

Baumgartner, POLI 195 Spring 2013

Shifting Frames of the Death Penalty

Reading: Decline, ch 5-6, framing and
public opinion

February 27, 2013

National Lawyer's Guild Student Day Against the Death Penalty on March 1

- *NCCU Law School Death Penalty Project Presents*

A Screening of *Love Lived on Death Row*, beginning at 12 noon in the Great Hall at the Albert Turner Building, NCCU School of Law.

<http://www.lovelivedondeathrow.com/>

- Followed by a panel discussion featuring:
 - **Linda Booker**, *LLODR Producer/Director*
 - **Tye Hunter**, *Executive Director of the Center for Death Penalty Litigation*
 - **Yolanda Littlejohn**, *The murder of Yolanda's sister, Jacquetta, remains unsolved. Greg Taylor was wrongfully convicted of her death until he was fully exonerated by NC Innocence Inquiry Commission, based on egregious misconduct by the state's crime lab*
- <http://law.nccu.edu/about/directions/>

Finish up from Monday

- Fig 4.8 and on from there, quickly

Ch 5, Evolutionary Factor Analysis

- This is math, pure and simple!
- Idea: take all 67 arguments, in 5 year “slices”
- See which ones move in the same directions at the same times
- See if these continue over a reasonable amount of time
- See if they are related to each other
- Result: Yes, we found that there were about 8

Fig 5.3: Shifting Frames Over Time

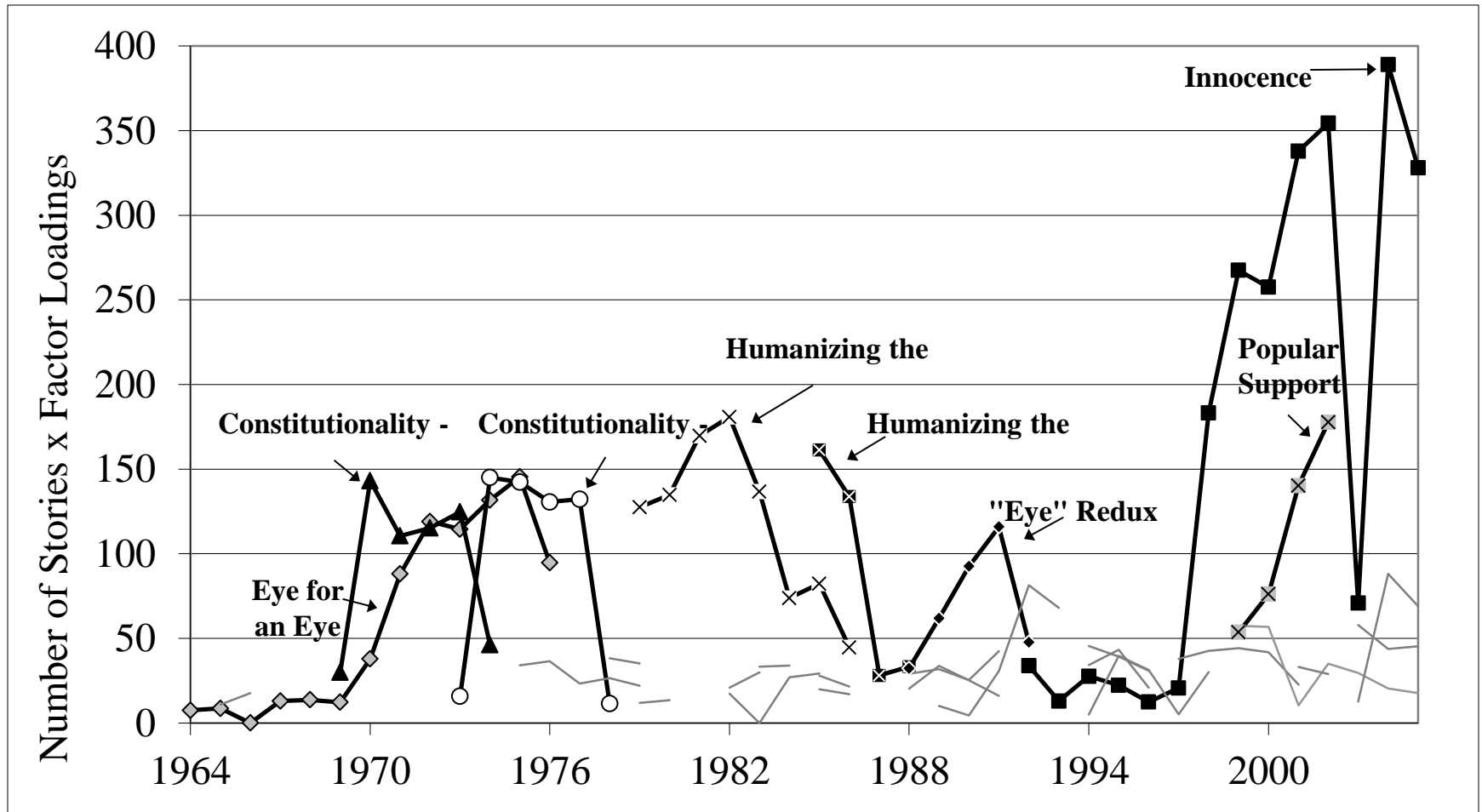


Fig 5.4. The Components of Innocence

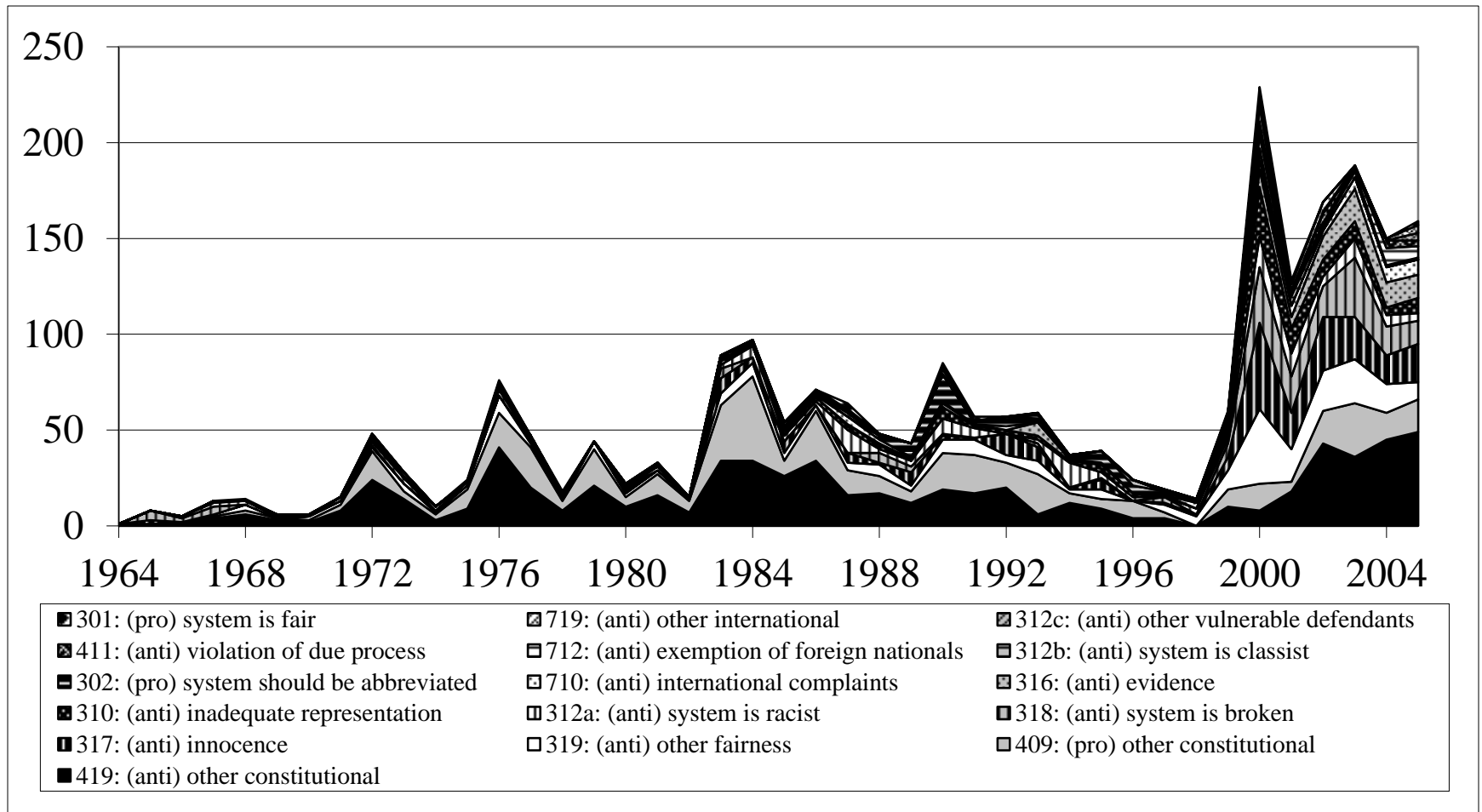
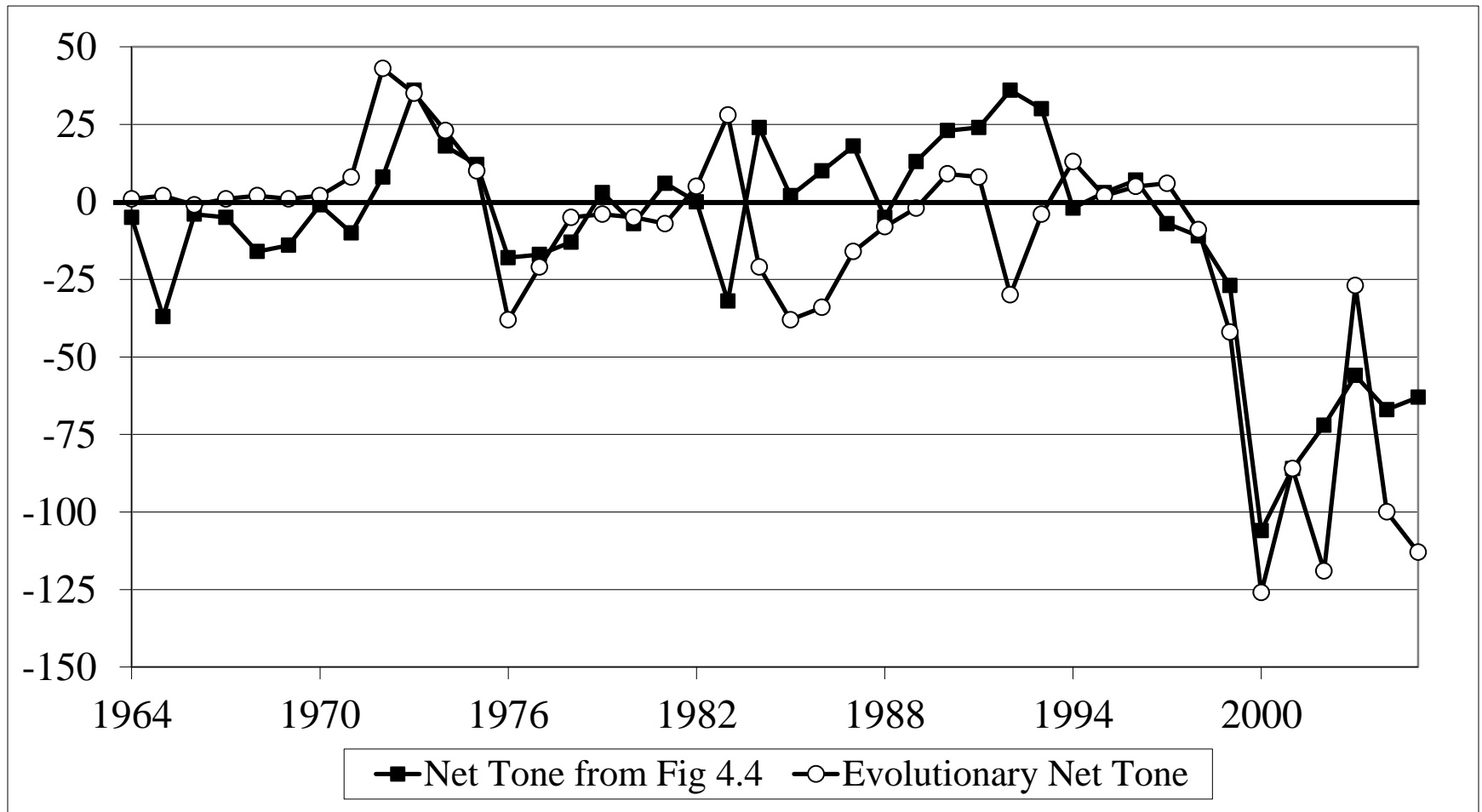


Fig 5.5. Replicating “Net Tone”



What did we learn in Ch 5?

- New methods of studying framing
 - (small audience for that!)
- What we saw in Ch 4 was not just our opinion
- The innocence frame is the most powerful frame ever associated with the death penalty:
 - Higher salience
 - More component arguments
 - Longer-lasting

Ch 6. Public Opinion

- How to measure it: The problem of multiple types of questions
- Prof. Stimson's solution: combine all available survey evidence
 - Any question, posed in the same format over time, shows a trend
 - These trends tend to move together, even if in parallel
 - Combining hundreds of surveys is more accurate
 - But it's harder to interpret...
 - Allows analysis of ups and downs over time

Fig 6.1. Three long series

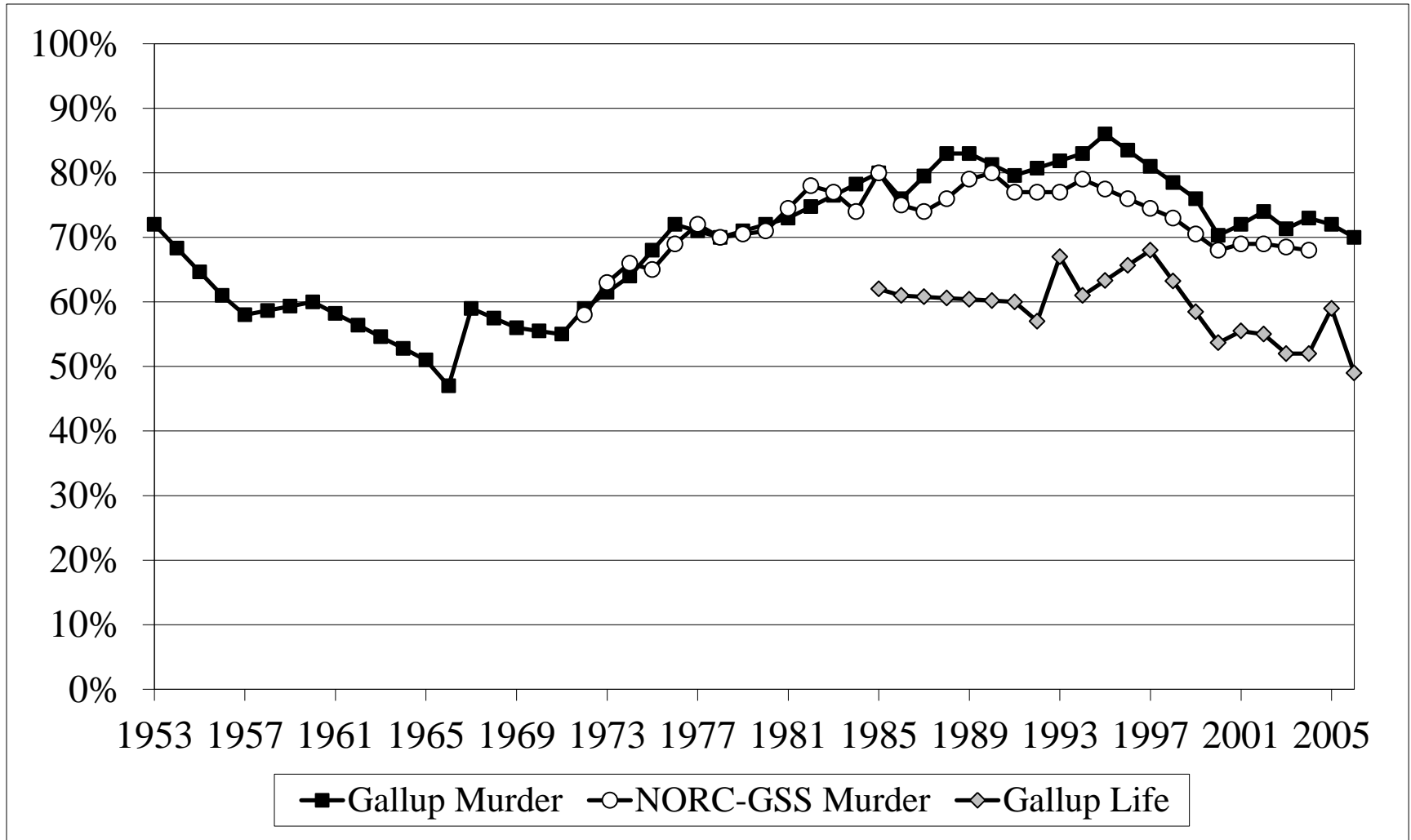


Fig 6.2. The Combined Index

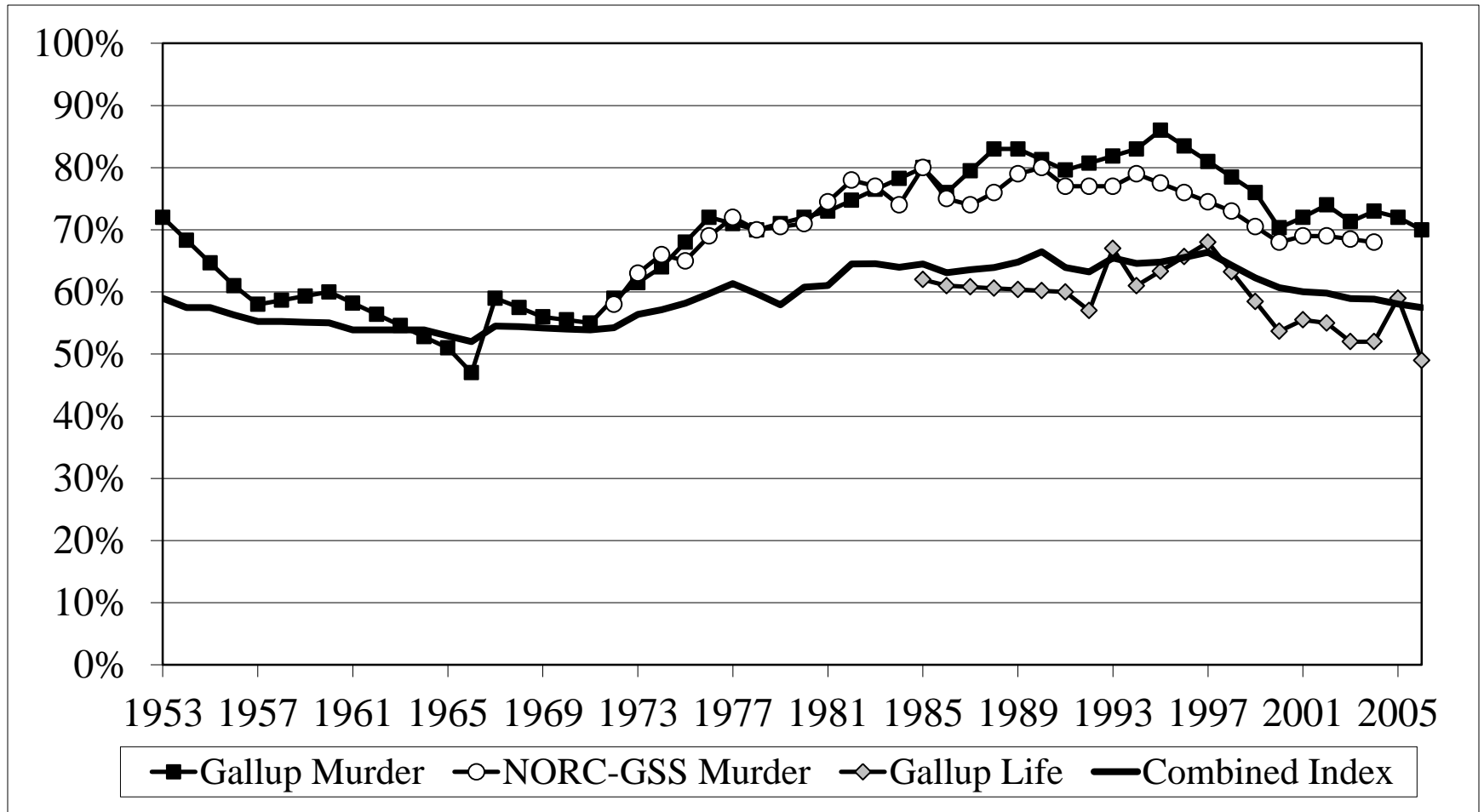
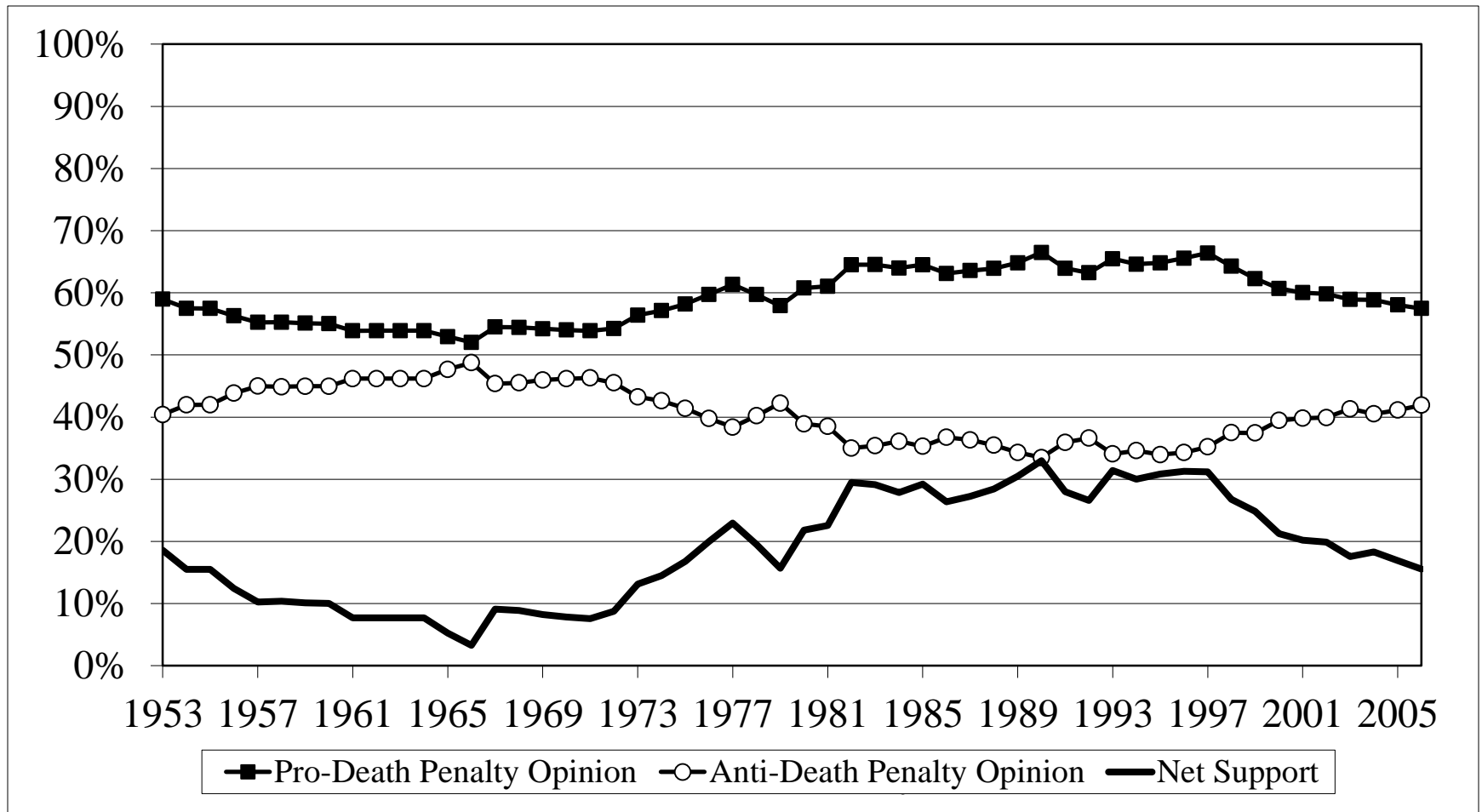


Fig 6.3. Pro, Anti, and Net Opinion



We can predict public opinion

- In the long run, opinion responds to:
 - A. The Net Tone of media coverage
 - B. The number of homicides

- And in the short run it responds to
 - A. Change in the Net Tone of media coverage
 - B. Change in homicides
 - C. Major events, beyond their effect on news coverage

Public Opinion Summary

- Frustrating to study because the questions are extremely general: “Do you support or oppose the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?” But jurors face not an abstract question but a very particular one.
- Disjuncture between wide support for the abstract notion and the rarity of the penalty
- Still, it varies in sensible ways over time
- It is affected by real-world events AND by media coverage