

A Study of the Federal Crime Budget, 1947-1999



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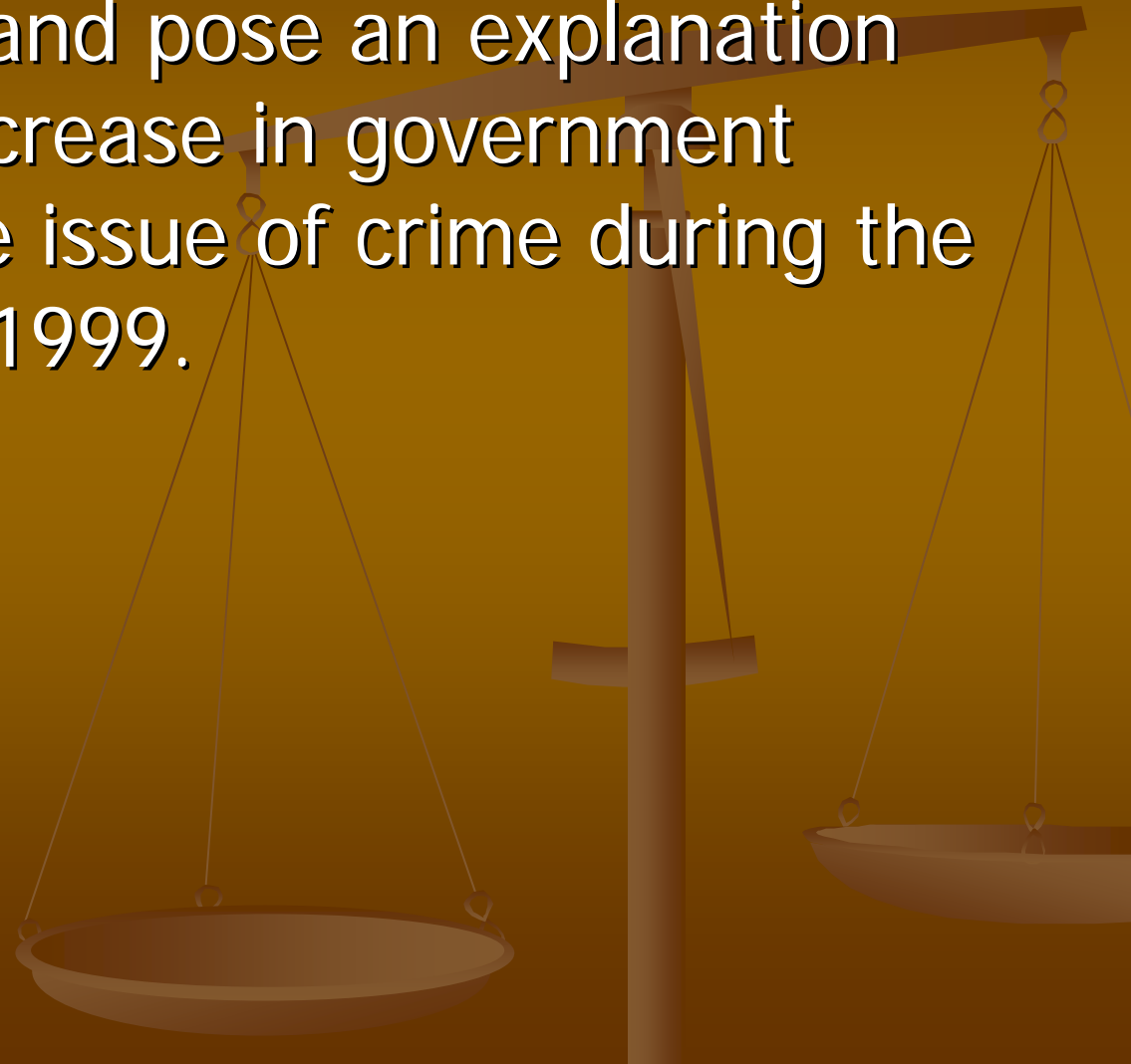
PLSC/SOC 497B

Final Presentation

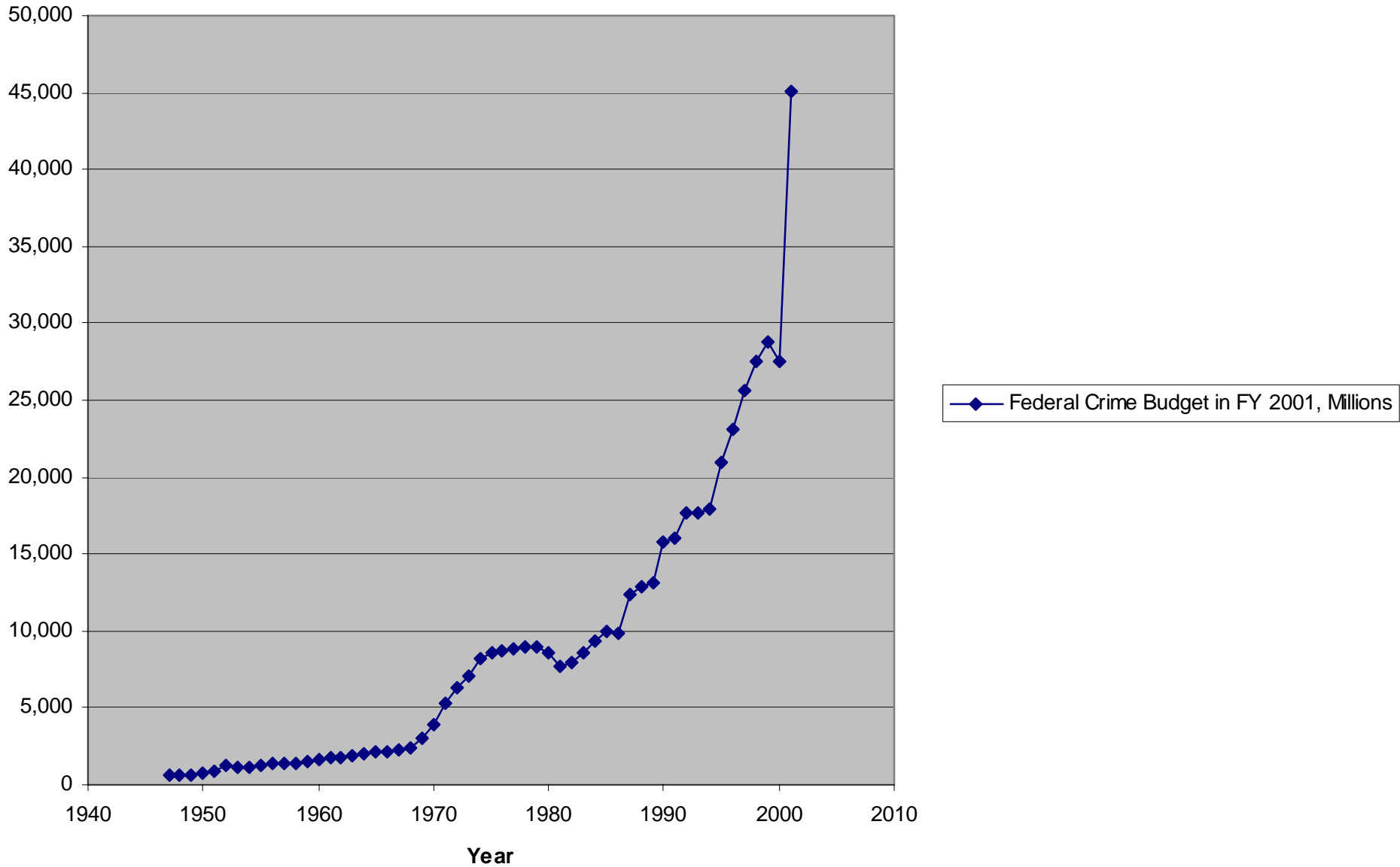
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Purpose

- To understand and pose an explanation for the steep increase in government spending on the issue of crime during the period 1947 to 1999.



Federal Crime Budget in FY 2001, Millions

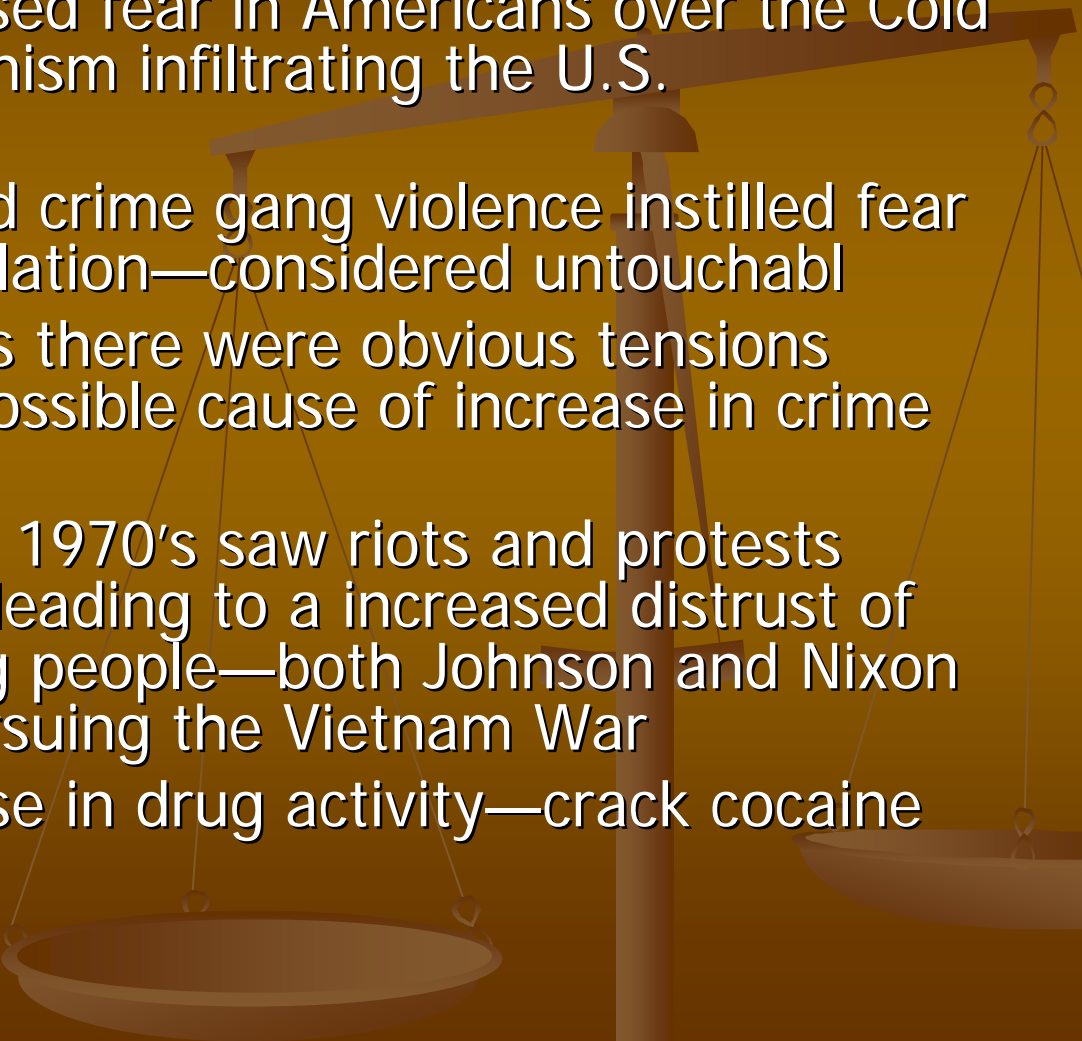


Introduction



- The primary aims of the criminal justice system are to “state, restate, and reinforce prevailing norms.” (Tonry, 99)
- Since the 1200’s the crime rate in western countries has been consistently showing a decreasing pattern until 1950 where there is a slight overall increase... this pattern is known as a “reverse J-shaped” curve. (Tonry, 104)
- During the 1950’s and 1960’s crime began to move from being a state issue to more of a federal issue

Introduction (con't)

- 1950's saw an increased fear in Americans over the Cold War—fear of Communism infiltrating the U.S. Government
 - Late 1950's Organized crime gang violence instilled fear in the American population—considered untouchabl
 - During the late 1960's there were obvious tensions between the races, possible cause of increase in crime rate.
 - Late 1960's and early 1970's saw riots and protests against Vietnam war leading to a increased distrust of government by young people—both Johnson and Nixon were attacked for pursuing the Vietnam War
 - 1980's saw an increase in drug activity—crack cocaine epidemic
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Hypothesis

- Pre 1975—the increase in crime rate in the late 1960's early 1970's was illustrated by an increase in crime in the media. Both media attention and the crime rate cause an increase in government attention causing an increase in federal spending.
- Post 1975—the increase in media attention in crime caused an increased interest in crime by organizations. Both organizations and media influenced an increase in government activity causing an increase in government spending.

Data & Methods

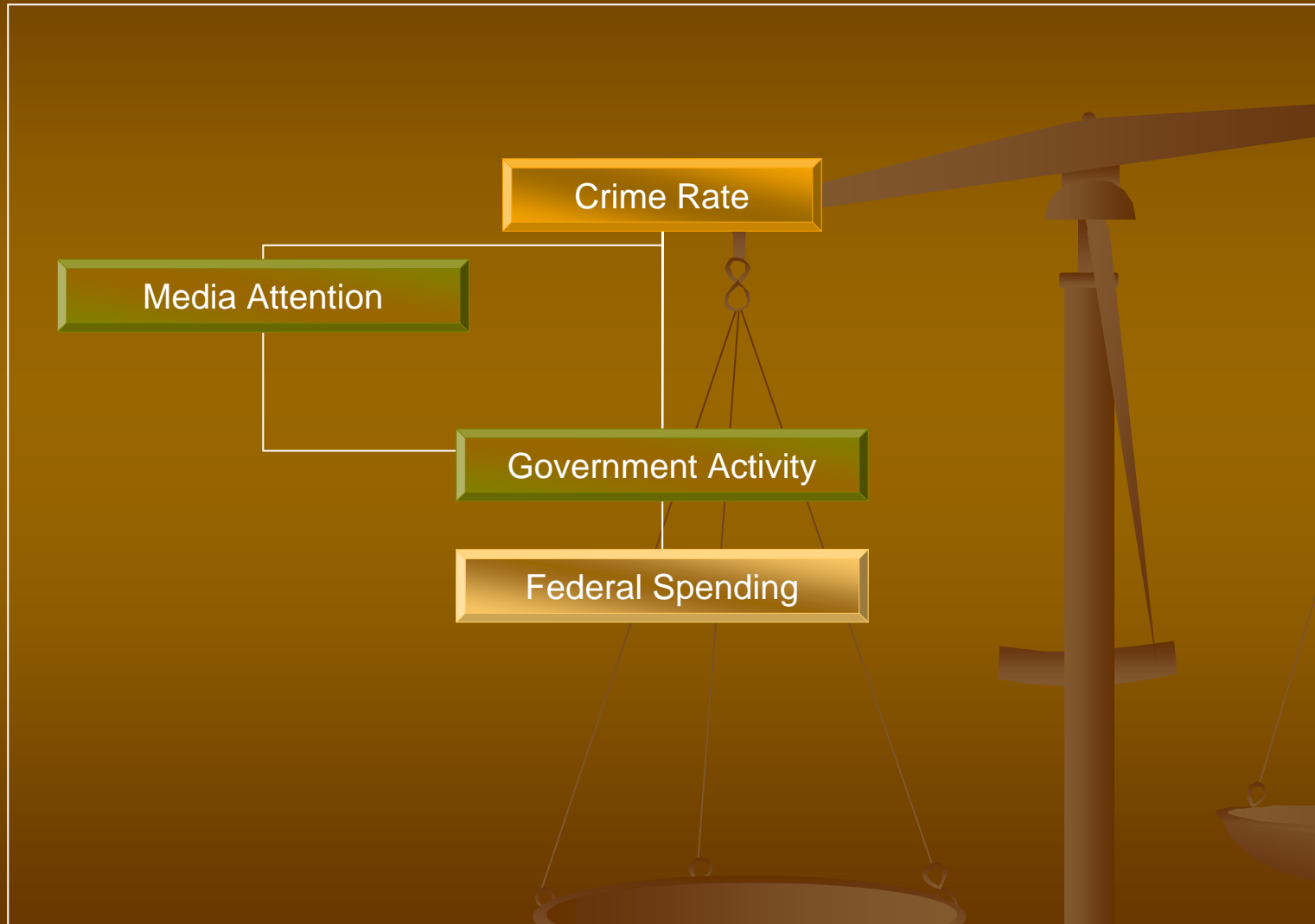


- Crime Rate—source FBI Uniform Crime Reports
 - I used the homicide rate because it is arguably the most reliable measure of crime.
 - Most FBI Index Crimes (homicide, theft, burglary, rape, robbery, assault) follow a broadly similar trend.
 - Rates rose steeply from 1960 to 1980, then fell until 1986 when they began to rise once again until topping off in 1990-1991 and starting a consistent downward trend
- Congressional Hearings—source Policy Agendas Project 2004
 - I looked at the policy area “Law, Crime and Family Issues”, read through each hearing so to simply eliminate all hearings on the subject of family issues.
- Federal Crime Budget—source Policy Agendas Project 2004 topic code 750 in Constant FY 2001 Millions
 - 750 Administration of Justice—includes law enforcement activities, judicial and litigation activities, correctional activities and criminal justice assistance.

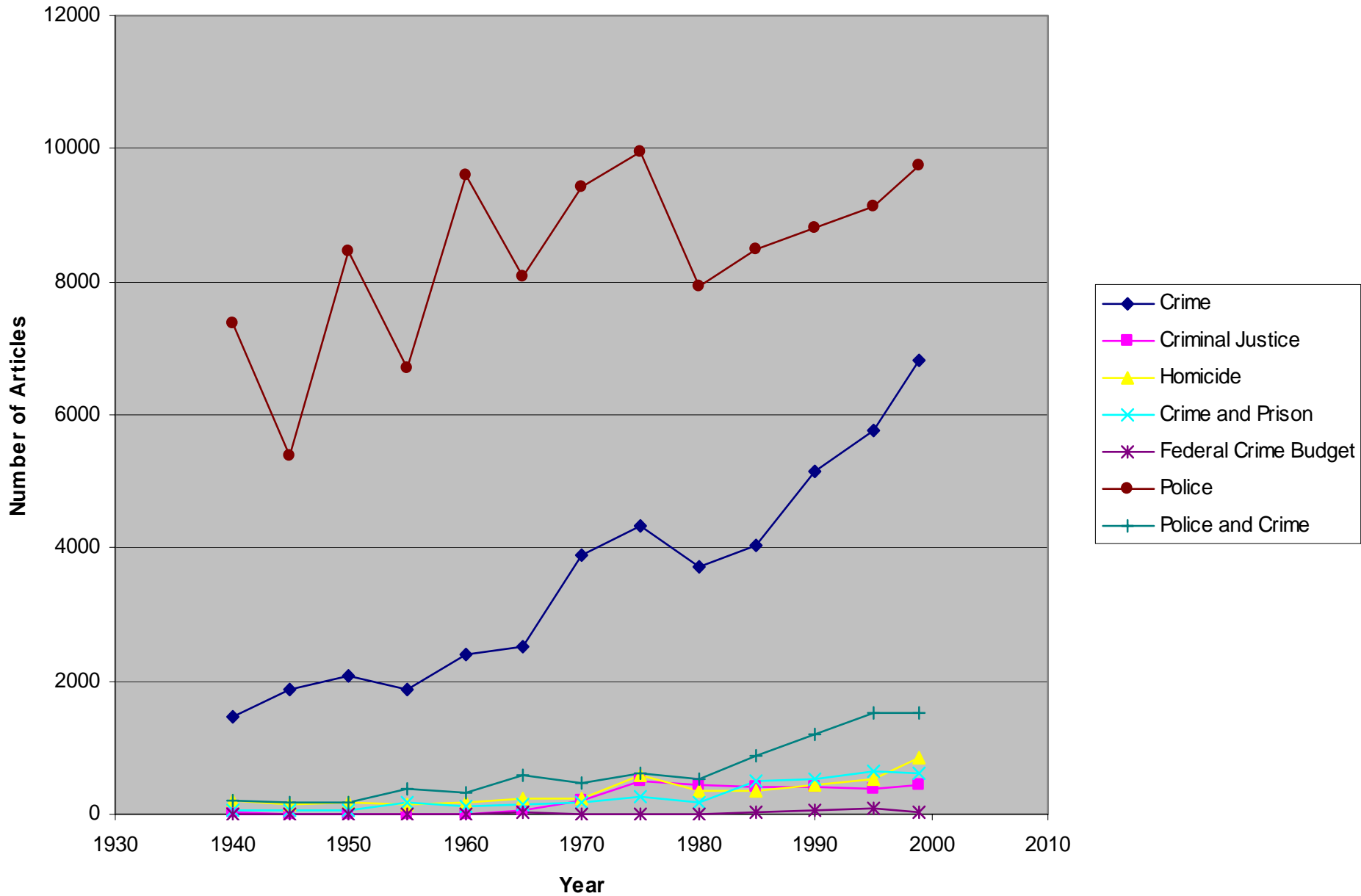
Data & Methods (con't)

- National Organization Density and Foundings—source Associations Unlimited 2004—subject descriptor “crime”
 - Backward projection to look at Density and Founding rates between years 1947 to 1999.
 - Divided organizations by professional and interest organization
 - by reading organization entry decided whether organization membership based on occupation—if ‘yes’ coded as professional organization, if ‘no’ coded as interest organization
- Media Attention—source New York Times Historical
 - Keywords– Police and Crime, Crime, Criminal Justice, Homicide, Federal Crime Budget, Crime and Prison, and Police
 - Similar upward trend found with all keywords

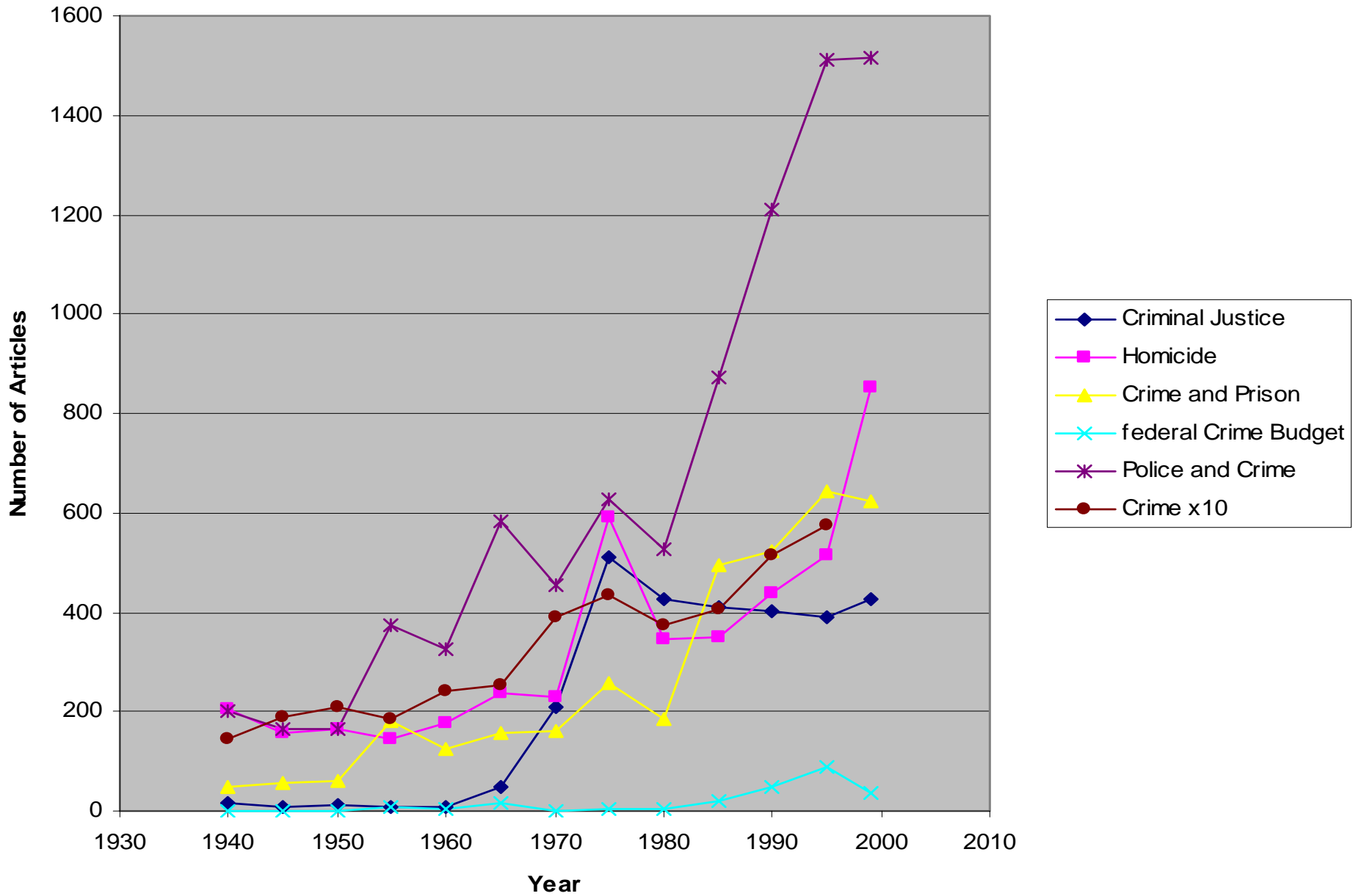
Schematic Model—Pre 1975



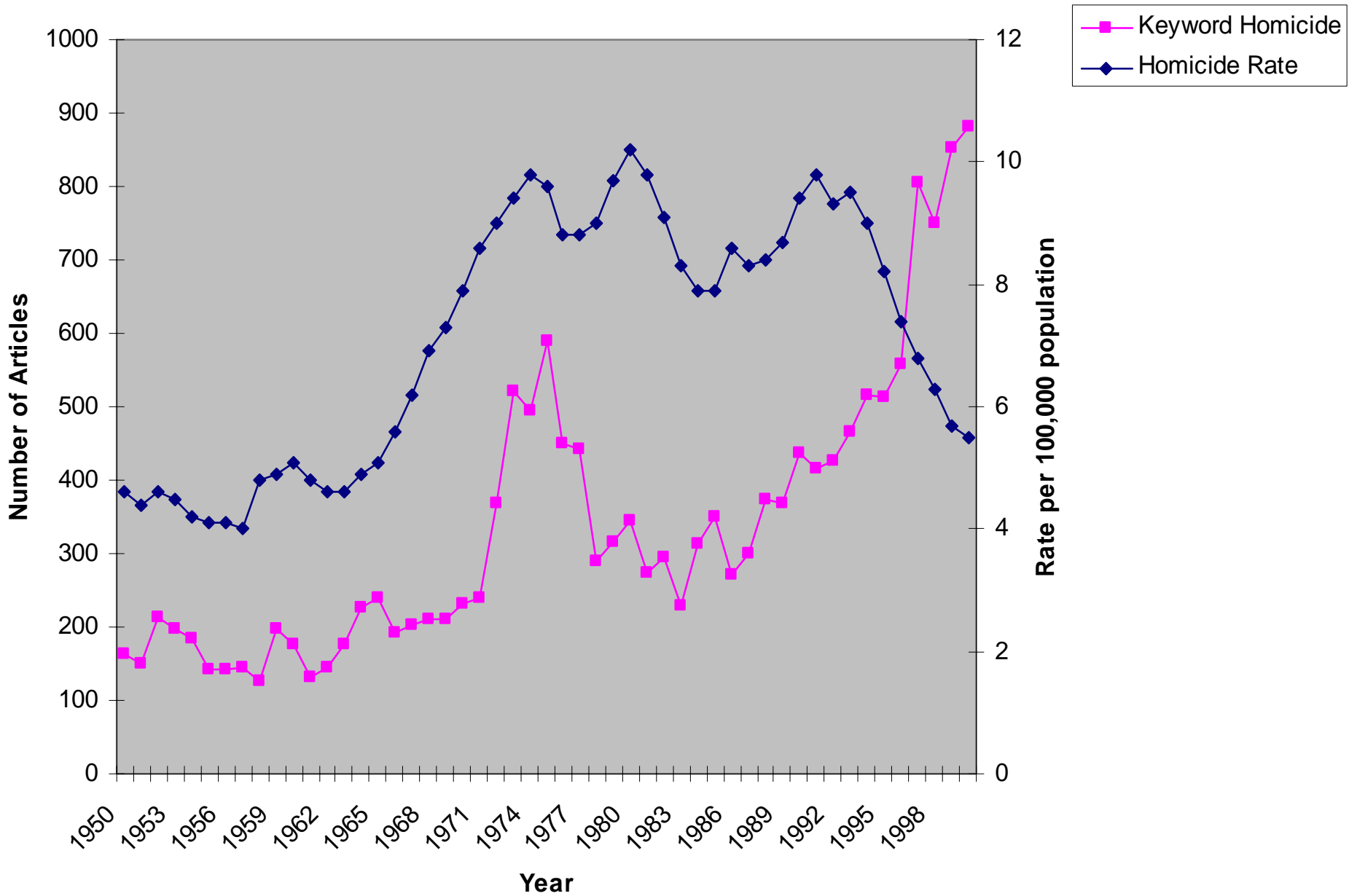
Media Attention



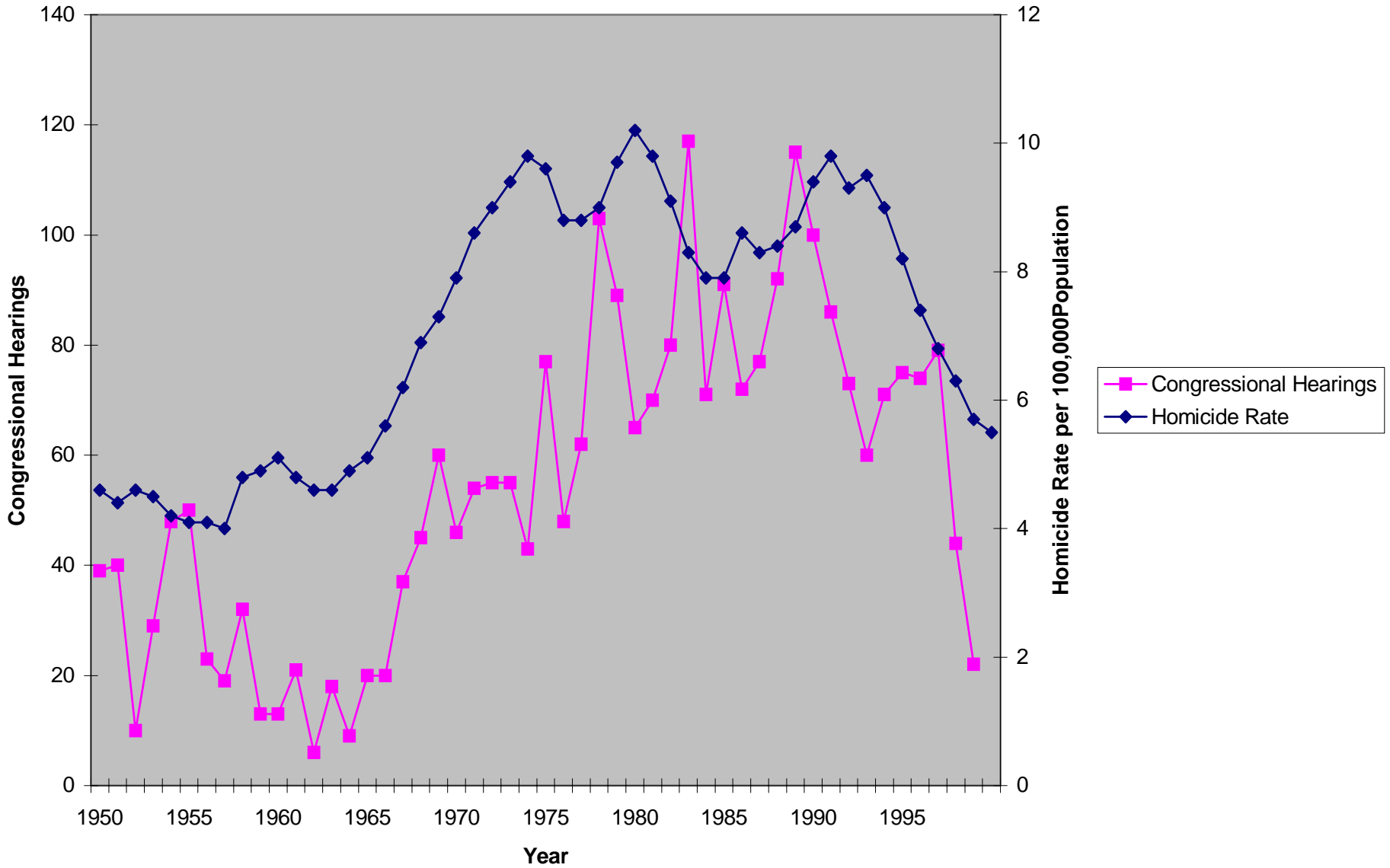
Media Attention



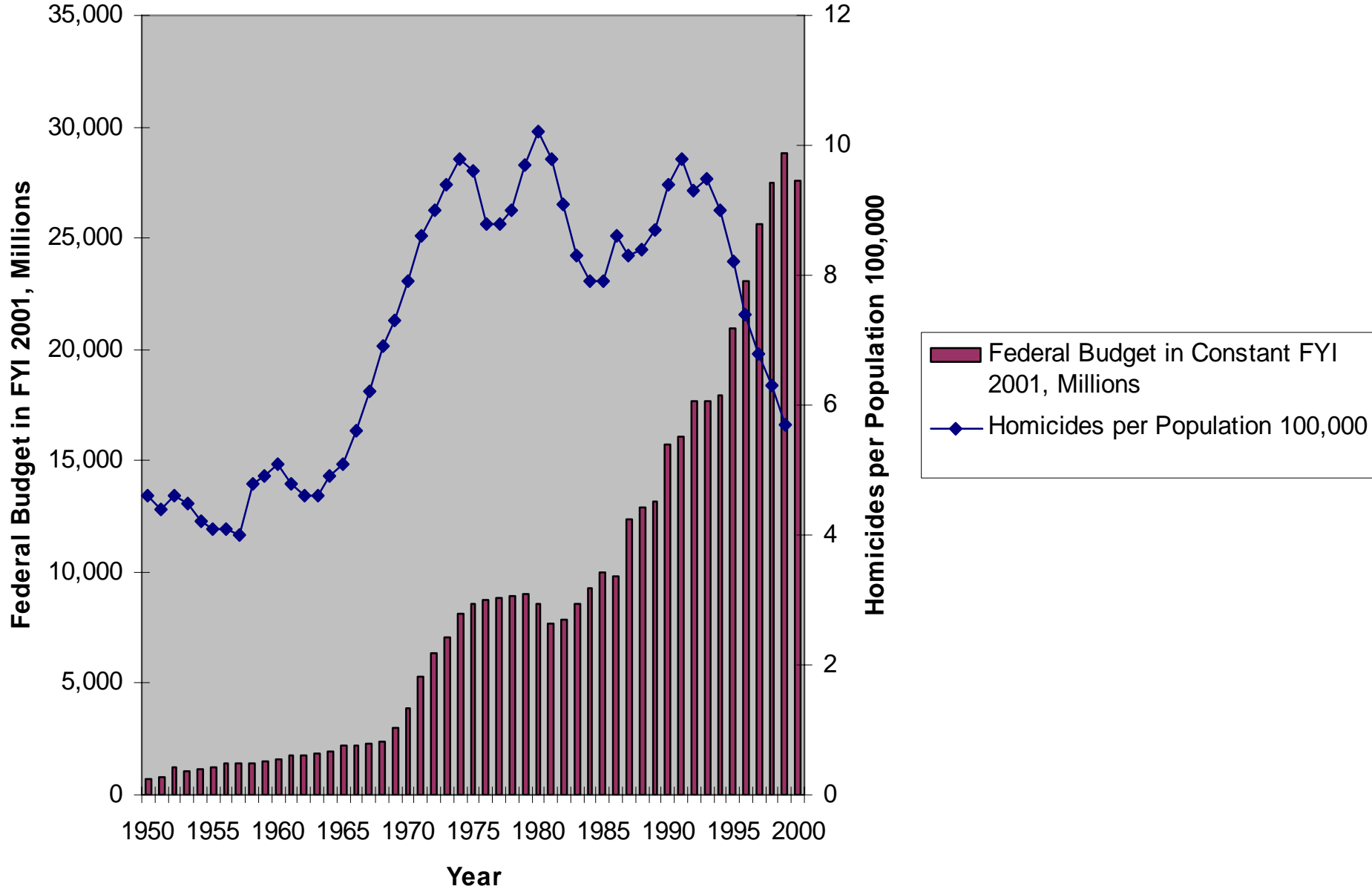
Comparing Homicide Rate and Media Attention



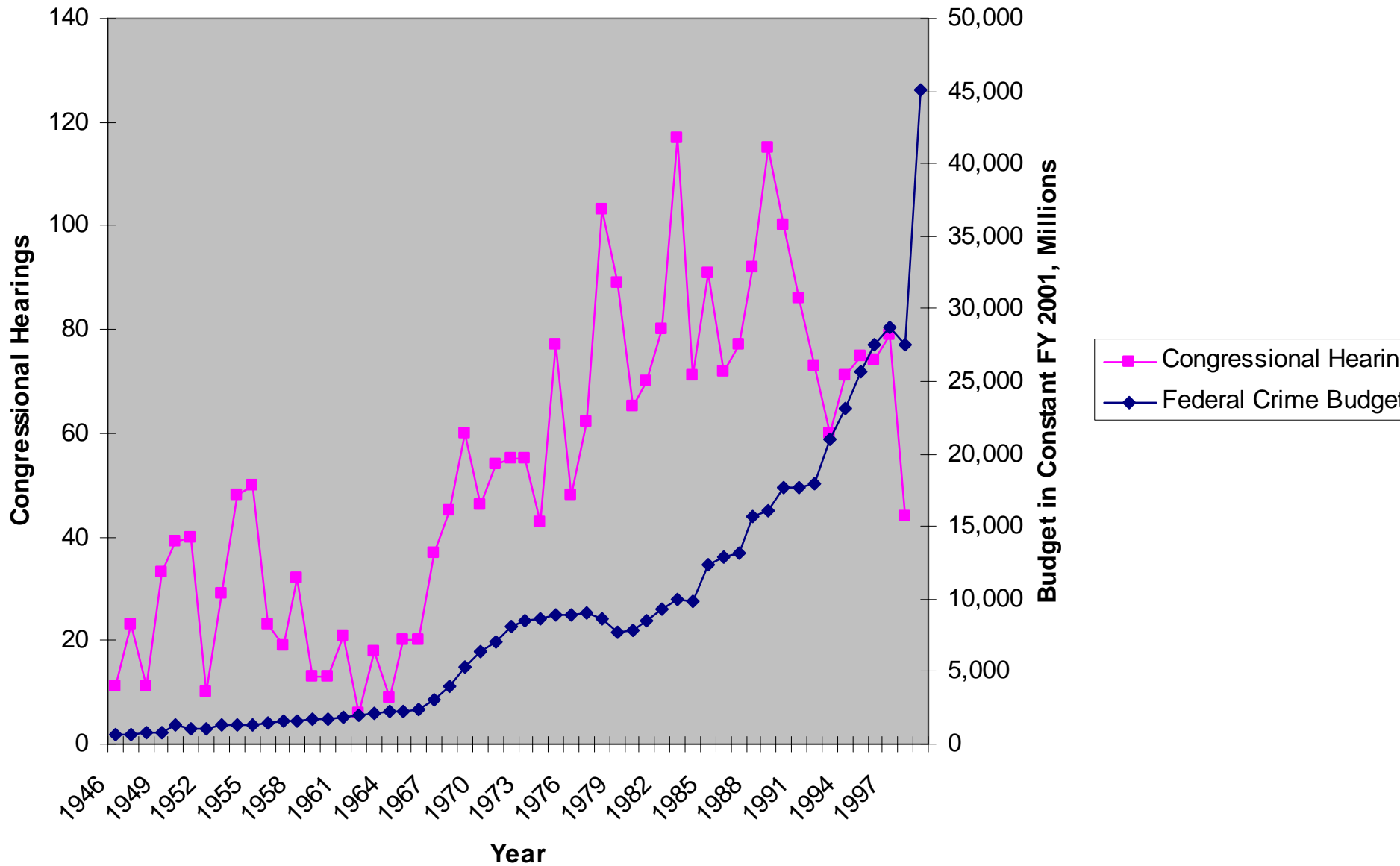
Comparing Government Activity with the Homicide Rate



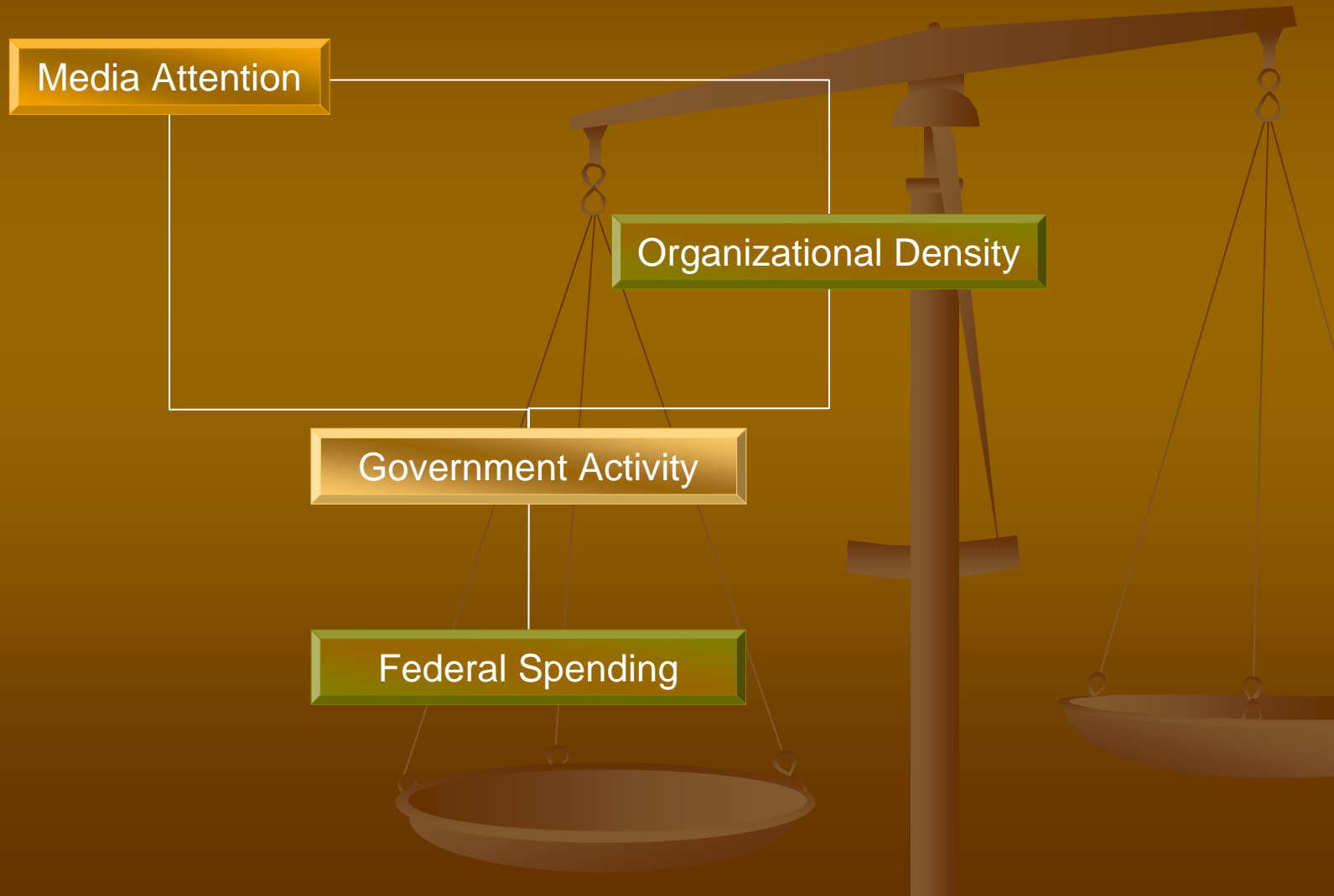
Comparing Federal Crime Budget and the Homicide Rate



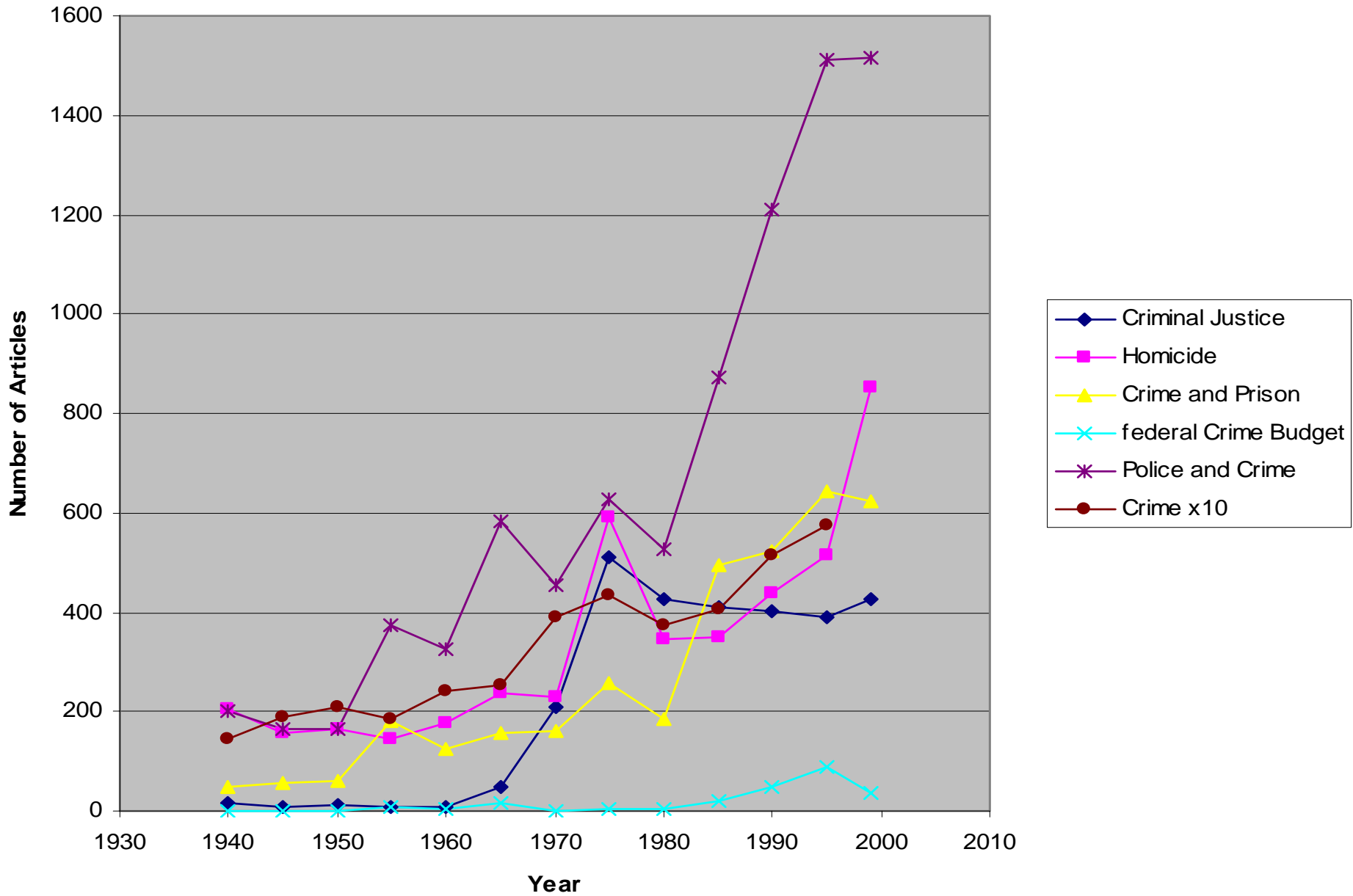
Comparing the Federal Crime Budget and Congressional Hearings



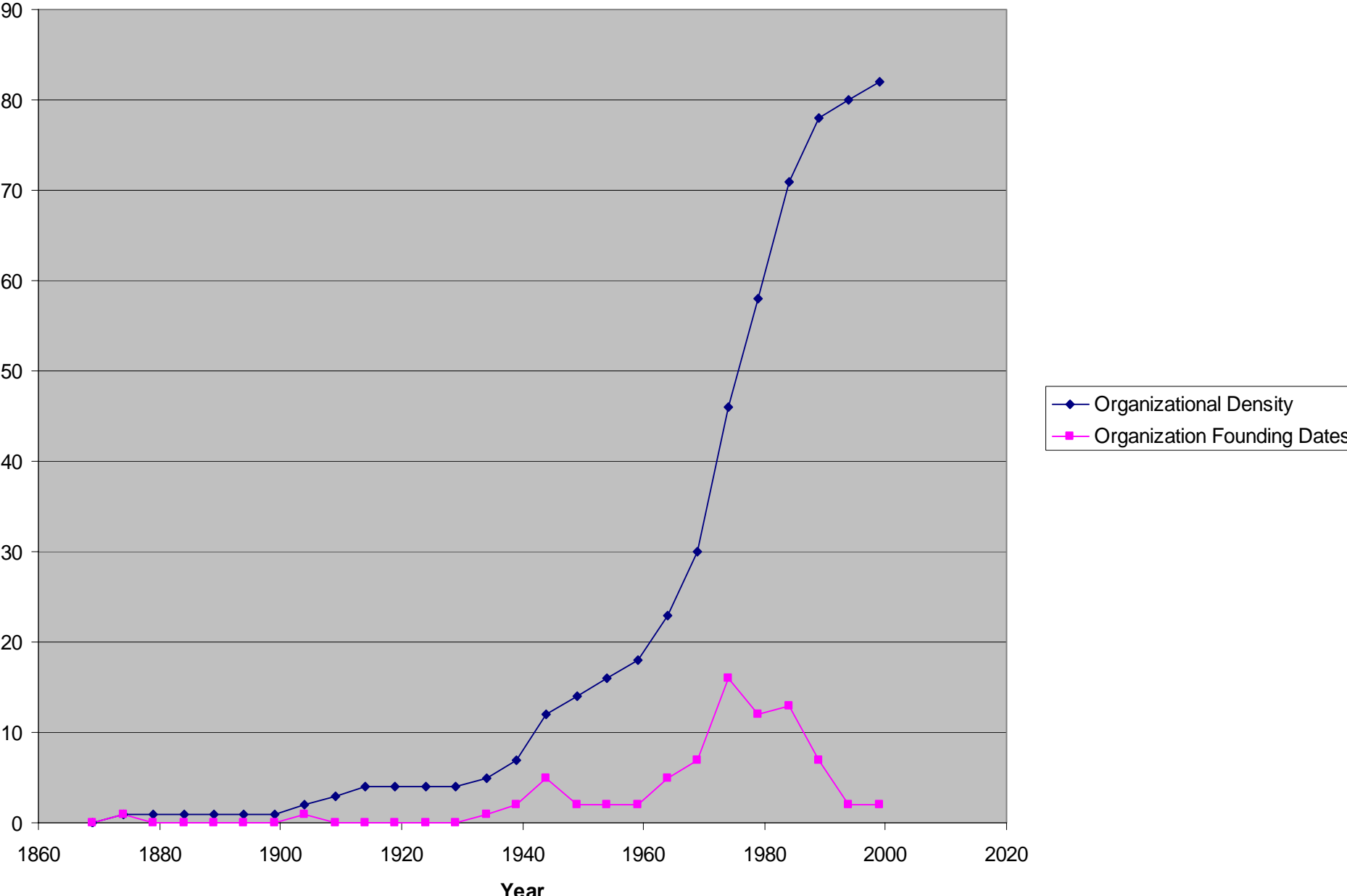
Schematic Model—Post 1975



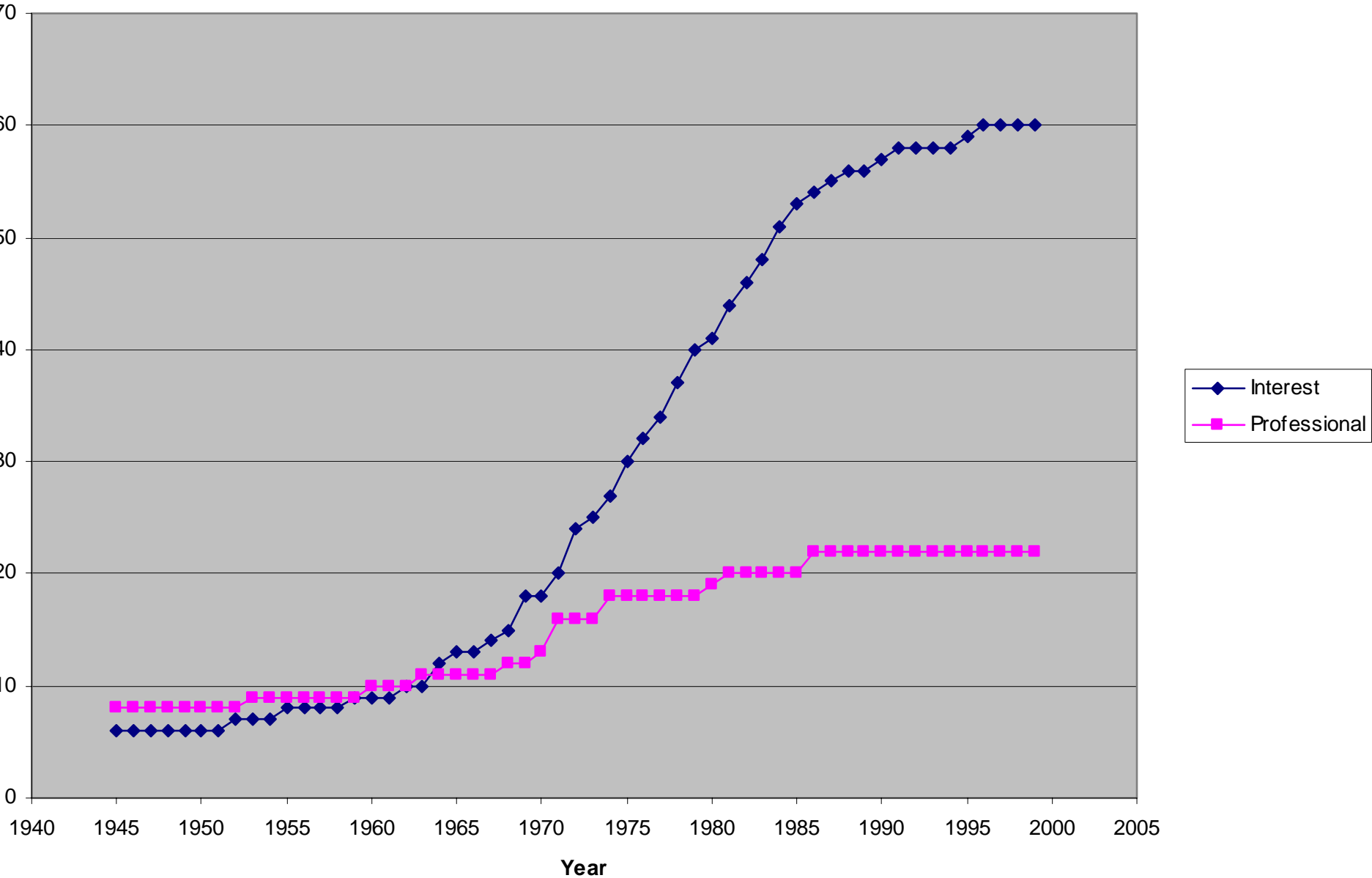
Media Attention



Crime Organizations: Density and Foundings

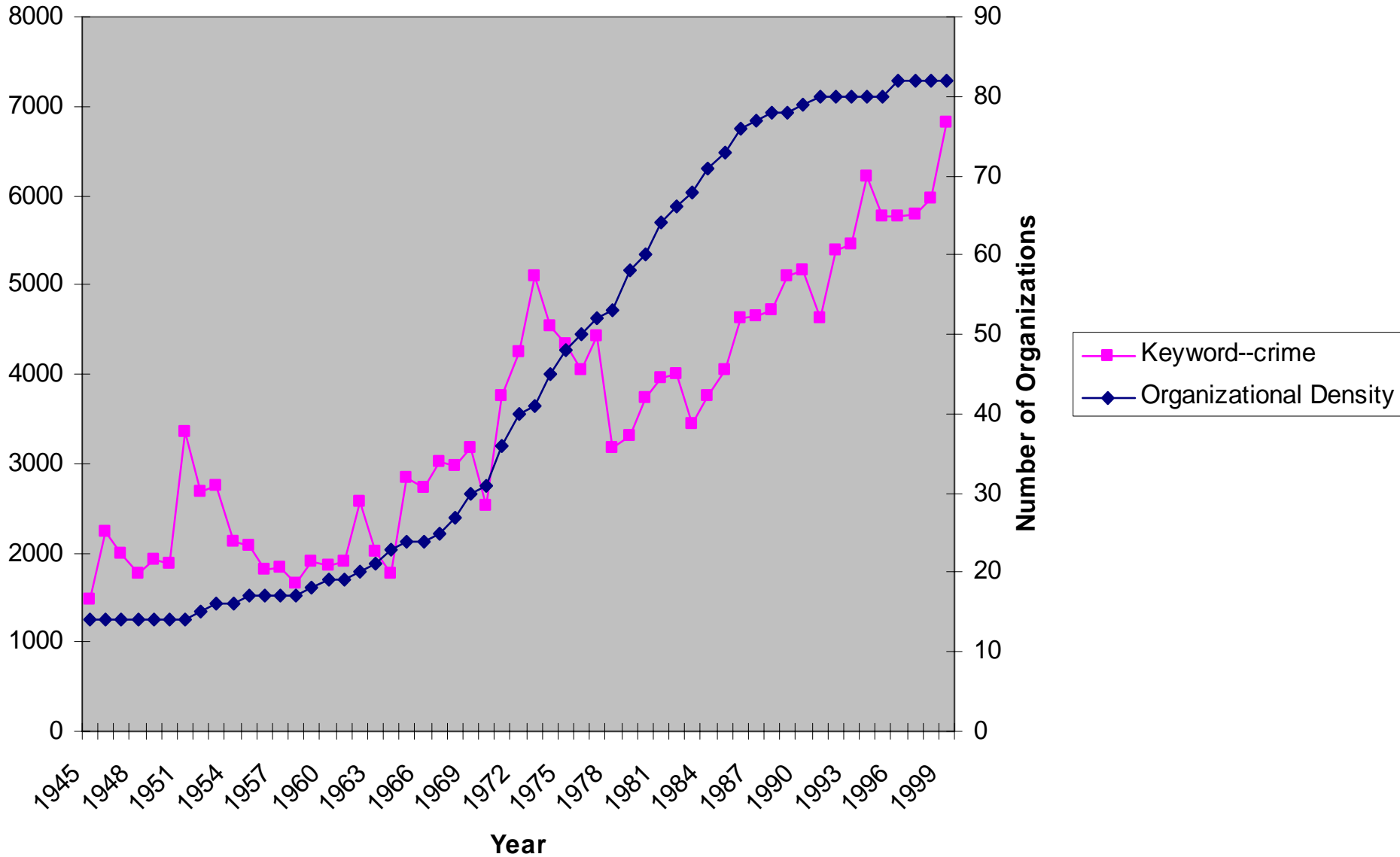


Density of Crime organizations: Professional and Interest

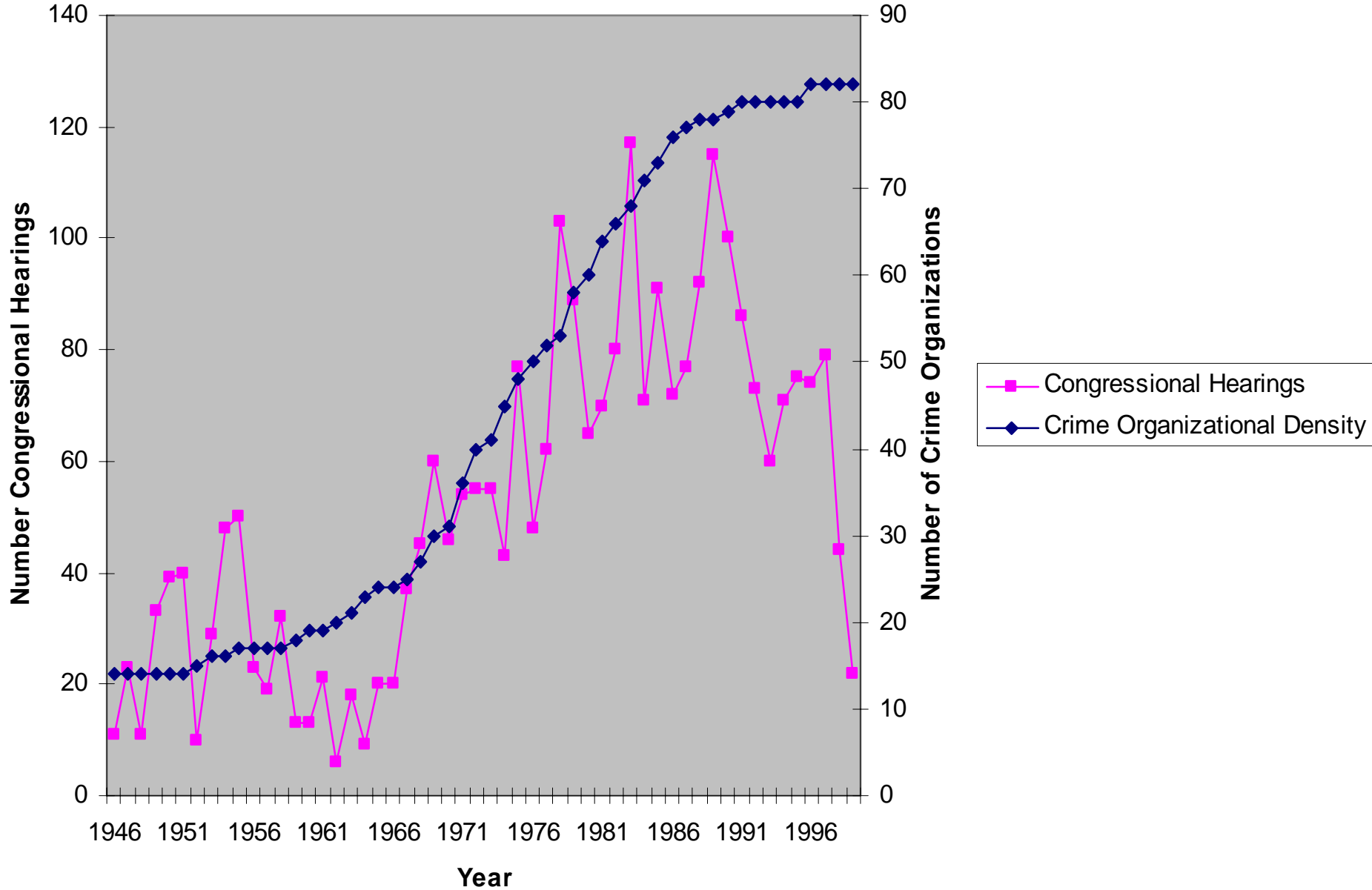


Comparing Media Attention and Organizational Density

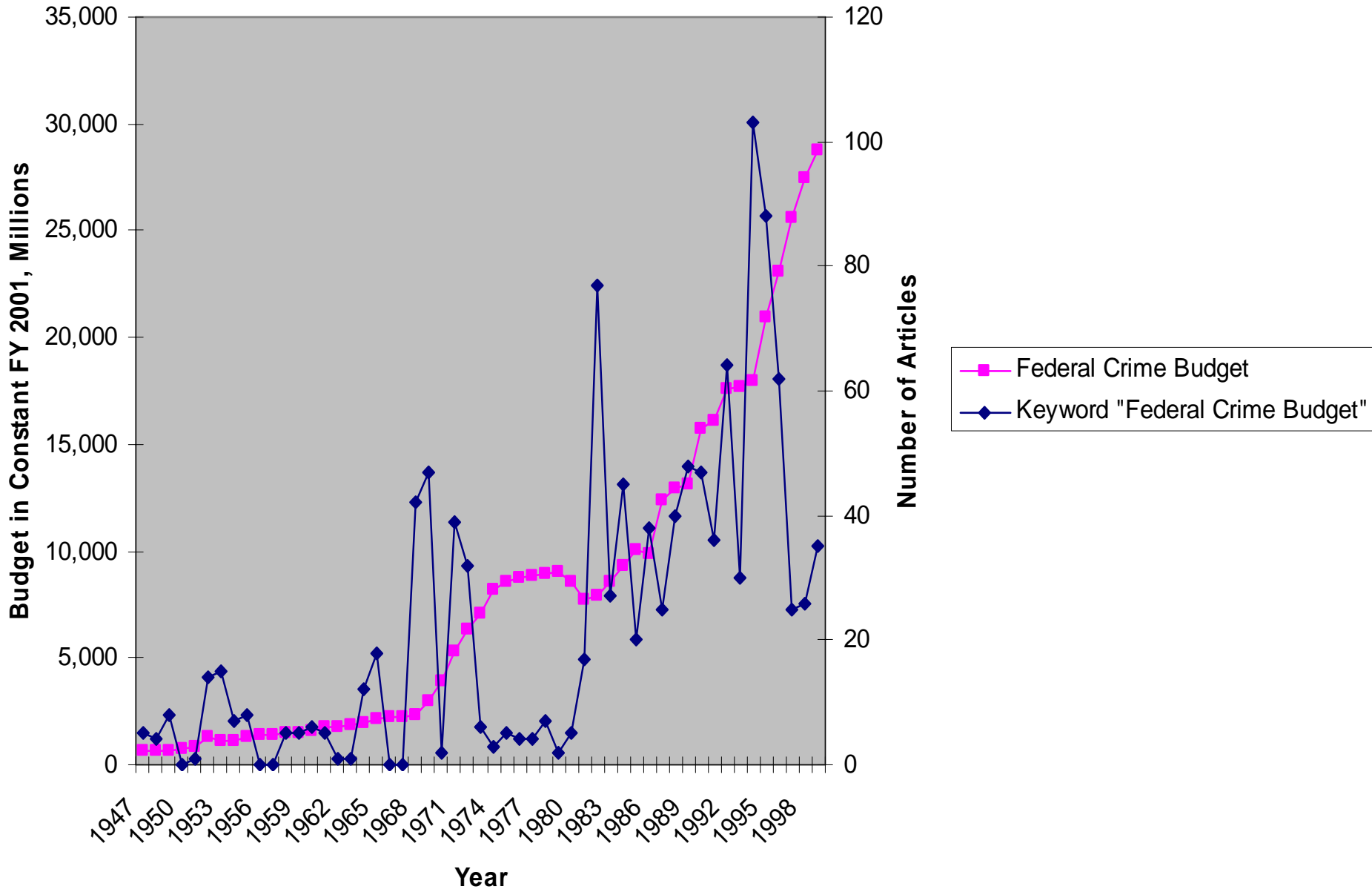
Number of Articles



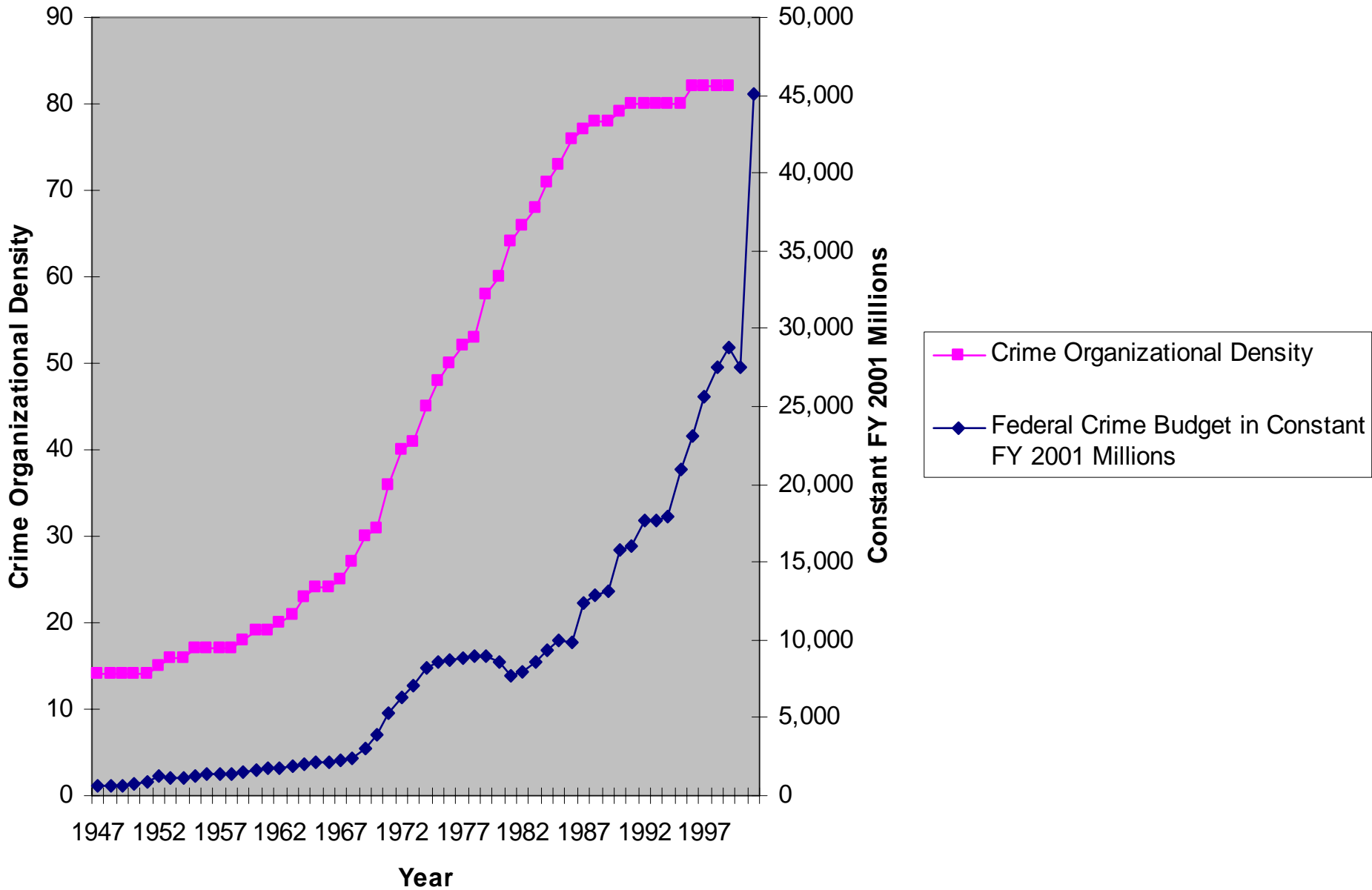
Comparing Organizational Density and Congressional Hearings



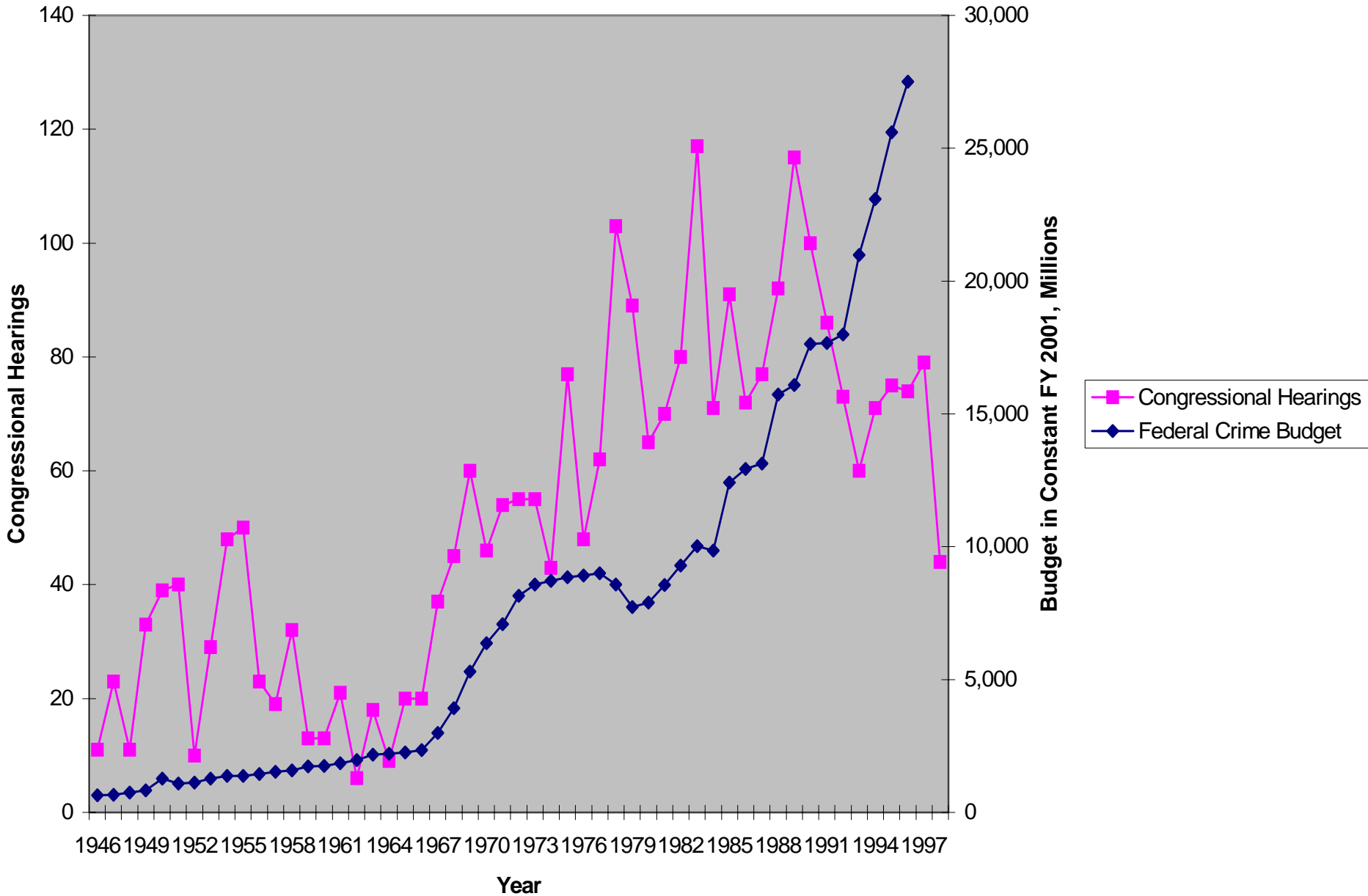
Comparing Media Attention and Federal Crime Budget



Comparing Organizational Density with Federal Crime Budget



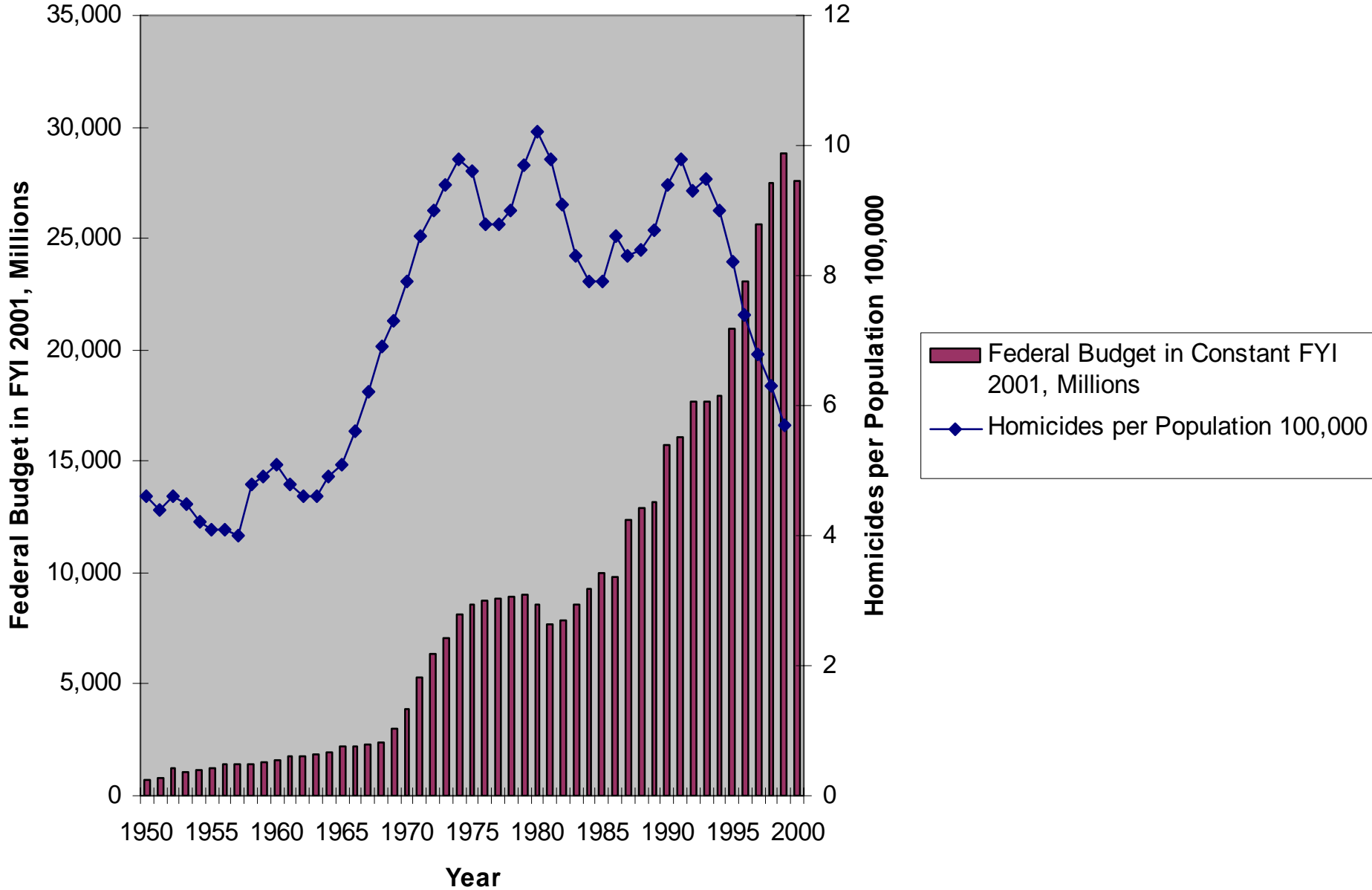
Comparing the Federal Crime Budget and Congressional Hearings



Findings

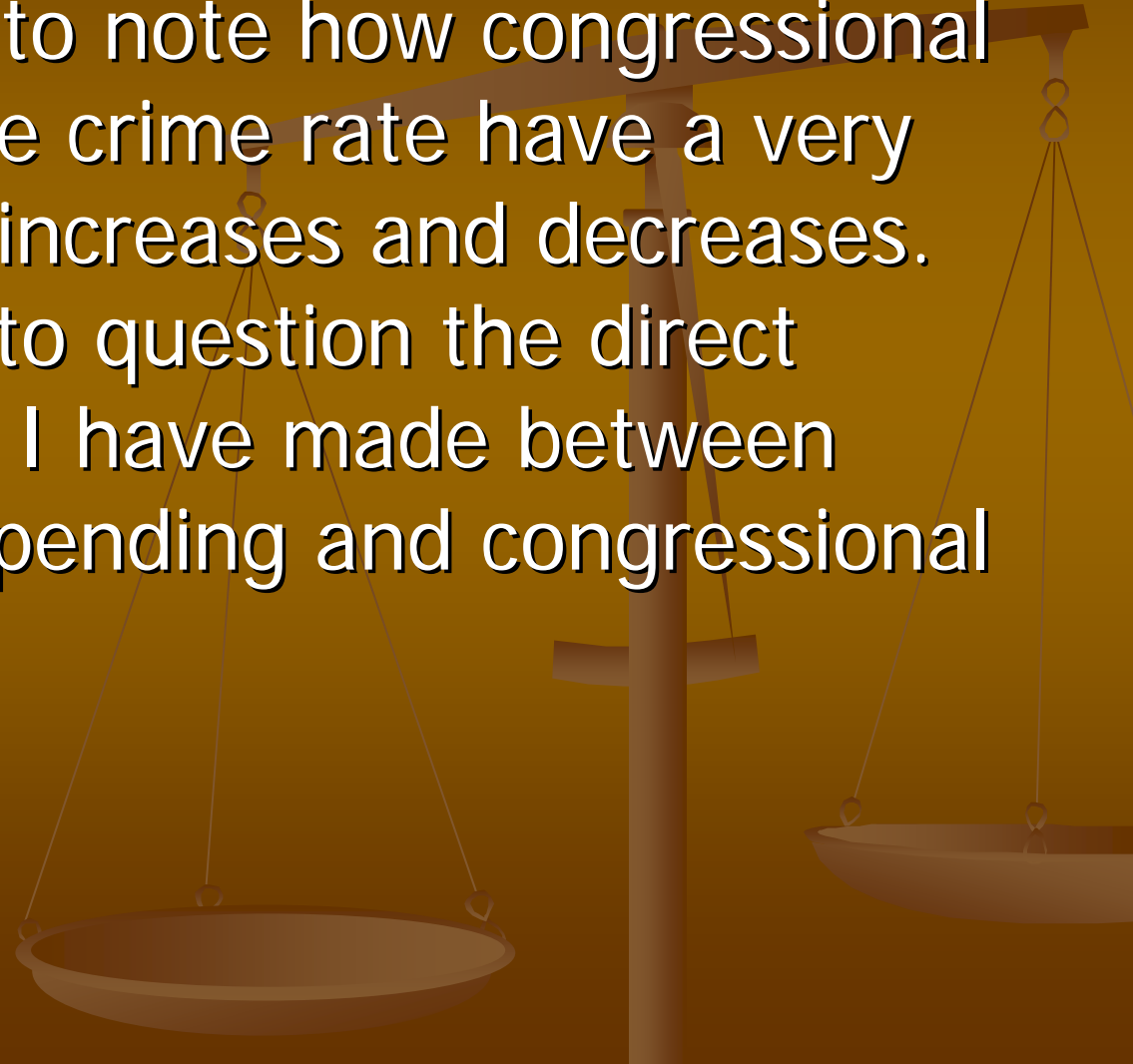
- It appears that after the late 1970's the crime rate begins to decrease where as spending continues to increase at a faster rate. The crime rate does not appear to have an influence on government spending after 1975.
- Crime organizations appear to have no or little affect on spending activity before their density begins to increase in the mid 1970's.
 - It is in the interest of both the crime organizations and the public for organizational activity to increase—"public gets, intangible "feel good" benefits, while organizations get material rewards" (High Cost of Symbolic Politics, 3)
- Seeing that government activity and government spending are most closely related it would make most sense that external forces would need to first influence government activity before affecting government spending, therefore only government activity directly affects government spending.

Comparing Federal Crime Budget and the Homicide Rate

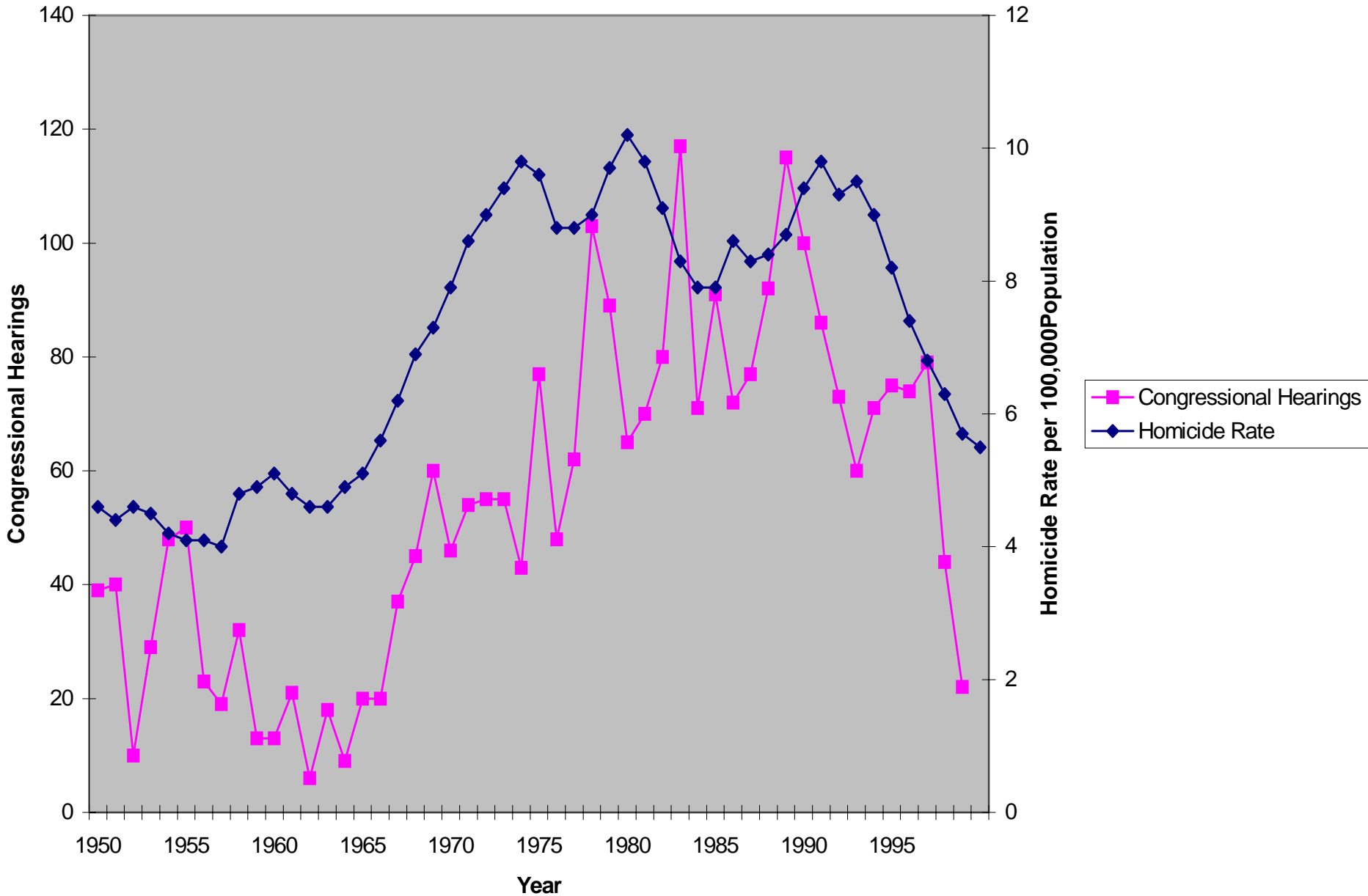


Findings (con't)

- It is interesting to note how congressional hearings and the crime rate have a very similar trend in increases and decreases. This leaves me to question the direct connection that I have made between governmental spending and congressional activity.



Comparing Government Activity with the Homicide Rate



Discussion

- It appears that as a society we are the most fearful of crime. Our reaction to the increase in the crime rate is unlike any other western country. Sociologists agree that in times of unpredictable exaggerated problems moral panic spreads rapidly making the public very polarized on an issue (Tonry, 98). The U.S. Government appeases the population's fear by acting 'tougher and tougher on crime' when in reality crime appears to be a natural oscillating phenomenon. The increase in government spending in reality is shown not to have a marginal affect on the crime rate.
- To have crime policies "work" is in the political self-interest of political figures.
- "Americans are predisposed to believe that harsh anti-crime policies are morally right and likely to work." (Tonry, 108)

Discussion (con't)



- Short-term changes in policy have little affect on crime rates—U.S. prison population in 2002 was 5 times that of 1970.
 - “Crime rates change slowly, in response to long-term underlying social and normative changes.” (Tonry, 112)
 - other countries experienced similar trends in crime, rises in the 1970’s and 1980’s and declines in the 1990’s yet did not drastically increase crime fighting tactics as did U.S.—the crime rate fell in every western country in the 1990’s
- Crime is an emotional study—how people perceive and interpret the world plays a more powerful role in their actions

Conclusion

- Before 1975, it is apparent that the crime rate and congressional hearings which follow a similar pattern have an affect on the government spending on crime. However after about 1978 federal spending appears to be on its own agenda affected by outside forces such as the increase in media and increase in organizational activity. Although both media attention and organizational density increase more drastically as the crime rate begins to slope downward, showing an increase in population interest.

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