# Baumgartner, POLI 203 Spring 2016

Framing

Reading: Radelet and Borg, Baumgartner DeBoef Boydstun

April 6, 2016

# Catching up

- Questions about Kim Davis, Troy Davis

- His case is so emblematic.
- Since he has been executed, there will be no further legal review of his possible innocence.

- T-shirts, details to follow on Monday

# Focus today: Framing

- General point, and how I got interested in this: Any public policy can be understood in many ways.
- How do collective frames shift over time?
- Death penalty was increasingly framed in positive light during the 1970s until about 1995, and since then it has flipped.
- This shift in framing is associated with how often we execute.
- So framing really does matter, and I can show it.

# Today: Jump ahead

- Today's talk is about next week's readings
- More on them on Monday, but we may get a bit ahead.
- Do the readings carefully, see if they make good sense with respect to these slides.

# Radelet and Borg

- Deterrence: No longer a strong argument. NAS report in 2012 said no evidence either way.
- Incapacitation: also on the decline, with LWOP
- Caprice and Bias: increasing evidence, but not new
- Cost: from pro- to anti-
- Miscarriages of justice: increased evidence
- One pro-dp argument has grown: Retribution

# A New View on an Old Debate:

- The death penalty is a government program run by bureaucrats and it is prone to cost-overruns, inefficiencies, and mistakes…
  - Peter Loge, The Innocence Project, 2002
- Capital punishment is a government program, so skepticism is in order…
  - George F. Will in the *Washington Post*, 6 April 2000

- A new group, Conservatives Concerned about the Death Penalty, reflects this view.

# The Discovery of Innocence

- Study of NYT stories from 1960 to 2006
- Track how the media have framed the DP
- See if shifting frames > policy outcomes
- Control for homicides, public opinion, exonerations, other events

- Start of project: a phone call

# The Death Penalty Debate

- A "most difficult case" for framing effects
- Yet attention has shifted dramatically
  - *From* Morality

    ANTI: State killing is wrong

    PRO: Eye-for-an-eye
  - *To* Innocence

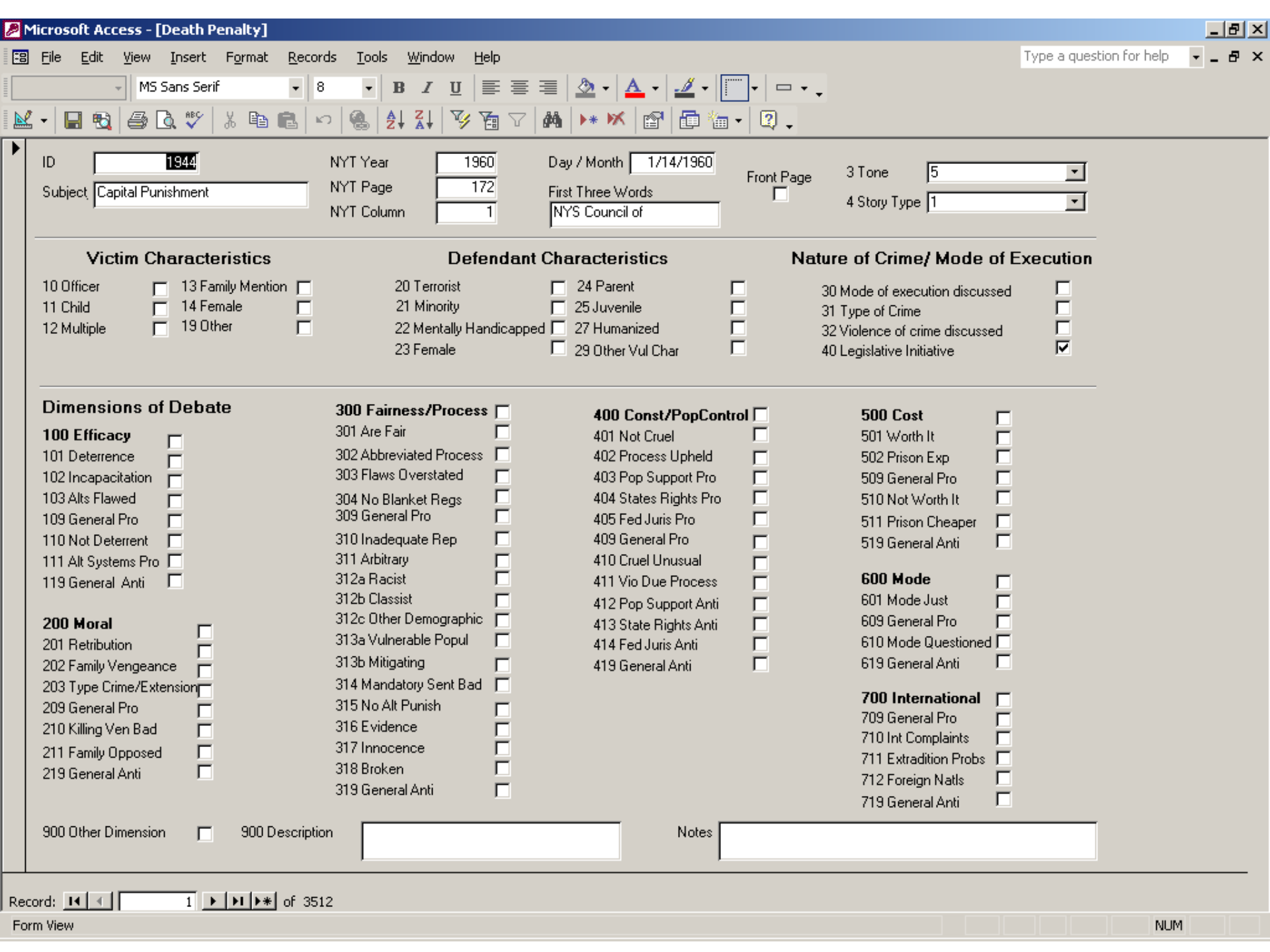
    ANTI: Imperfect system, innocents may be killed

    PRO: 1) System is perfect

    PRO: 2) If you're going to make an omelet…

# Measuring Framing

- Abstracts of all *New York Times* articles on capital punishment, 1960–2005
- 3,939 abstracts in all
- Measure framing by counting attention over time to:
  - 1) argument
  - 2) tone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8
ID 1944
Subject Capital Punishment
NYT Year 1960
NYT Page 172
NYT Column 1
Day / Month 1/14/1960
First Three Words NYS Council of
Front Page
3 Tone 5
4 Story Type 1
Victim Characteristics
10 Officer
11 Child
12 Multiple
13 Family Mention
14 Female
19 Other
Defendant Characteristics
20 Terrorist
21 Minority
22 Mentally Handicapped
23 Female
24 Parent
25 Juvenile
27 Humanized
29 Other Vul Char
Nature of Crime/ Mode of Execution
30 Mode of execution discussed
31 Type of Crime
32 Violence of crime discussed
40 Legislative Initiative
Dimensions of Debate
100 Efficacy
101 Deterrence
102 Incapacitation
103 Alts Flawed
109 General Pro
110 Not Deterrent
111 Alt Systems Pro
119 General Anti
200 Moral
201 Retribution
202 Family Vengeance
203 Type Crime/Extension
209 General Pro
210 Killing Ven Bad
211 Family Opposed
219 General Anti
300 Fairness/Process
301 Are Fair
302 Abbreviated Process
303 Flaws Overstated
304 No Blanket Regs
309 General Pro
310 Inadequate Rep
311 Arbitrary
312a Racist
312b Classist
312c Other Demographic
313a Vulnerable Popul
313b Mitigating
314 Mandatory Sent Bad
315 No Alt Punish
316 Evidence
317 Innocence
318 Broken
319 General Anti
400 Const/PopControl
401 Not Cruel
402 Process Upheld
403 Pop Support Pro
404 States Rights Pro
405 Fed Juris Pro
409 General Pro
410 Cruel Unusual
411 Vio Due Process
412 Pop Support Anti
413 State Rights Anti
414 Fed Juris Anti
419 General Anti
500 Cost
501 Worth It
502 Prison Exp
509 General Pro
510 Not Worth It
511 Prison Cheaper
519 General Anti
600 Mode
601 Mode Just
609 General Pro
610 Mode Questioned
619 General Anti
700 International
709 General Pro
710 Int Complaints
711 Extradition Probs
712 Foreign Natls
719 General Anti
900 Other Dimension
900 Description
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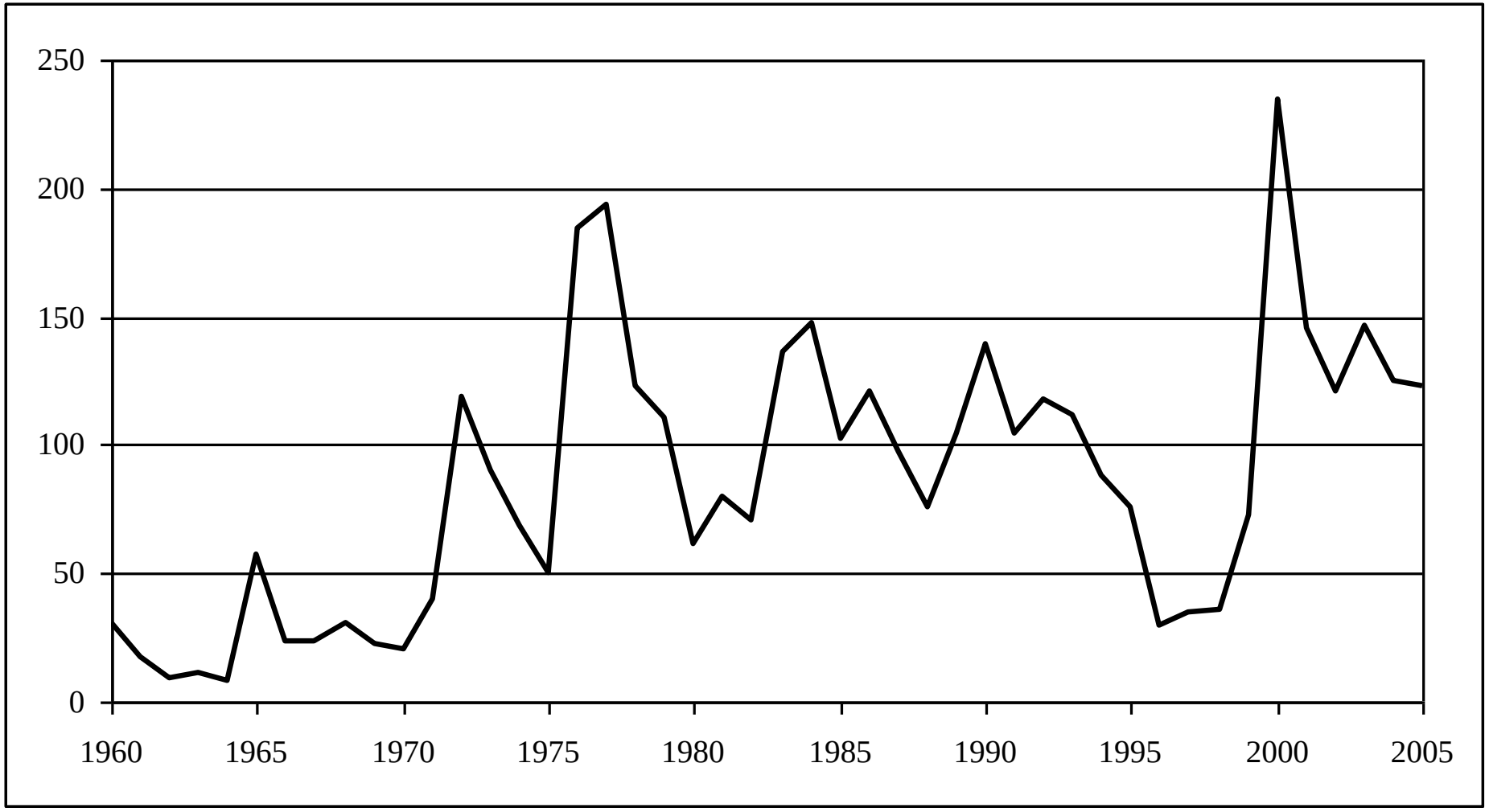
# Total Number of *NYT* Articles

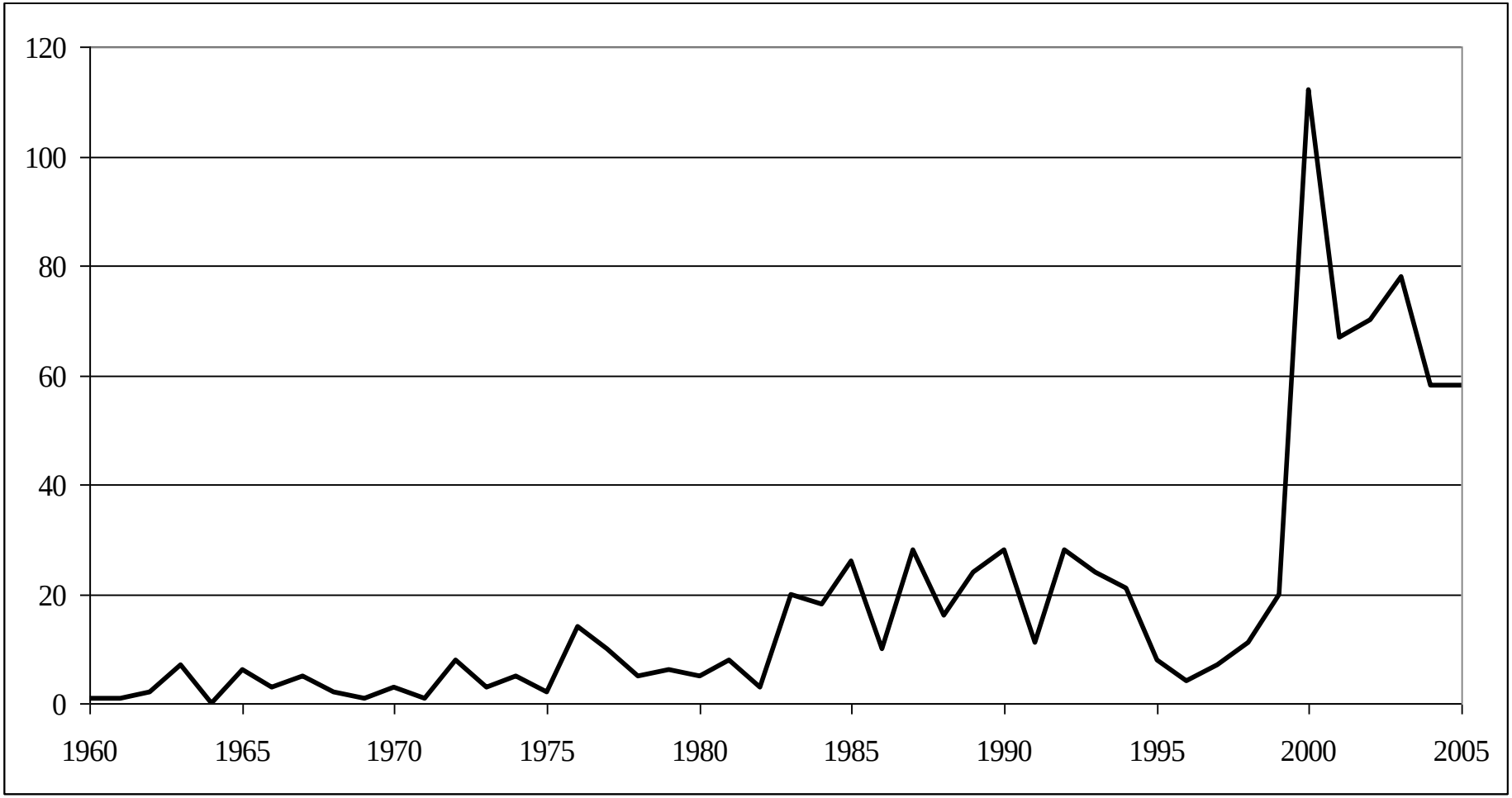


# 1) What Arguments Are Used?

*Exhaustive list of 65 arguments, categorized in 7 major dimensions of debate:*

- **Fairness**- Is the capital punishment process fair?
- **Constitutionality**- Is the penalty constitutional?
- **Morality**- Is capital punishment moral?
- **Mode of Execution**- Which modes of execution should be permitted?
- **Efficacy**- Does the punishment deter crime?
- **International**- Should we consider complaints from abroad regarding our death penalty system?
- **Cost**- Is capital punishment cost-effective?

# The Rise of the "Innocence" Frame

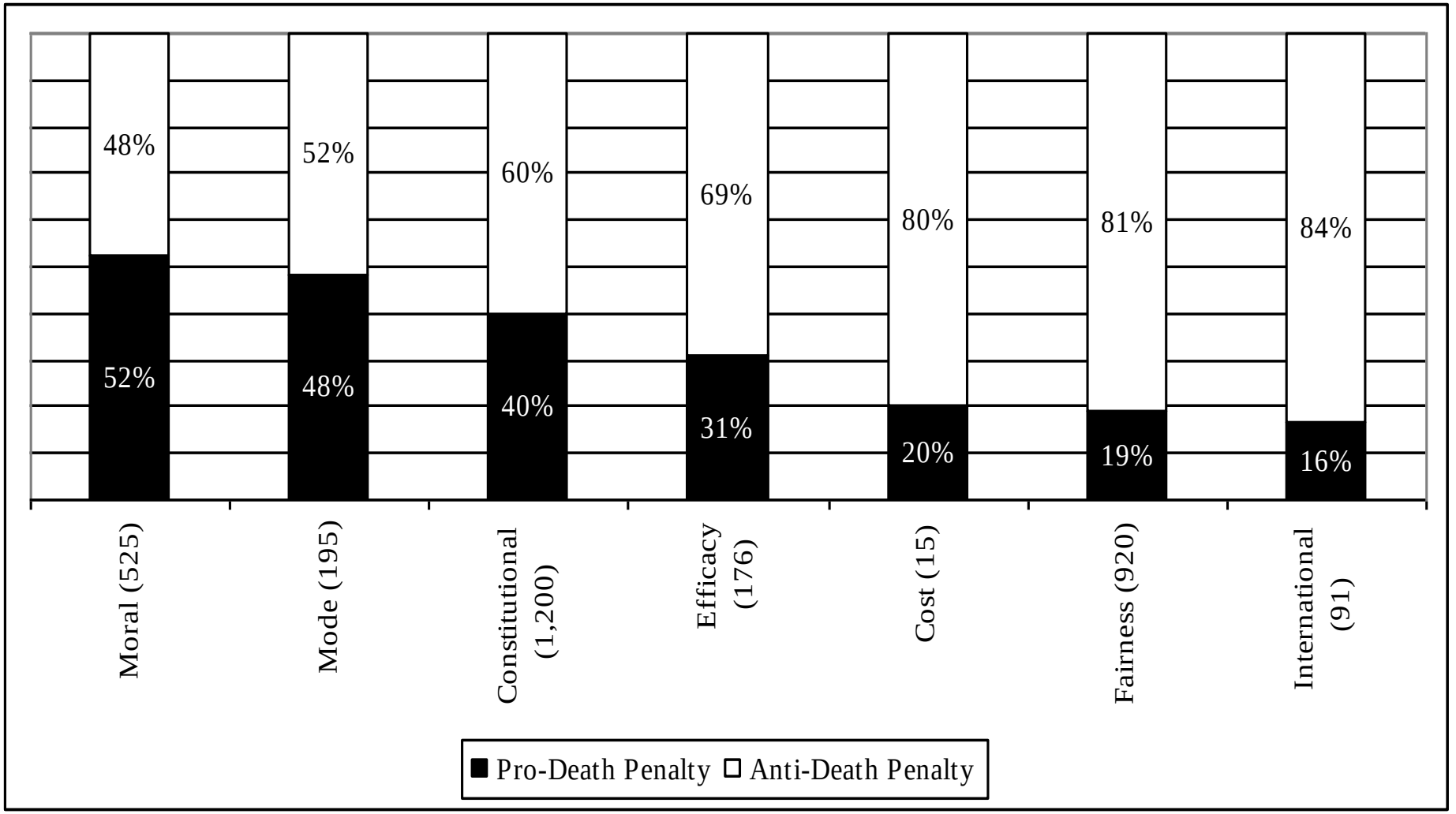



**Includes: Innocence; Evidence; System-is-Broken; Mention of the Defendant**

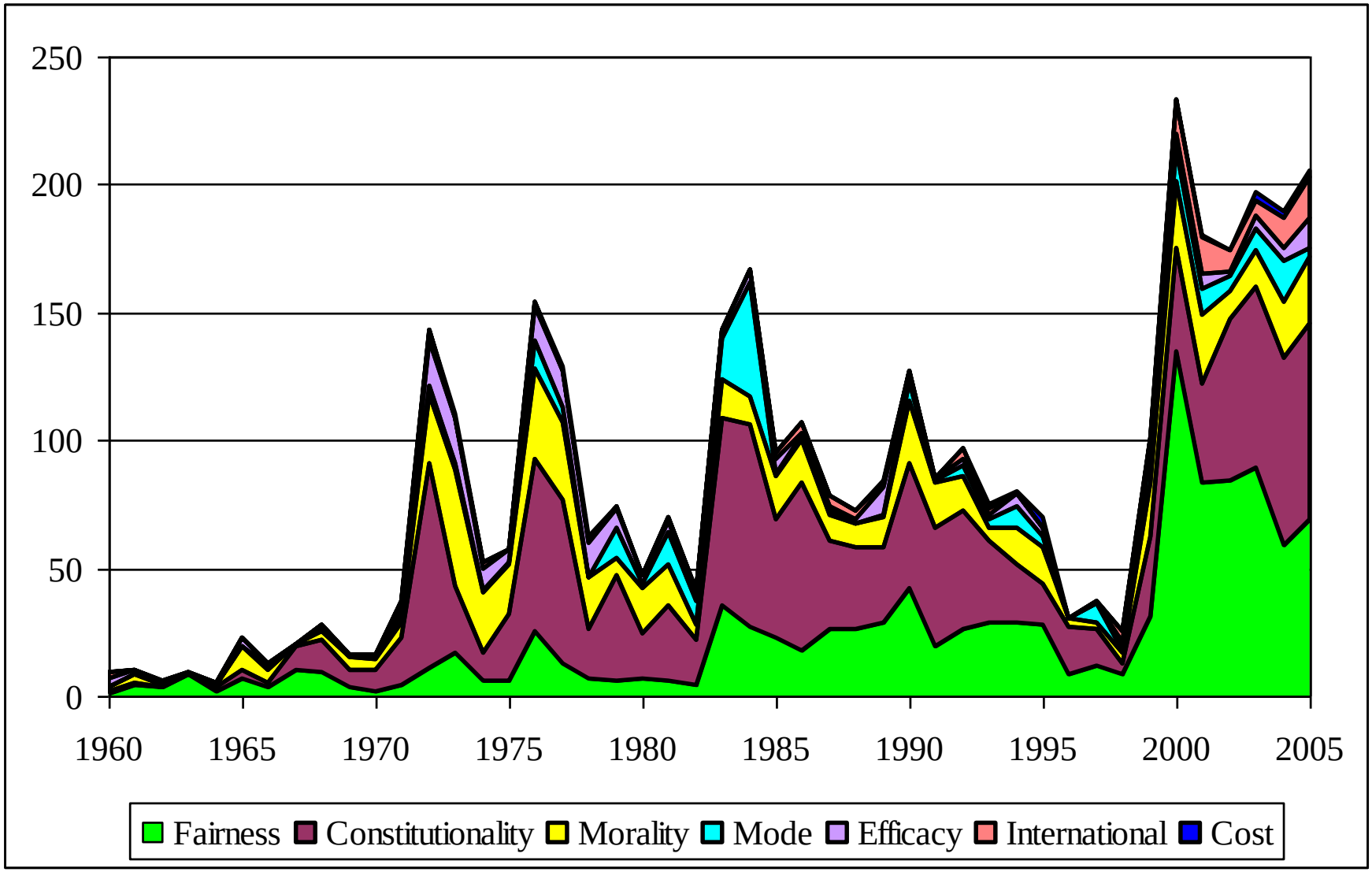
# 2) What Tone Is Used?

- Pro: Reflects or urges expanded use
- Anti: Reflects or urges restricted use
- When attention shifts from one dimension of debate to another, the tone is likely to follow
  - Cost: could be pro- or anti- depending on what the results show
  - Morality: could go either way…
  - But many times, the topic determines the tone…
- Shifting from topic to topic can therefore affect the tone.

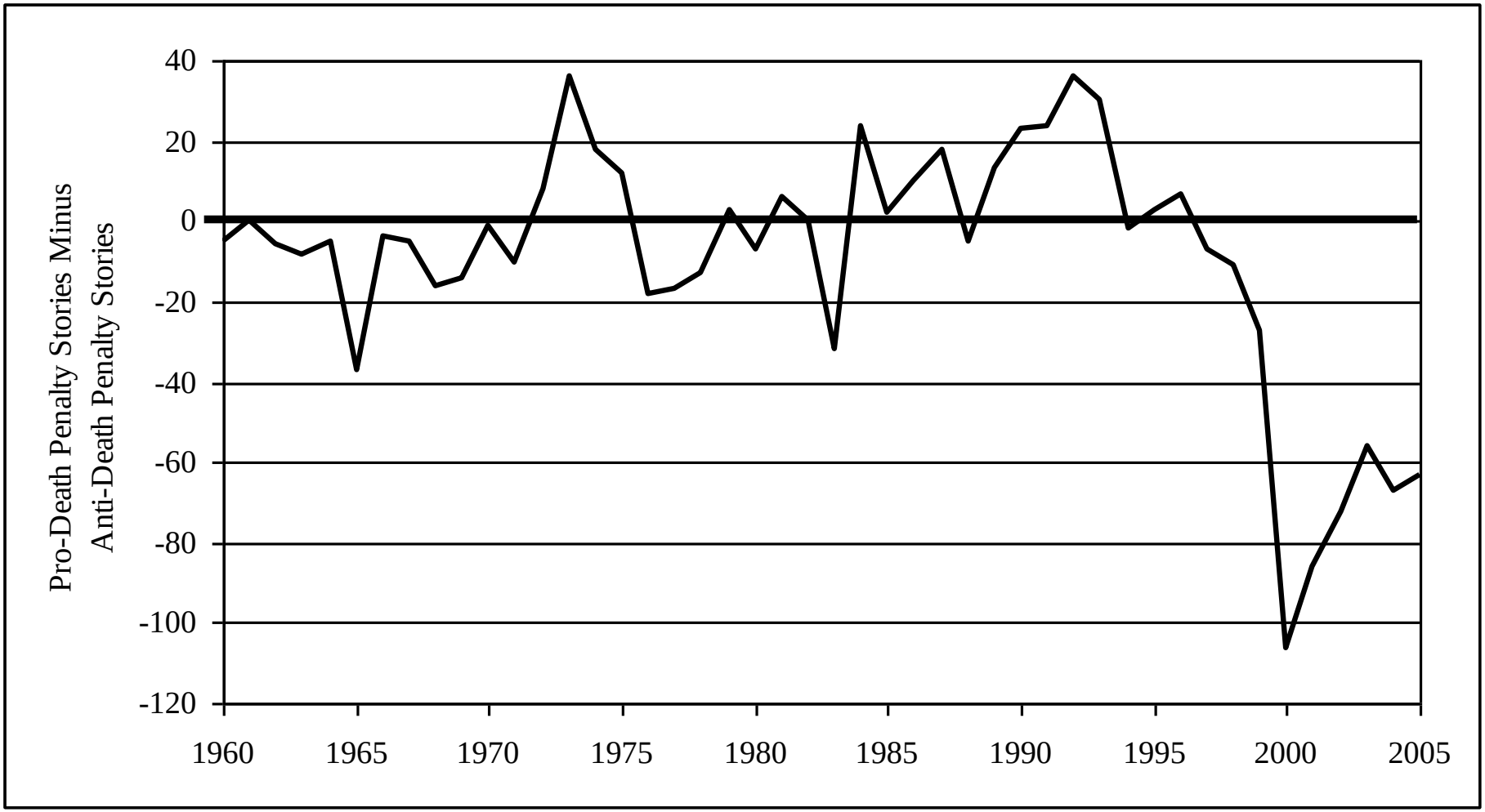
# The Topic Determines the Tone



# Attention to Dimensions Over Time

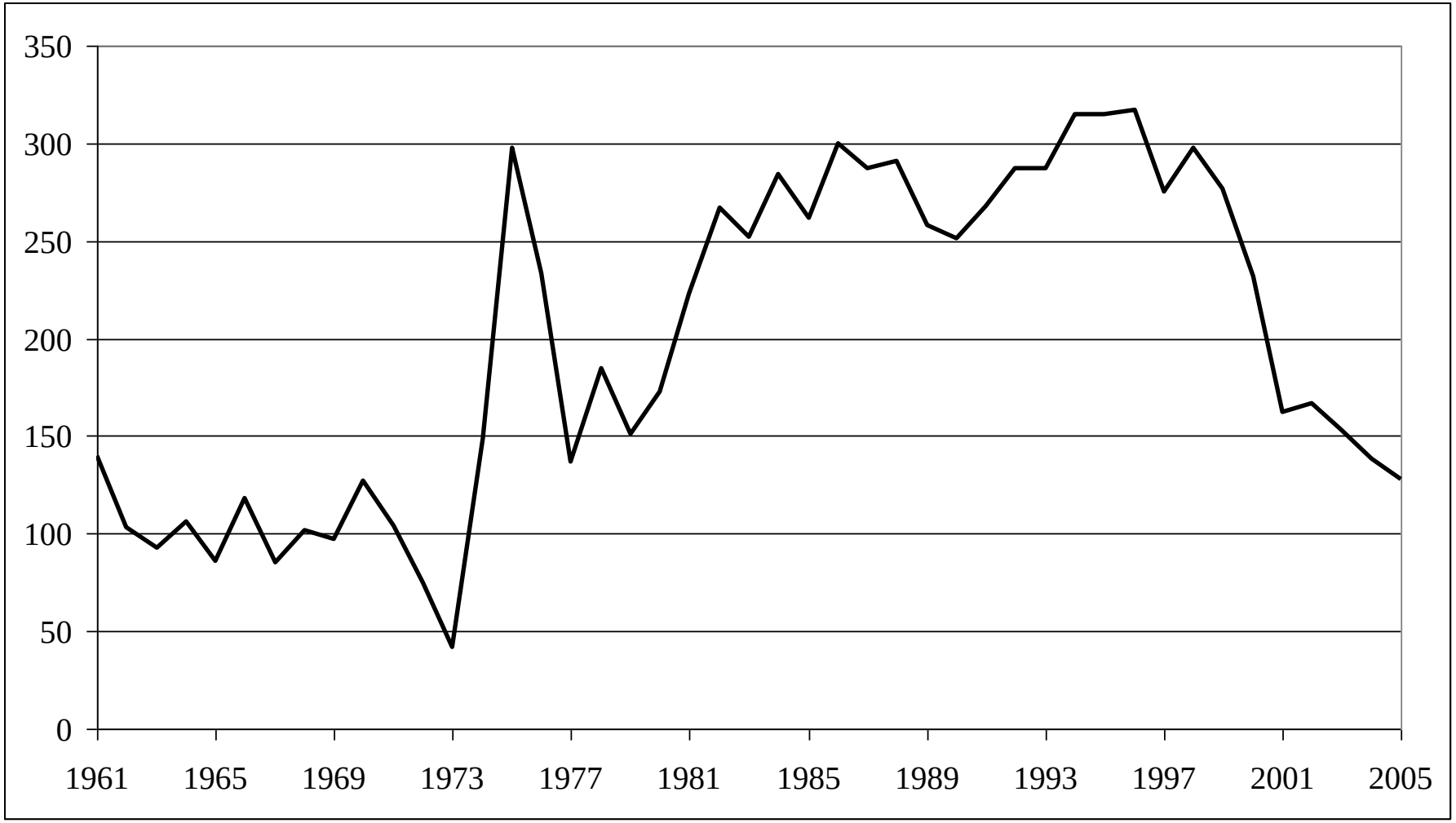


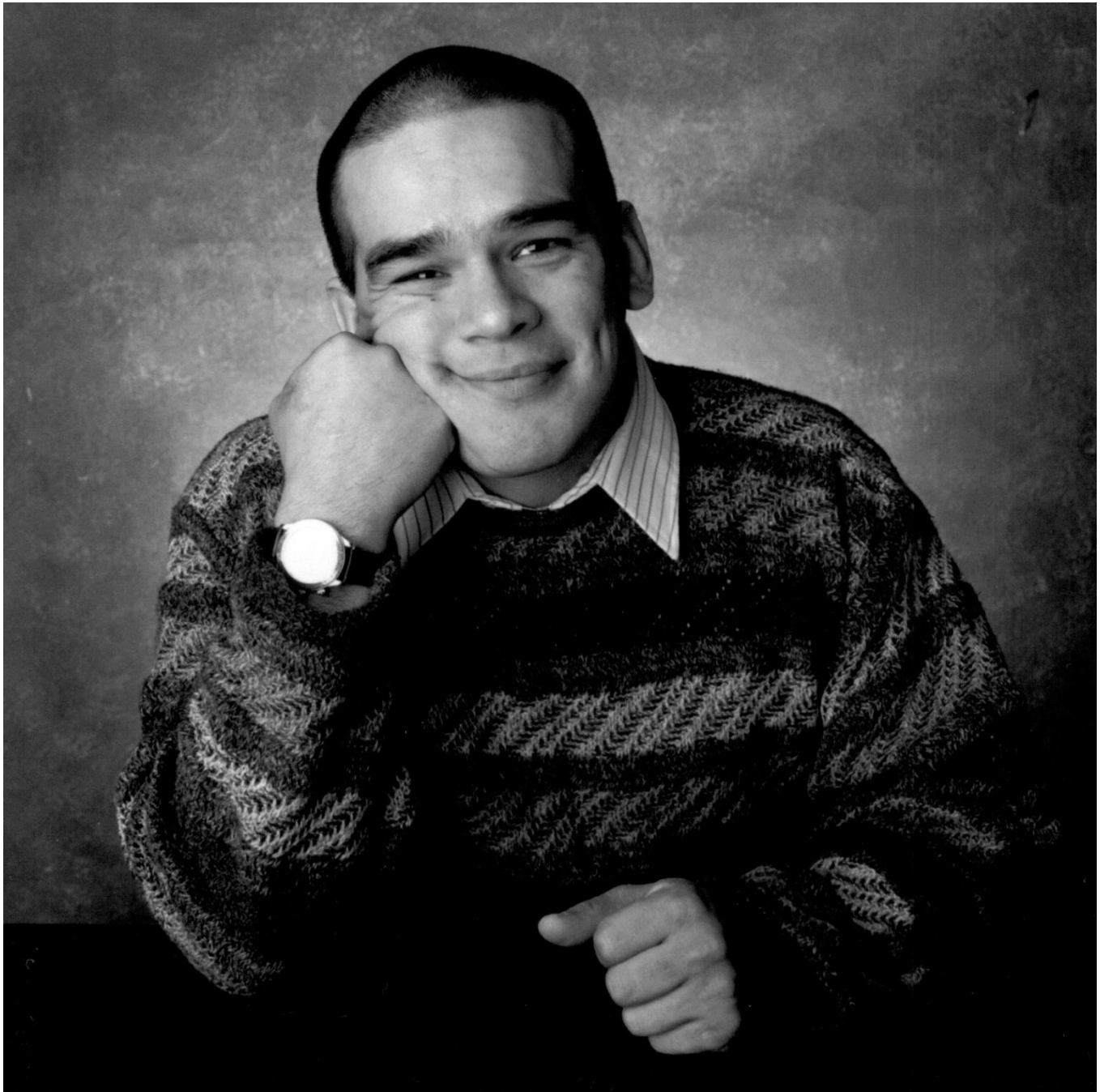
# The “Net Tone” of NYT Coverage




**Shows number of pro- minus number of anti-death penalty stories per year**

# Annual Death Sentences



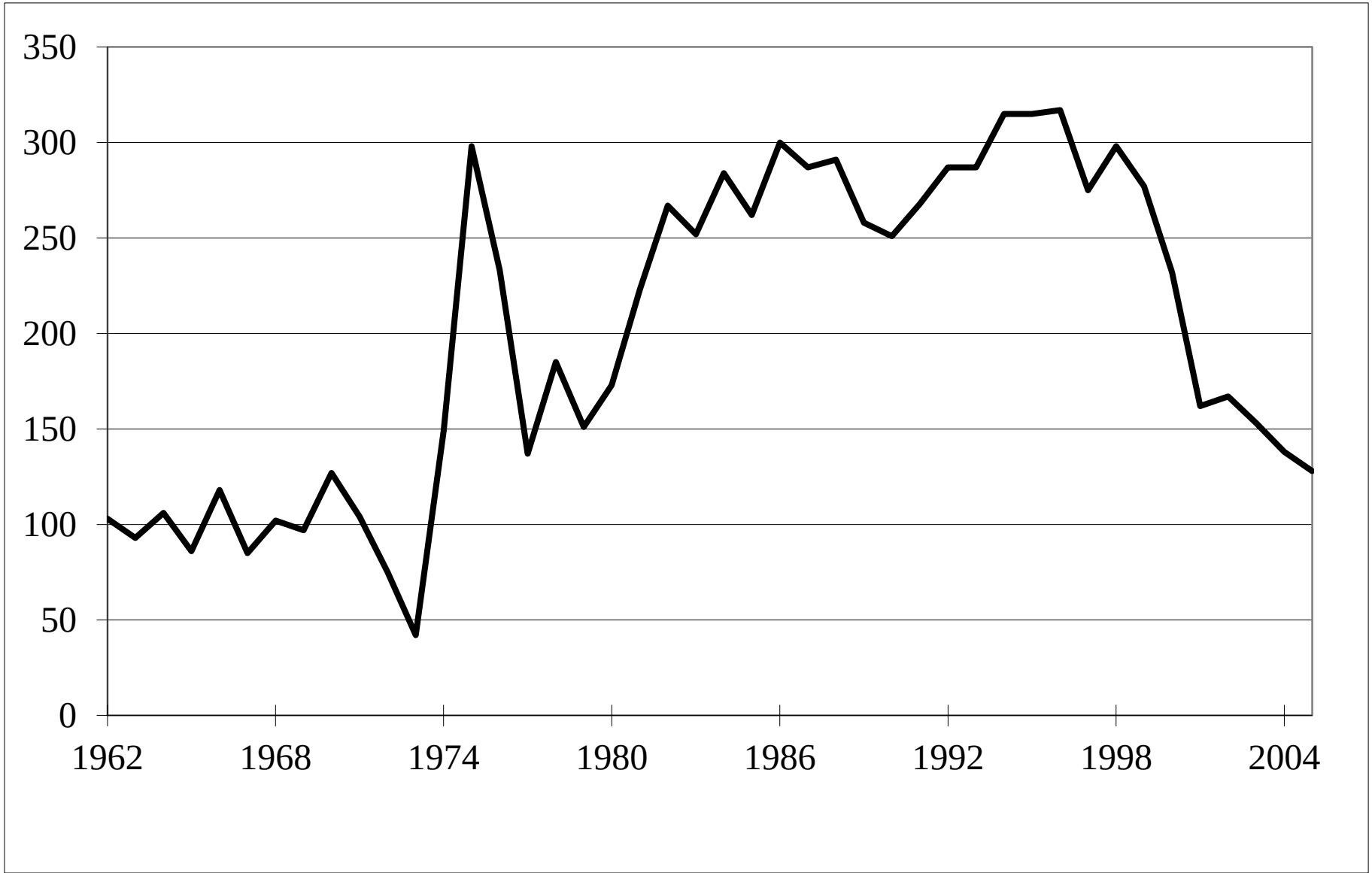


# OK, now some real pol sci

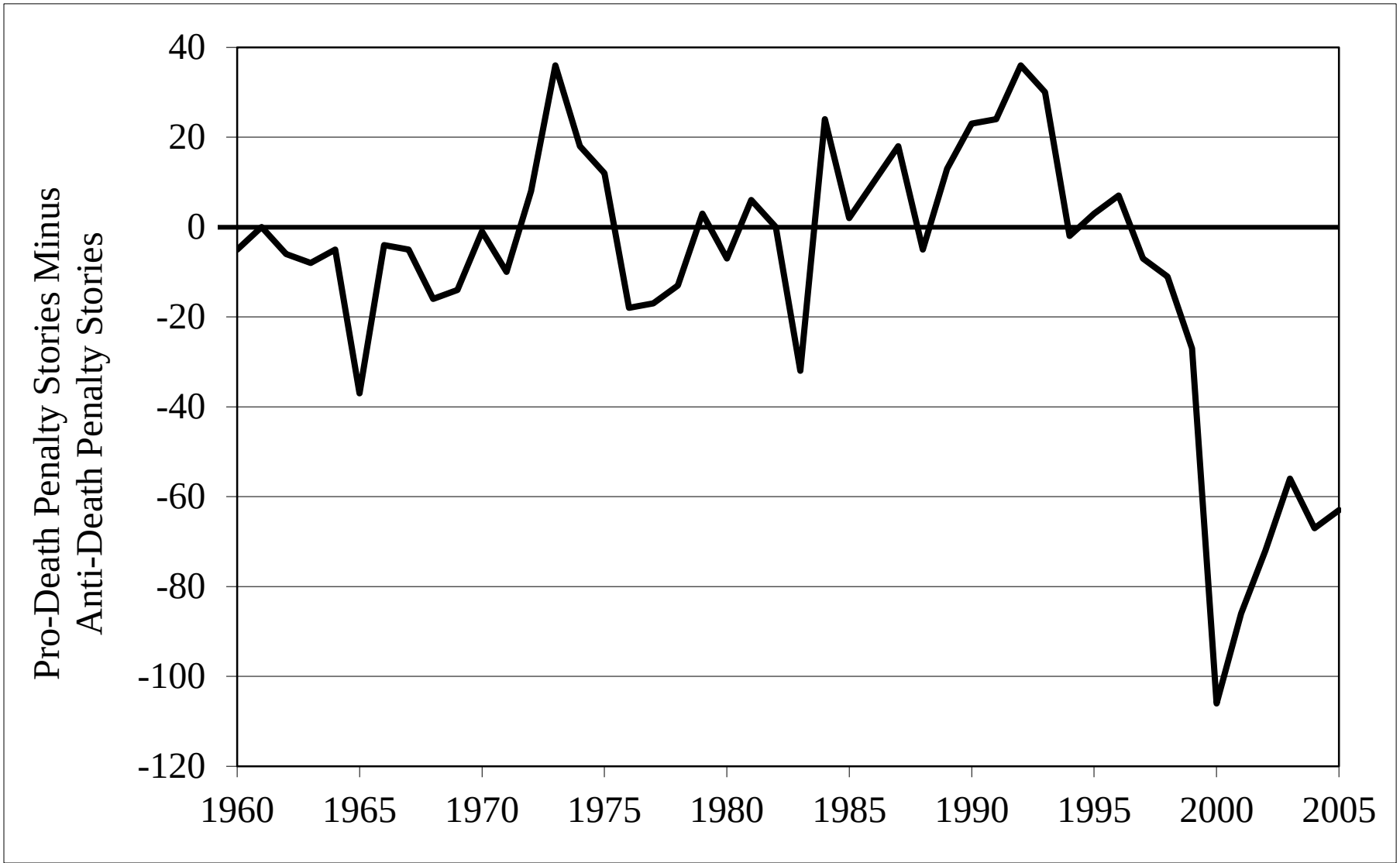
- Can we use the measure of framing, net-tone in newspaper coverage and predict the number of death sentences?

- No:  Juries respond to individual cases
- Yes:  Media coverage reflects shifting social norms, which will also be present in the jury box

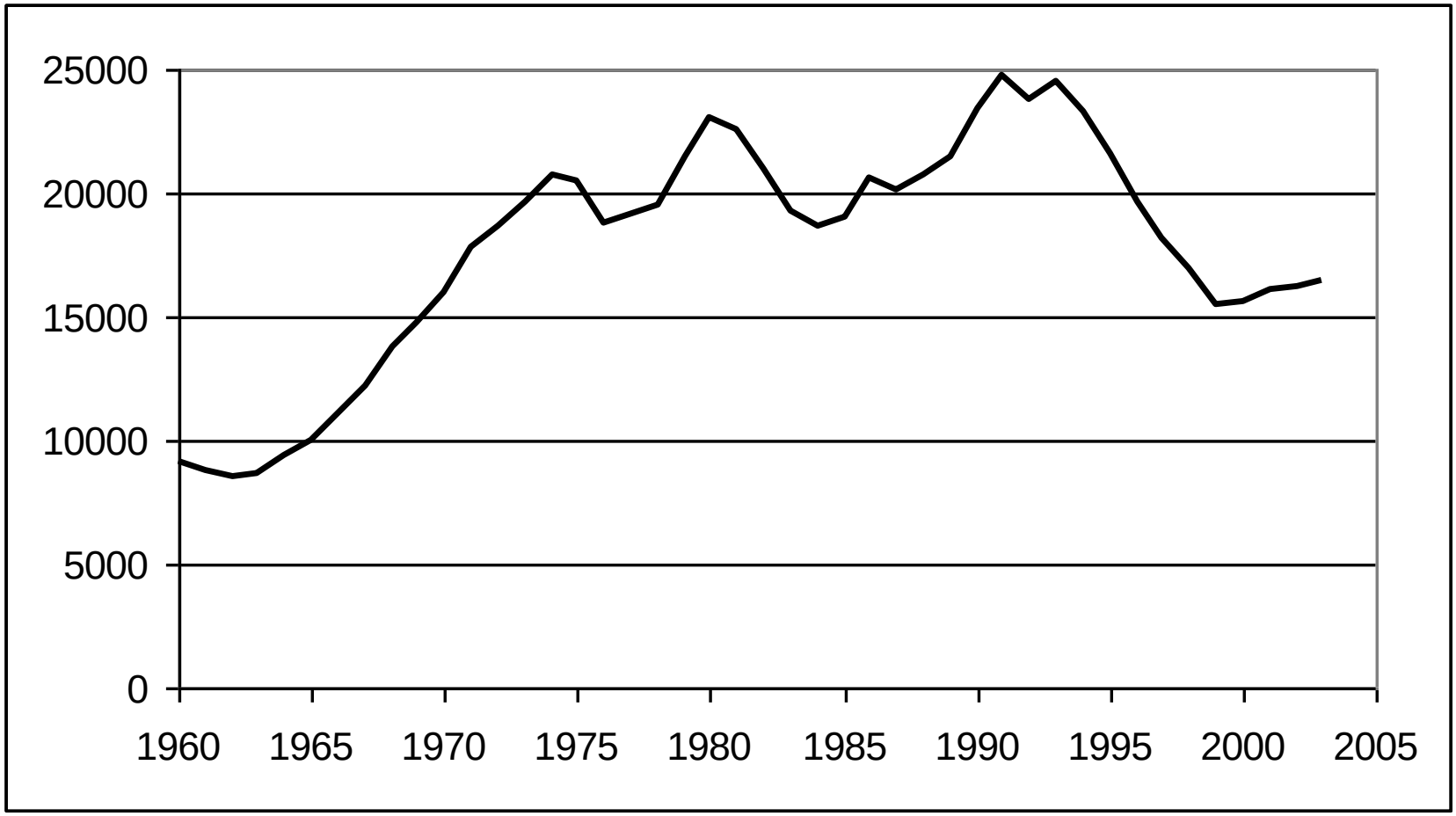
# Number of Death Sentences
# Can We Predict this Series?



# The “Net Tone” of NYT Coverage, 1960–2005



# Homicides: decline from 24,500 in 1993 to 15,500 in 2000



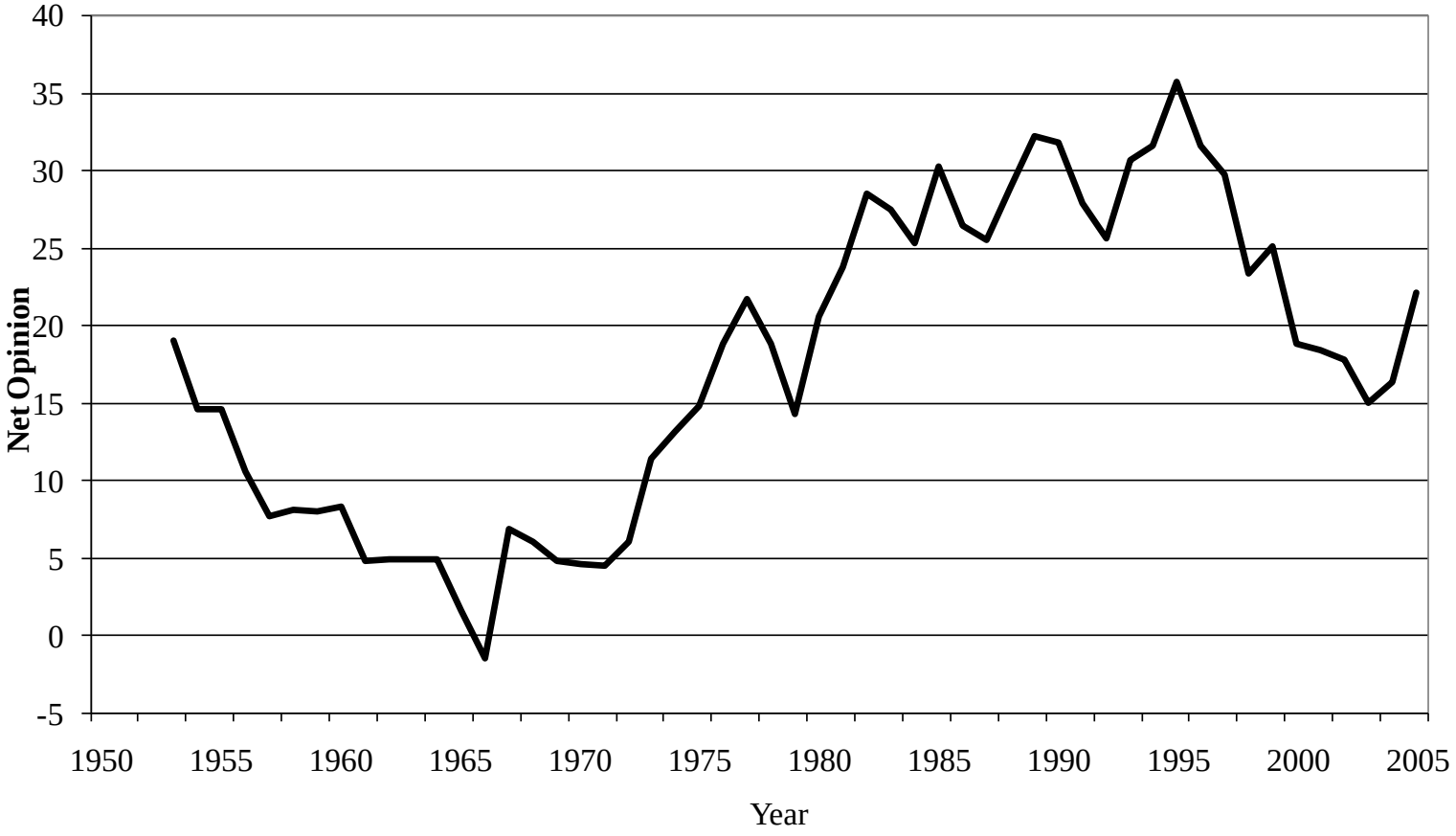

NB: France, UK, approx 400 per year

# Measuring Public Opinion

- 65 different questions posed in identical manner by the same survey organization
- 292 surveys used from 1960 to 2004 to construct the index

- (Thanks to Jim Stimson for his invention.)

# Net Public Opinion, 1953-2004



# Predicting Annual Death Sentences (Don't laugh, this really works)

Annual Number of Death Sentences =

22.92 (19.20)+

0.316 x Sentences$_{t-1}$ (0.097) +

0.453 x Net Tone of *New York Times*$_{t-1}$ (0.137) +

0.817 x Homicides (thousands)$_{t-1}$ (1.437) +

5.059 x Opinion$_{t-1}$ (1.069) +

-67.80 x 1973 dummy (25.80) +

129.49 x 1975 dummy (25.34)

$R^2$ = .930 (N=42)

Note: Analysis is annual from 1963 to 2005.

# Predicted and Actual Death Sentences

# What was that again?

Annual Number of Death Sentences

= 22.92

+ 0.316 x Sentences$_{t-1}$

+ 0.453 x Net Tone of *New York Times*$_{t-1}$

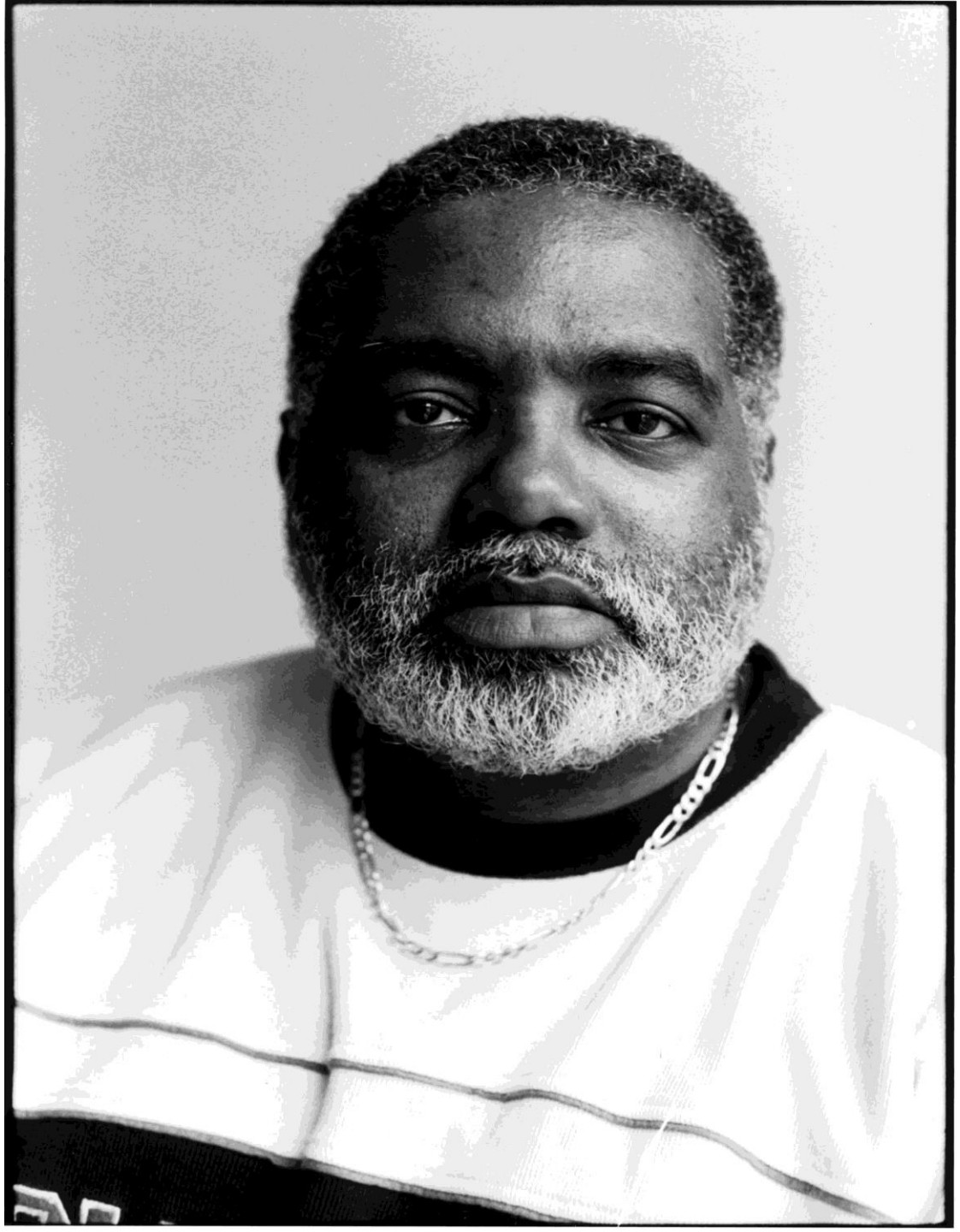
+ 0.817 x Homicides (thousands)$_{t-1}$

+ 5.059 x Opinion$_{t-1}$

- 67.80 x 1973 dummy

+ 129.49 x 1975 dummy

This equation explains 93 percent of the variance in death sentences. Seriously. It also allows us to see the relative impact of each factor…



# Interpretation

0.453 x Net Tone of *New York Times*$_{t-1}$ (0.137)

A 10-point shift in news coverage: 4.5 fewer death sentences in the following time period, with a longer term impact of 6.7 fewer.

1992: Net tone = +36

2000: Net tone = -106

Shift of 142 points

Expected impact: 98 death sentences

# Interpretation

5.059 x $Opinion_{t-1}$ (1.069)

This is a big impact:

In the long term, after inertia plays out:

15 point shift in opinion: 111 fewer death sentences

Note: Death Sentences have declined by about 220 since 1996, so these numbers do add up

Also note: public opinion shift is due to rise of innocence frame

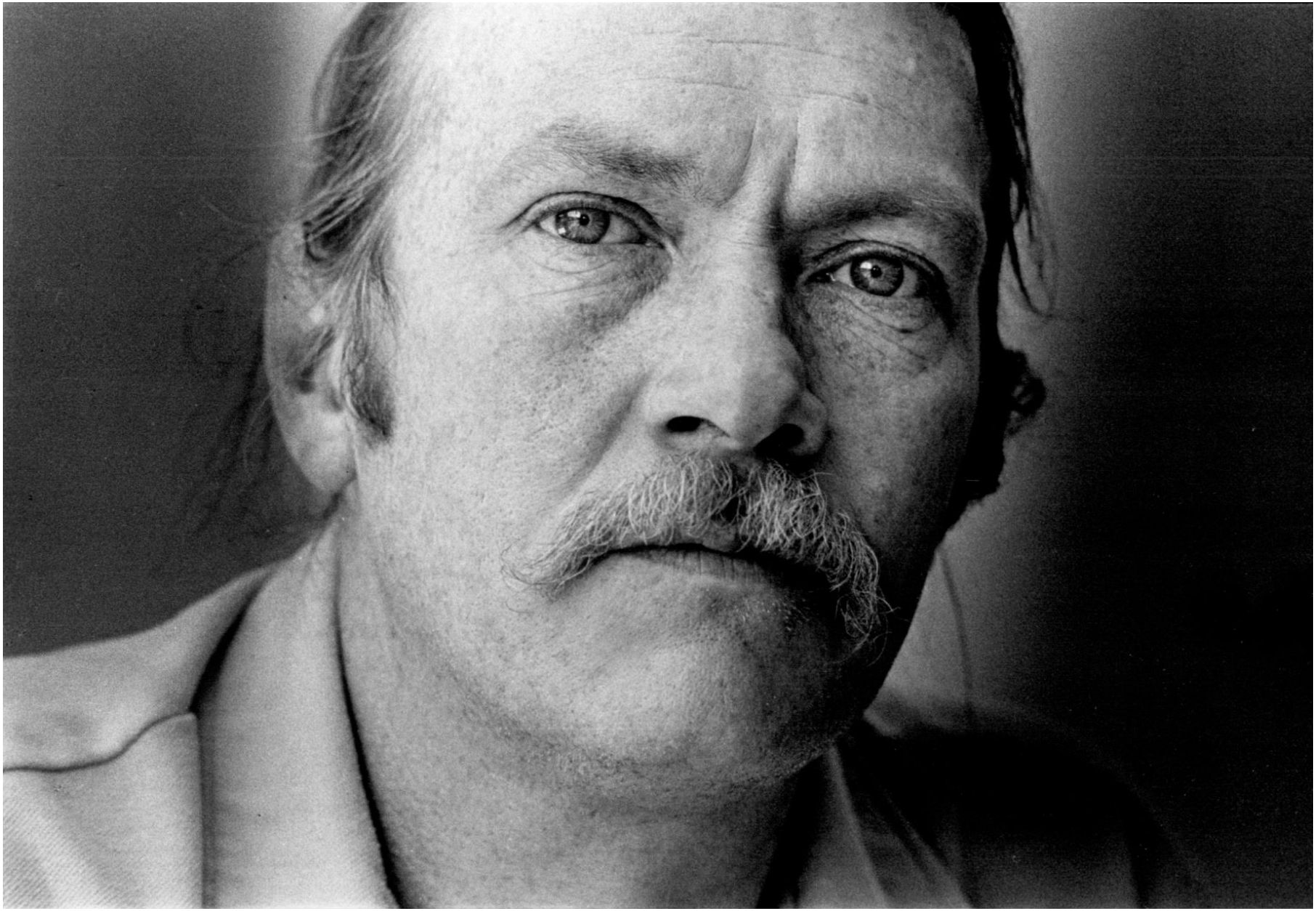
# Interpretation

.817 x Homicides (thousands)$_{t-1}$ (1.437)

Move homicides by 8,000:

Decline in death sentences: 10 per year

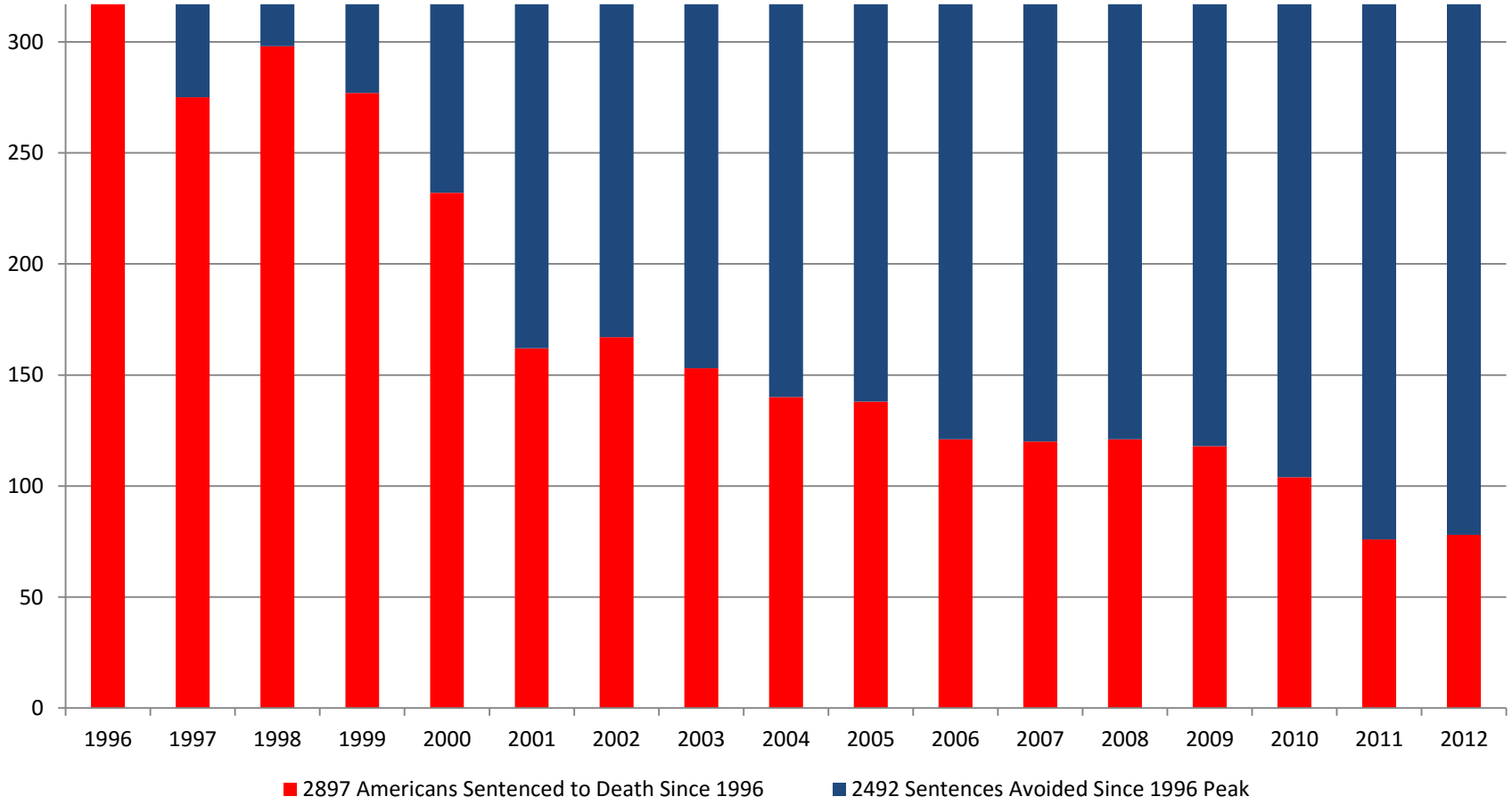
(Effect is small, and statistically insignificant)

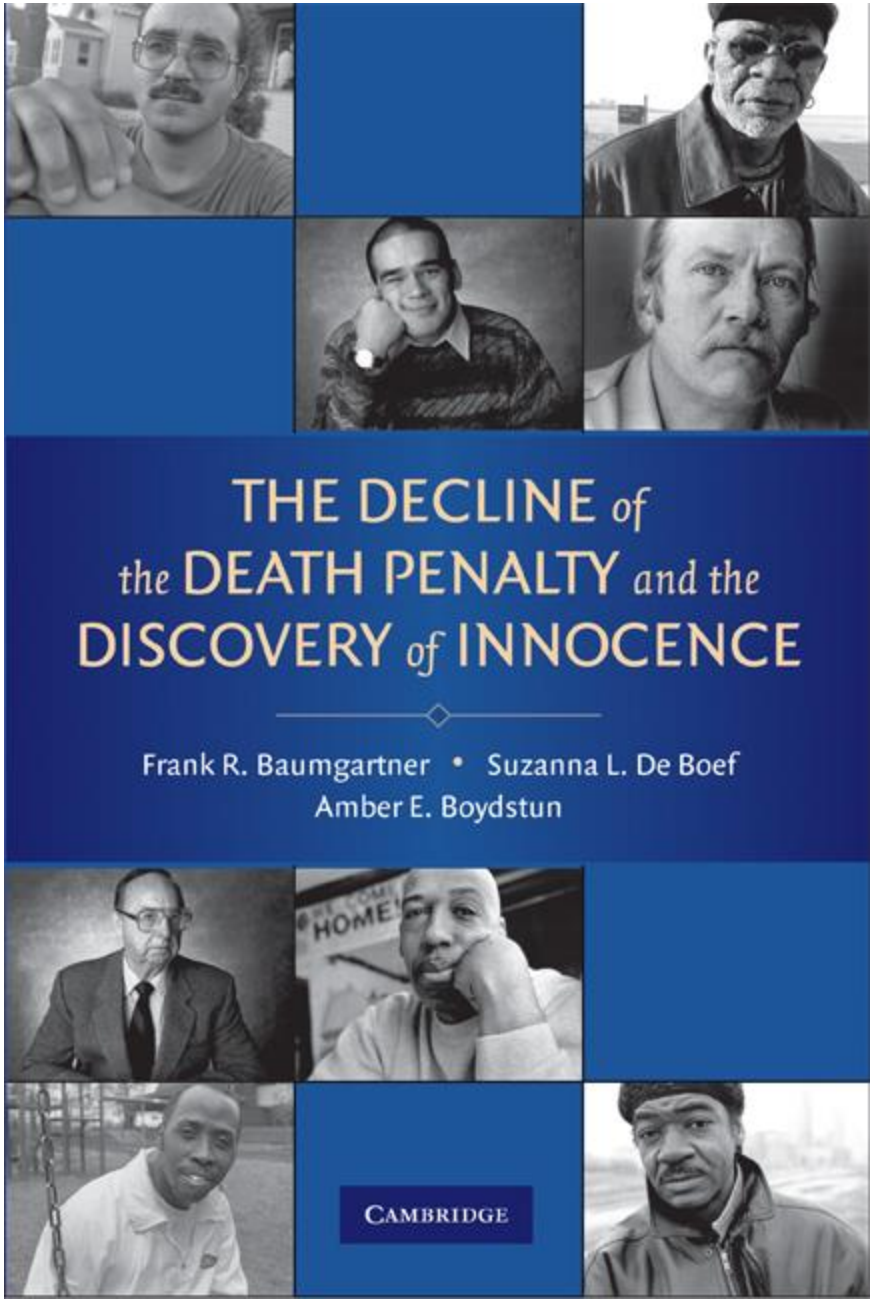


# A self-perpetuating process

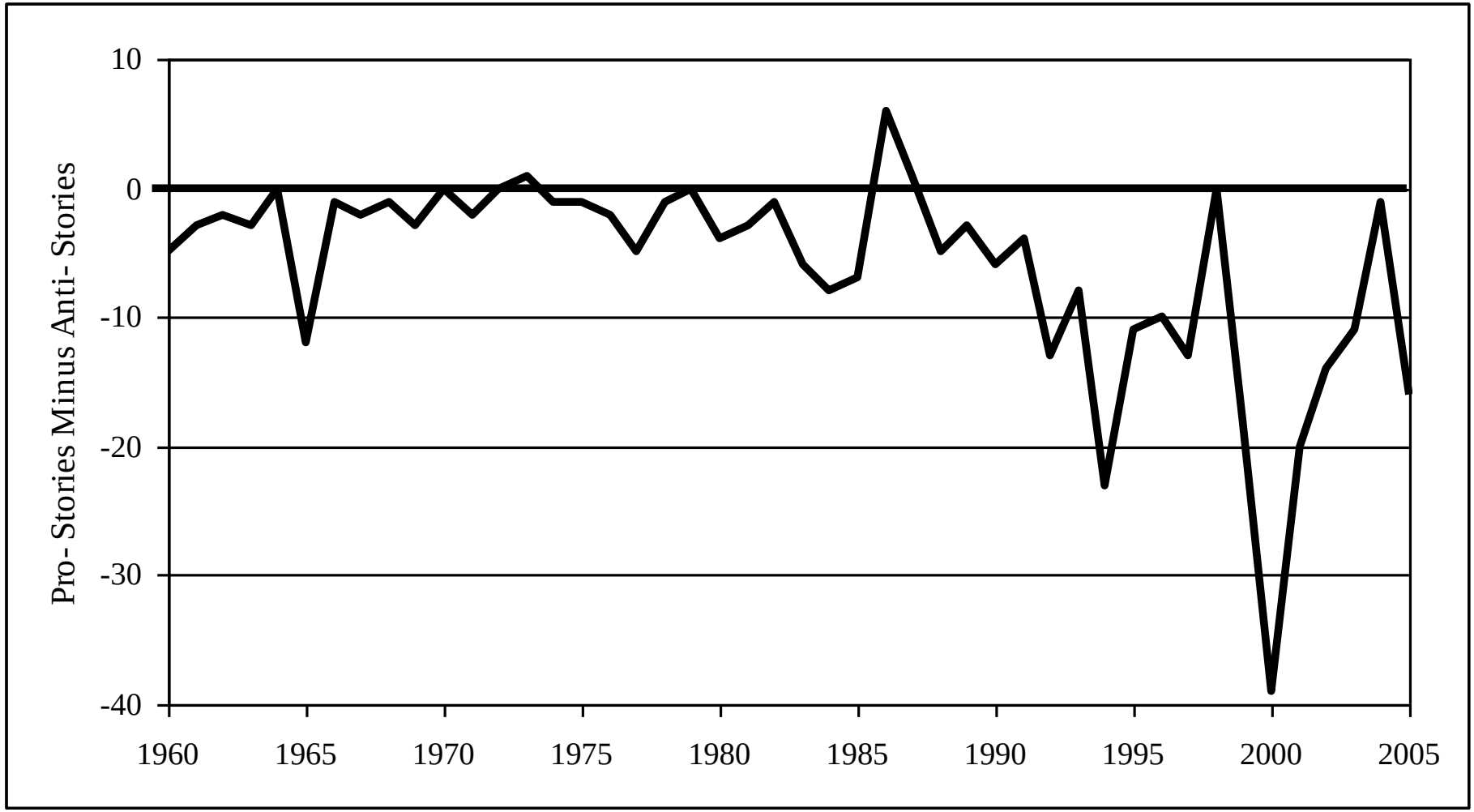
- Decline, just like the growth (1976-1995) is self-perpetuating
- So innocence claims in a particular case can have a huge multiplier effect.
- Consider that about 2,500 people are not on death row today who would have been if we continued to sentence at the rate of 1996.

# 2492 Death Sentences did not happen

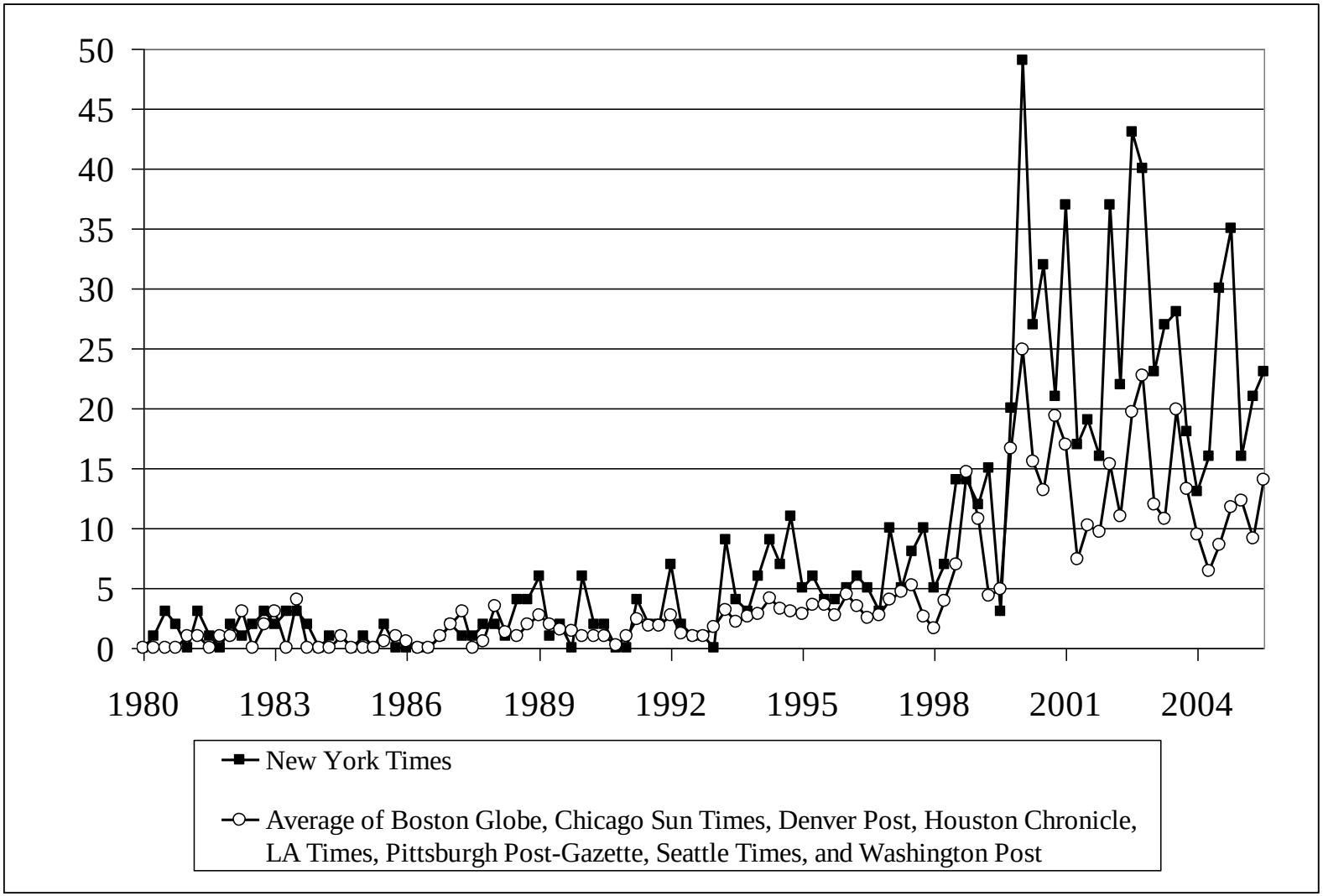



THE DECLINE of
the DEATH PENALTY and the
DISCOVERY of INNOCENCE
Frank R. Baumgartner • Suzanna L. De Boef
Amber E. Boydstun
HOME
CAMBRIDGE

# Net Tone from *Readers' Guide*



# Innocence Frame:
# *NYT* vs. Other Major Papers



# Innocence Frame:
# *NYT* vs. *Houston Chronicle*