

The Effect of Media Attention on Domestic Violence Organizations



Kristen Costa
Soc497
Spring 2004

Domestic Violence Defined:

- Sexual assault, sexual battery, or any criminal act that results in physical injury or death to a family member or members would constitute domestic violence in a legal sense. (McKenzie, 1995)
- 3 Types:
 - Spouse Abuse (Main focus of this study)
 - Child Abuse
 - Elder Abuse

History of Domestic Violence

Early History (taken from Cherlin, 2002)

- Puritans believed that government should enforce moral behavior
 - Moral behavior excluded wife beating or other violent acts by husbands
- First law against wife beating enacted in 1641 in Massachusetts

The Twentieth Century

- No attention to wife beating until mid 1970s
- By end of 1970s almost every state had enacted laws to protect women from violence
- In 1980, Congress proposed legislation to provide support for victims of domestic violence

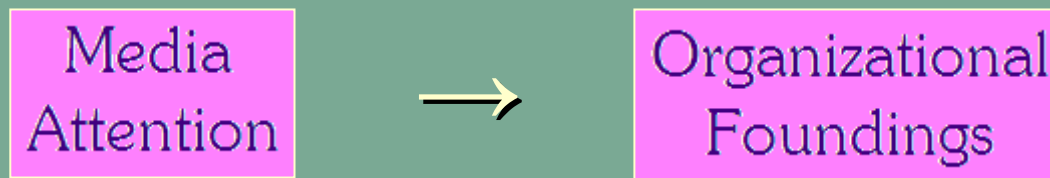
Research Question

- What causes domestic violence organizations to form?



Hypothesis

- This research hypothesizes that media attention influences organizational founding.
- Since the media glamorizes issues and makes them appear more prevalent than they truly are, individuals will feel the need to form an organization to combat the issue.



Data and Methods

- Government Attention
 - Congressional Hearings
 - Policy Agendas Project
- Media Attention
 - New York Times Articles
 - New York Times Historical Index (1851-2001)
- Key Domestic Violence Events/ Women's Rights Events
- Domestic Violence Rate
 - Intimate Partner Homicide
 - Rennison, 2000
- Women's Rights Organizations
 - "Women's Rights" Keyword
 - Associations Unlimited

Keywords

Focal

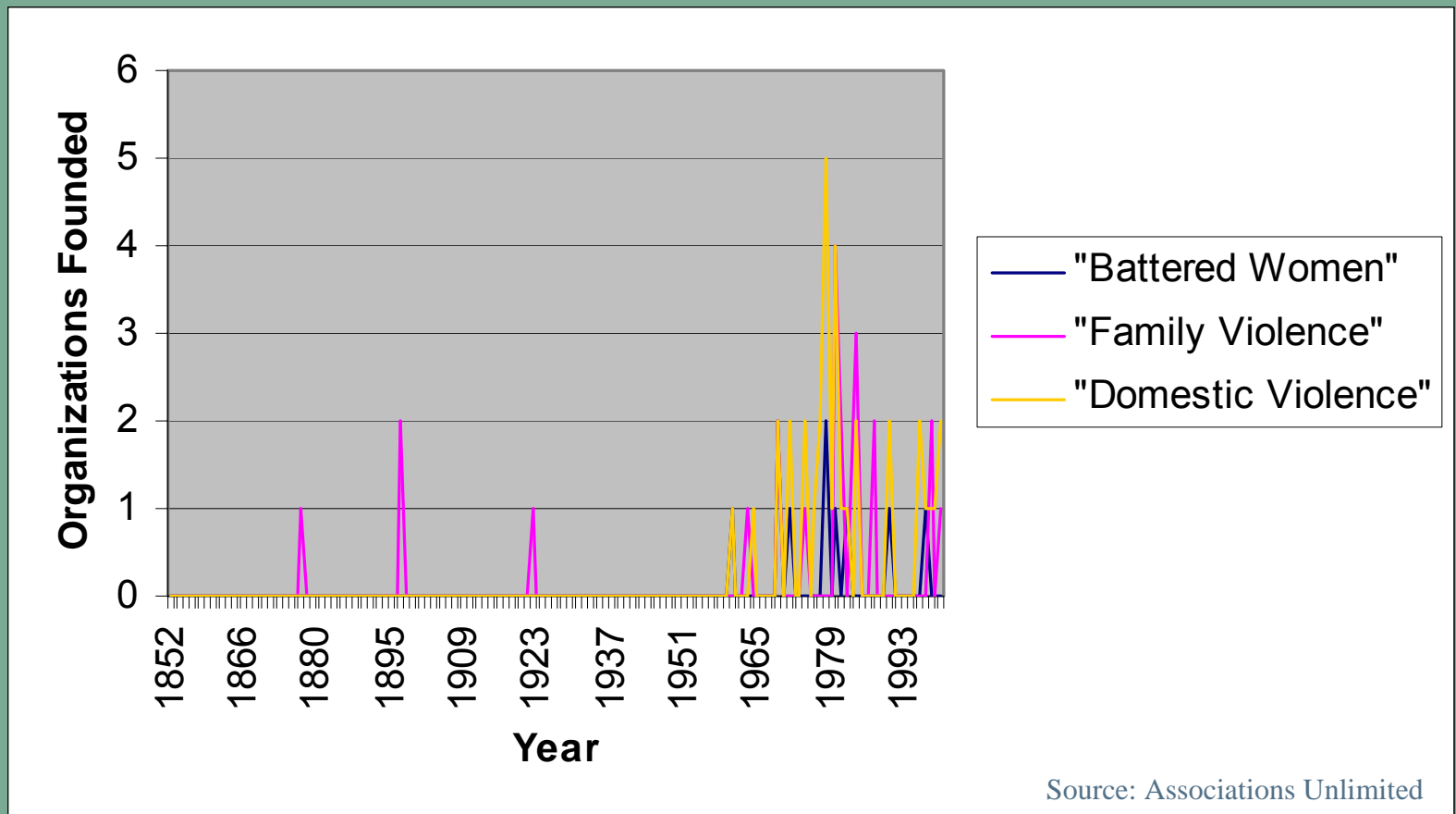
- “Family Violence”
- “Domestic Violence”
- “Battered Women”

Relevant

- “Dating Violence”
- “In-home Abuse”
- “Intimate Abuse”
- “Intimate Violence”
- “Spouse Abuse”
- “Relationship Violence”
- “Battered Wife”

Organizational Foundings

- Boomed in the late 1970s

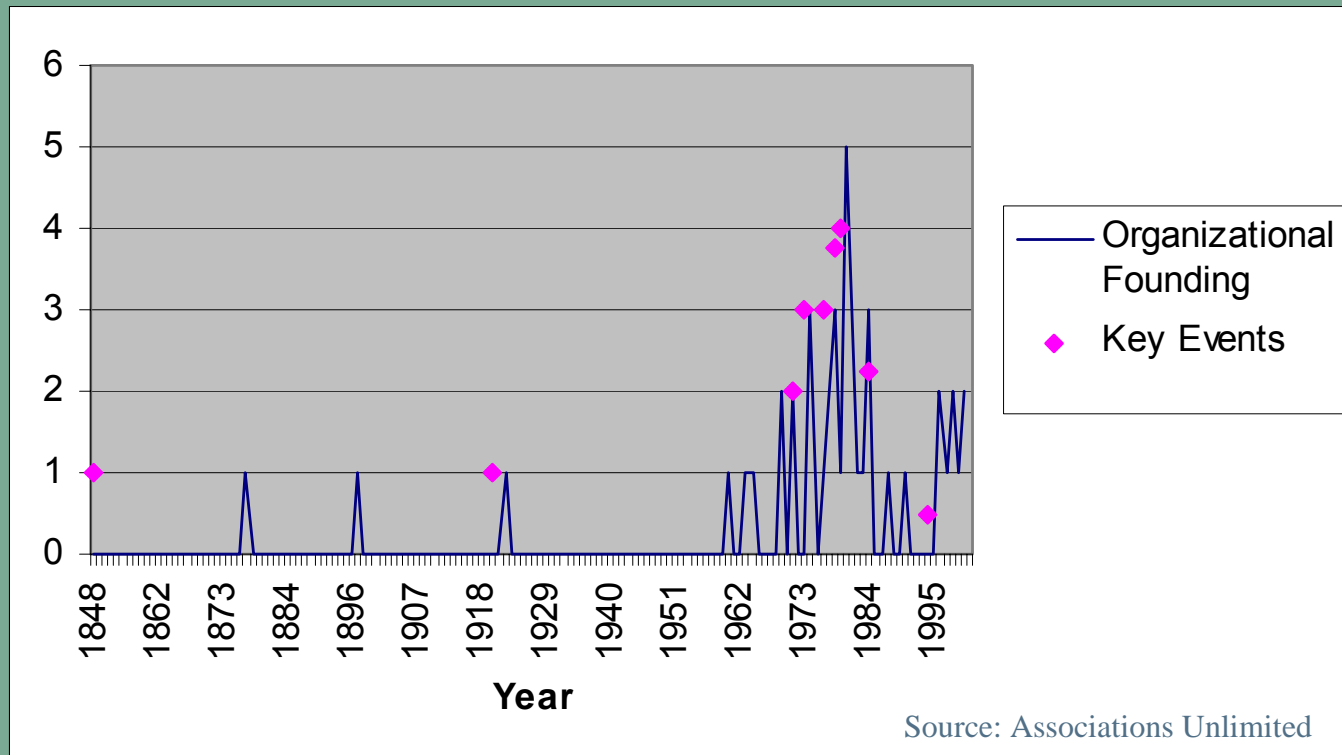


Key Women's Rights Events

- 1848- 1st Women's Rights Convention
- 1920- 19th amendment
- 1971- First "speak-out" on rape
Shelter movement started in England
- 1973- 1st shelter for abused women in Phoenix, AZ
- 1976- NOW Task Force founded
Bruno v. McGuire
- 1978- NCADV was founded
- 1979- NYC family law
- 1984- Family Violence Prevention and Services Act
- 1994- OJ Simpson Trial

Key Events

- Both became prominent in the 1970s



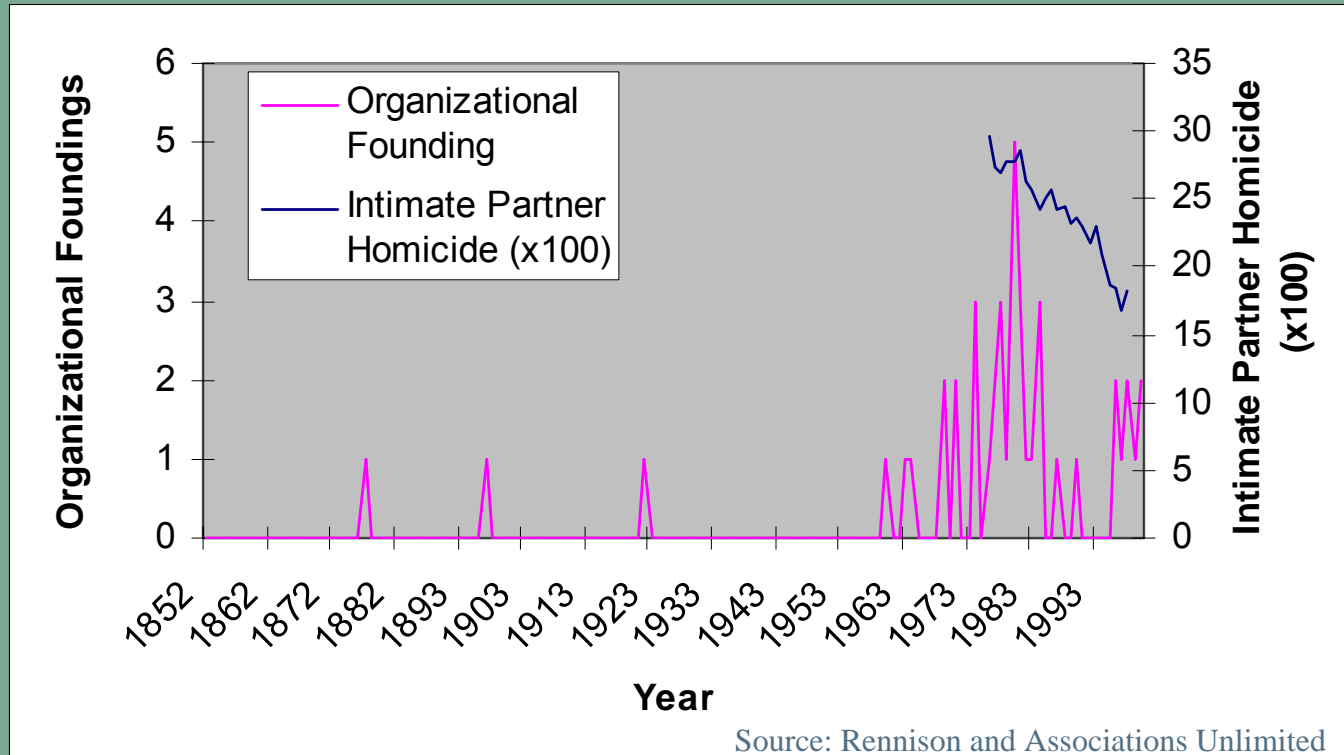
Key Events



Organizational Foundings

Domestic Violence Rate

- Positive relationship ($r = 0.316$)



Domestic
Violence Rate



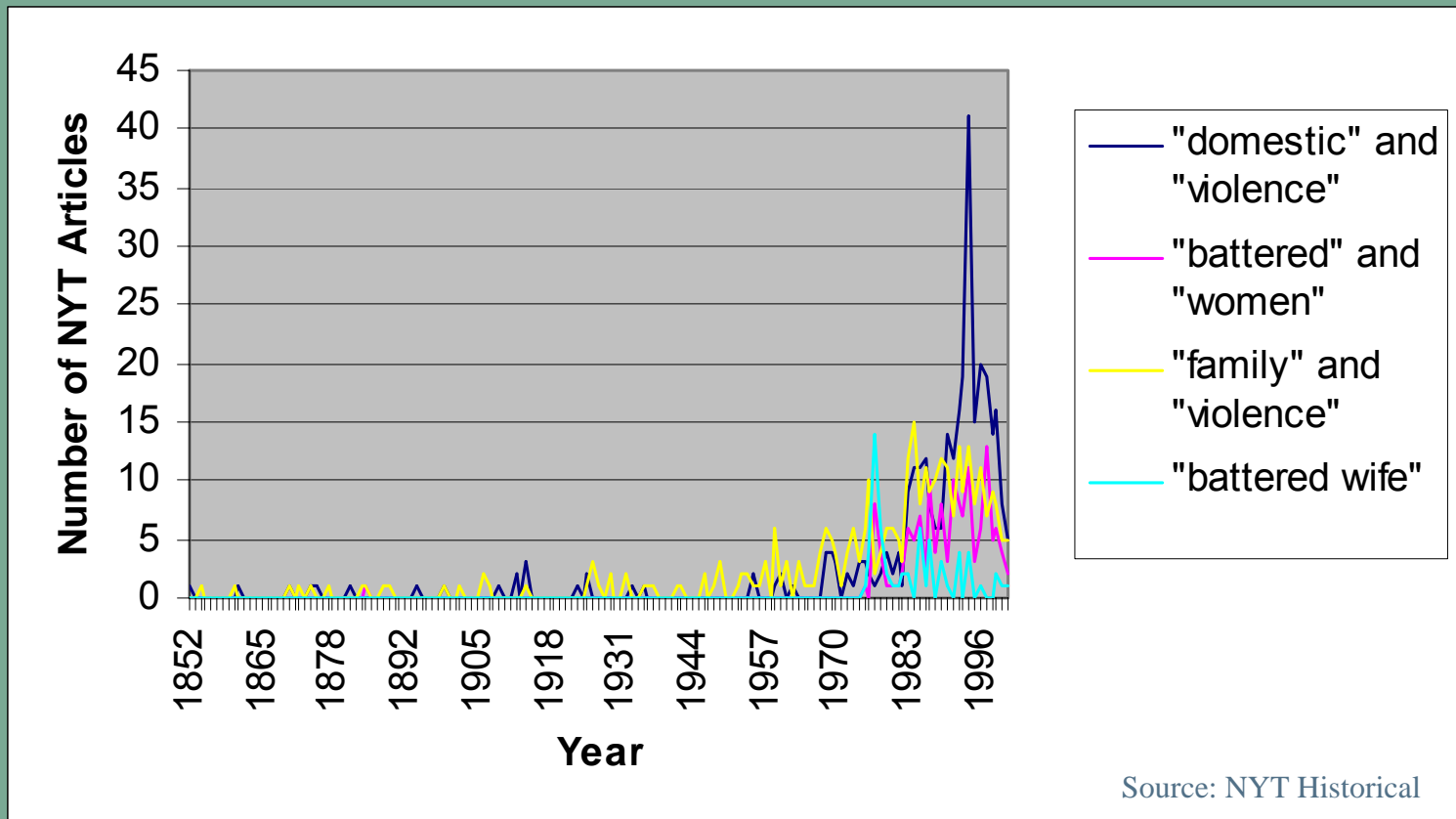
Organizational
Foundings

Domestic Violence Rate

- According to Pleck (1987), periods of attention to domestic violence have less to do with the prevalence of violence than with the power of various political and social groups
- The previous graph reaffirms this observation

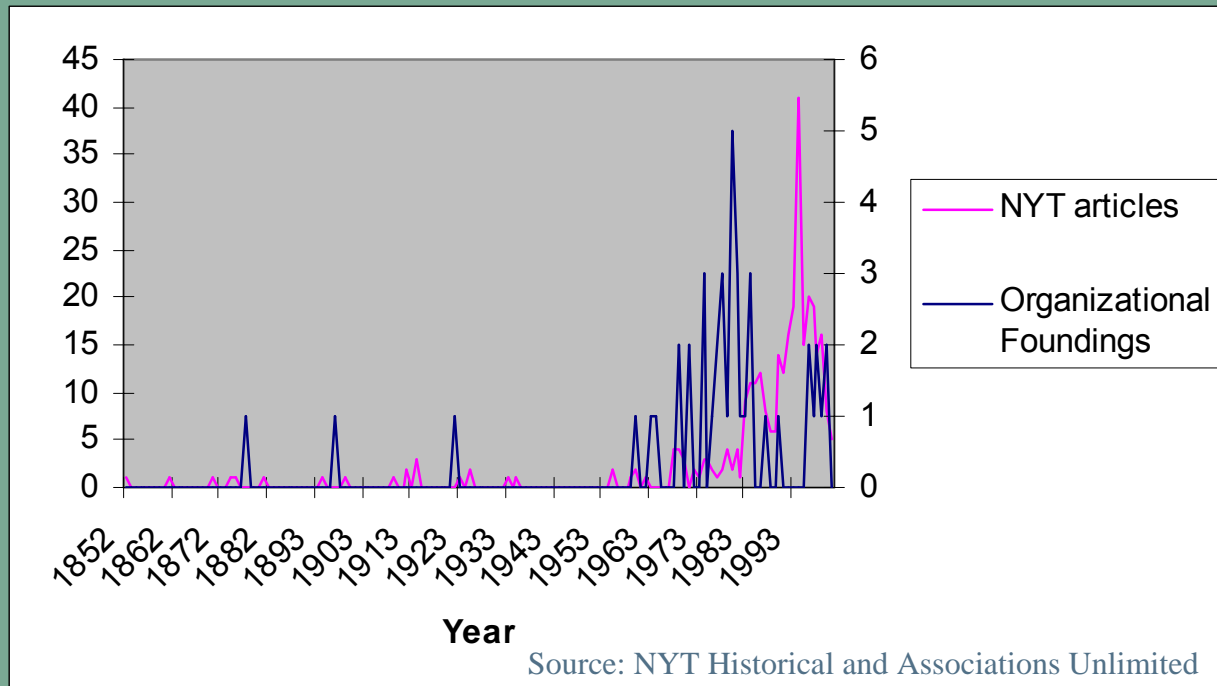
Media Attention

- Boomed in the early 1990s



Media Attention

- Shows that organizational foundings precede media attention



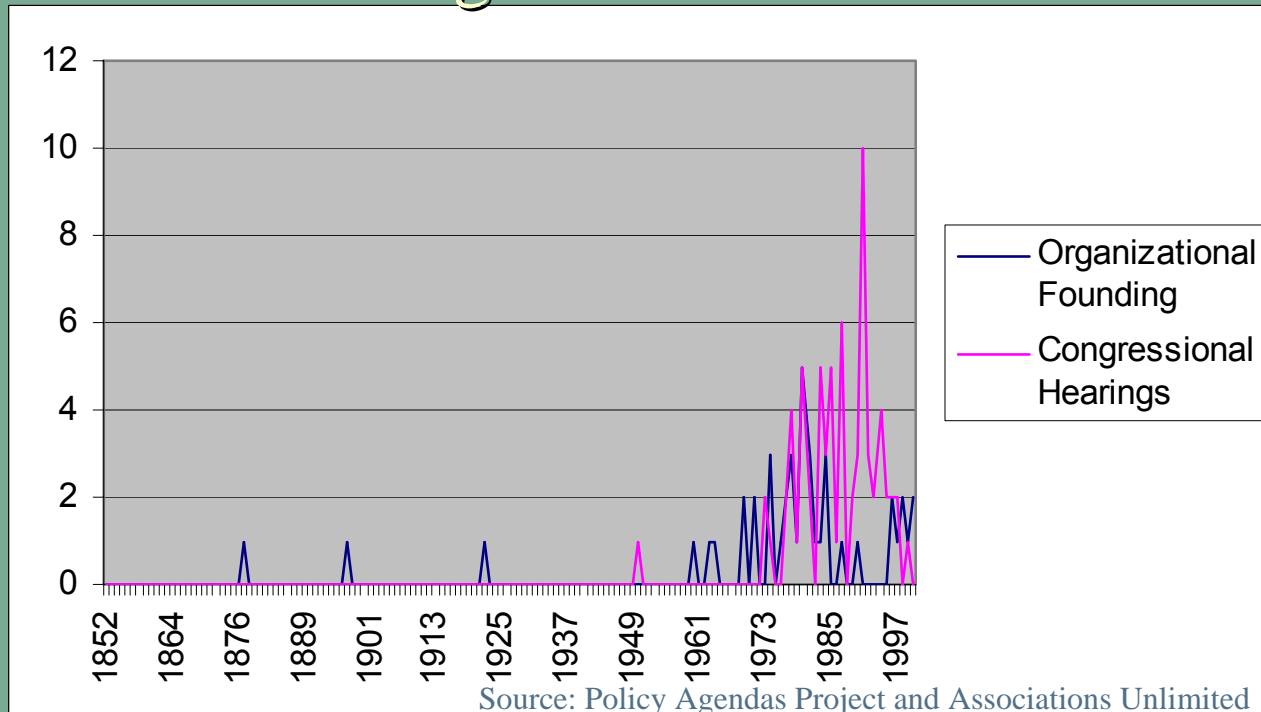
Organizational Foundings



Media Attention

Congressional Hearings

- Organizational foundings peaked before congressional hearings



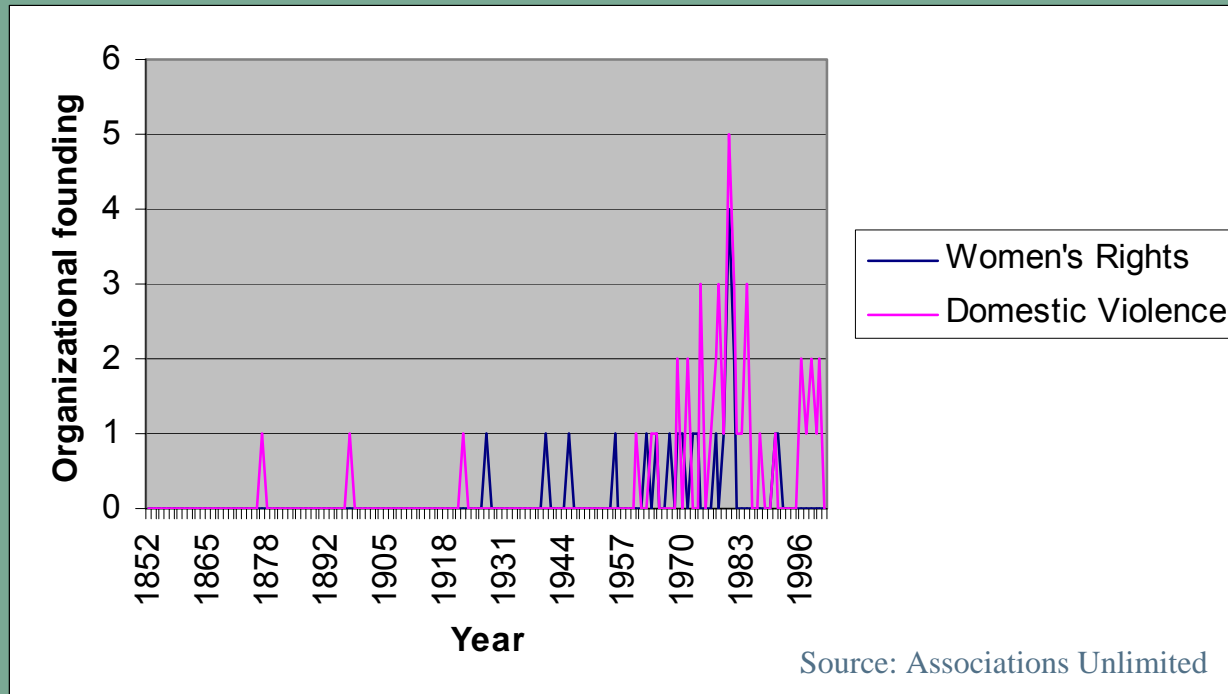
Organizational
Foundings



Congressional
Hearings

Women's Rights Organizations

- Domestic violence organizational foundings follow women's rights organizational foundings



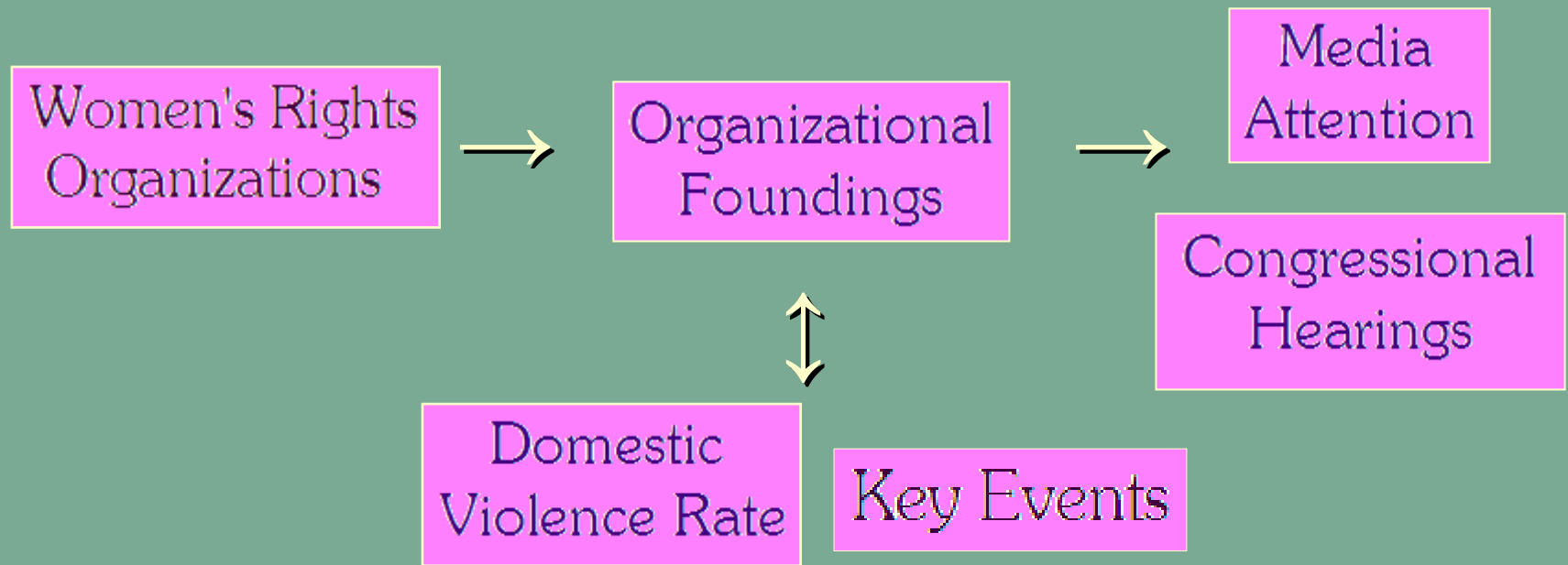
Women's Rights
Organizations



Organizational
Foundings

Conclusions

- The hypothesis of this study was not proven



- Women's rights organizations precede domestic violence organizations

Limitations

- Domestic violence rate measure (intimate partner homicide)
 - Not the most precise measure of domestic violence
 - Homicide can be recorded
- Government attention measure (congressional hearings)
 - Domestic violence laws are mostly at the state level

Bibliography

- Associations Unlimited Online Database. (2004). Gale Research Co. <http://www.galegroup.com>.
- Berkeley, Kathleen C. *The Women's Liberation Movement in America*. (Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1999), 53-143.
- Cherlin, Andrew J. (2002). *Public and Private Families*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Gelb, Joyce and Palley, Marian Lief. *Women and Public Policies* (Virginia: The University Press of Virginia, 1996), 219-231.
- Lorena Bobbitt Returns to Former Work as Manicurist. (1995). *The Los Angeles Times*, 17.
- McKenzie, V. Michael, PhD., CAC. *Domestic Violence in America*. (Virginia, Brunswick Publishing Corporation, 1995), 5-24.
- New York Times Historical Index (1851-2001). Internet. Available. <http://proquest.umi.com>.
- NiCarthy, Ginny, Merriam, Karen, Coffman, Sandra. *Talking It Out: A Guide to Groups for Abused Women*. (Seattle, The Seal Press, 1984), 10-15.
- Pleck, E. (1987). *Domestic Tyranny: The making of American social policy against family violence from colonial times to the present*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Policy Agendas Project (2004). Internet. Available. <http://www.policyagendas.org/>.
- Rennison, Callie Marie, PhD. (2000). Intimate Partner Violence. *Bureau of Justice Statistics: Special Report*, 1-11.