



Pastors or Predators

A case study of clergy
representation in two nations

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Introduction

- This paper deals with the issue of media reporting of clergy misconduct in Ireland and America.
- It draws on communications theory and uses a basic content analysis to examine the reporting in the two newspapers.
- It is a work in progress and is based on previously published research.



Framing

- How stories are framed in the press is a key issue.
- Stories are often framed ideologically, whether intentionally or otherwise.
- Such framing affects audience interpretations.



Labeling

- Labeling in media reports
- Typically used to identify minorities
- A worldwide phenomenon
- Different groups involved, normally ethnic minorities



US Experience

- A contentious issue
- Different forms
 - 'black on black' violence
 - a link between race and crime
 - racism in social institutions
 - relationships between ethnic groups
 - sexual minorities



Deviance and Minorities

- Deviance is commonly indicated in media reports about minorities.
- It reflects the values of the power elite in a society.
- It tends to indicate which groups are regarded as legitimate.

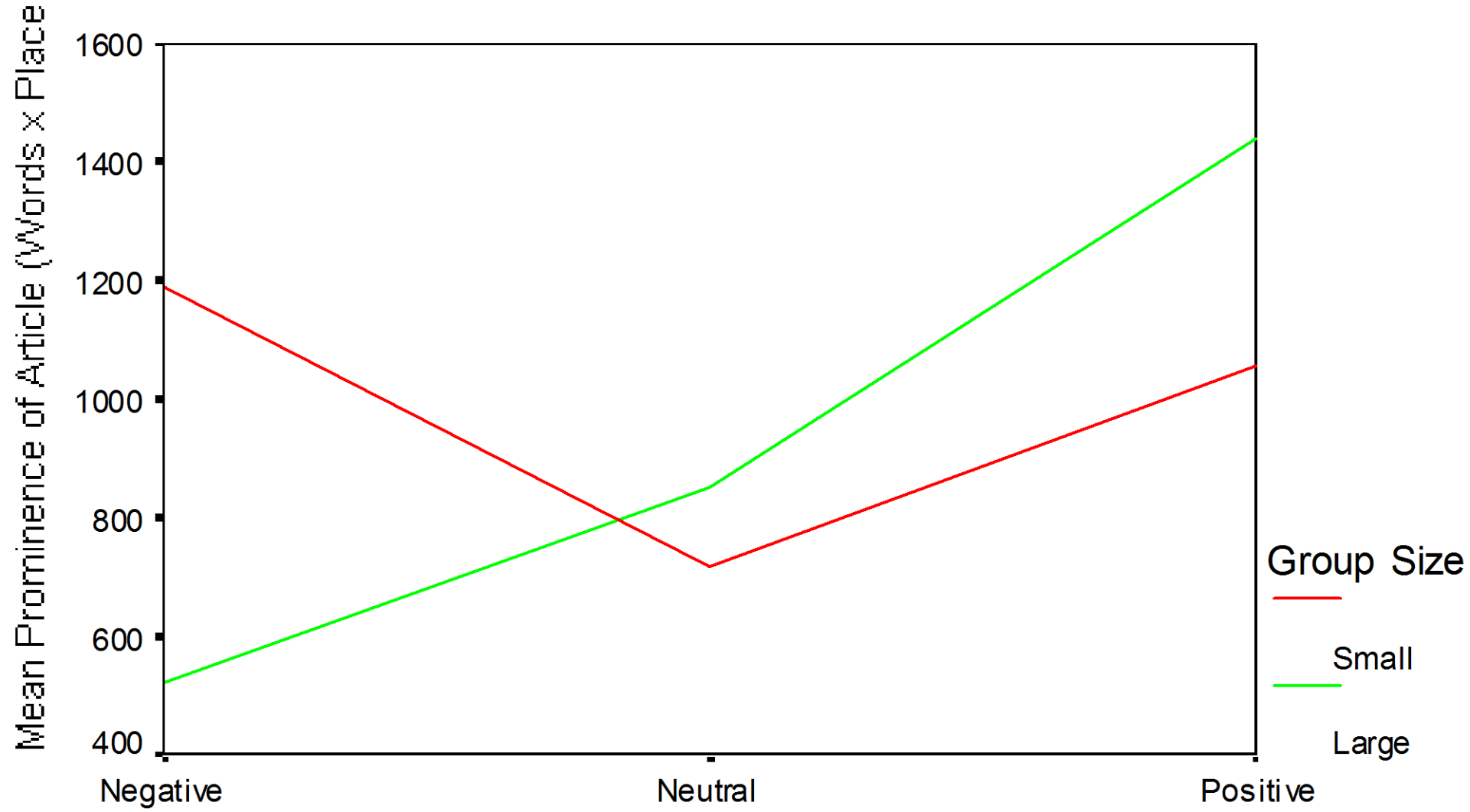


Religion & Deviance

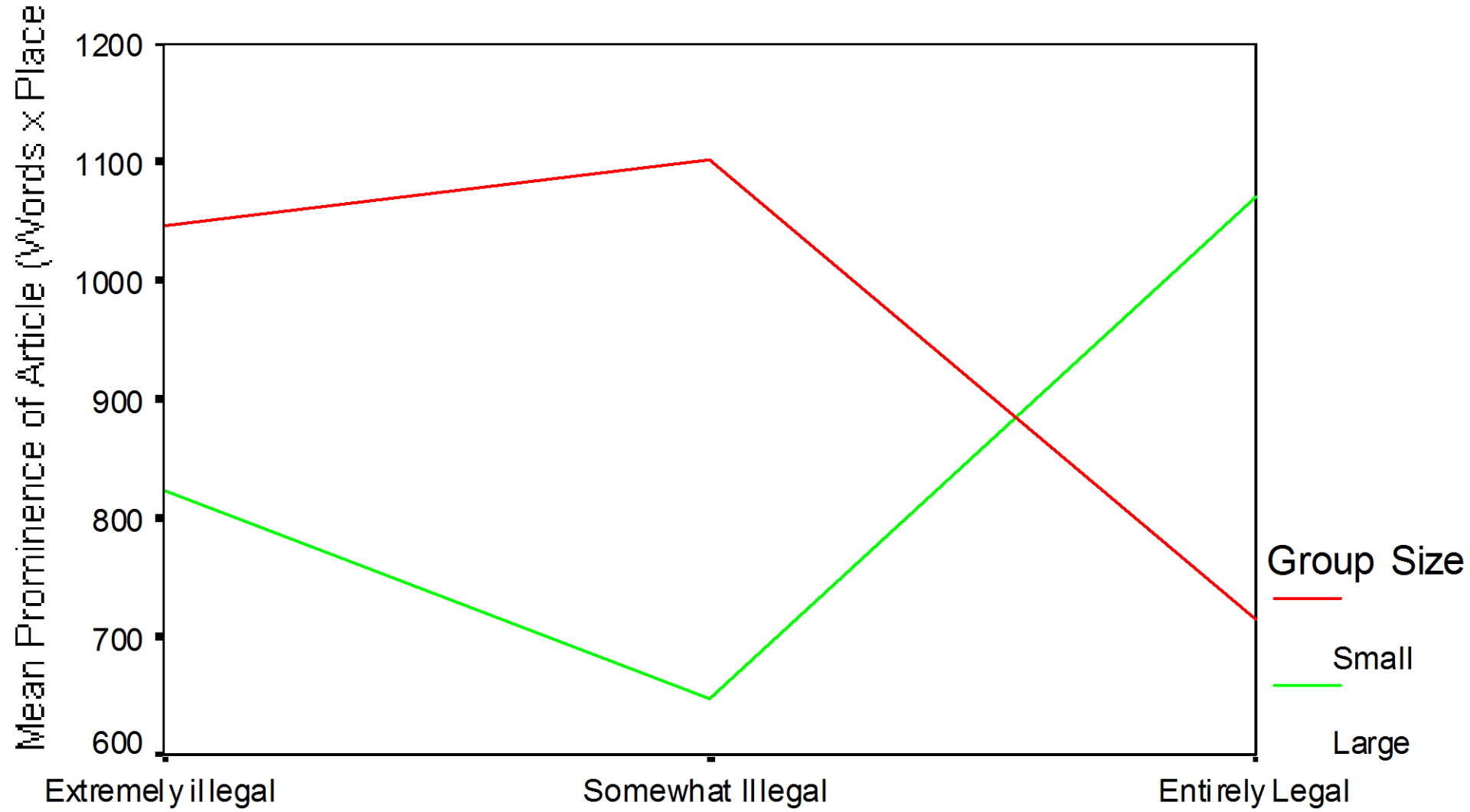
- Religious affiliation is increasingly used as an identifier in news reports.
- Such religious labeling can be pejorative
 - fundamentalist cleric,
 - right-wing Christian,
 - Moslem fanatic,
 - Jewish extremist
- Previous study on religious groups in the US



Prominence & Group Size



Legality & Group Size





Media Focus on Deviance

- The definition of newsworthiness
- Deviant behavior *per se*
- Journalistic use of deviance in reporting



Deviance & Agenda Setting

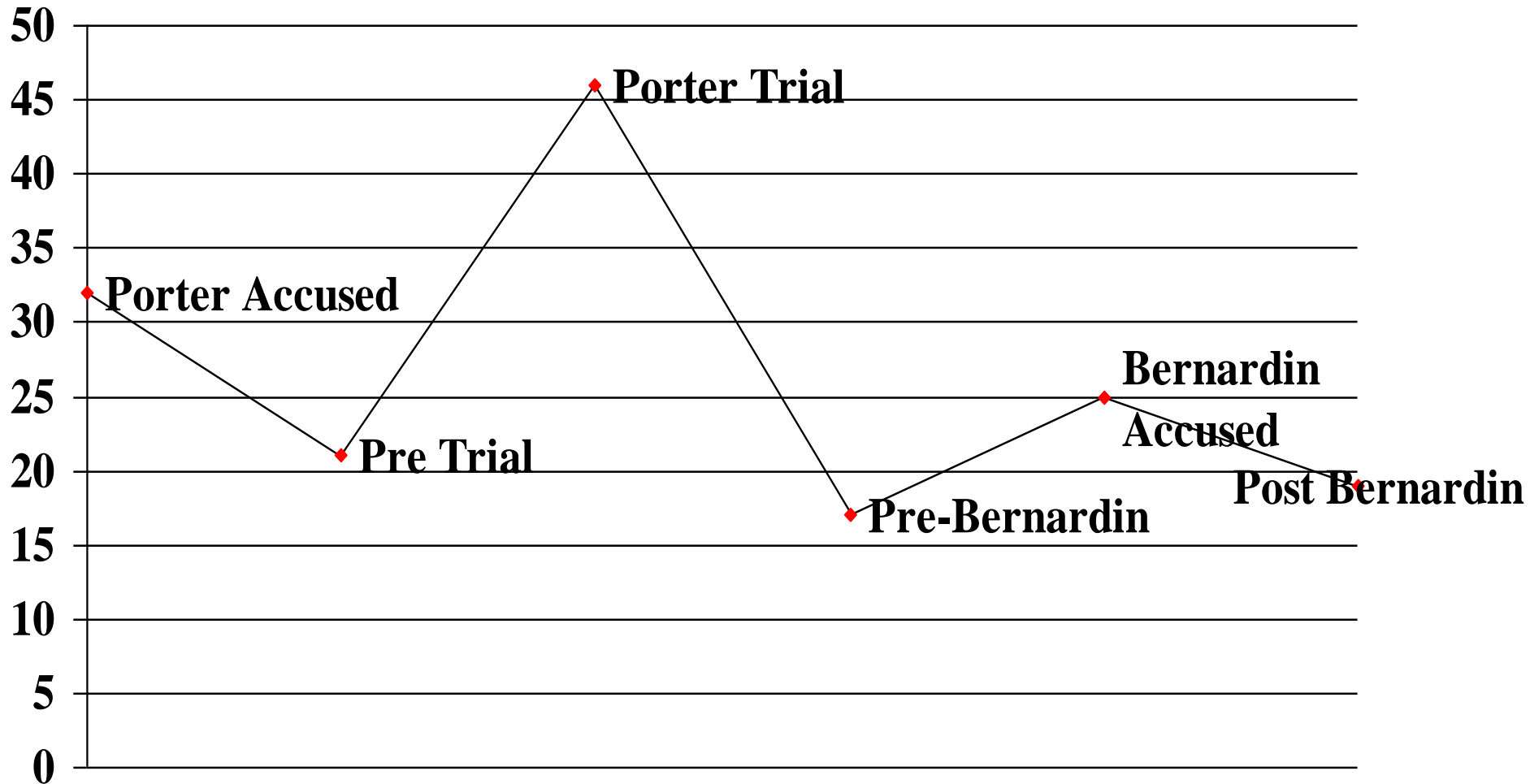
- Deviance gets repeated and amplified.
- Deviance serves as a lens for future reporting
- Deviance applies to an entire group, not just the minority within a group engaged in deviance.



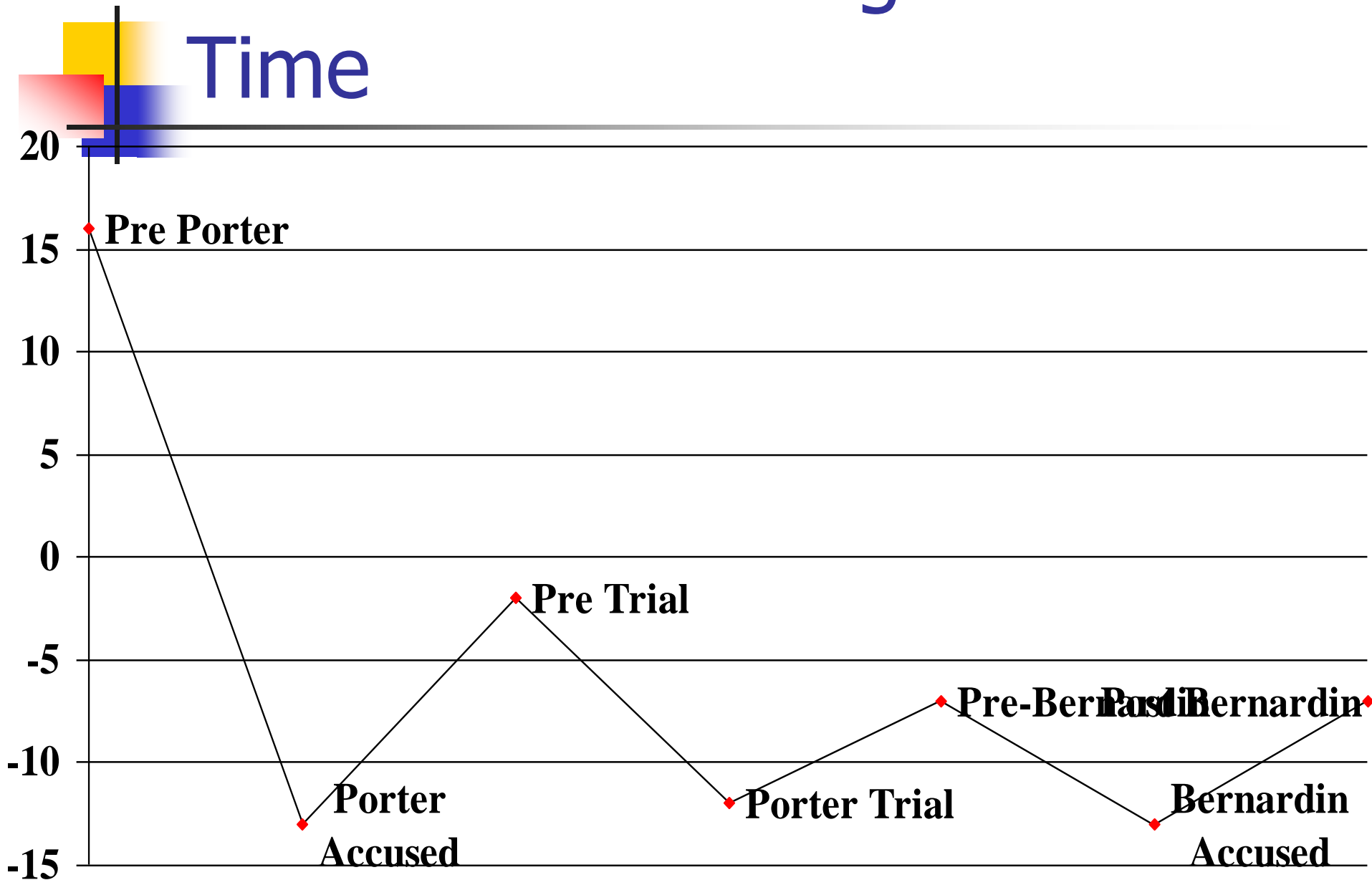
Deviance & Agenda Setting II

- Those who share an identity with those reported as deviant are particularly affected.
- The use of deviance as an historical referent is problematic.
- The Bernardin example.

Level of Coverage over time



Valence of Coverage over Time





The Present Study

- Previous research had looked at English language elite papers worldwide on the issue of clergy deviance.
- This study narrowed the focus to two newspapers, The Irish Times, and the New York Times, looked specifically at the extent and emphasis of reporting of clergy misconduct over the eight years since the previous study.



Methodology

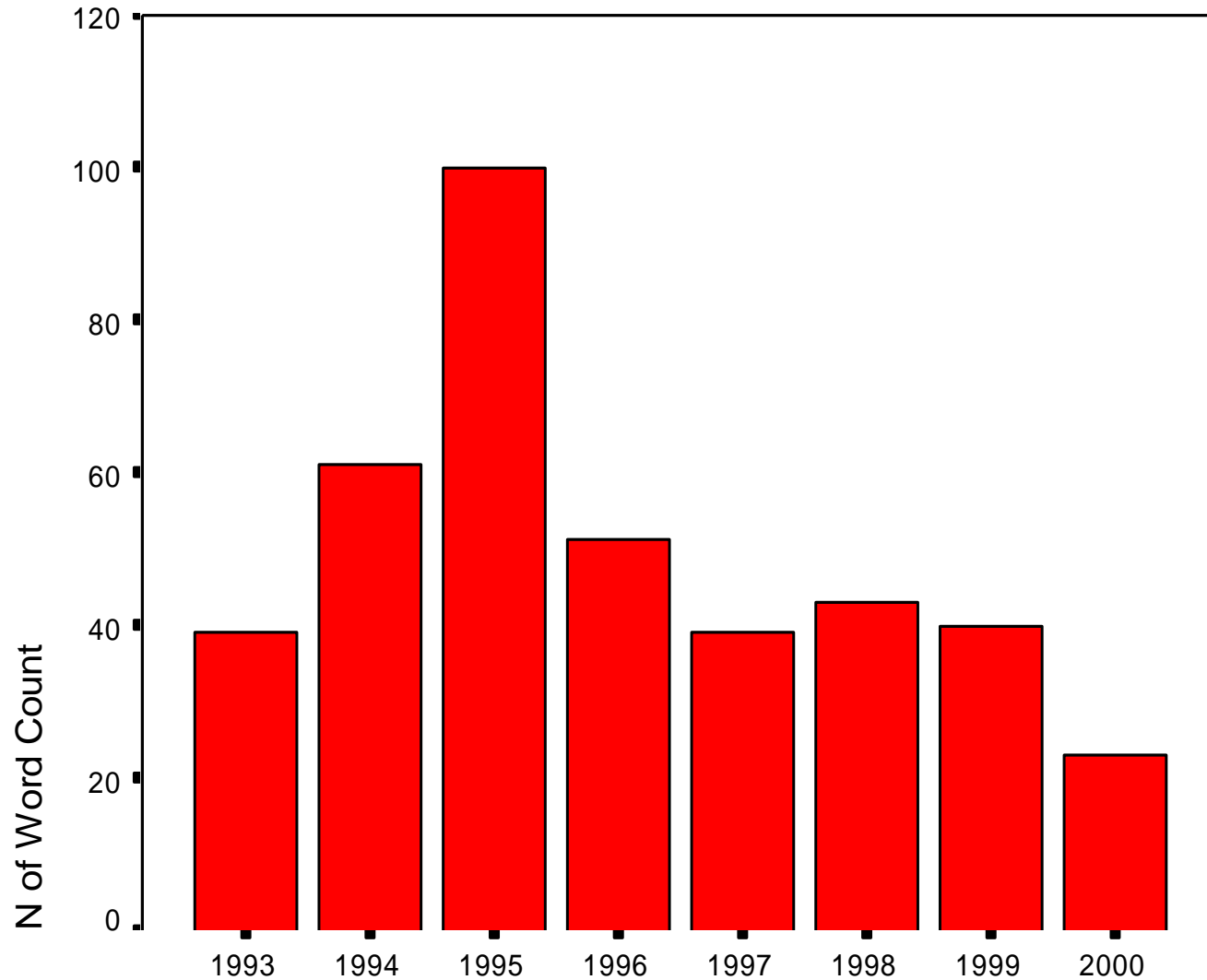
- The Nexis-Lexis database was searched using date gates and limiting the search to the two papers (ALLNWS:NYT,ITIMES).
- The search term was **“(priest* or cleric or clergy or minister* or rabbi* or brother* or monk*) w/10 ((child w/1 abuse) or (sex* w/1 abuse) or (molestation) or (rape)) and date aft 01/01/93 and date bef 01/01/2001”**



Data

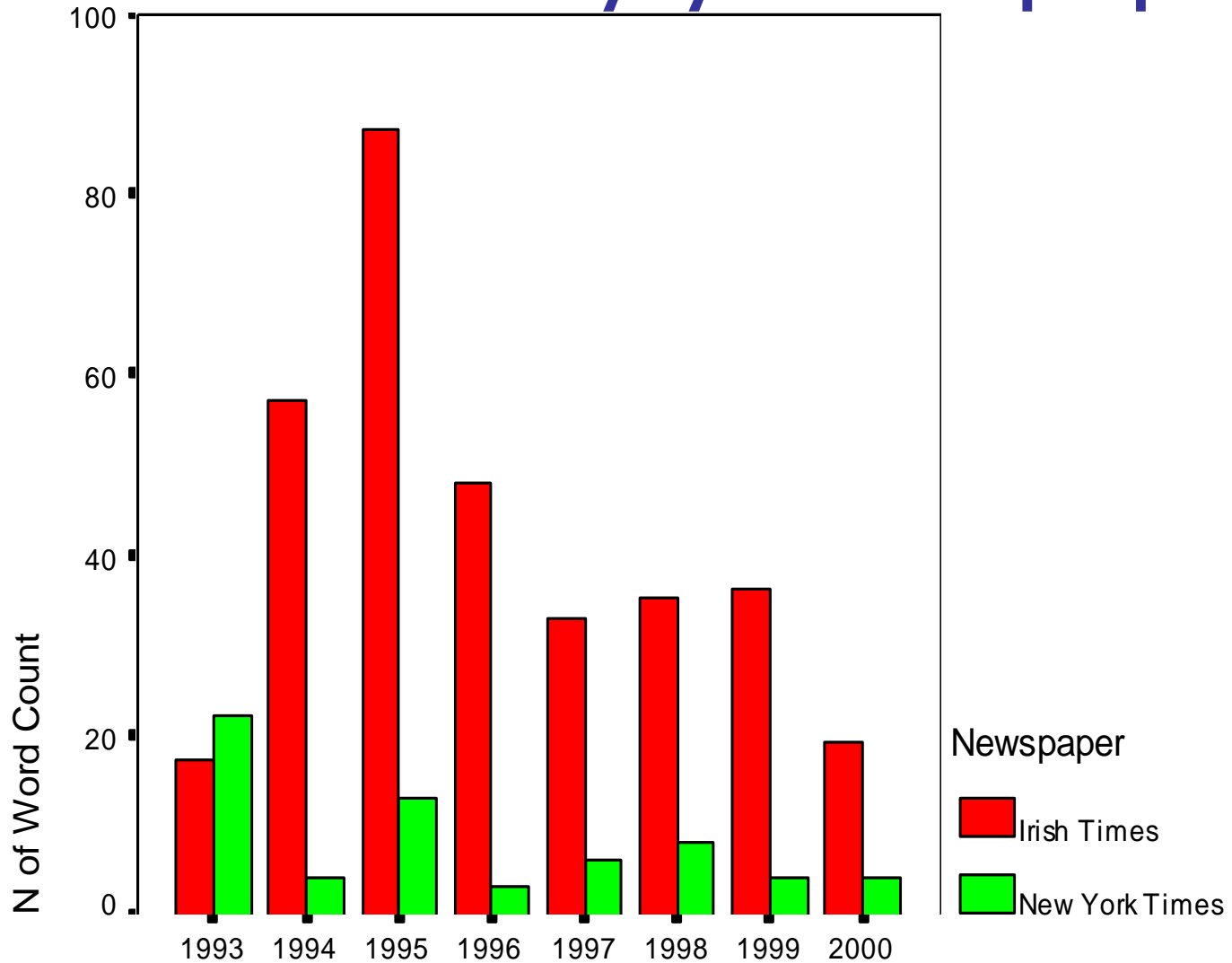
- The search yielded 781 stories.
- The story yield was then examined to exclude non –relevant stories
- The filtering reduced the total to 413
 - 343 from the Irish Times
 - 70 from the New York Times

N of stories by year of publication



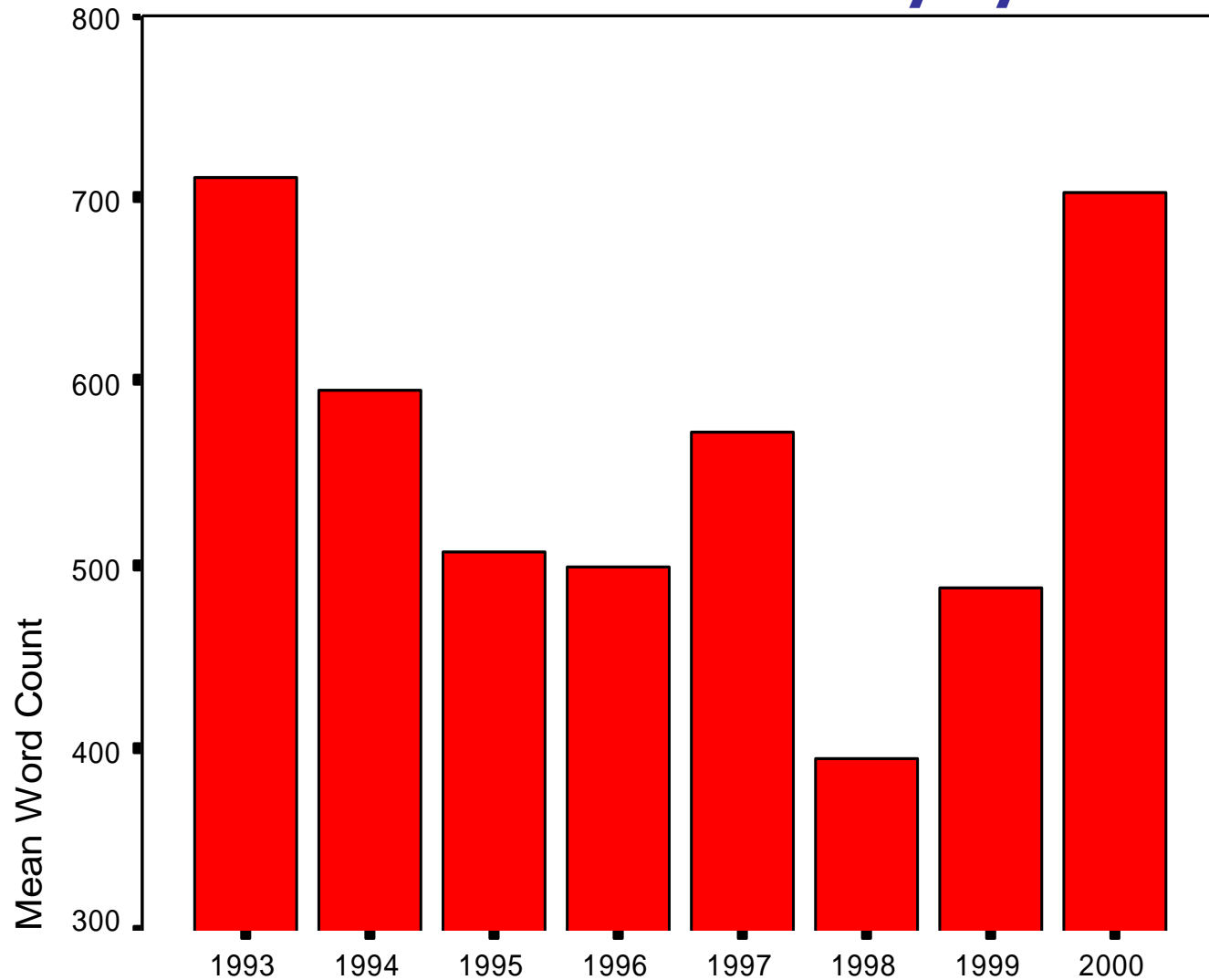


N of stories by year & paper

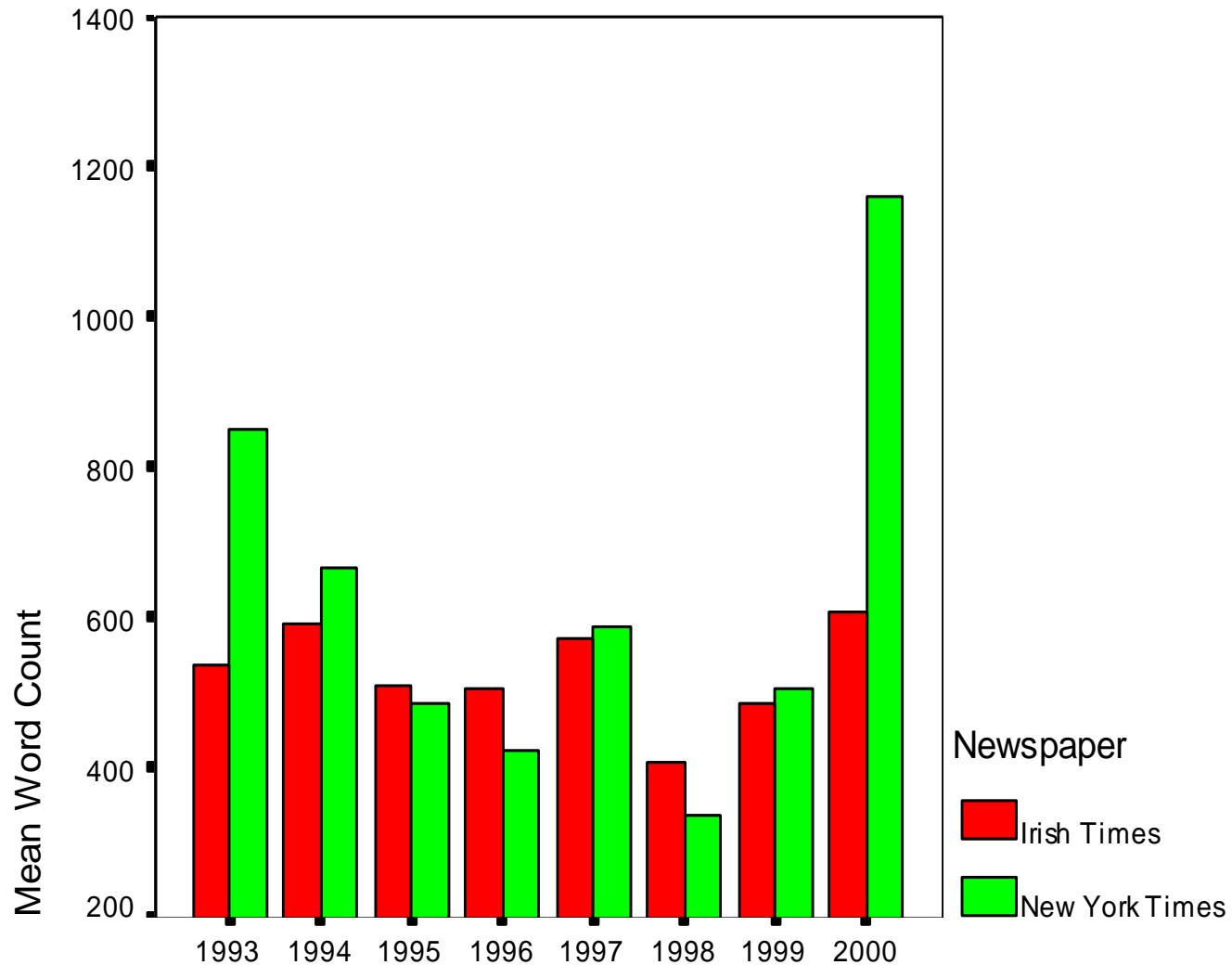




Mean word count by year

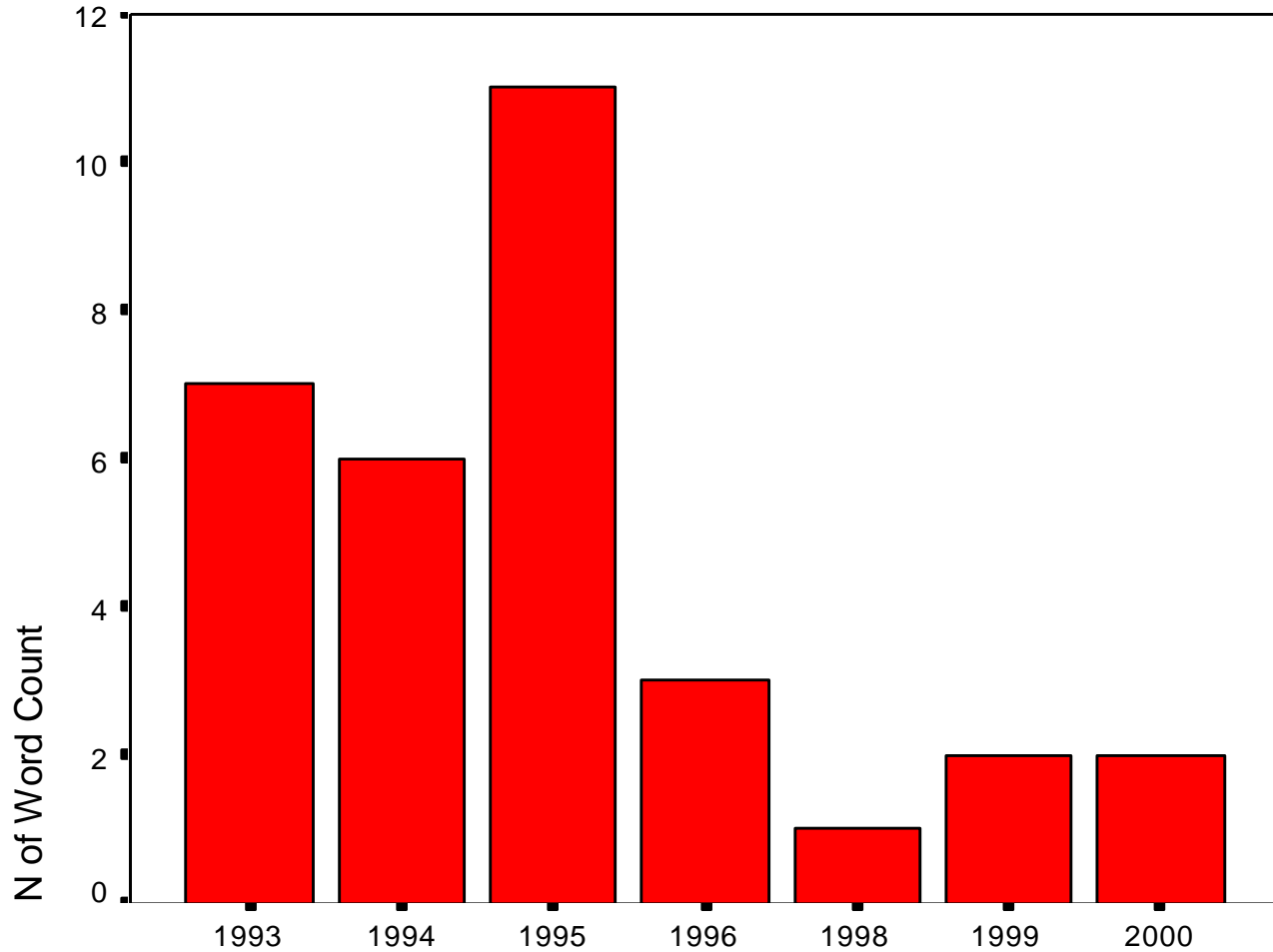


Mean word count by year & paper

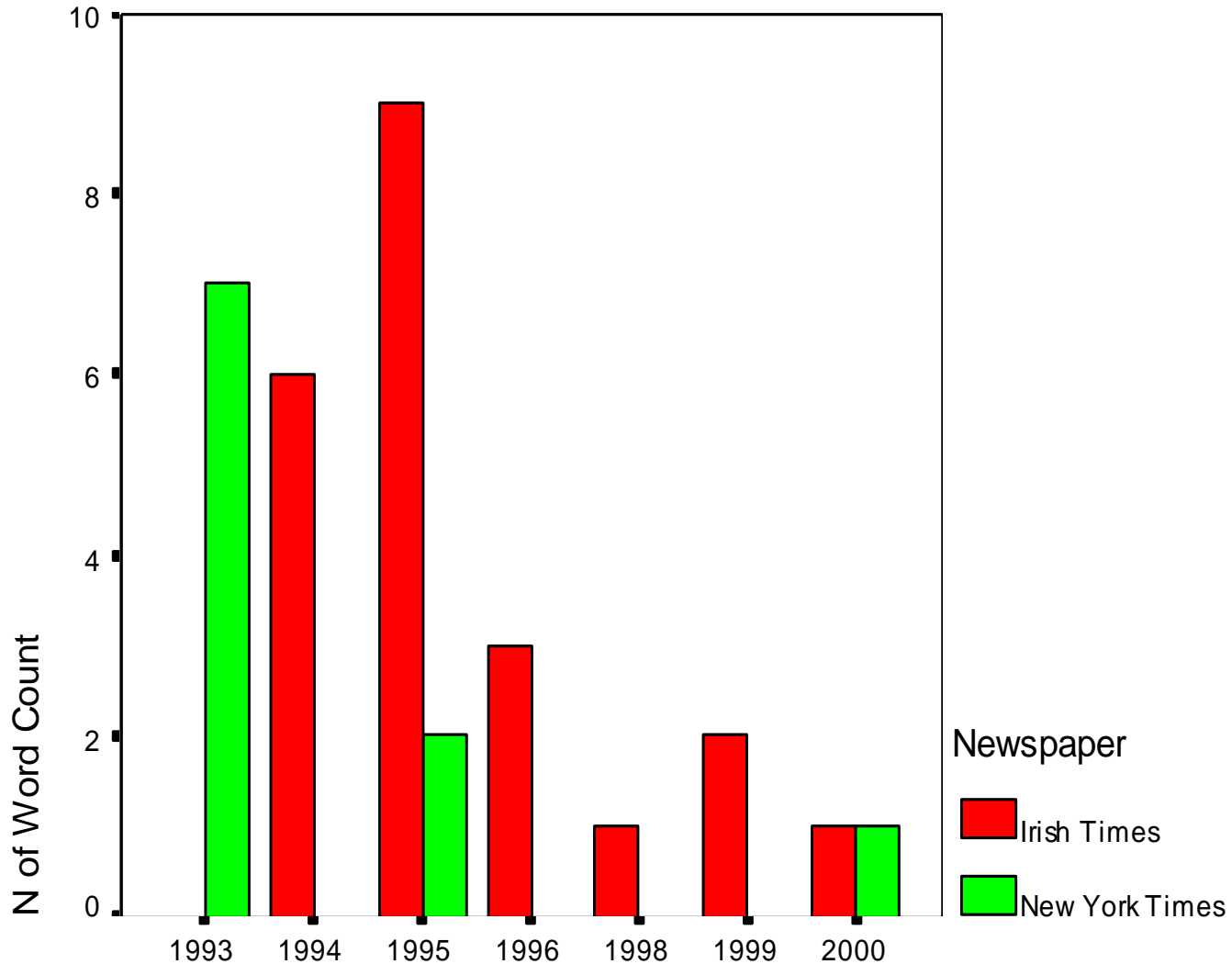




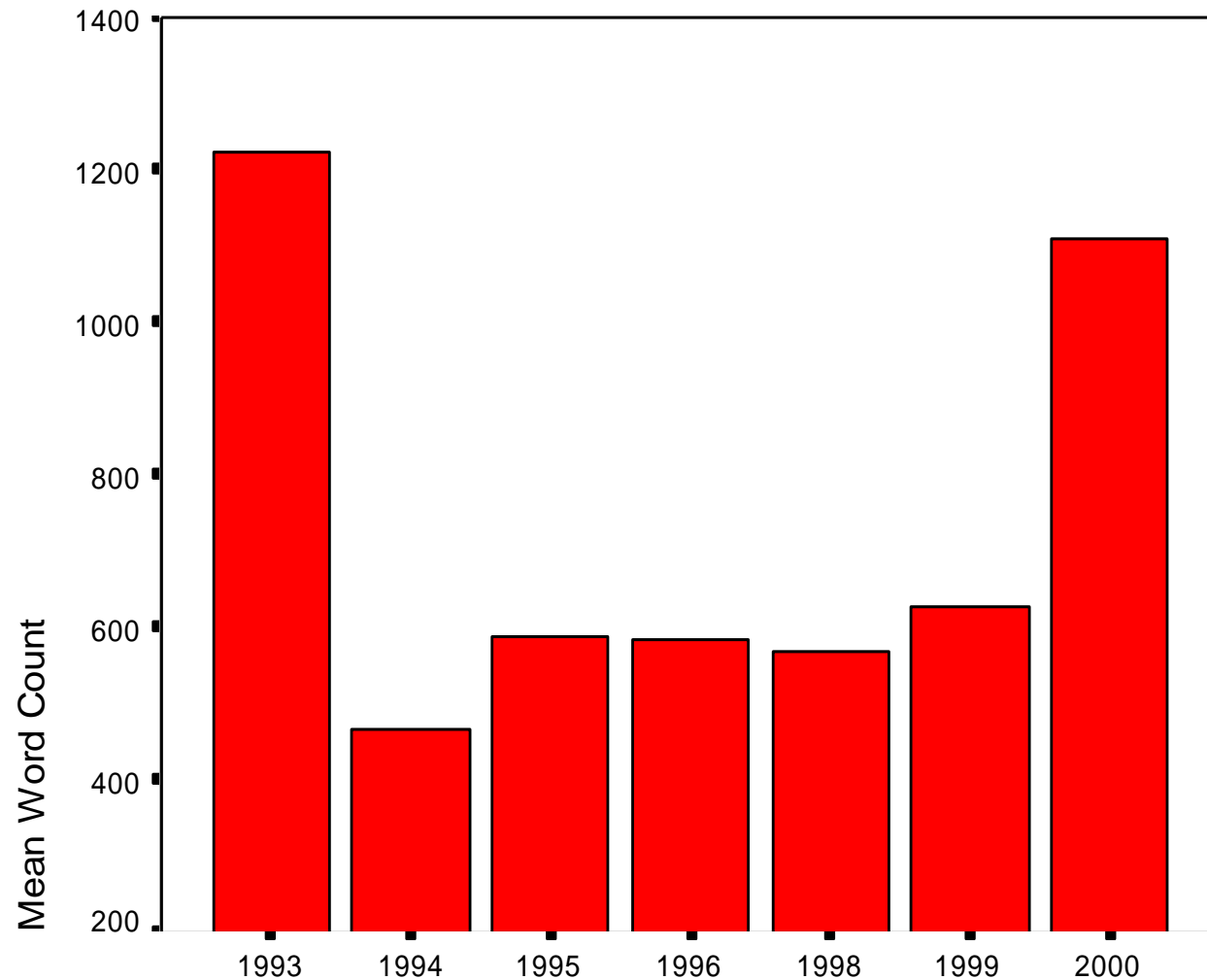
N of page 1 stories by year



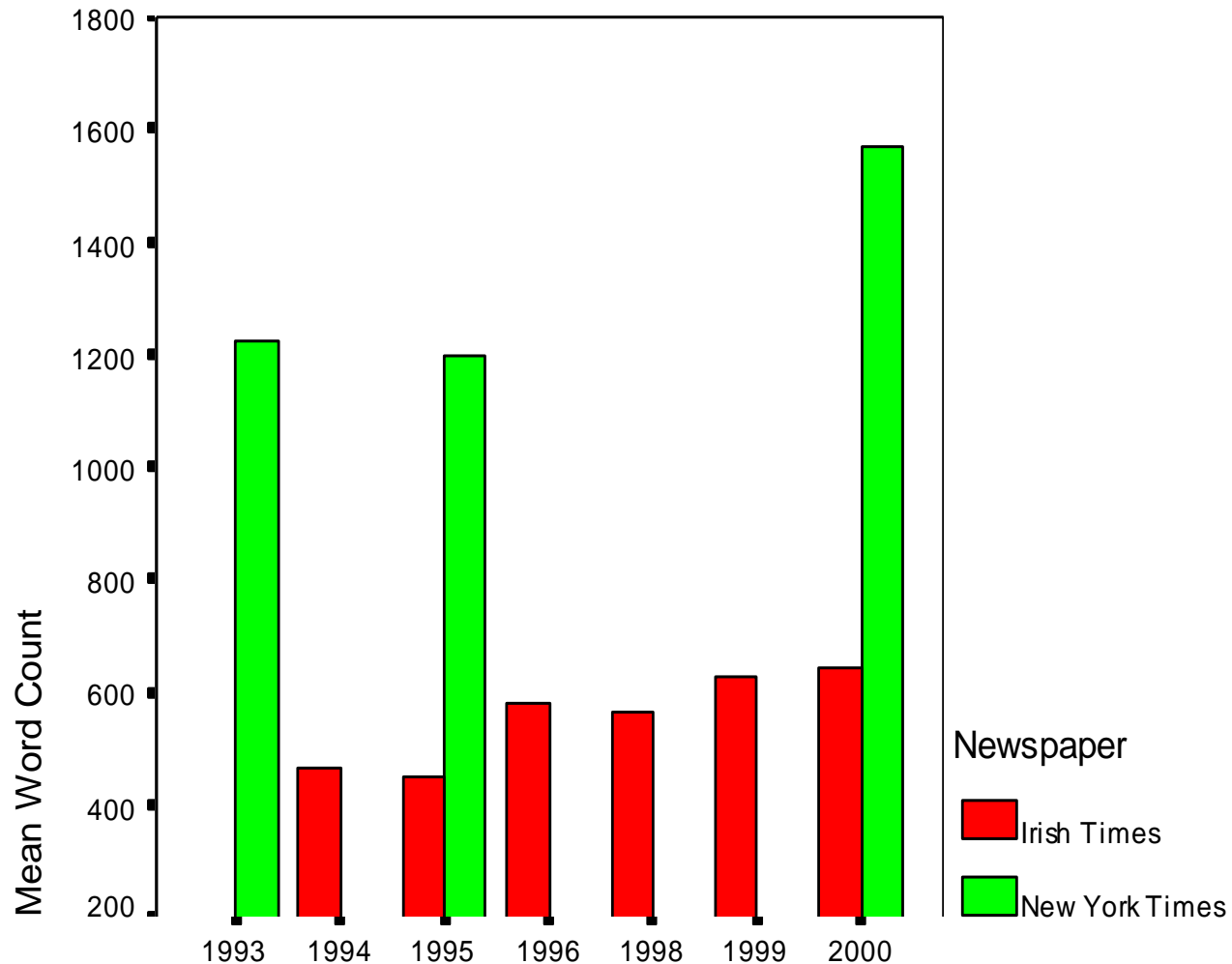
N of page 1 stories by year & paper



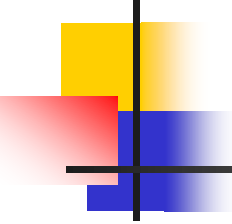
Mean word count of page 1 stories by year



Mean word count of page 1 stories by year and paper

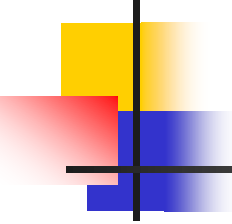


Headline Word Usage



Word	IT	IT	NYT	NYT
	N	%	N	%
Clergy	9	3%	2	3%
Priest	118	34%	28	41%
Bishop	41	12%	4	6%
Cardinal	11	3%	0	0%
Pope	6	3%	3	2%
TOTAL	176	51%	35	51%

Headline Word Usage II



Word	IT	IT	NYT	NYT
	N	%	N	%
Church	55	16%	4	6%
Pedophile	11	3%	0	0%
Allege*	19	6%	1	1%
Celibacy*	3	1%	0	0%
Belief*	2	1%	2	3%
Charge*	40	12%	7	10%



The 'Paedophile Priest'

- Between August 1993 and August 2000, the Irish Times used the phrase paedophile priest 332 times.
- 'Paedophile farmer' occurred 5 times
- No instance of
 - 'paedophile parent',
 - 'paedophile teacher',
 - 'paedophile journalist'



Conclusion I

- There are significant differences between media coverage of the Irish of serious sexual misconduct by clergy in Ireland and in the US.
- The issue tends to get longer and more prominent coverage in Ireland.
- There appears to be an element of media construction in relation to the paedophile priest concept as opposed to recognition of a society-wide phenomenon.



Conclusion II

- Further research is needed
- Ireland's historical involvement of the Church in politics clearly has an impact. How can this be measured in the context of such a study?
- Does the same issue arise in other Catholic countries, e.g., Spain, as clergy misconduct comes to light?
- What social effect does media construction have on public opinion, if any?