Baumgartner, POLI 203 Fall 2014

Framing

Reading: Radelet and Borg,
Baumgartner DeBoef Boydstun

September 29, 2014

Catching up

- Feedback on speakers last Wednesday
- Speaker this Wednesday: Ballard Everett
- https://www.facebook.com/NCCCADP
- http://conservativesconcerned.org/

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.

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

- Our speaker on Wednesday, from 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

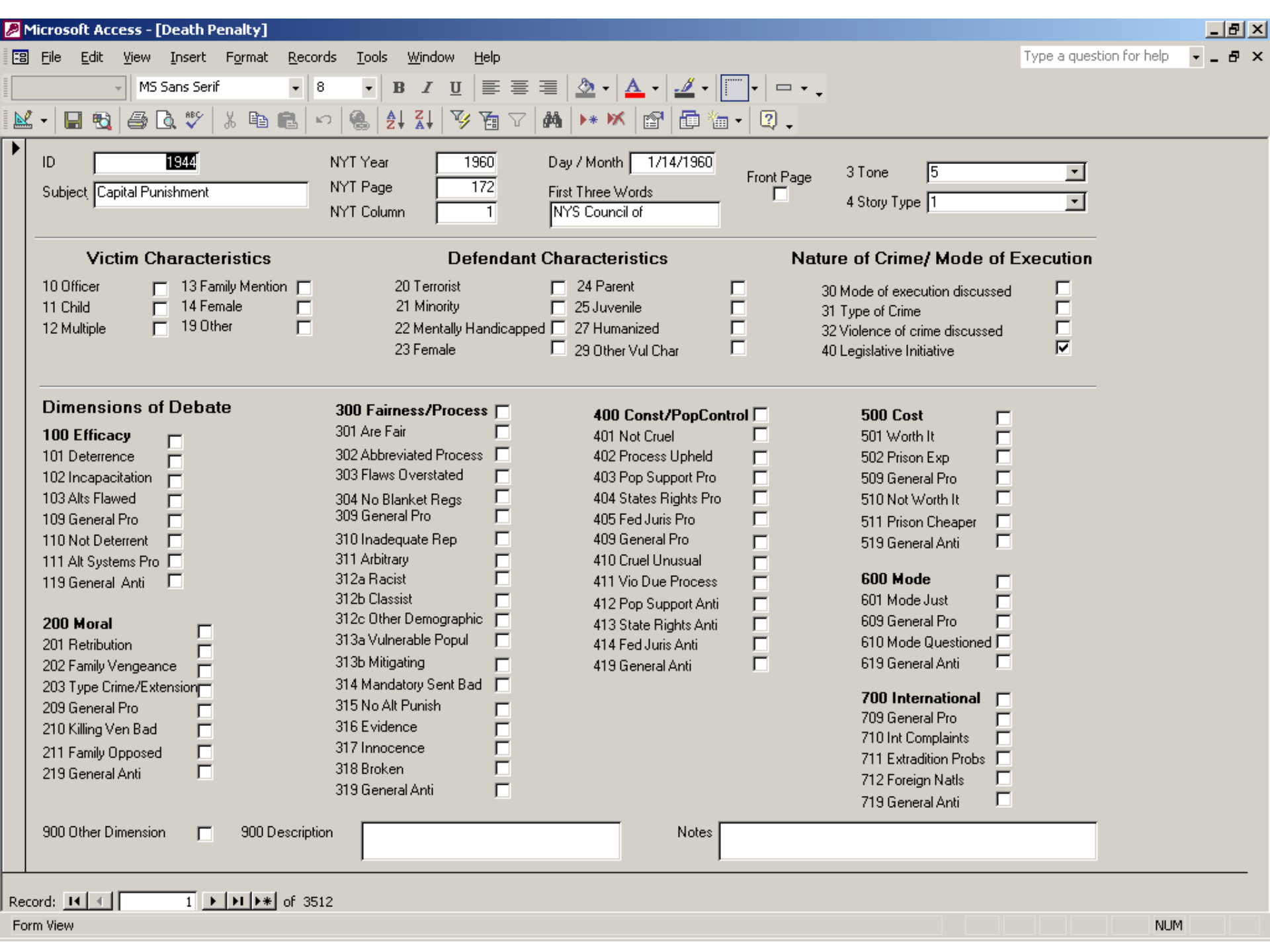
    ANTI: Imperfect system, innocents may be killed

    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



Microsoft Access - [Death Penalty]

File Edit View Insert Format Records Tools Window Help

Type a question for help

MS Sans Serif 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 ☐

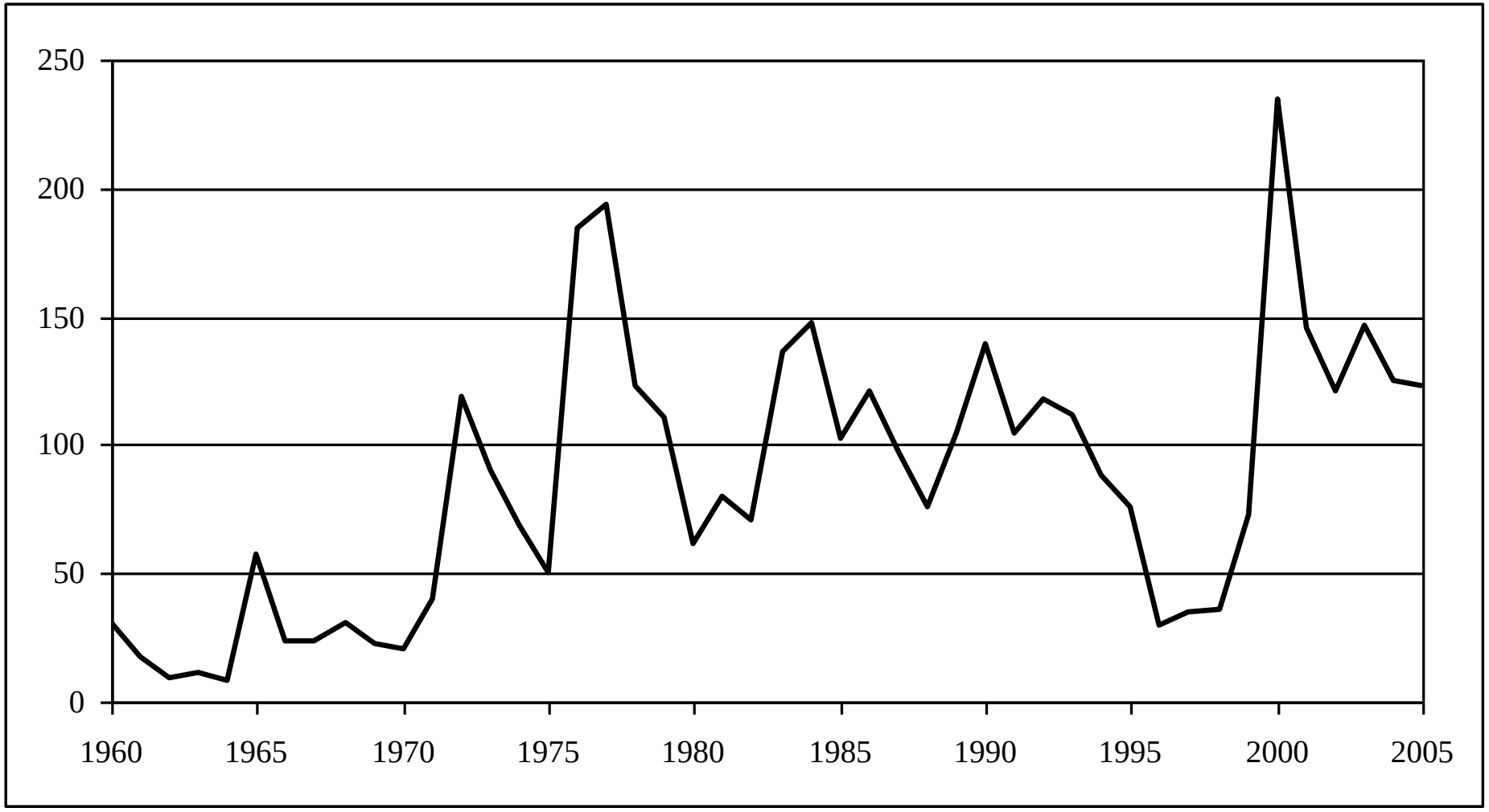
900 Description

Notes

Record: 1 of 3512

Form View NUM

Total Number of *NYT* Articles

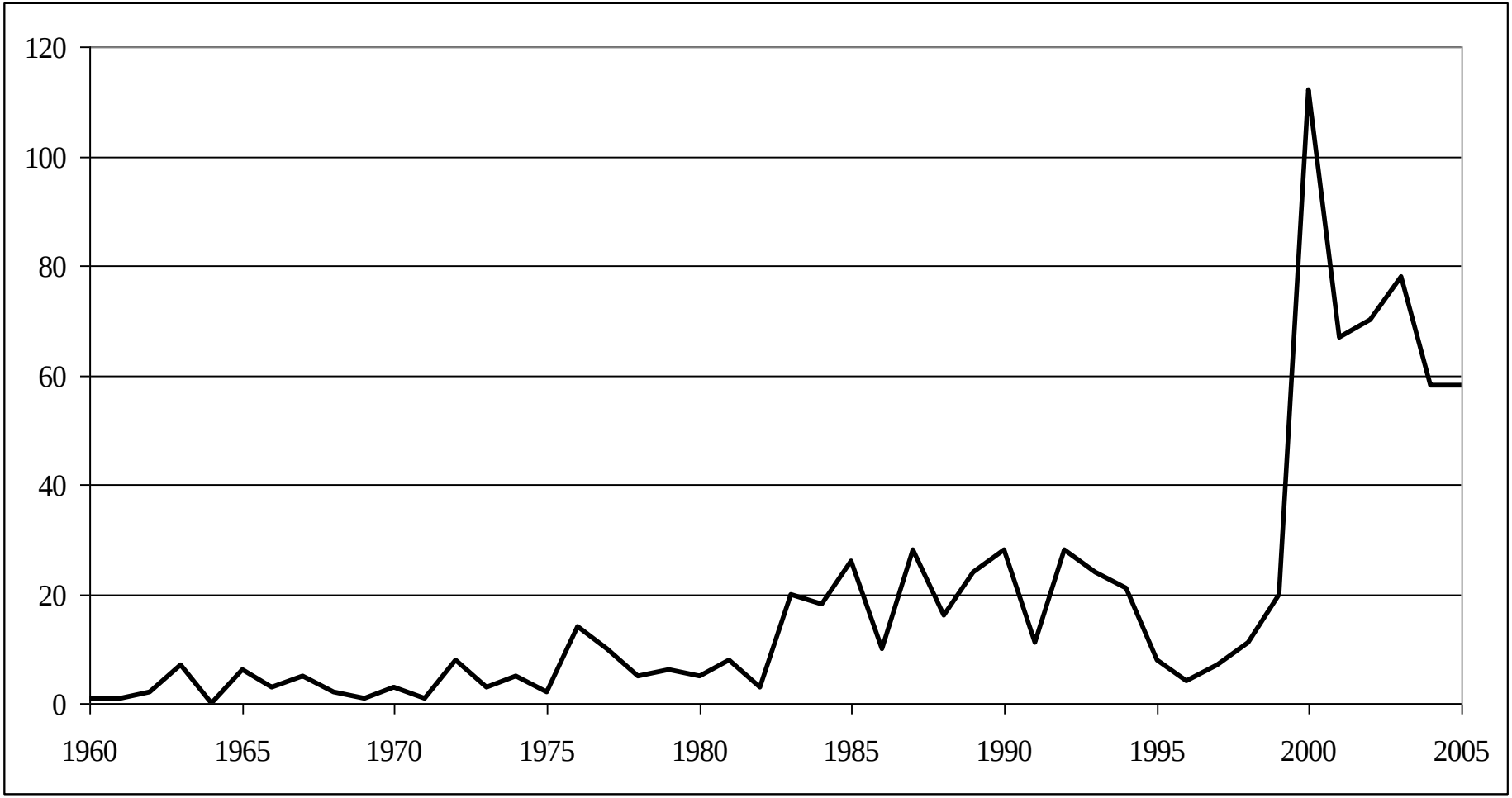


1) What Arguments Are Used?

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

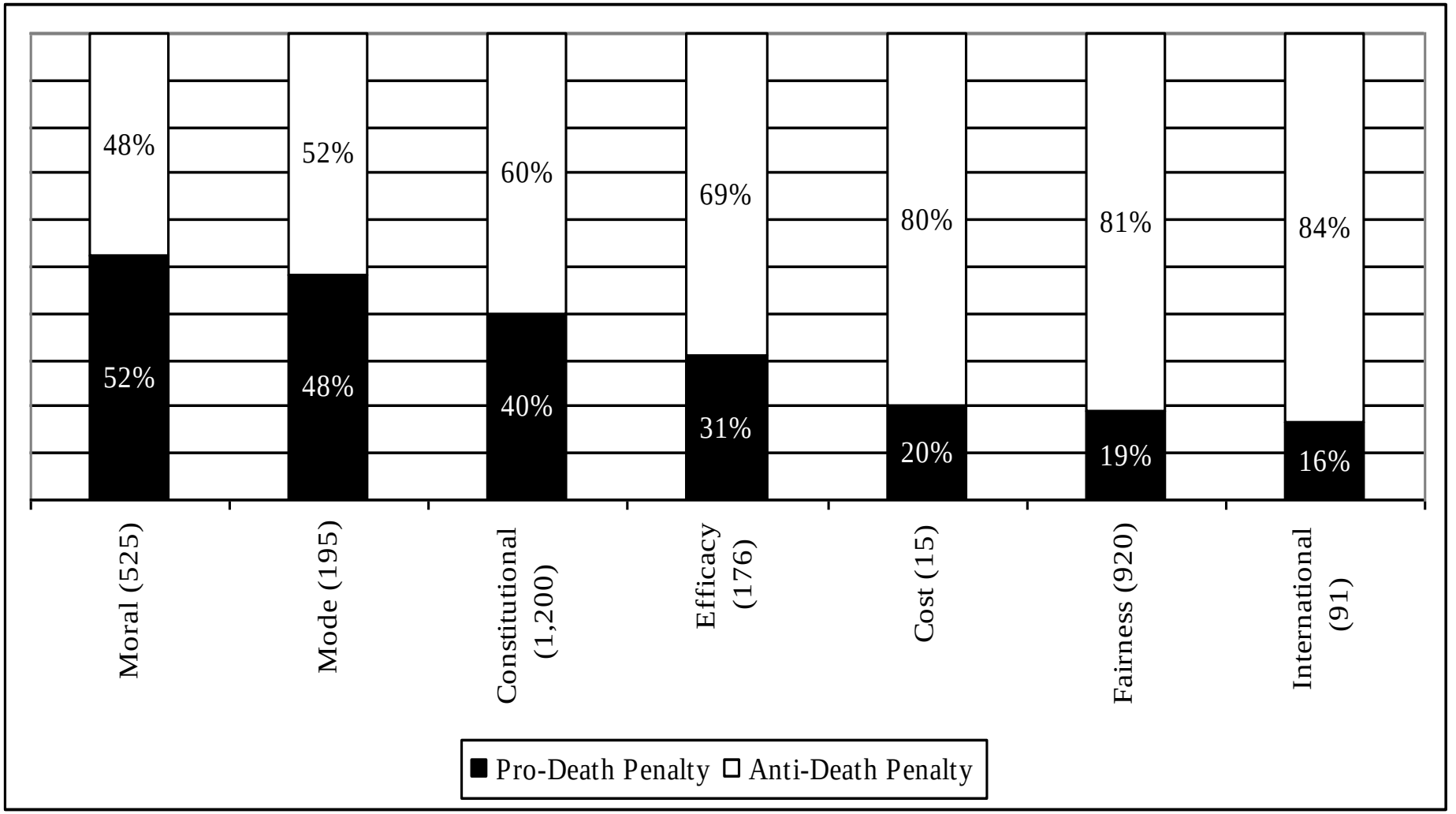


Includes: Innocence; Evidence; System-is-Broken; Mention of the Defendant

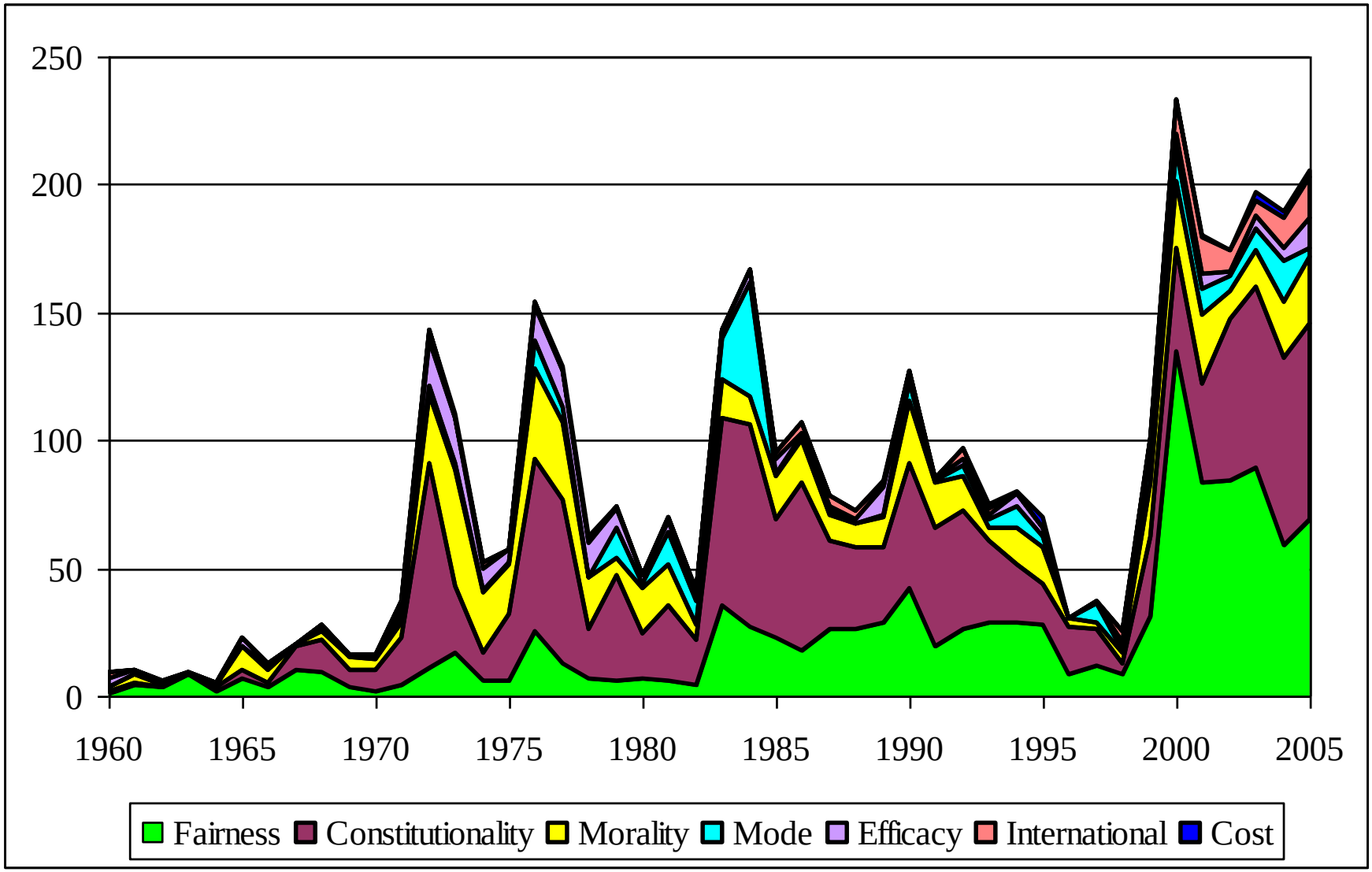
2) What Tone Is Used?

- 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.

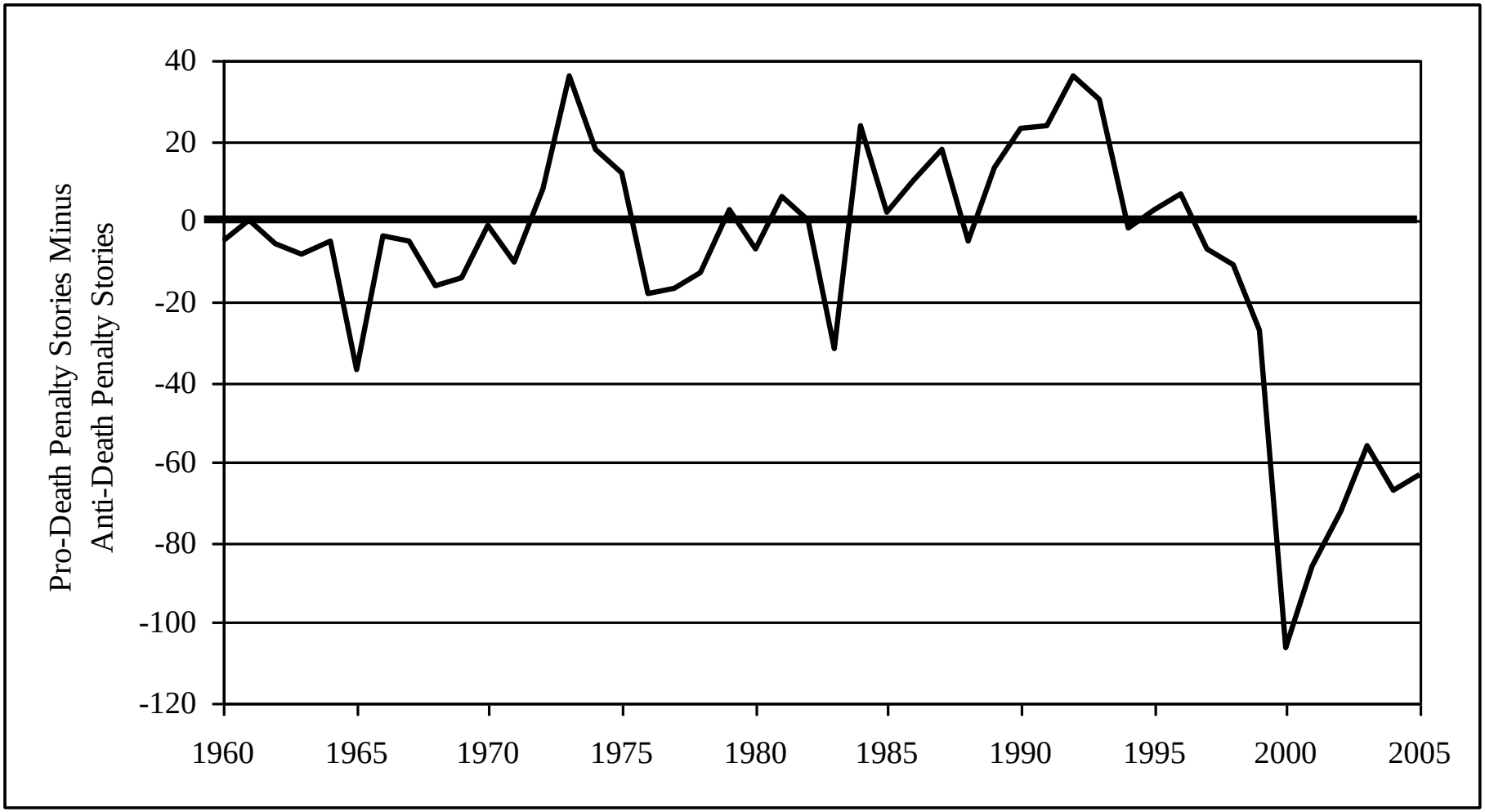
The Topic Determines the Tone



Attention to Dimensions Over Time

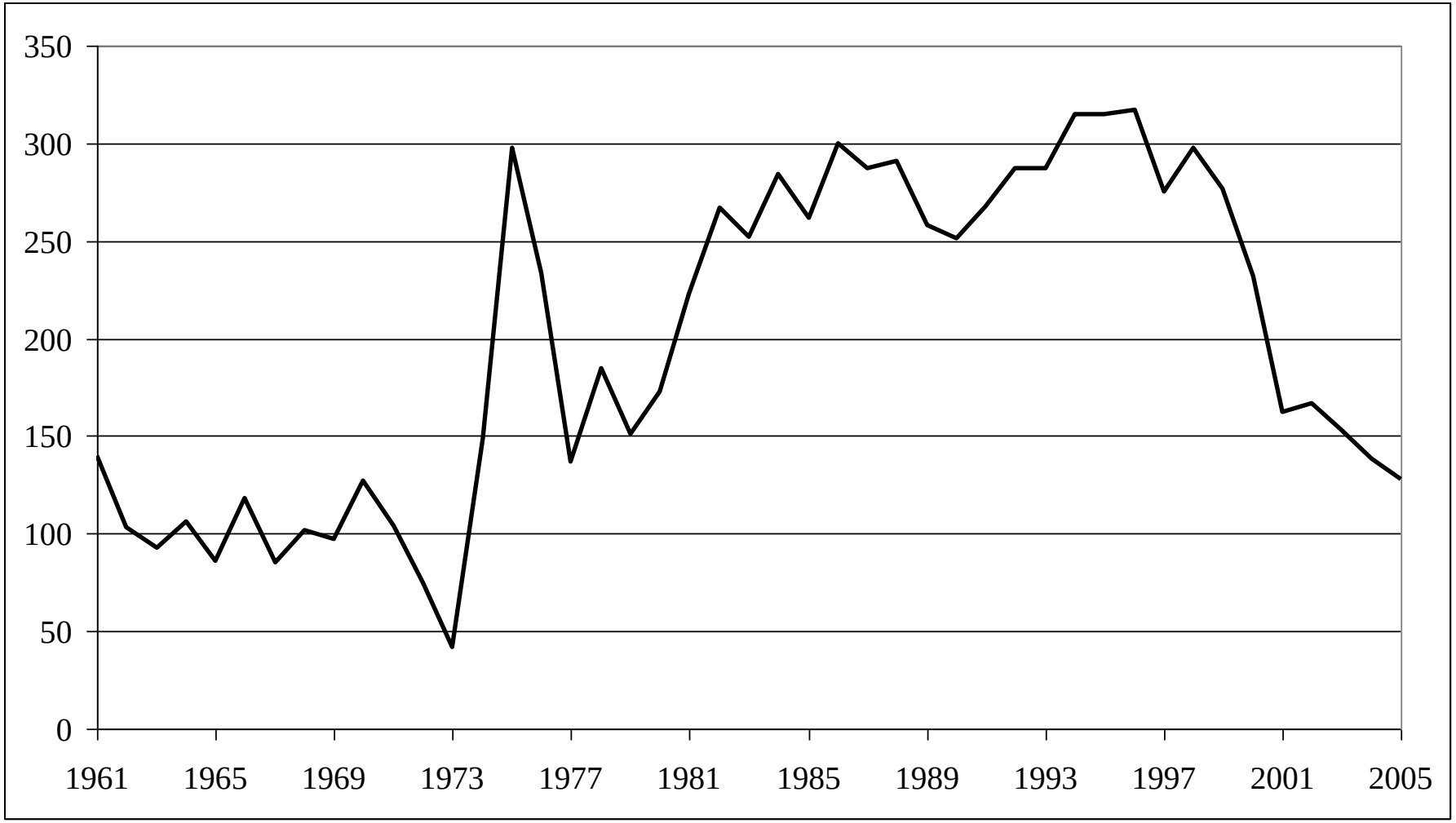


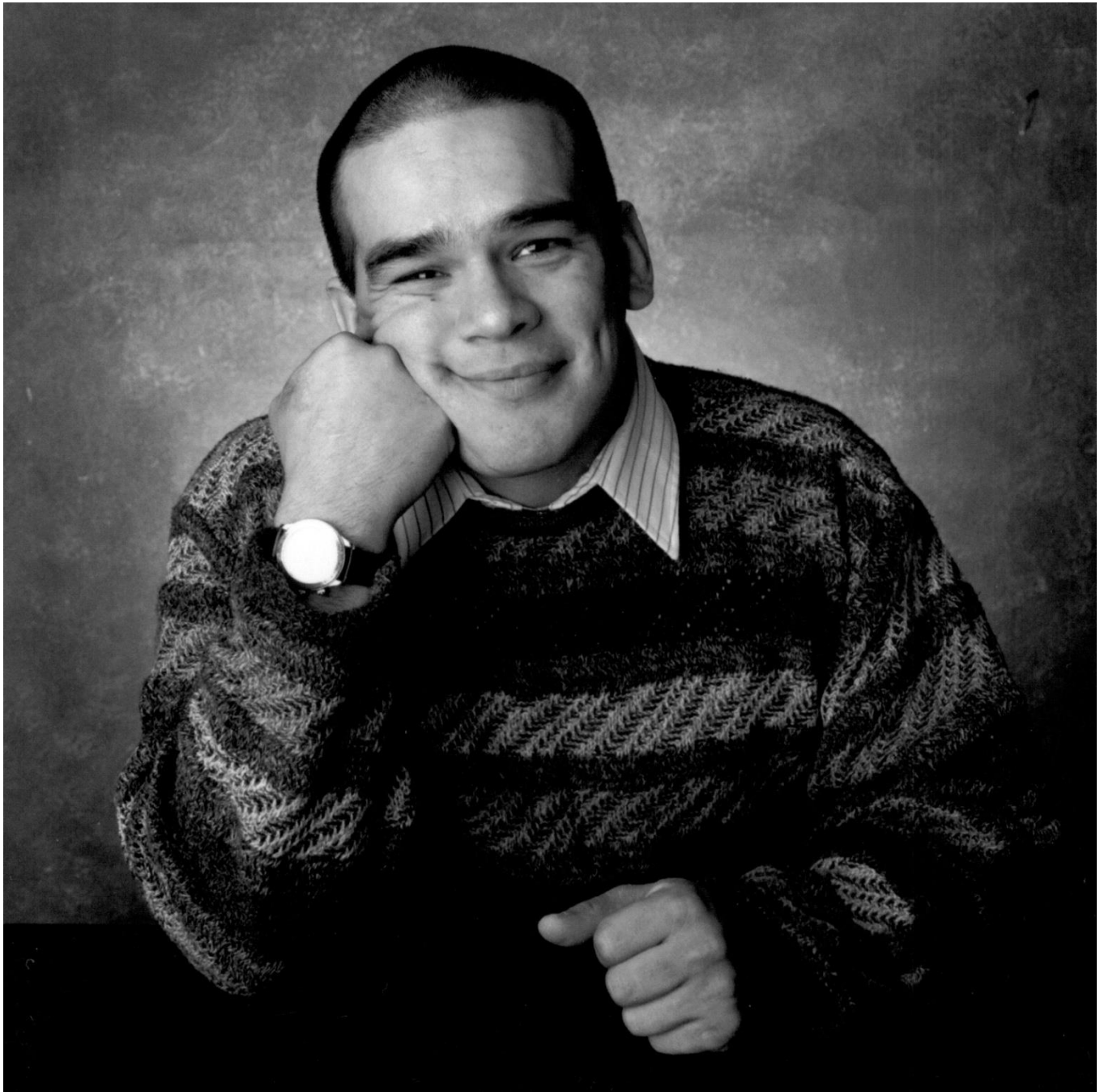
The “Net Tone” of NYT Coverage



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

Annual Death Sentences



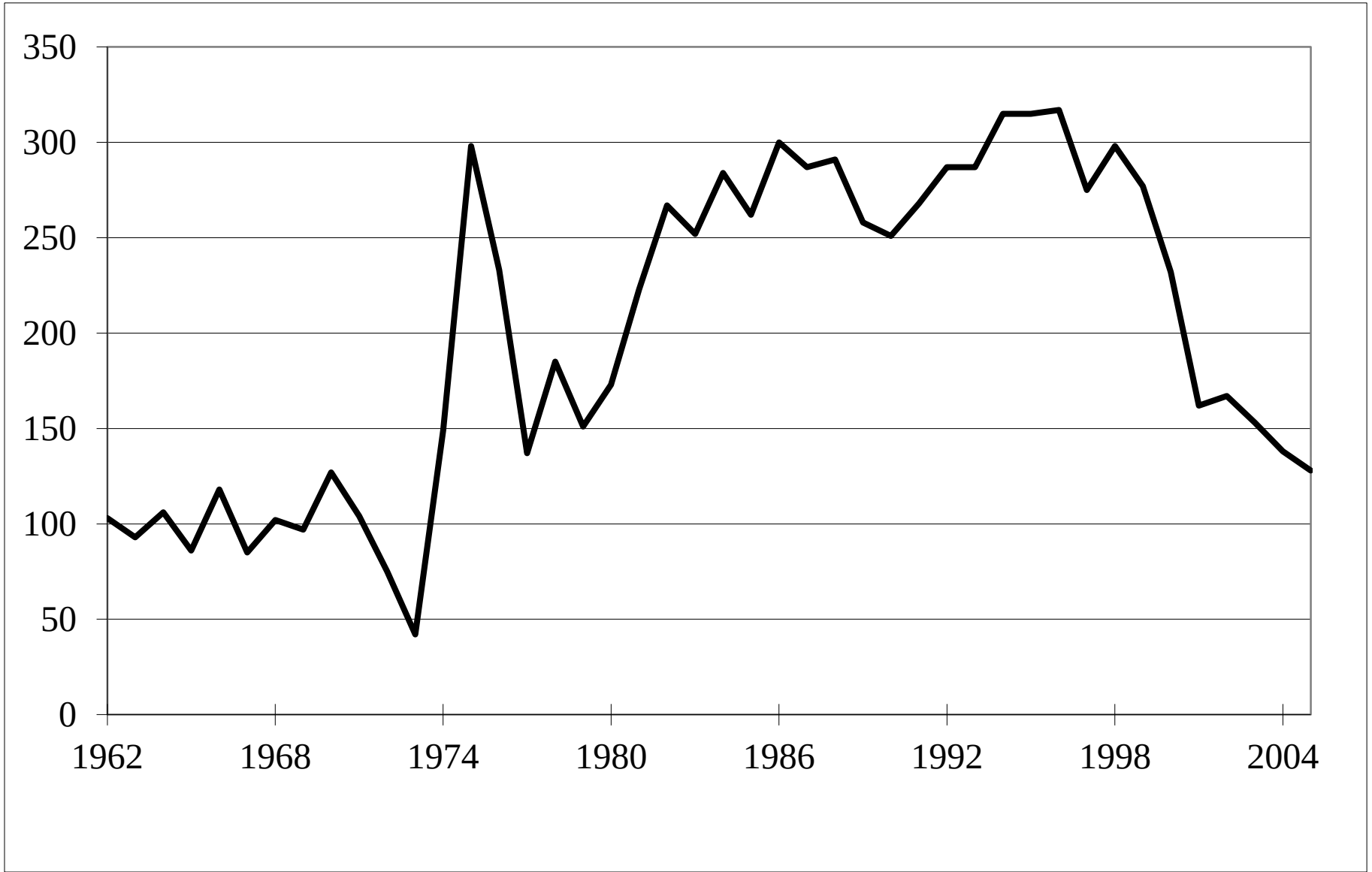


OK, now some real pol sci

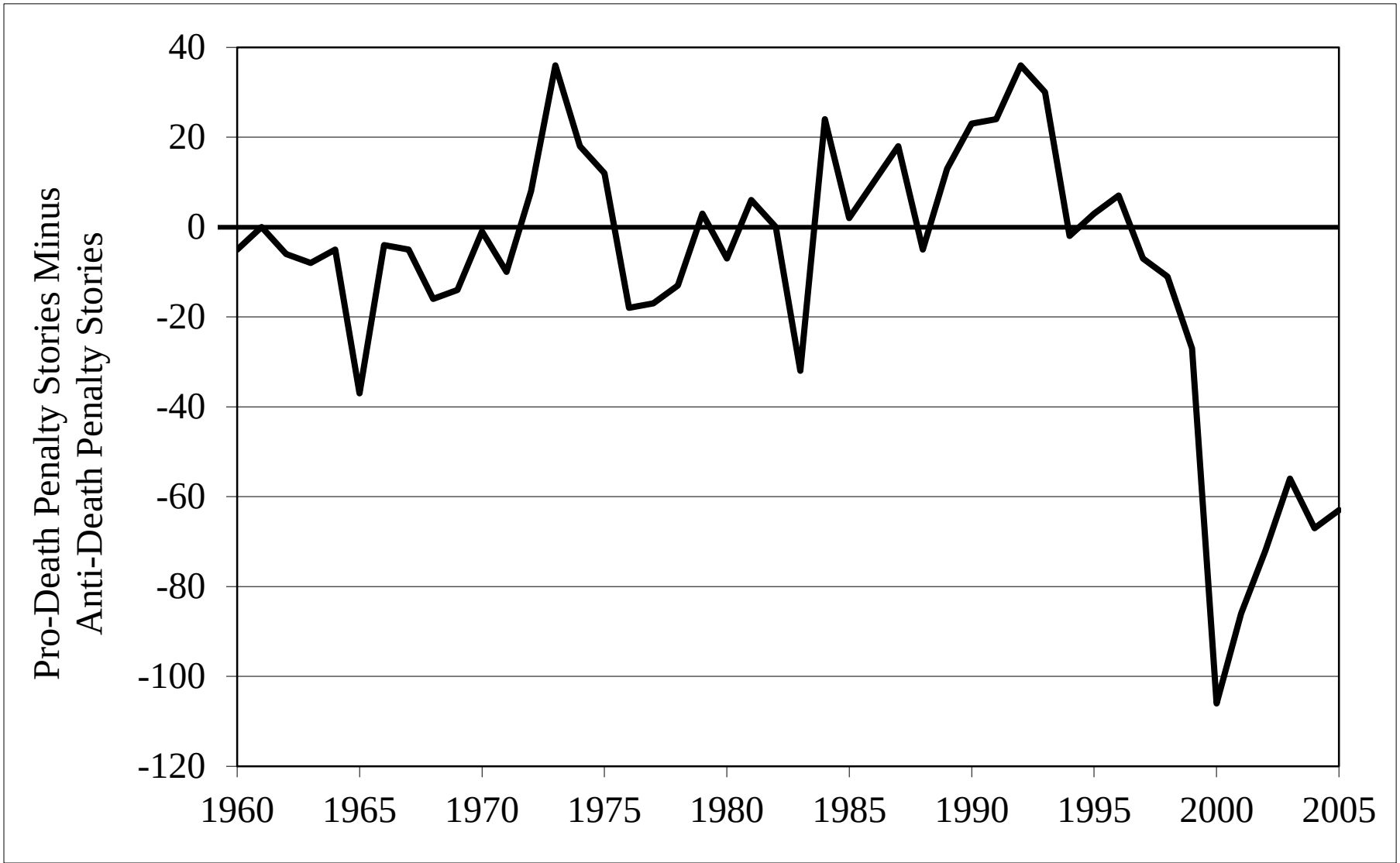
- Can we use the measure of framing, net-tone in newspaper coverage and predict the number of death sentences?

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

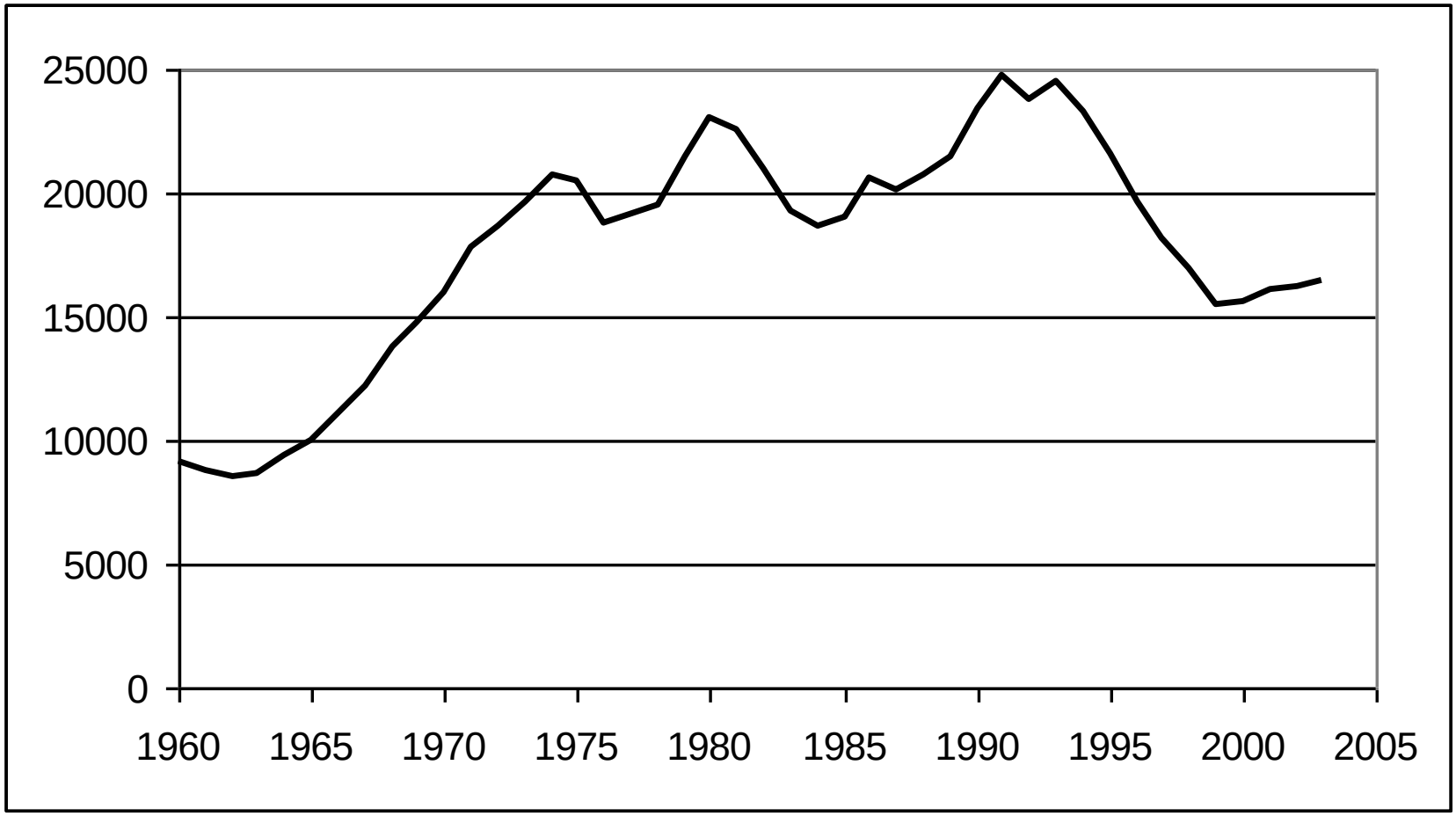
Number of Death Sentences
Can We Predict this Series?



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



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



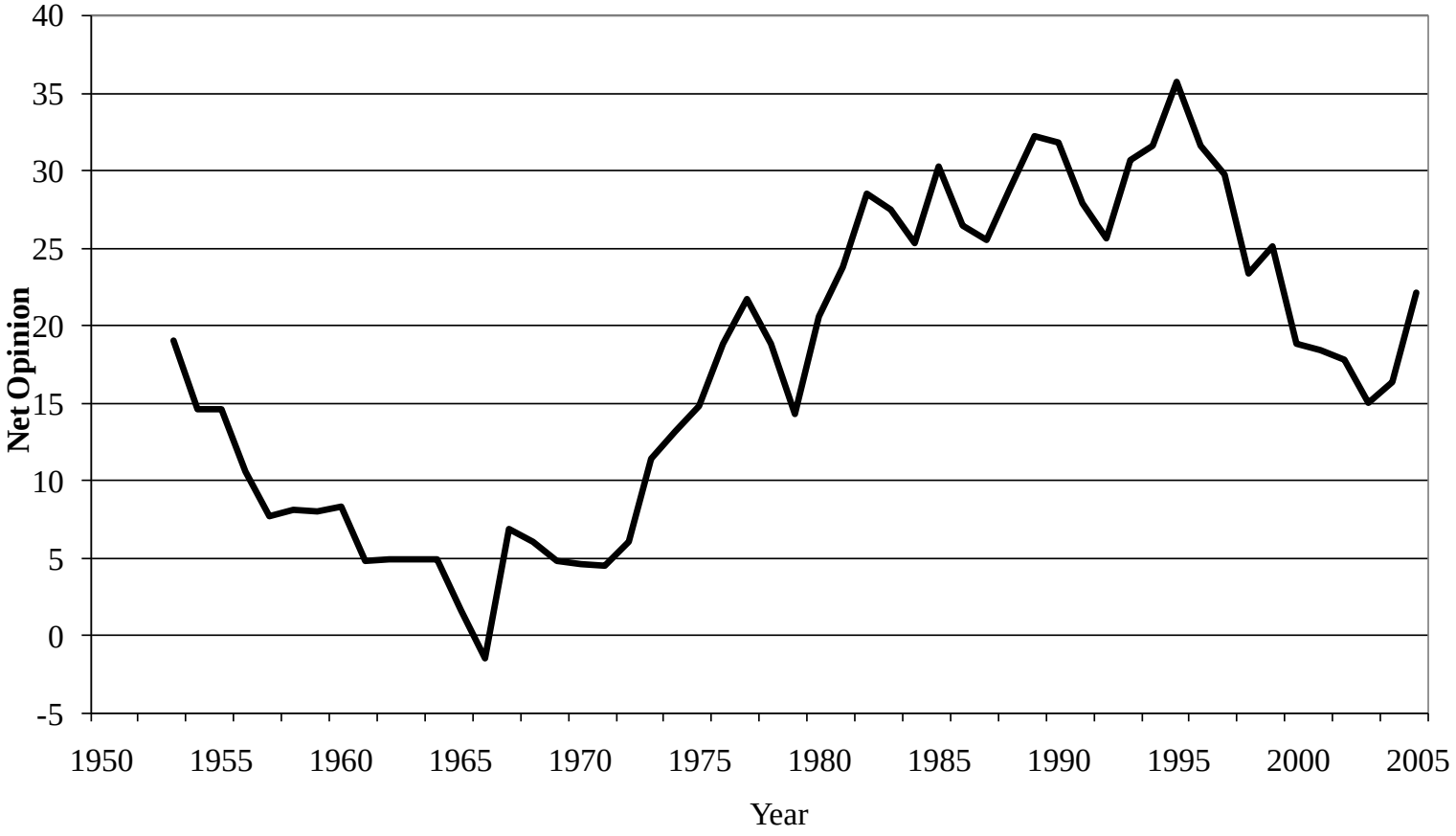
NB: France, UK, approx 400 per year

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*$_{t-1}$

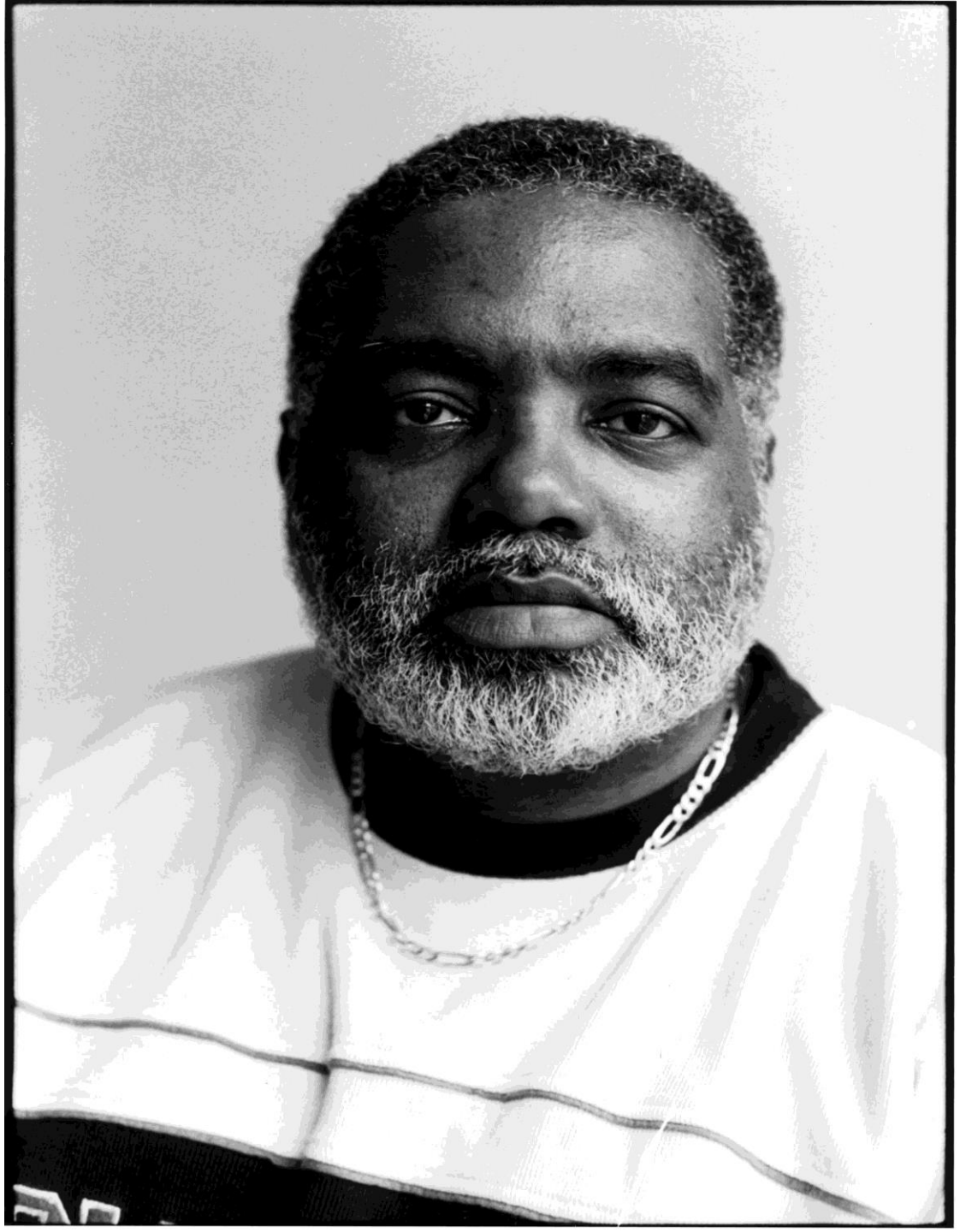
+ 0.817 x Homicides (thousands)$_{t-1}$

+ 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

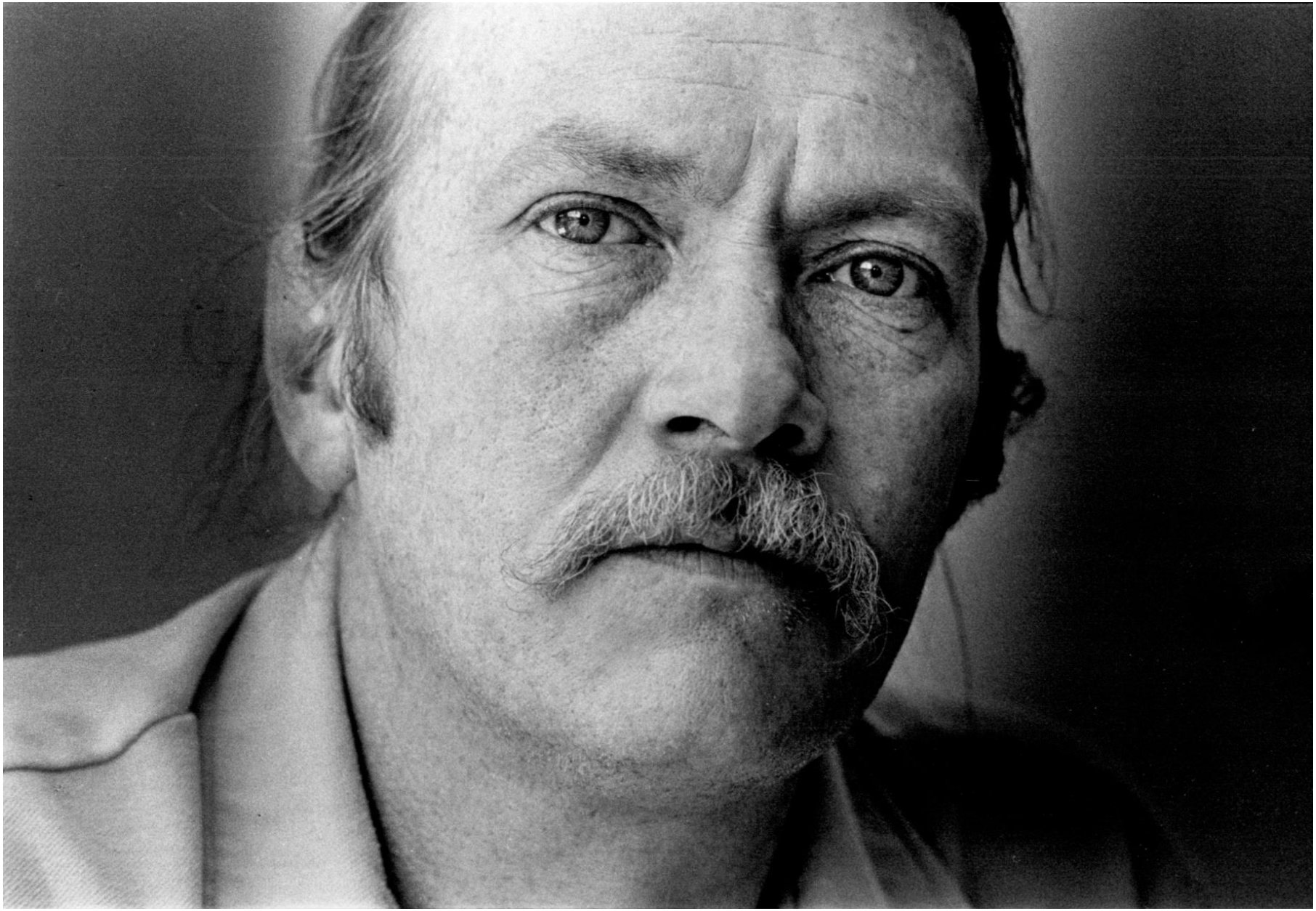
Interpretation

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

Move homicides by 8,000:

Decline in death sentences: 10 per year

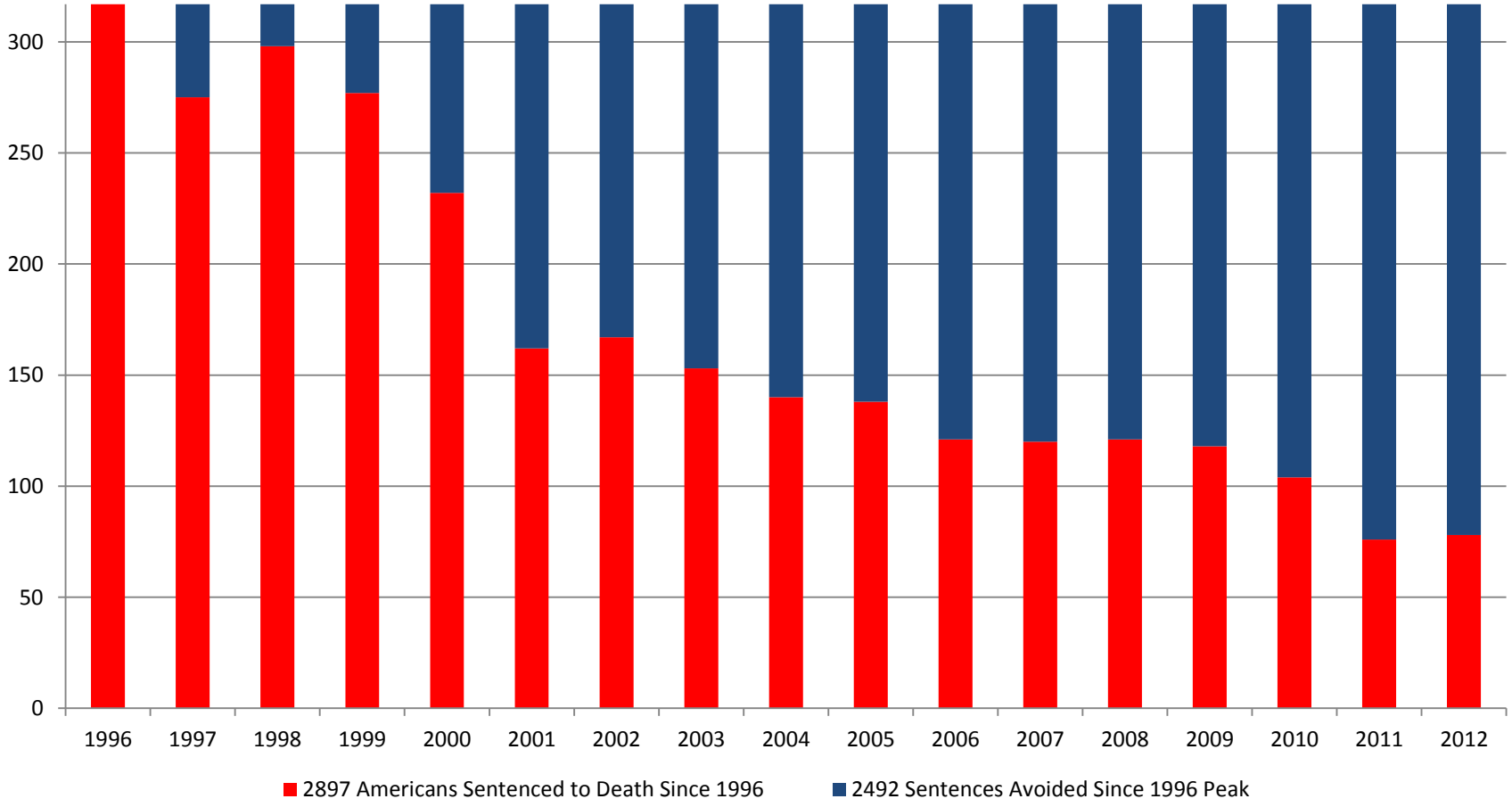
(Effect is small, and statistically insignificant)

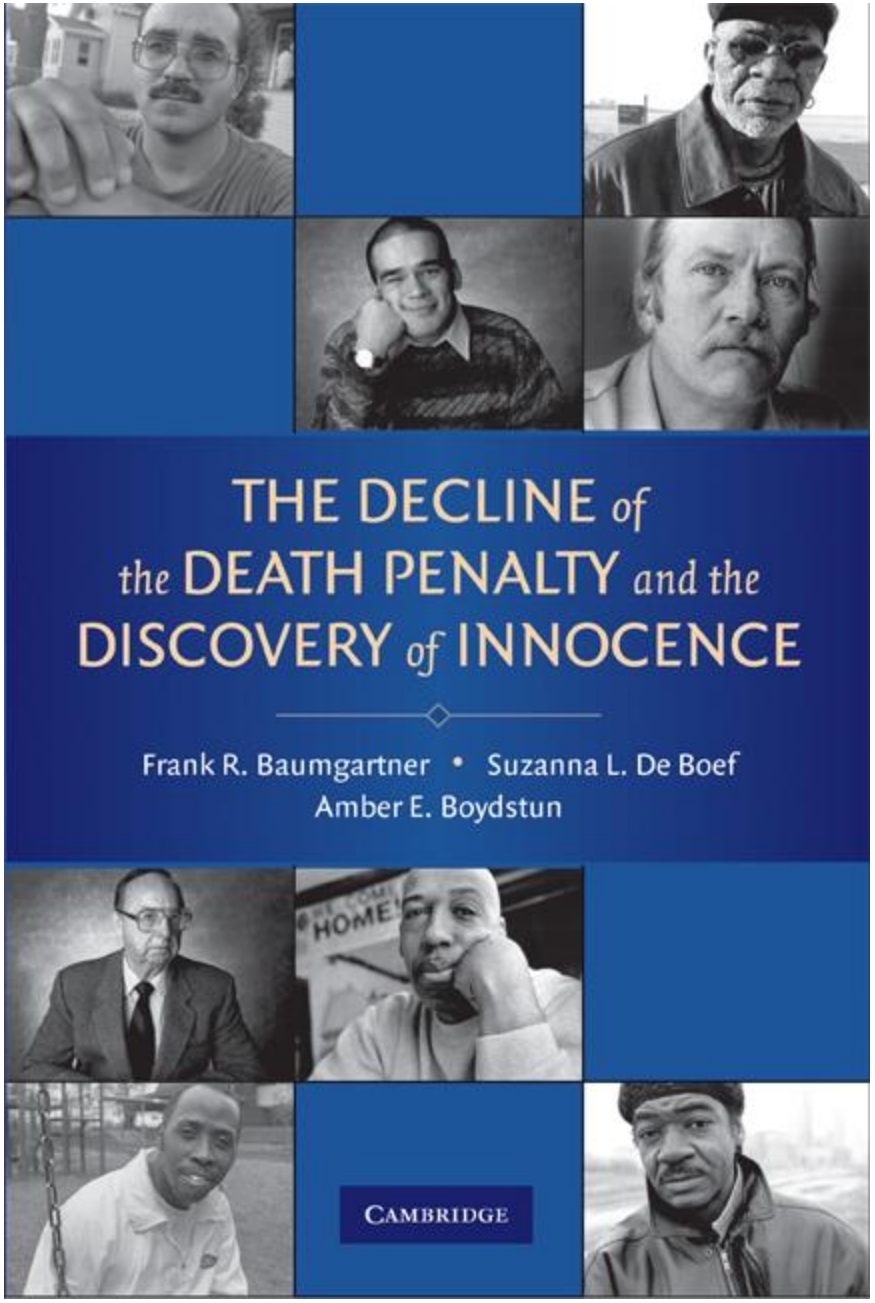


A self-perpetuating process

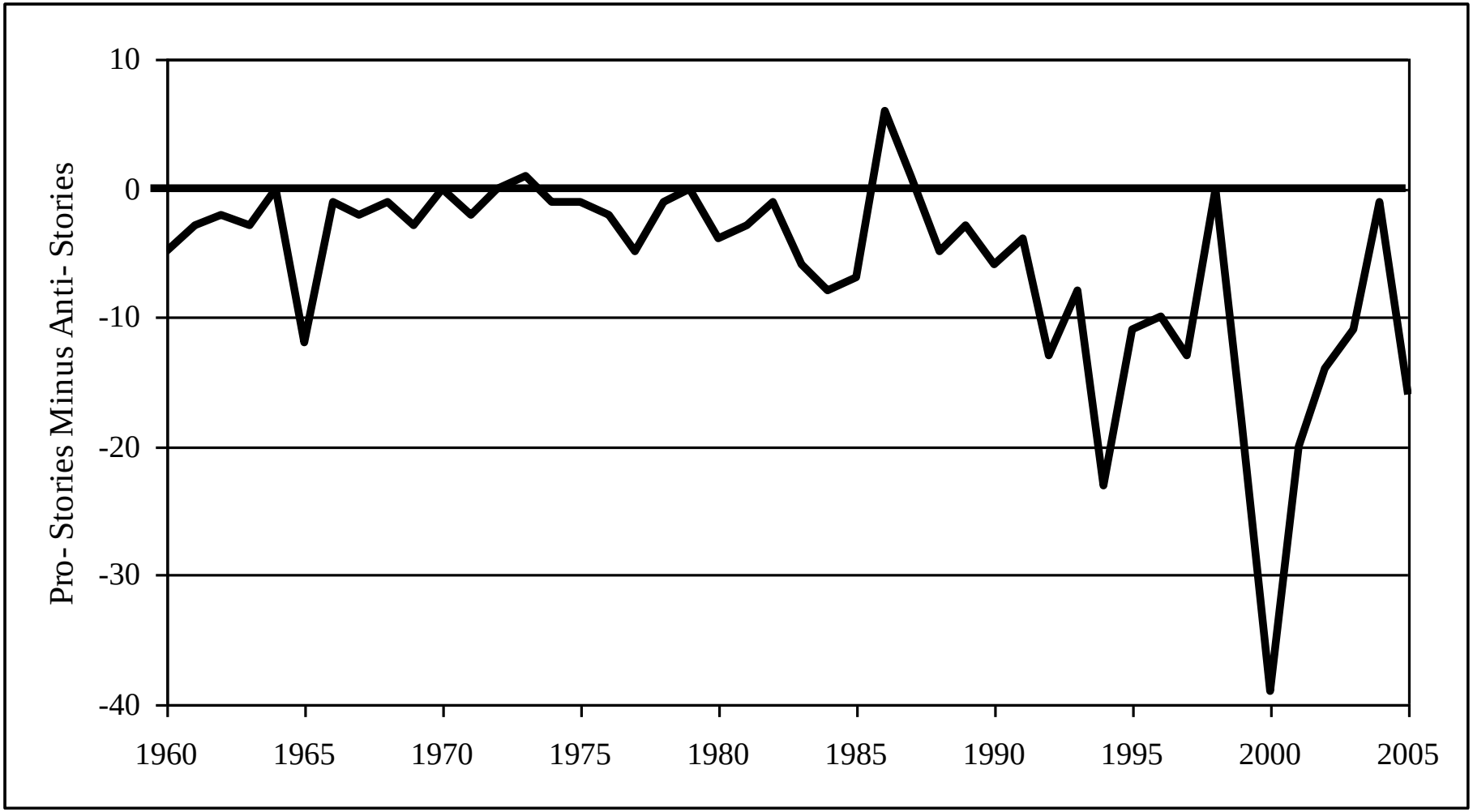
- Decline, just like the growth (1976-1995) is self-perpetuating
- So innocence claims in a particular case can have a huge multiplier effect.
- Consider that about 2,500 people are not on death row today who would have been if we continued to sentence at the rate of 1996.

2492 Death Sentences did not happen

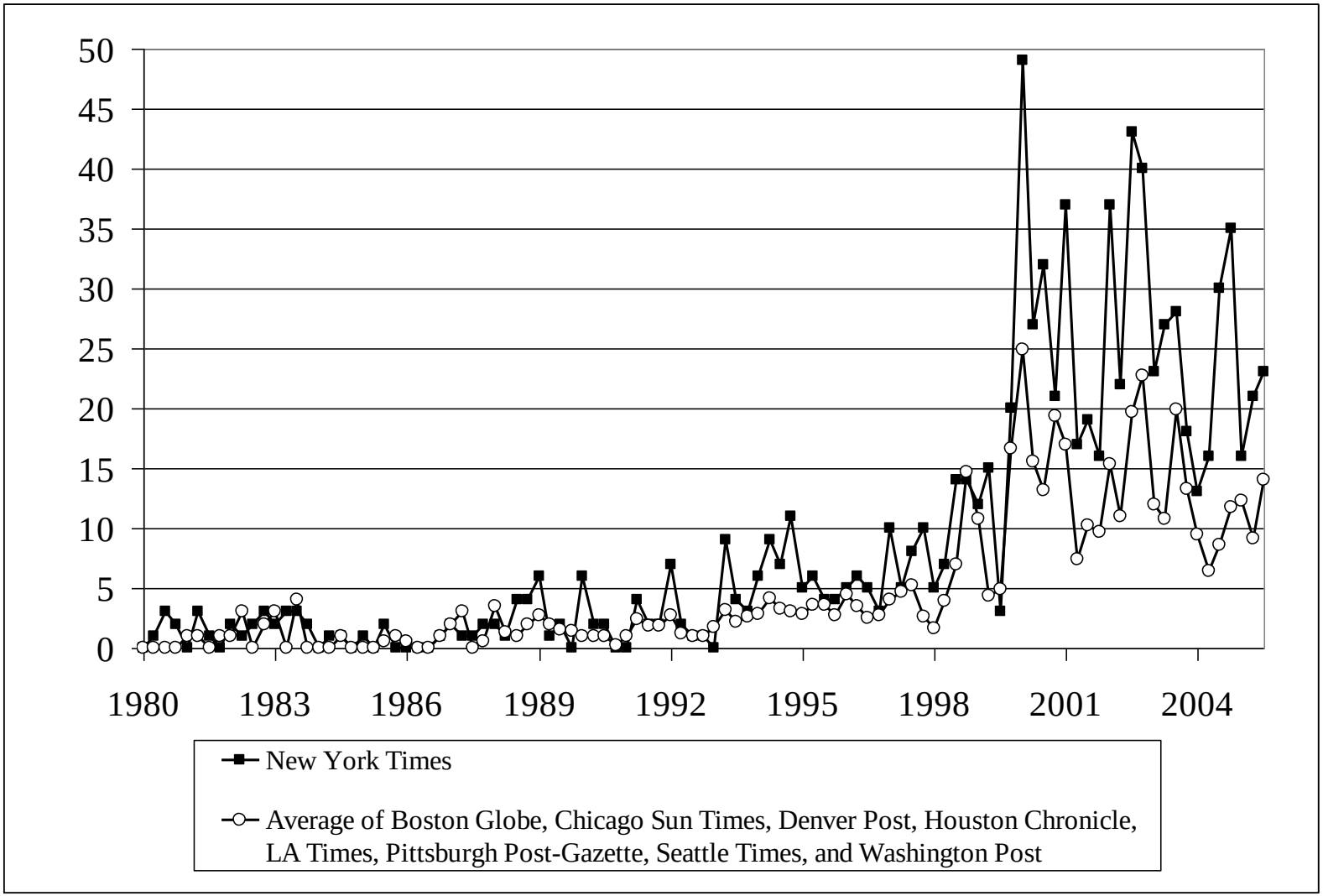
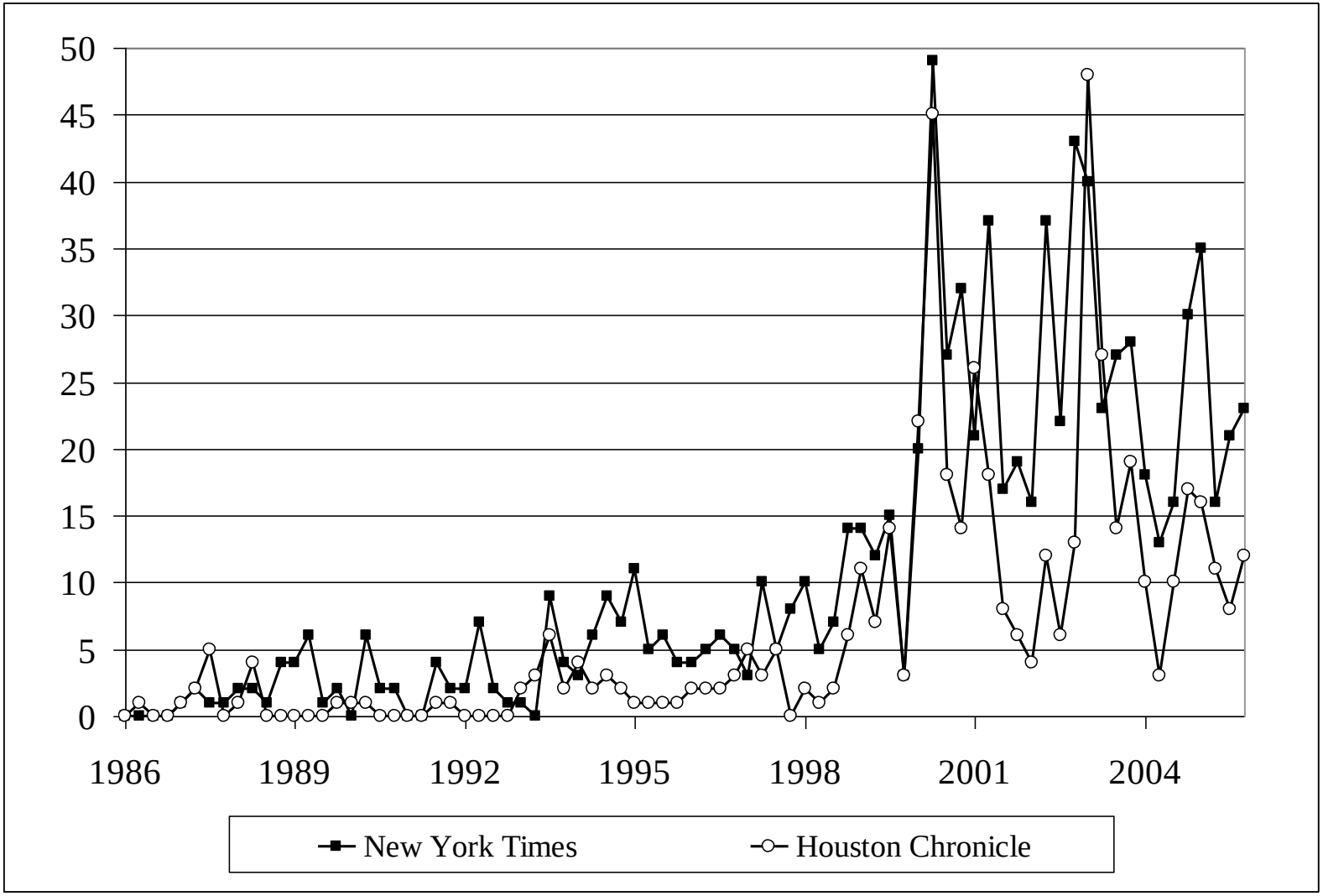



THE DECLINE of
the DEATH PENALTY and the
DISCOVERY of INNOCENCE
Frank R. Baumgartner • Suzanna L. De Boef
Amber E. Boydstun
HOME
CAMBRIDGE

Net Tone from *Readers' Guide*



Innocence Frame:
NYT vs. Other Major Papers



Innocence Frame:
NYT vs. *Houston Chronicle*