focus on the Victim = Pro-Death Penalty Tone

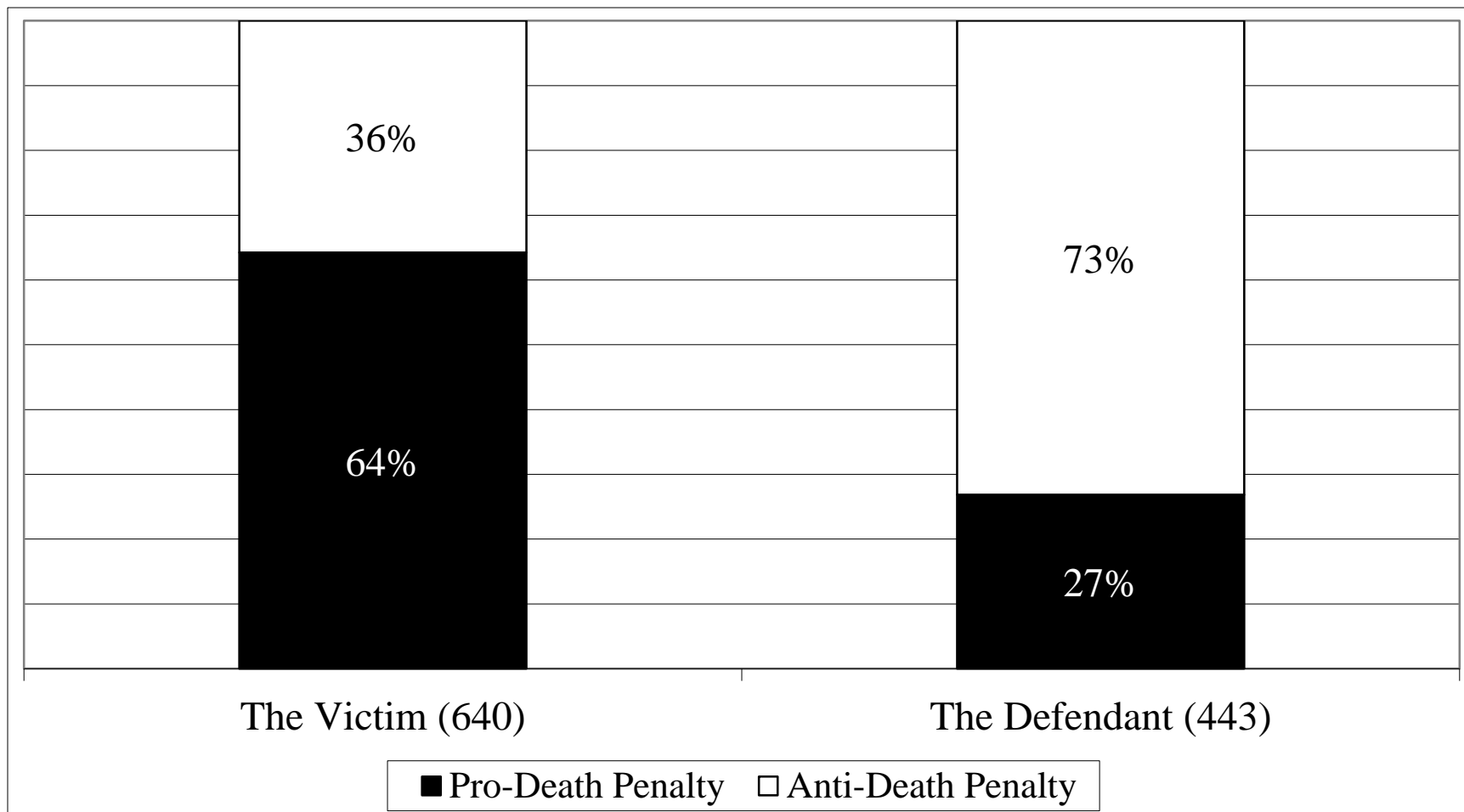


Fig 4.9: Stories about the Victim are Always Pro-Death Penalty

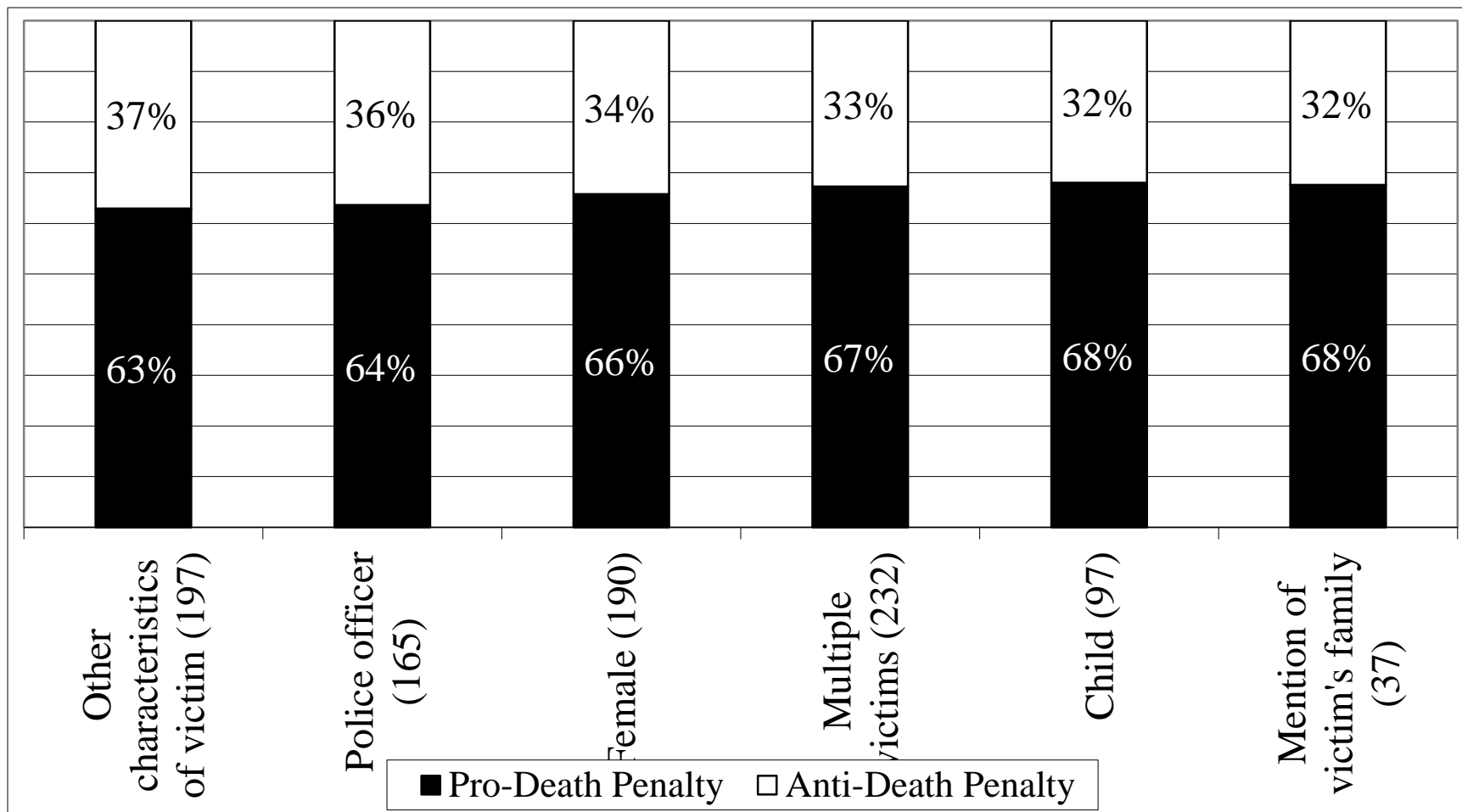


Fig 4.10: Inmate Characteristics Always Anti-Death Penalty, Except Terrorism (and female is mixed)

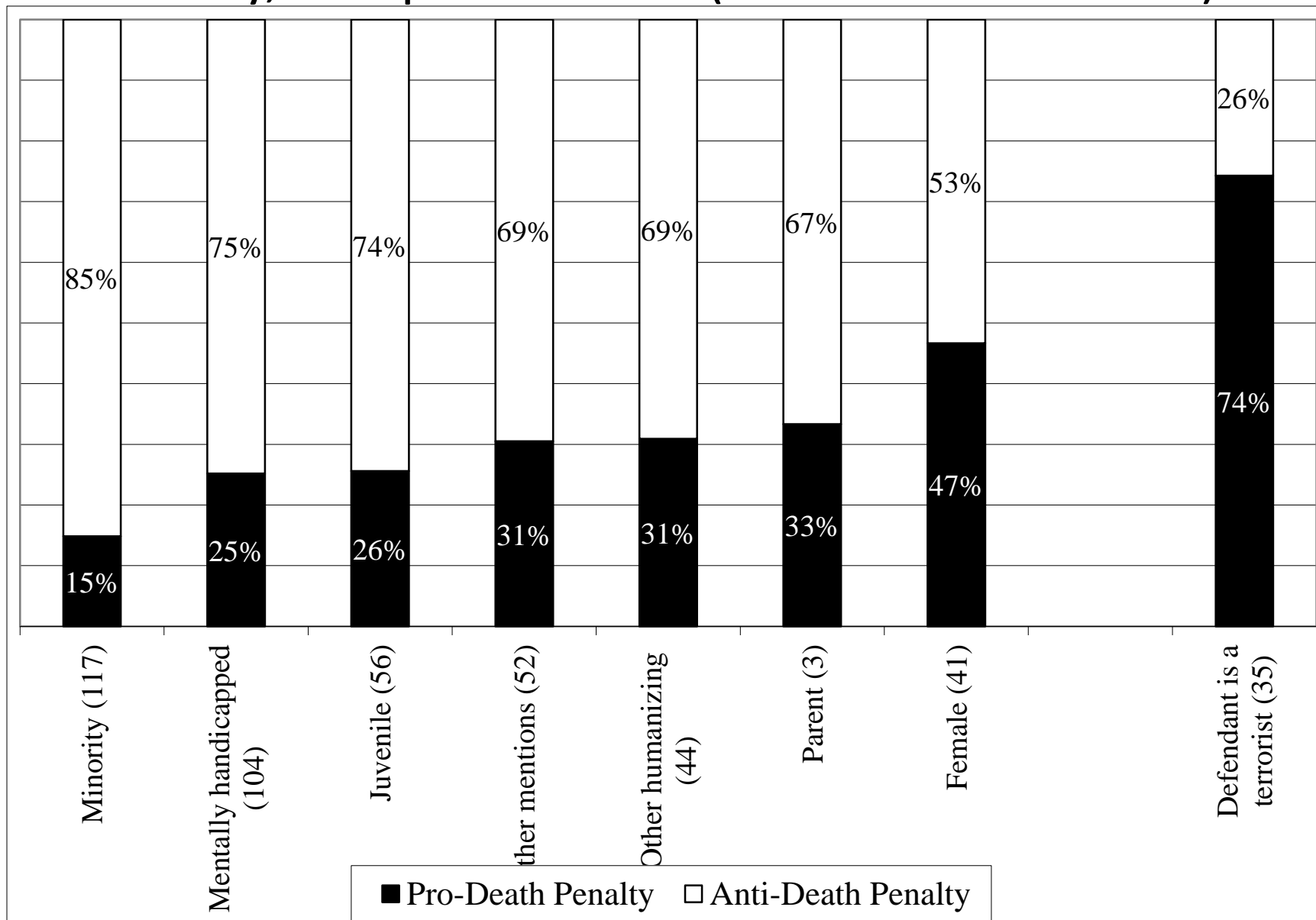


Fig 4.11: Attention to Victims and Defendants Over Time

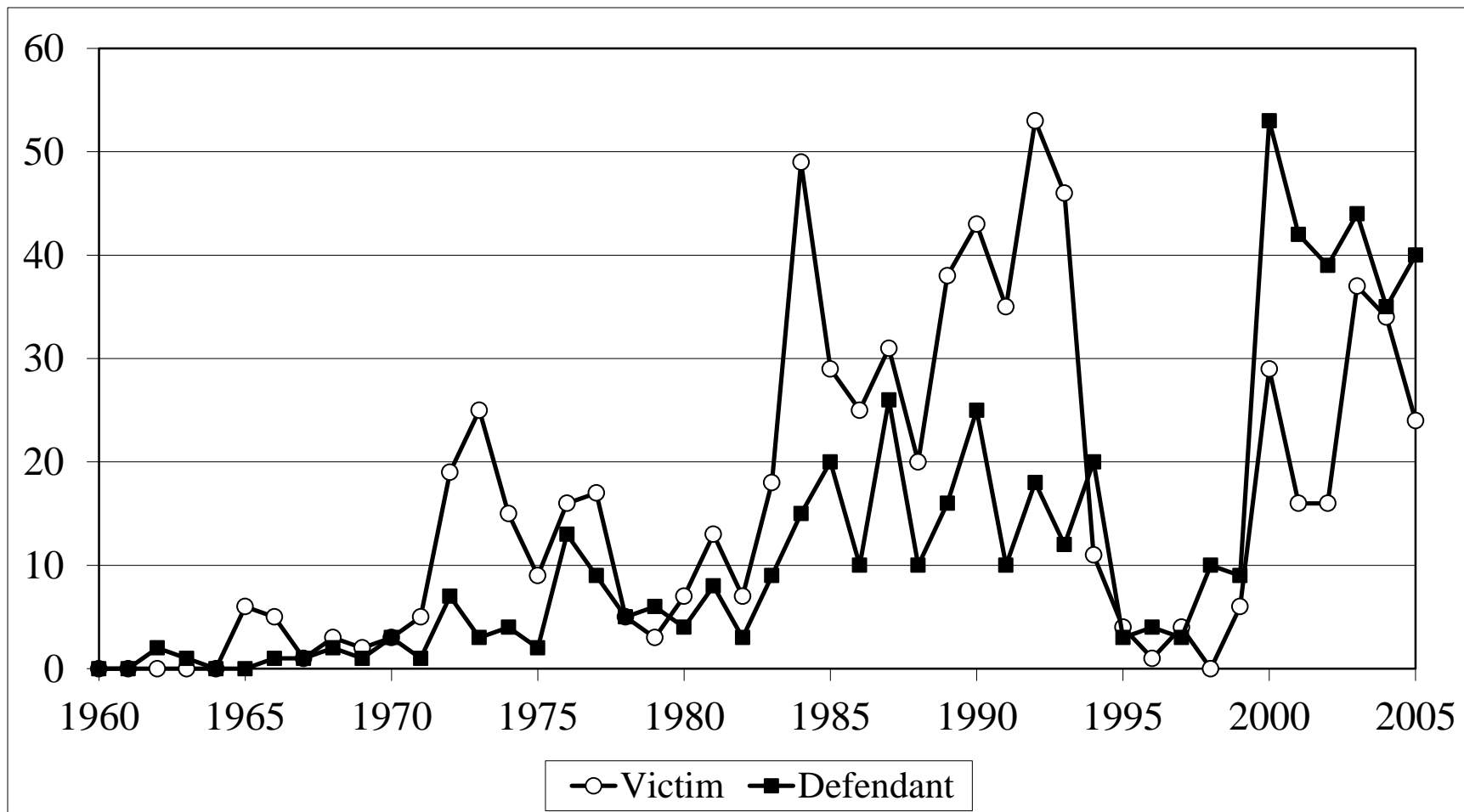


Fig 4.12: Net Attention to the Victim

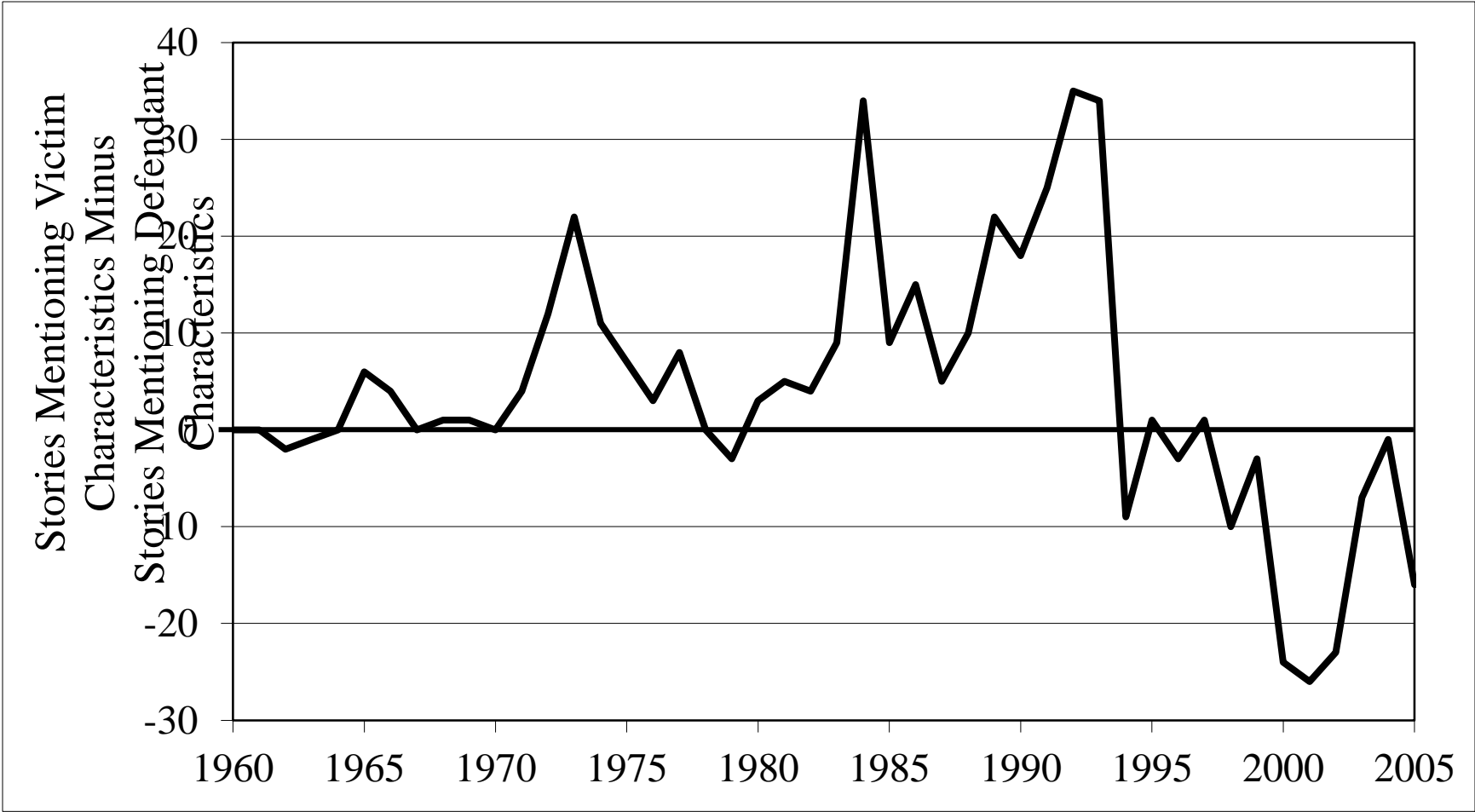


Fig 4.13: Readers' Guide Total Attention

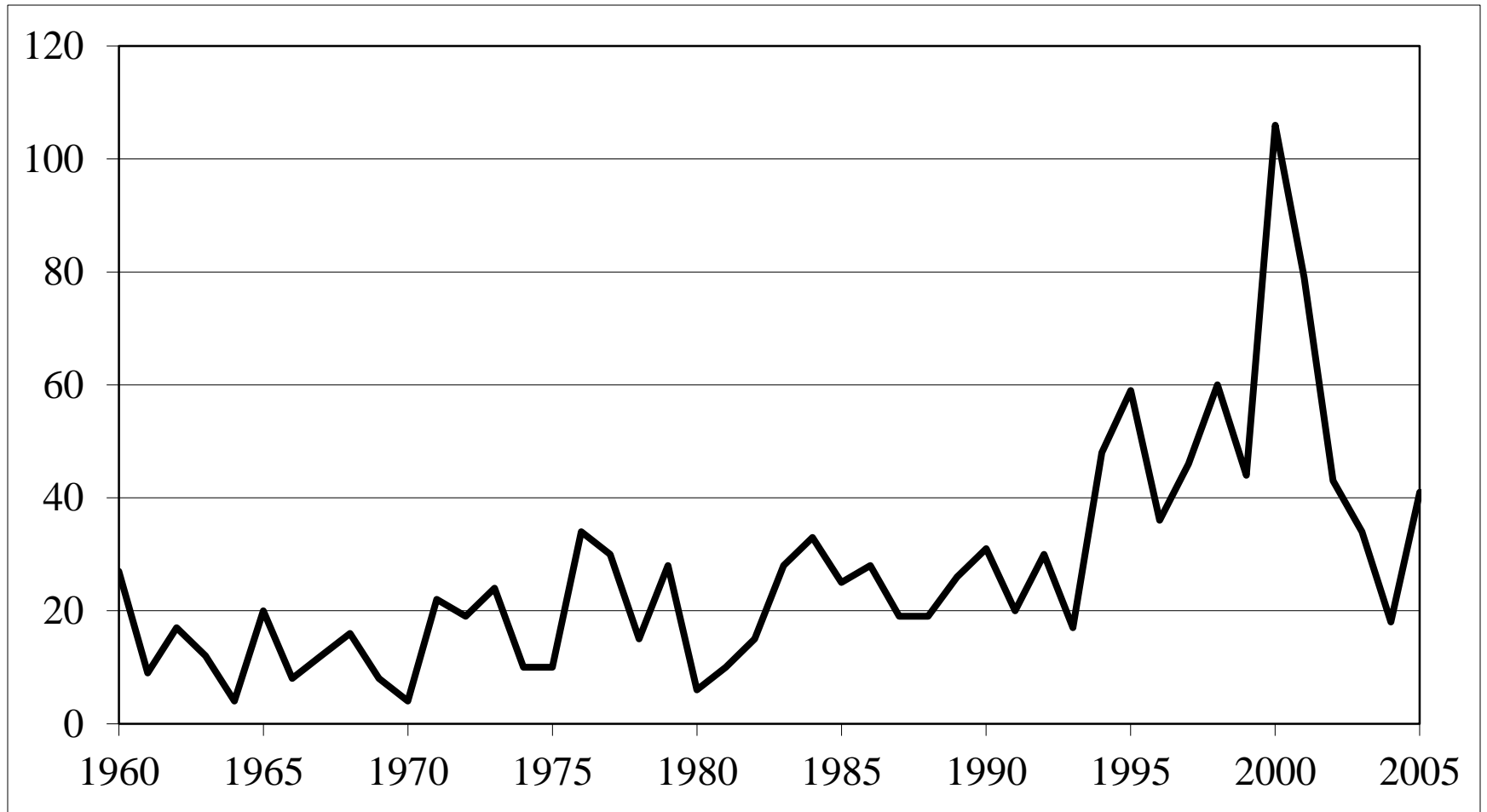


Fig 4.14 Readers' Guide Net Tone

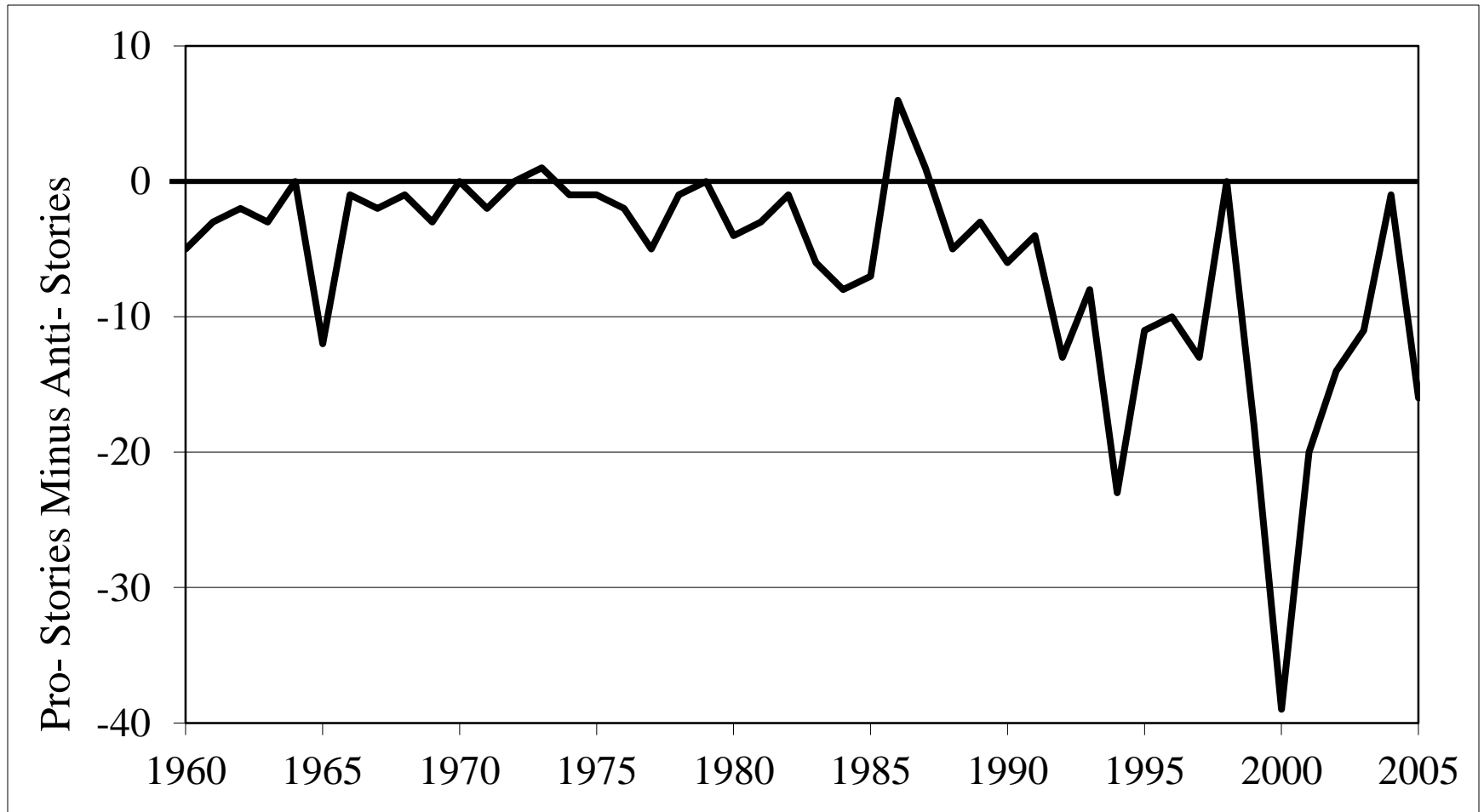


Fig 4.15: Total Attention, Many Sources

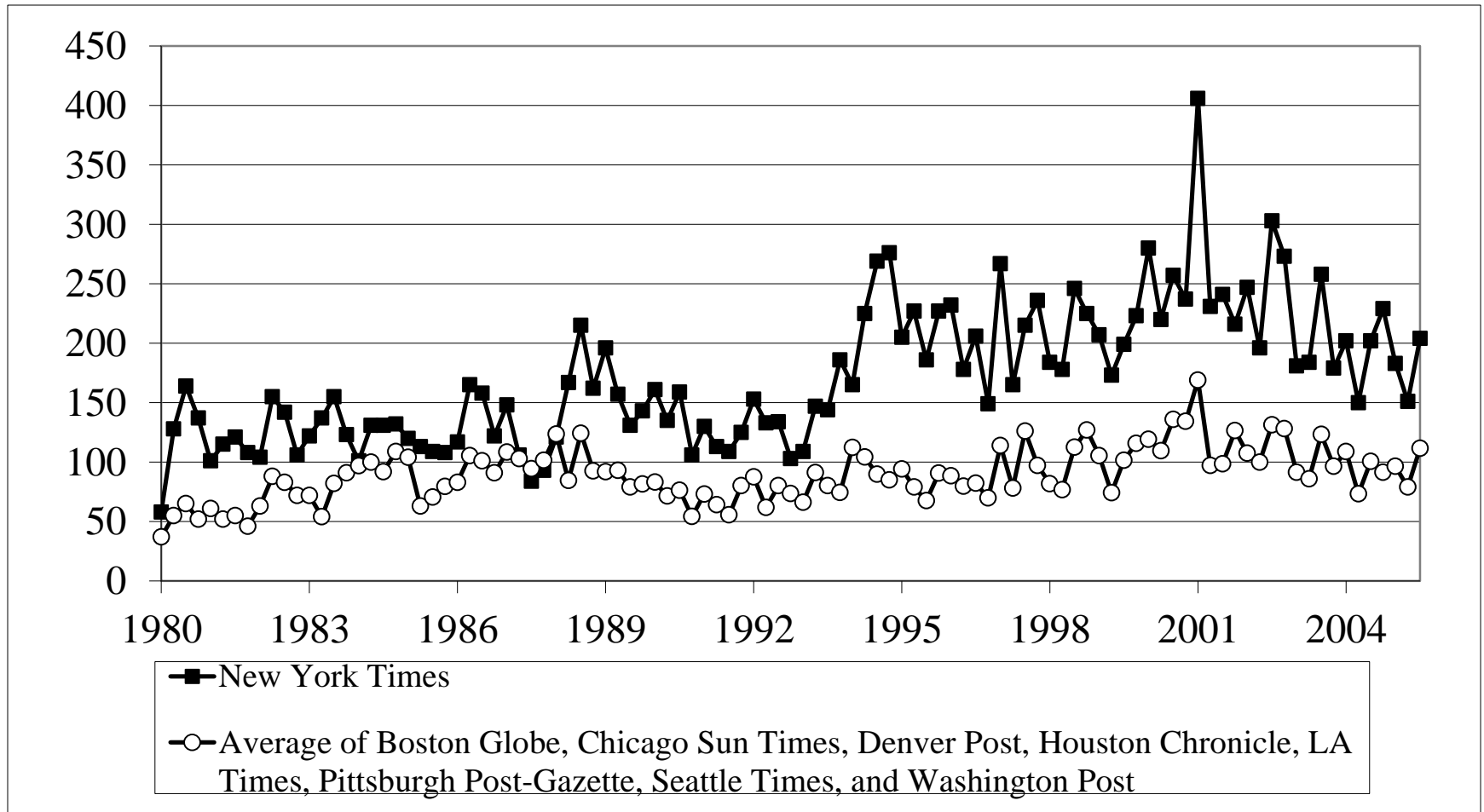


Fig 4.16: Innocence, Many Sources

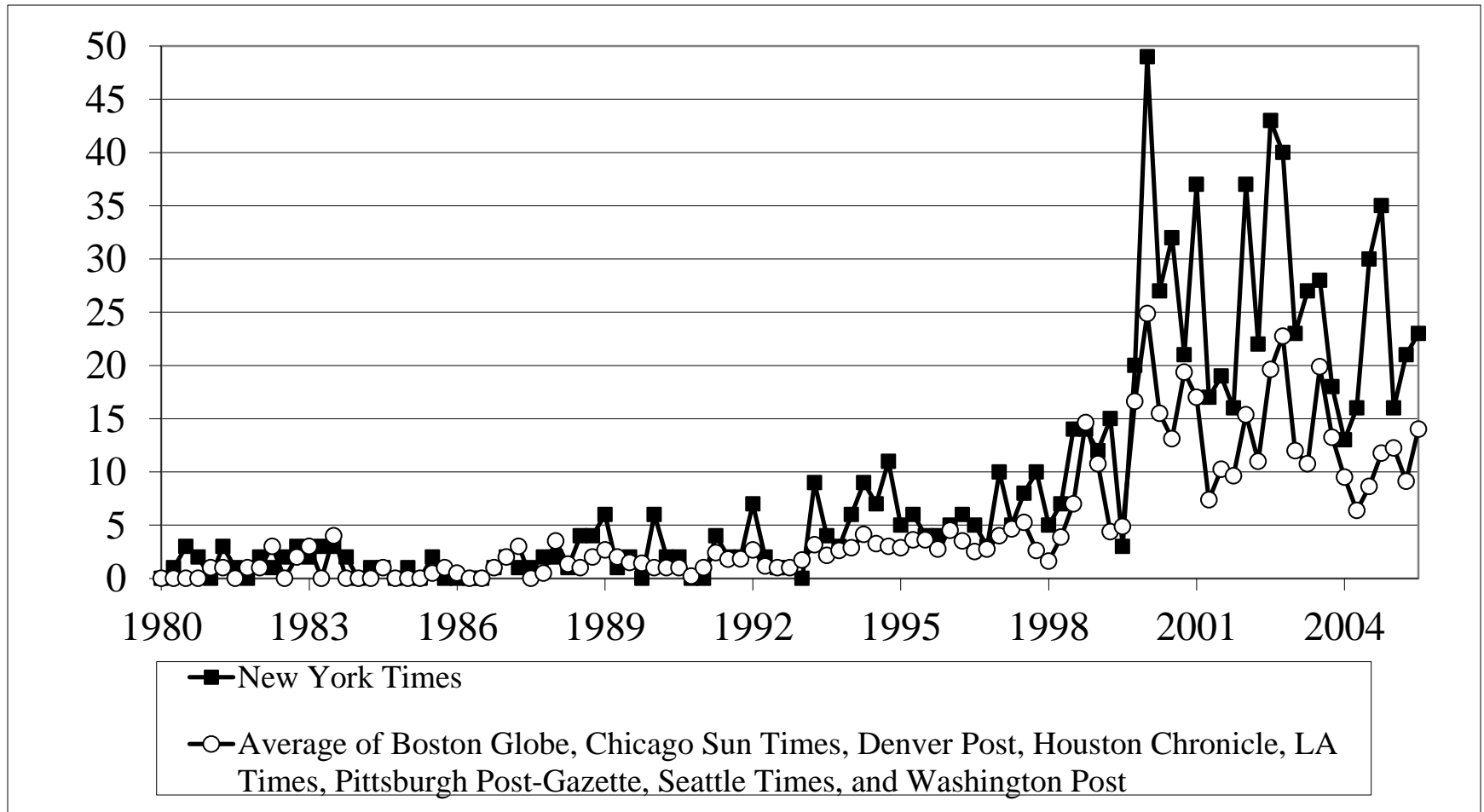
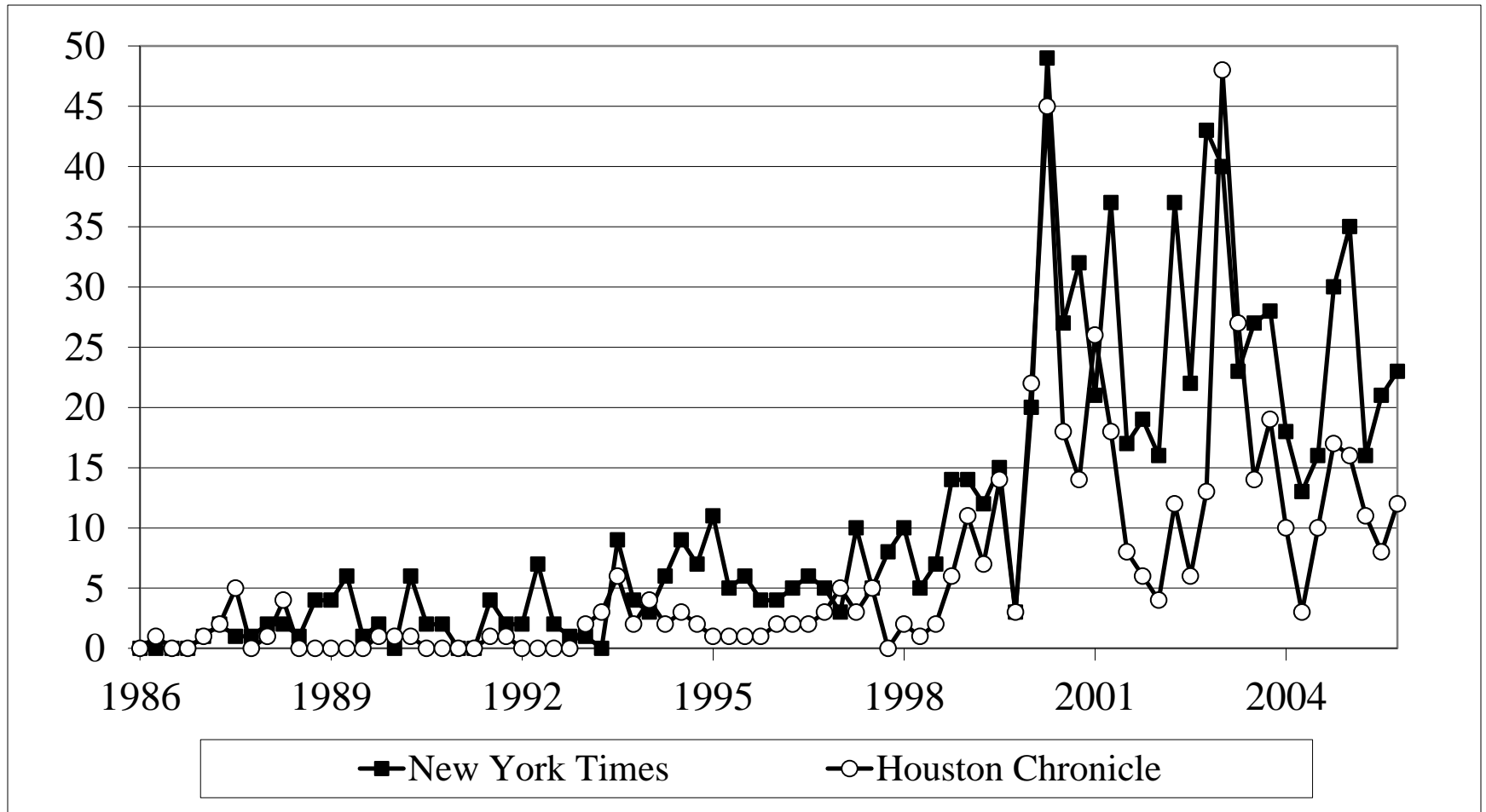


Fig 4.17: NYT and Houston Chronicle, Attention to Innocence is the same



So what did we learn from this?

- 1. You can study the evolution of frames over time by using simple tools of content-analysis
- 2. NYT is not all that different from other sources
- 3. Very large differences in SALIENCE over time
- 4. Important differences in FRAMING over time
- 5. Huge surge in INNOCENCE in late 1990s