

The History of Homicide in the U.S.

The need for historical data

Homicide

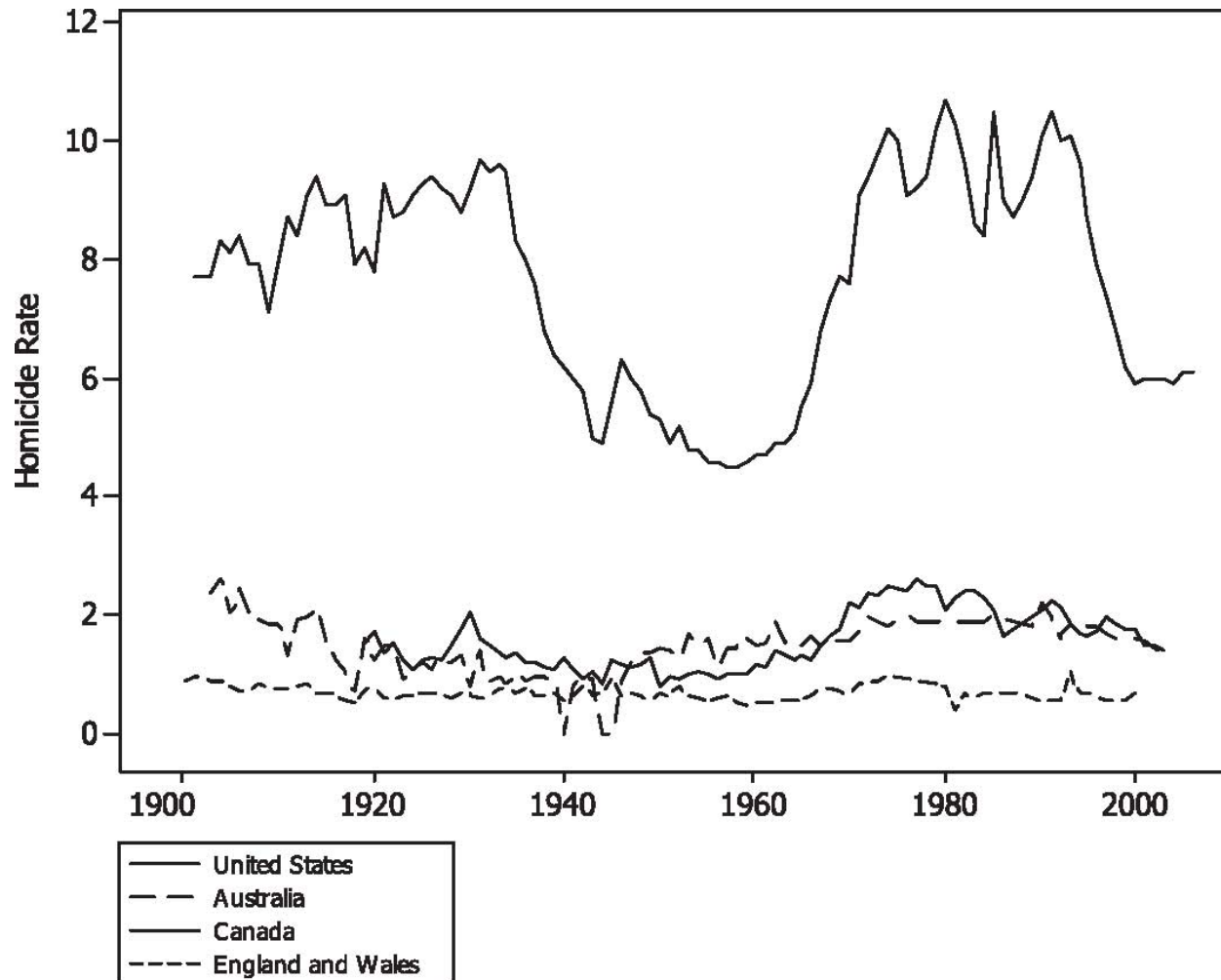
White-collar crime

Sexual assaults

Property crime

Drug addiction

Homicide Rates in the U.S, 1900-2006



The Pattern of 20th Century Homicide: Data Problems

Death Registration Area data in the early 20th century

**Improvements in the Quality of Data in 1959 and 1960: NCHS
and UCR**

**Limitations of the Improvements in the Quality of Data: Ohio,
1976-1988**

Flaws in the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) data system

		NCHS		Total
		In NCHS database	Not in NCHS Database	
Ohio Department of Health	CASUALTY	22	0	22
	HOMICIDE	8	0	8
	NATURAL CAUSE	6	0	6
	In ODH as hom	5537	1762	7299
	SUICIDE	30	0	30
	No match in ODH	9	0	9
Total		5612	1762	7374

Flaws in the Ohio Department of Health Mortality Files and in the Supplementary Homicide Reports

Preble County homicides, 1976-1988

Only in SHR	4	
Only in ODH	11	
In both	18	
Homicides found	33	
Homicides estimated	35.5	
Percent in ODH	82%	(29 of 35.5)
Percent in SHR	62%	(22 of 35.5)

The Variability of Homicide Rates across Time and Space in the U.S.

**Substantial and rapid rises and falls in homicide rates among unrelated adults,
1607-present**

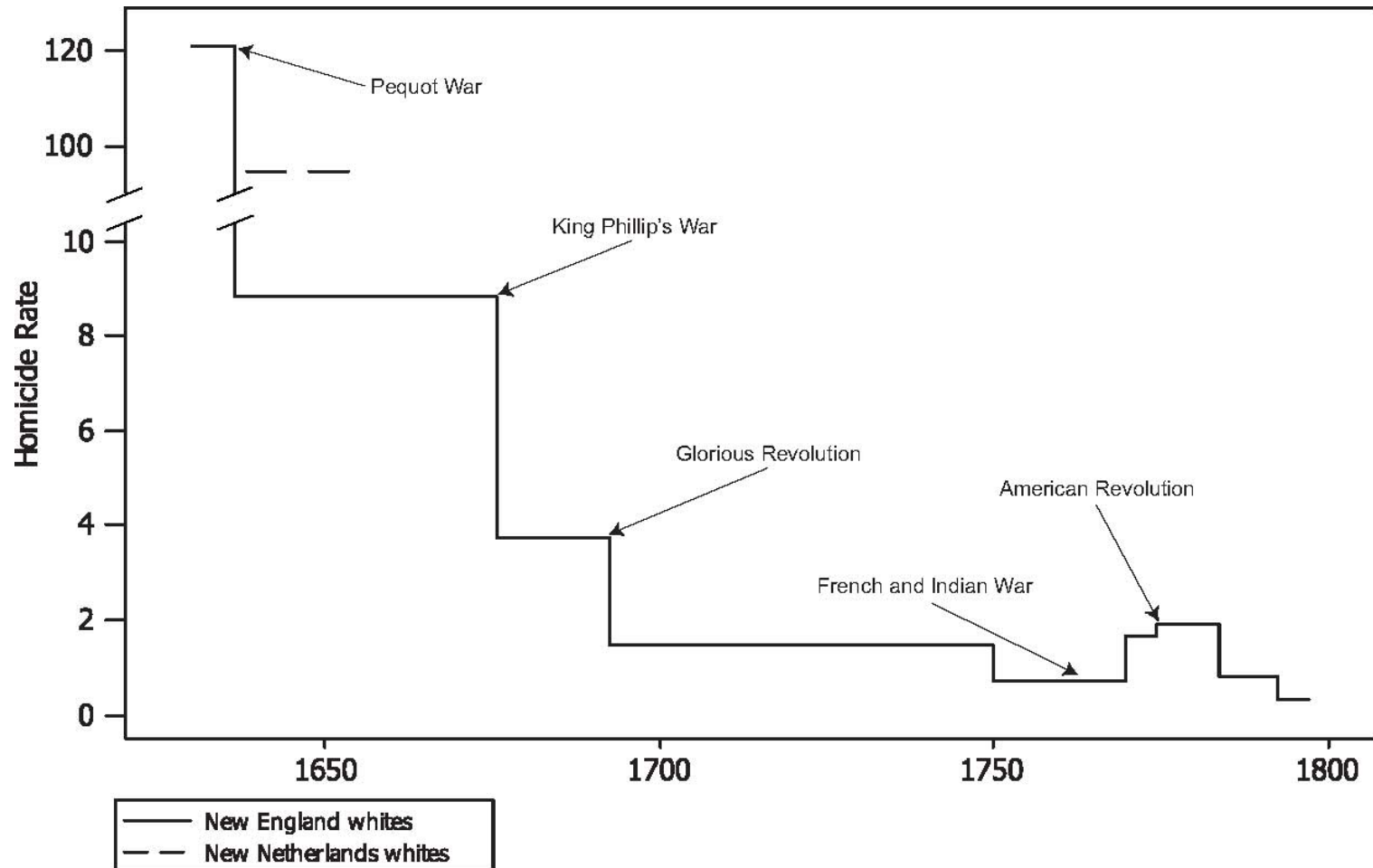
**Substantial variation in the timing of changes in homicide rates across regions
prior to the Great Depression**

**Remarkably low aggregate homicide rates in the mid-18th century and early 19th
century**

**Lower rates of commission by African Americans than European Americans
through most of our nation's history**

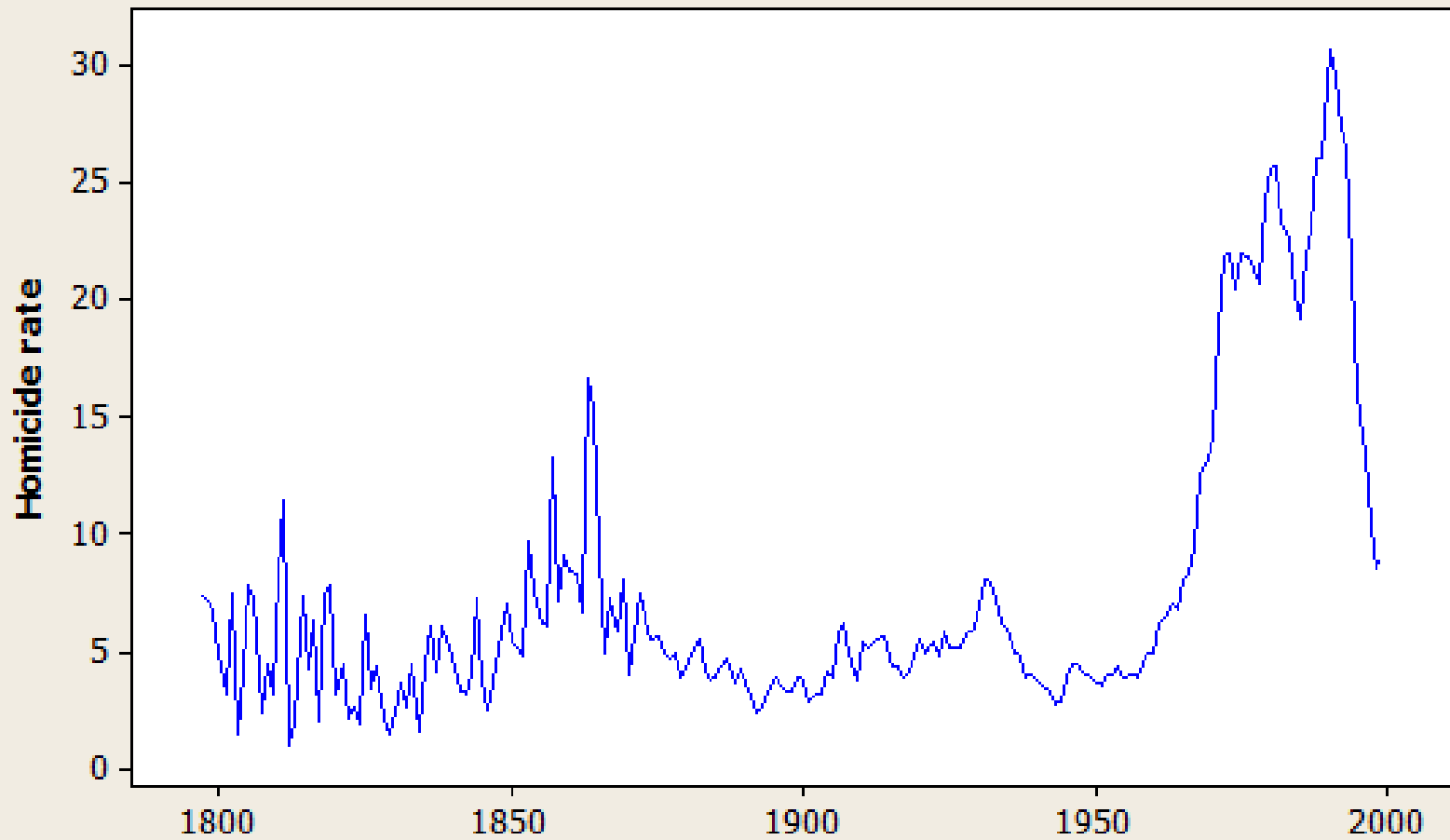
**Remarkably high rates during the early and mid-17th century, the American
Revolution, the mid-19th century, and on contested frontiers and in the late 19th
and early 20th century South**

Homicide Rates in New England, 1630-1800

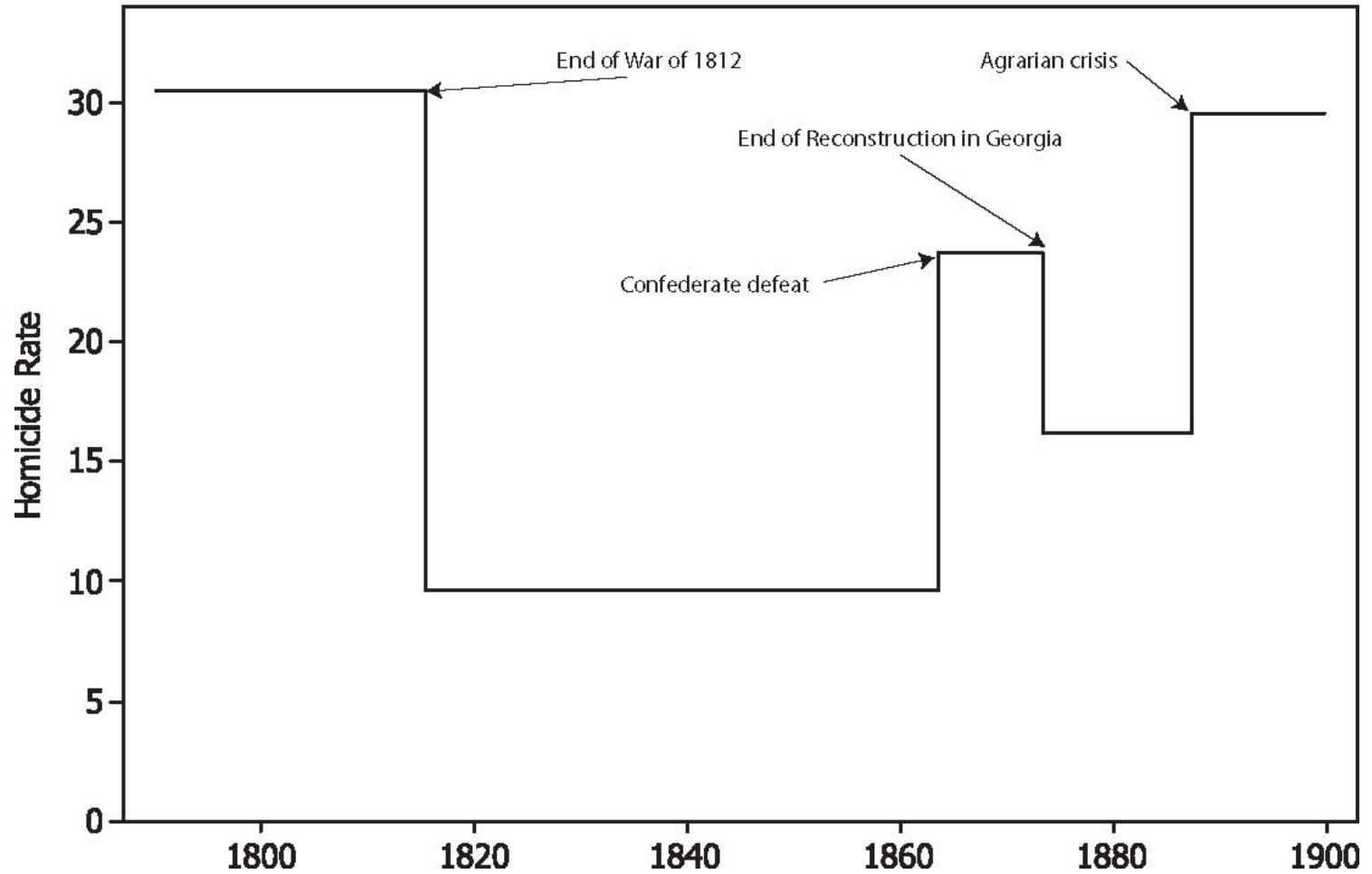


New York City Homicide Rate, 1797-2000

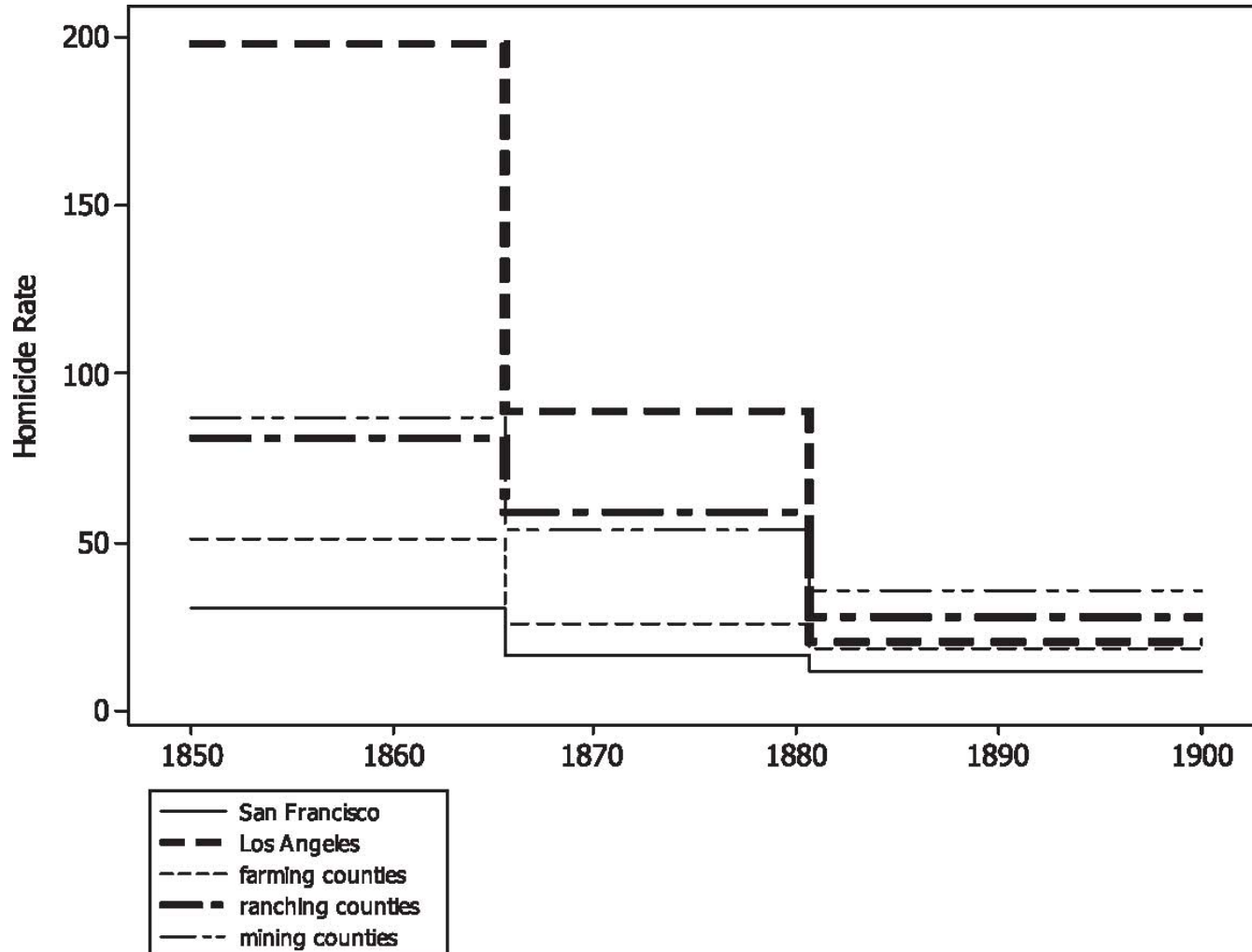
(per 100,000 persons per year)



Homicide Rates in Plantation Counties in Georgia, 1790-1900



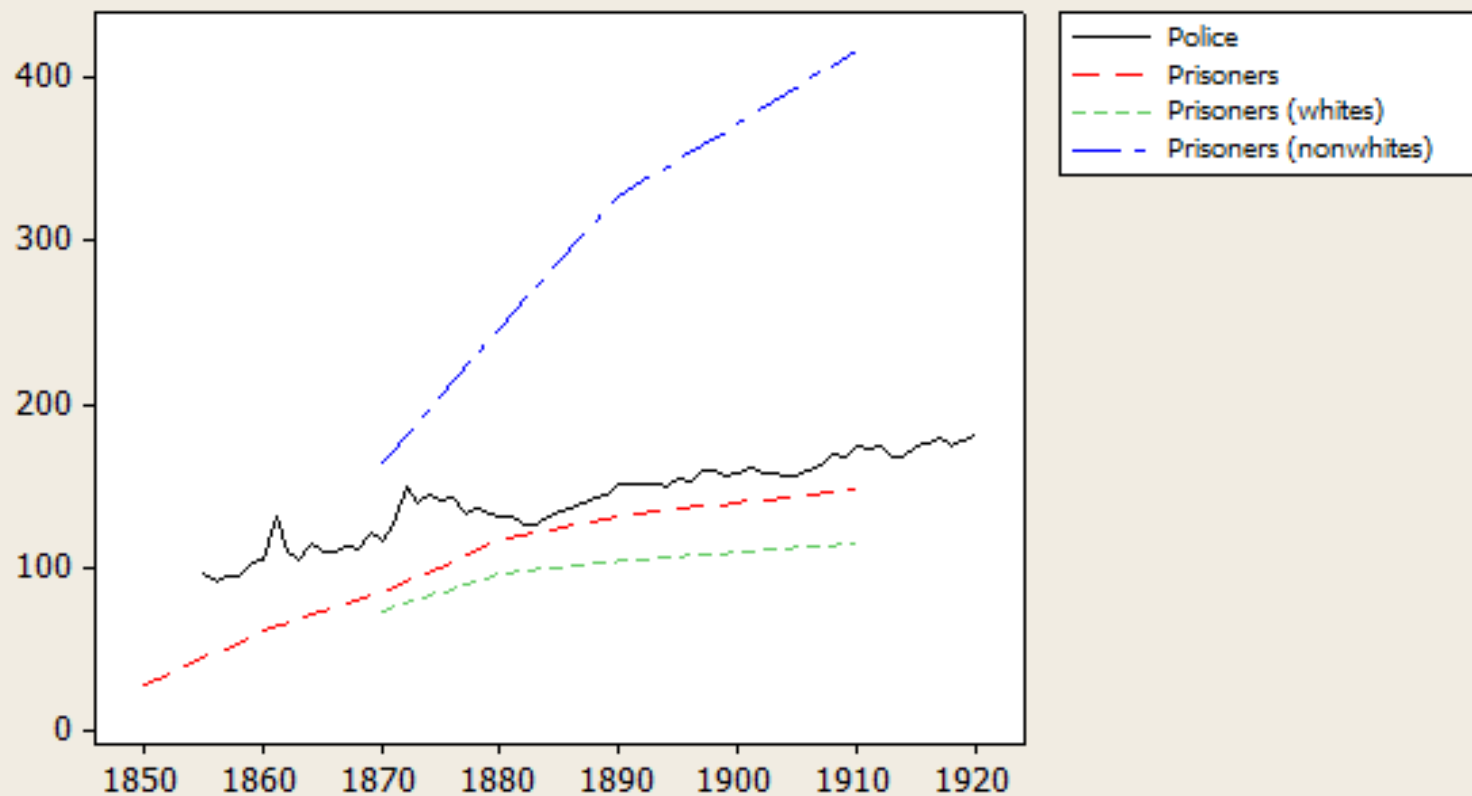
Homicide in California, 1850-1900



Possible Explanations

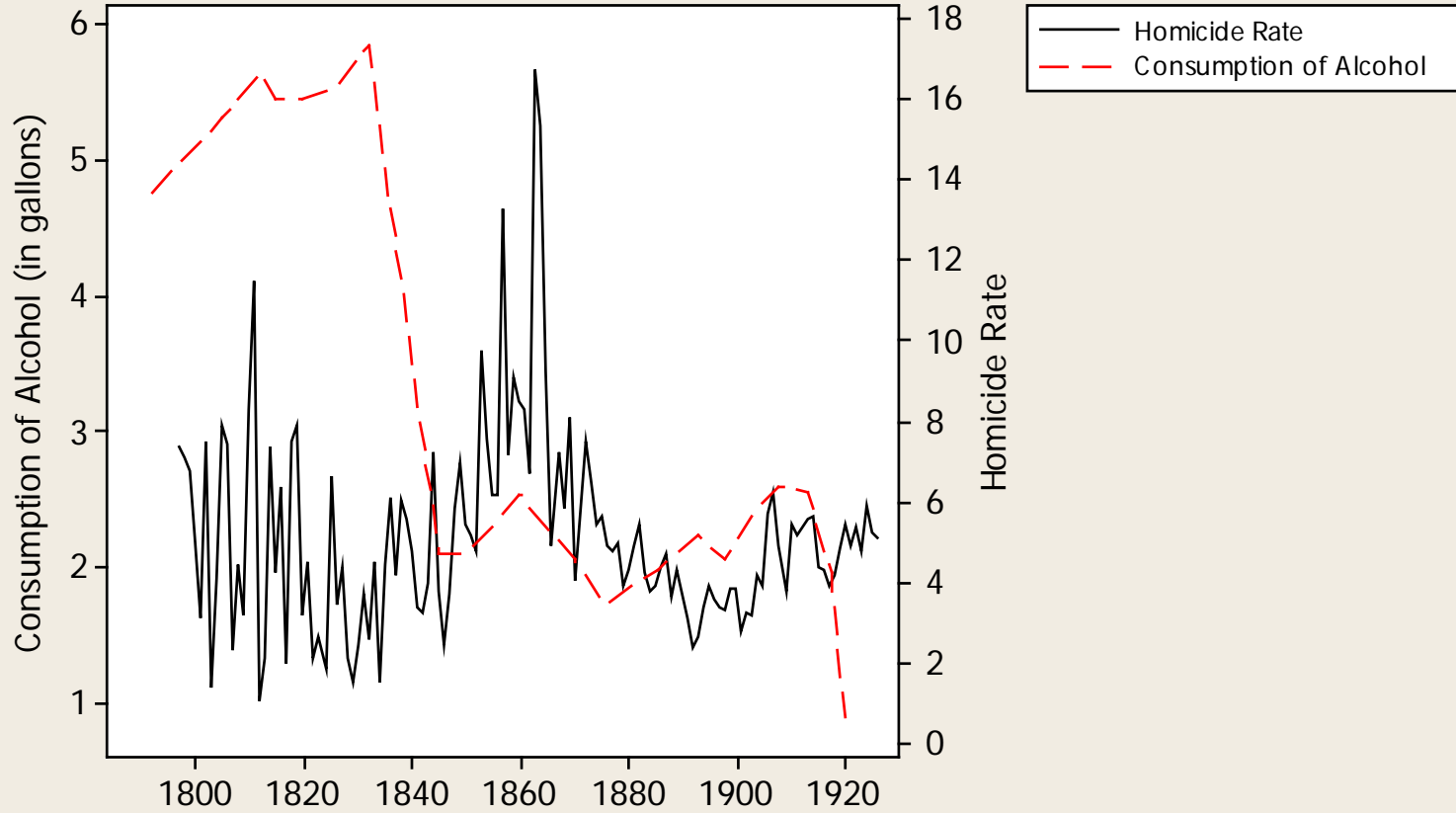
- **Performance of the economy?**
- **Incarceration rates?**
- **Policing? (numbers, not strategy)**
- **Abortion rates?**
- **Alcohol consumption?**

Police in 23 Cities and Prisoners in the United States, 1850-1920 (per 100,000 persons)



Monkkonen (1981) and U. S. Census

Consumption of Alcohol (in gallons) versus Homicide Rate in New York City (per 100,000 persons per year)



The Historical Correlates of Homicide

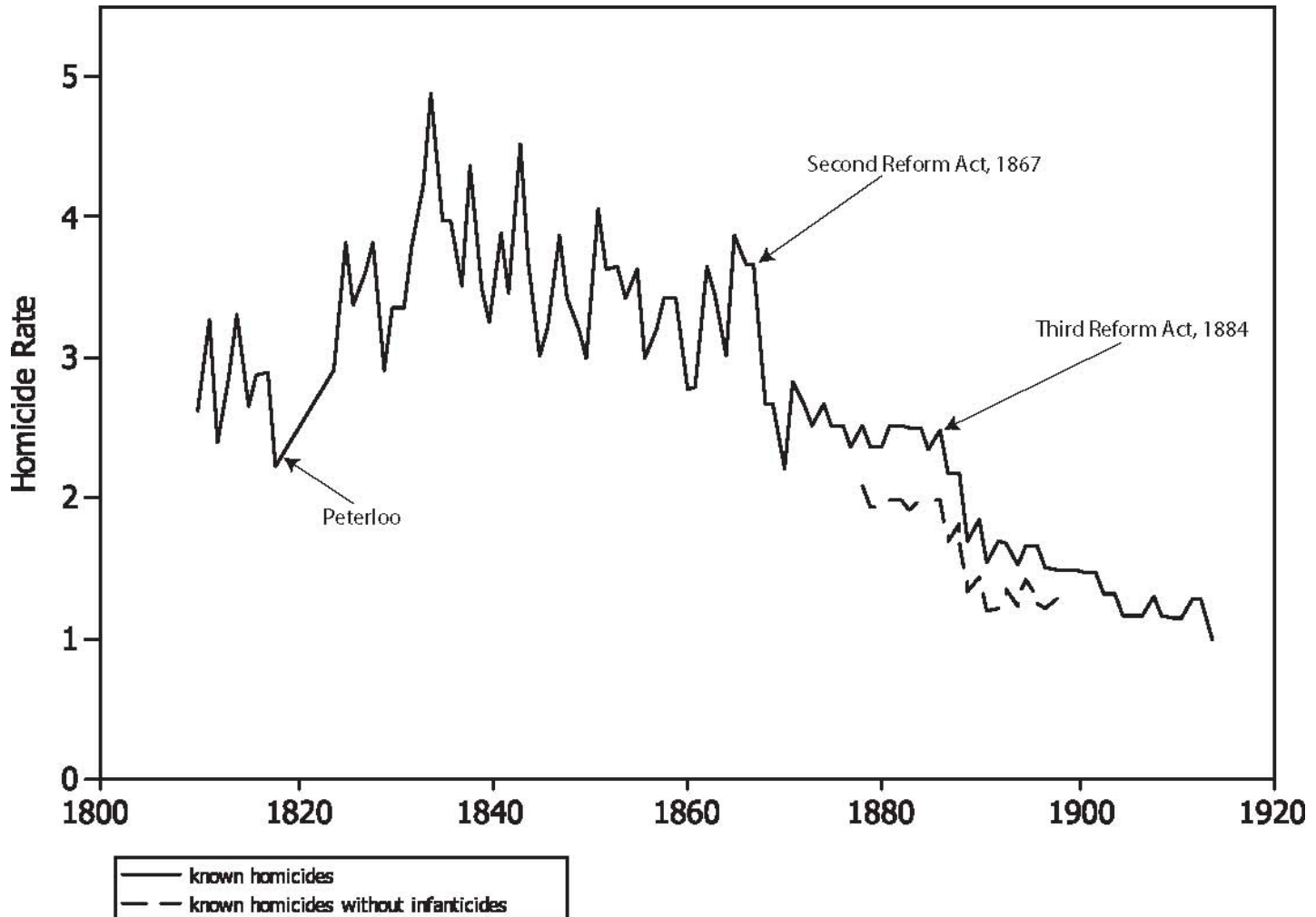
Political stability: The belief that government is stable and that its legal and judicial institutions are unbiased and will redress wrongs and protect lives and property.

A legitimate government: A feeling of confidence in government and the officials who run it, and a belief in their legitimacy.

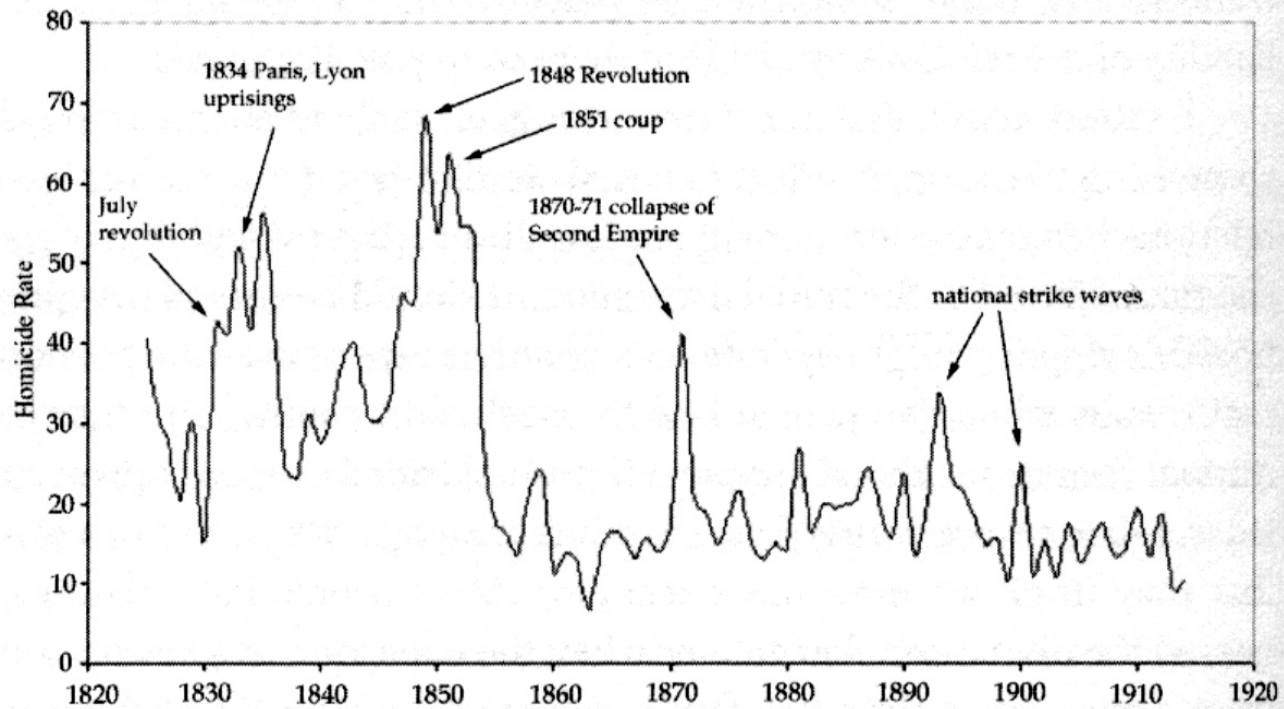
Fellow feeling, empathy: A feeling of patriotism, empathy, and kinship with other members of society arising from racial, religious, or political solidarity.

A legitimate status hierarchy: The belief that the social hierarchy is legitimate, that one's position in society is or can be satisfactory and that one can command the respect of others without resorting to violence.

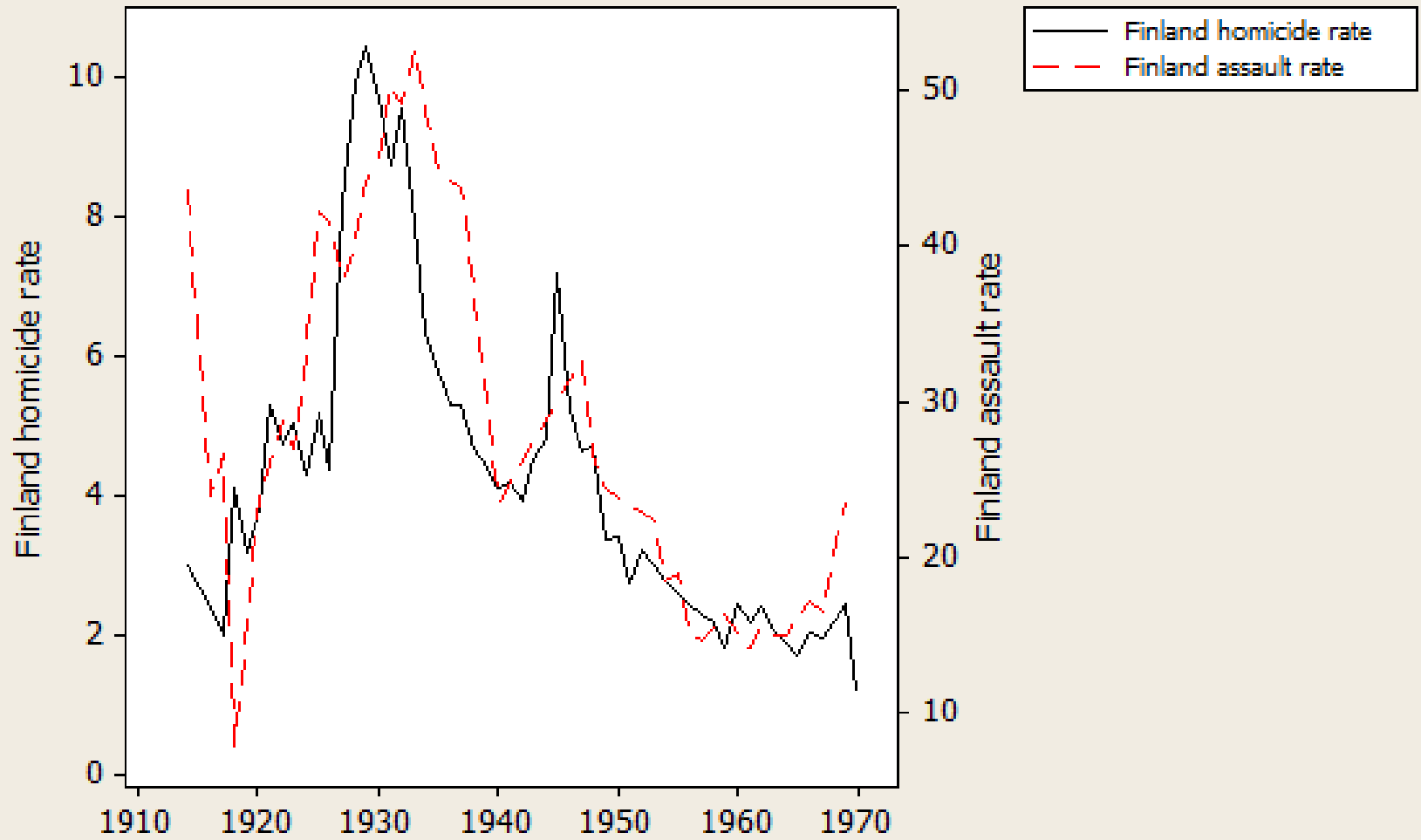
Homicide Rate in England and Wales, 1810-1914

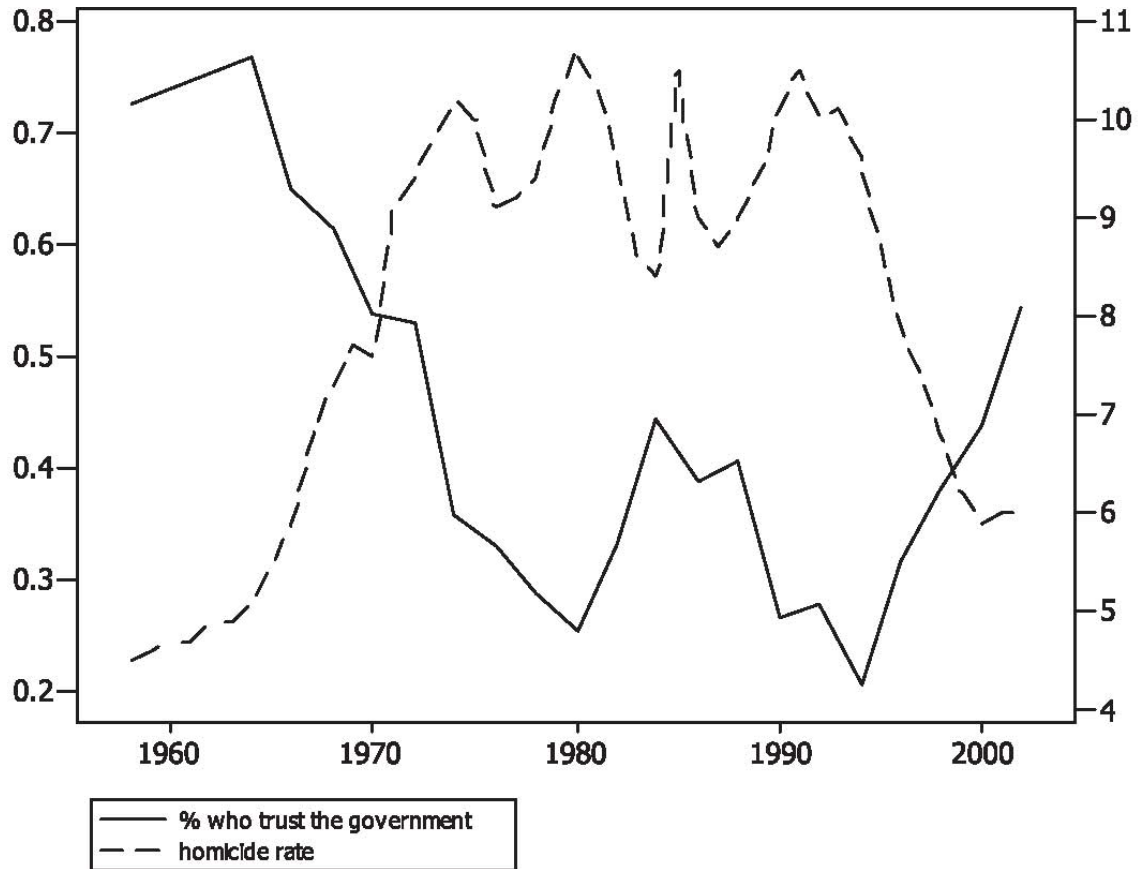


Corsican Homicide Rate, 1835–1914 (yearly homicides per 100,000)



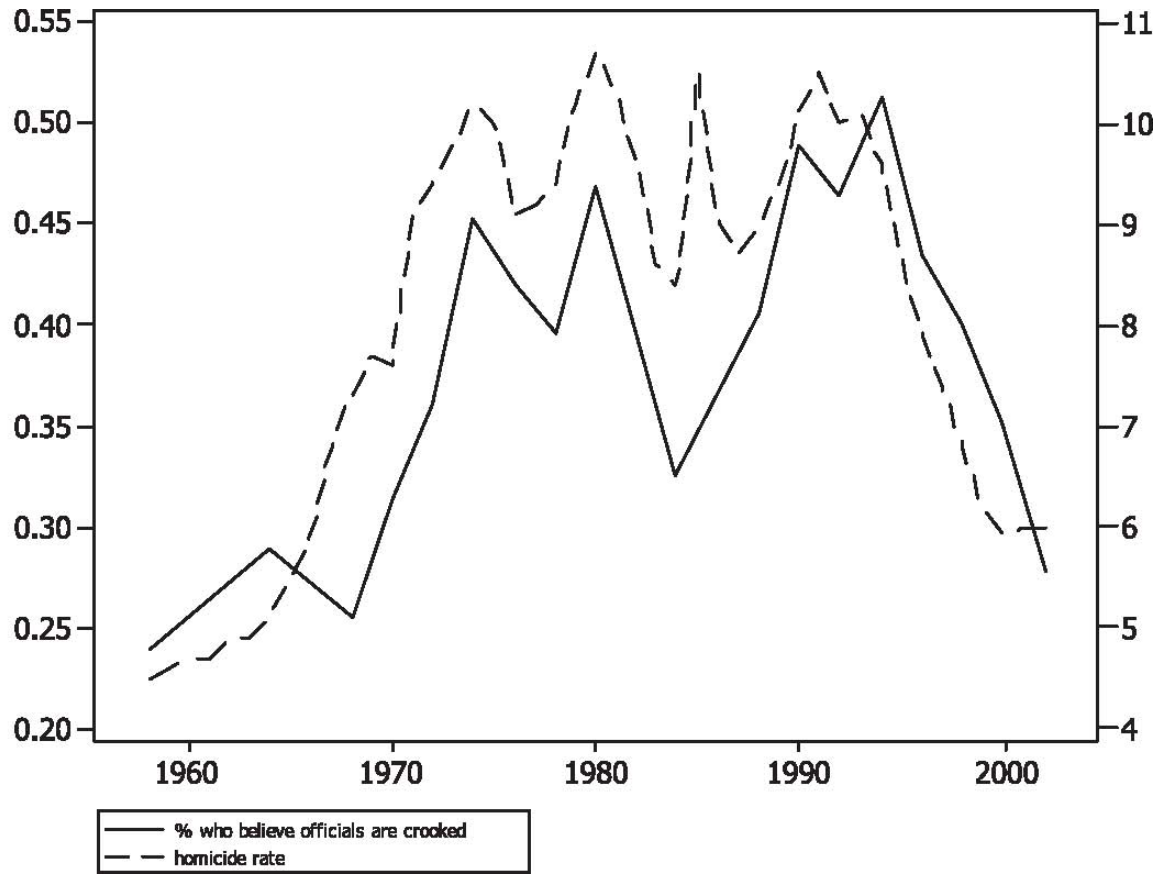
Homicide and Assault Rates in Finland, 1914-1970





Homicide rate vs. percent who trust the government

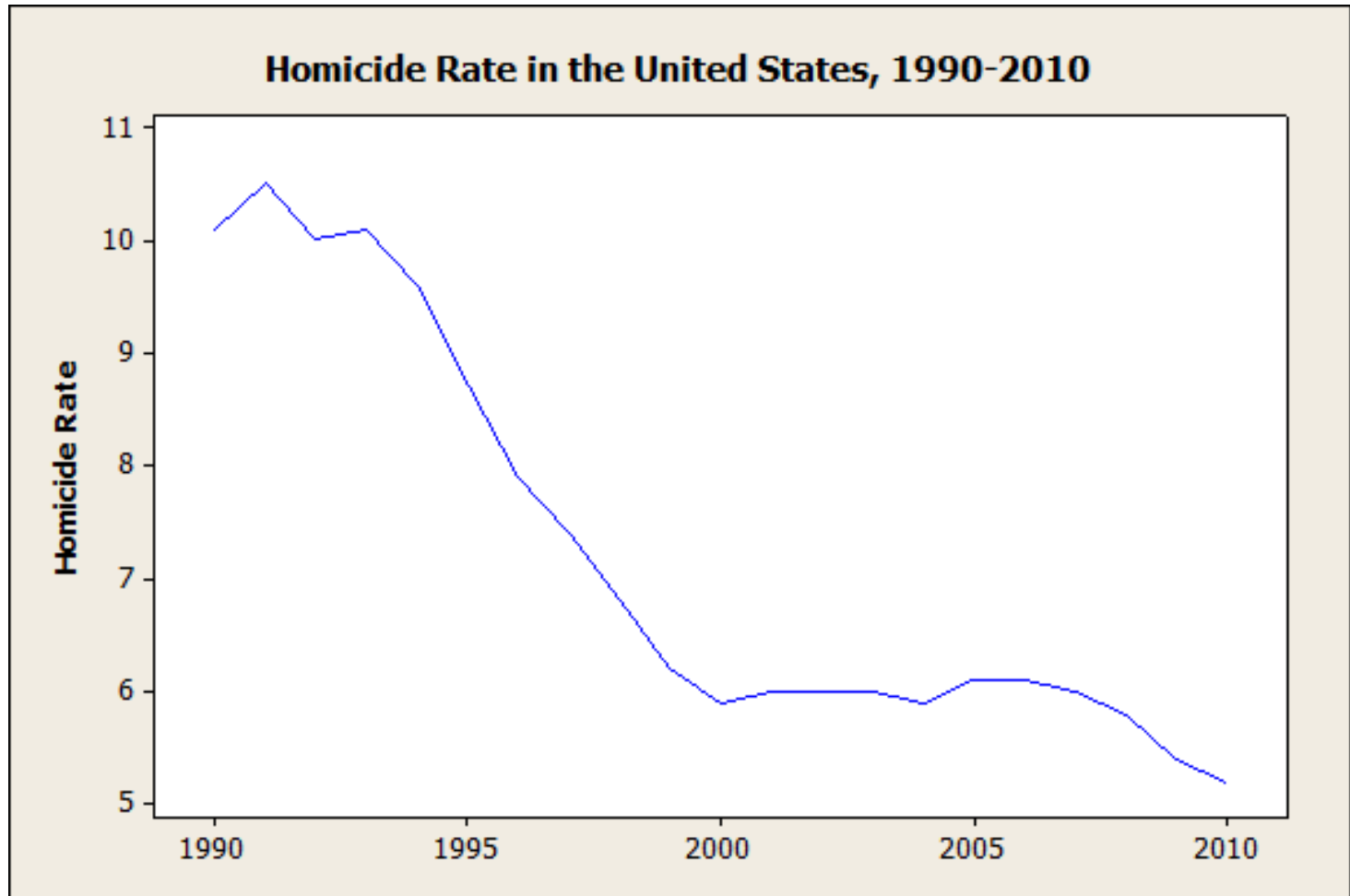
Source: LaFree (1998).



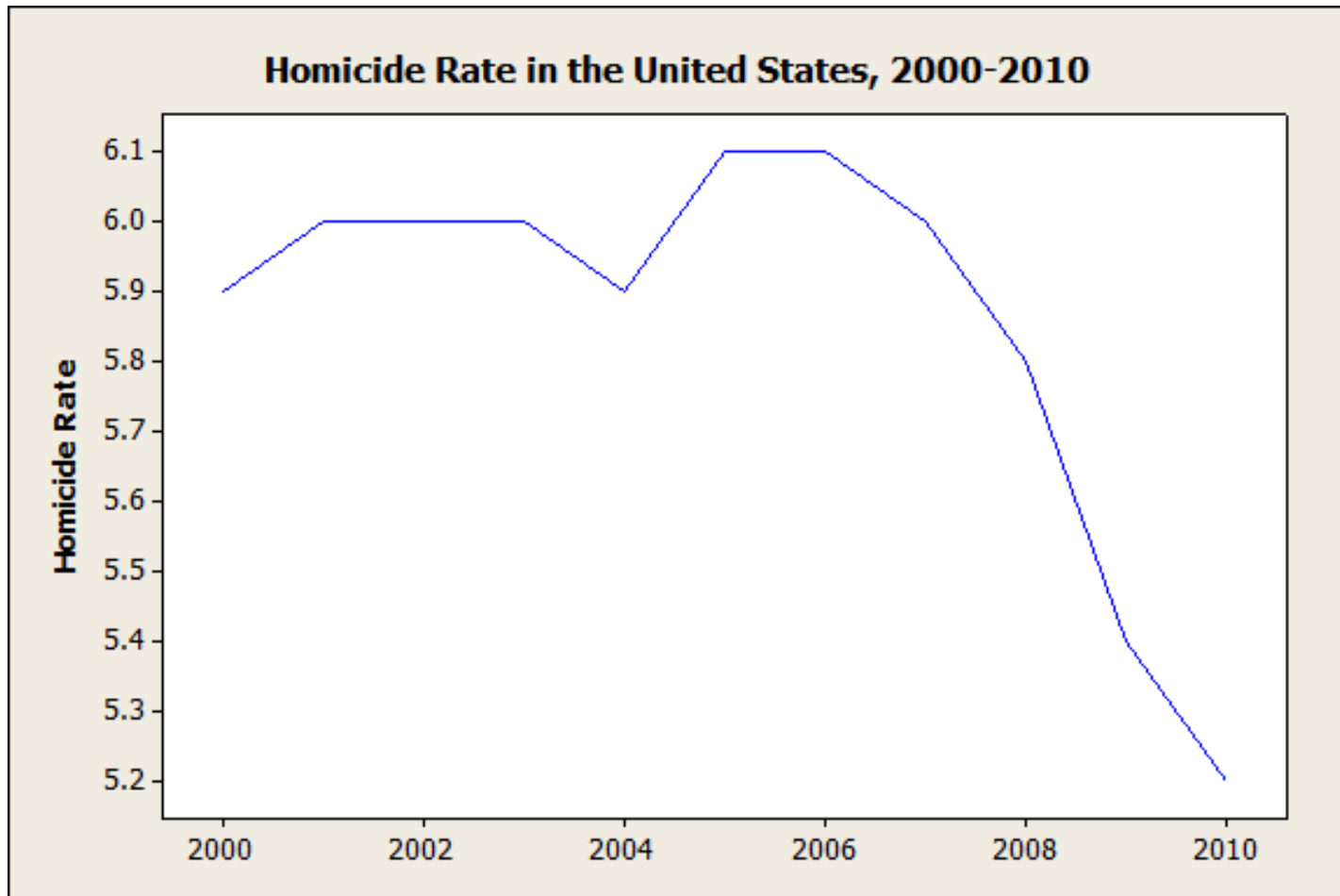
Homicide rate vs. percent who believe officials are crooked

Source: LaFree (1998).

Has the Fall in Homicide Been Steady?



Has the Fall in Homicide Been Steady?



The Pattern of the Recent Drop

The Federal Bureau of Investigation reported that the murder rate fell by 10 percent in the United States during the first six months of 2009, its steepest drop since the mid-1990s. The decline was widespread, but it was larger in metropolitan areas (14.4 percent) than in non-metropolitan areas (8.5 percent). A few cities, such as Lexington, Kentucky, and Toledo, Ohio, saw their homicide rates rise, but most cities, from Boston, New York, Charlotte, and Atlanta in the east to Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles in the west, reported dramatically lower homicide rates. Some rates declined by an astonishing 50 to 65 percent. The United States, and especially its cities, suddenly became less murderous between November, 2008, and January, 2009, and remained that way through June.

The Pattern of the Recent Drop

The inauguration of the first black president and the passing of the Bush administration re-legitimized the government in the eyes of many Americans during the first few months of 2009. African Americans and other racial minorities, who live disproportionately in America's cities, were more deeply affected than anyone else, and it is likely that their greater trust in the political process and their positive feelings about the new president led to lower rates of urban violence. Of course, not everyone is enamored of President Obama. In Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Tennessee, the states with the largest percentage of counties that voted more heavily Republican in 2008 than they did in 2004, the homicide rate rose 11 percent in cities of over 100,000 that have reported to date. Until the F.B.I. releases full data next year on the race of homicide victims and suspects, we will not know for certain whether homicide rates fell farther for minorities than for whites or whether the downward trend in homicides was countered in certain regions by an increase in homicides by whites. What we do know, however, is that the homicide rate fell farthest in cities, where African Americans and other minorities predominate, and that it appears to have risen in the states where the most politically alienated whites live.

The Need for Big Data to Test Theories

Reliable, indirect measures of feelings and beliefs which may facilitate or deter homicide

e.g. – hate speech, deadly riots and rebellions, patriotism, etc.

Consider: the number of demonstrations, riots, and rebellions that resulted in fatalities in the U.S., 1963-1992, and the near absence of fatalities in the two decades before and since. A measure of political stability.

Correlates of Homicides of Children by Parents or Caregivers

THE NEED FOR DISAGGREGATION

Low rates of child homicide (prior to the last decades of the 19th century) were correlated with:

- Higher birth rates
- Longer life expectancy
- Higher adult heights (a function of net nutrition)
- Higher proportions of women who marry at least once
- Higher rates of premarital pregnancy

Lower ages of mothers at the births of their first children Lower rates of abortion-related deaths

How might family limitation, contraception, neonaticide, and child murder be related to each other?

Hypothesis: Child murder at the aggregate level is a function of cost of children relative to parental resources and parental ambitions for themselves and their children

Forensic archaeology: repeated, twisting spiral fractures of the arms or legs

Contemporary studies in greater Columbus and Pittsburgh: the economics of child abuse

New England Neonaticide and Child Homicide Rates, 1630 - 1880

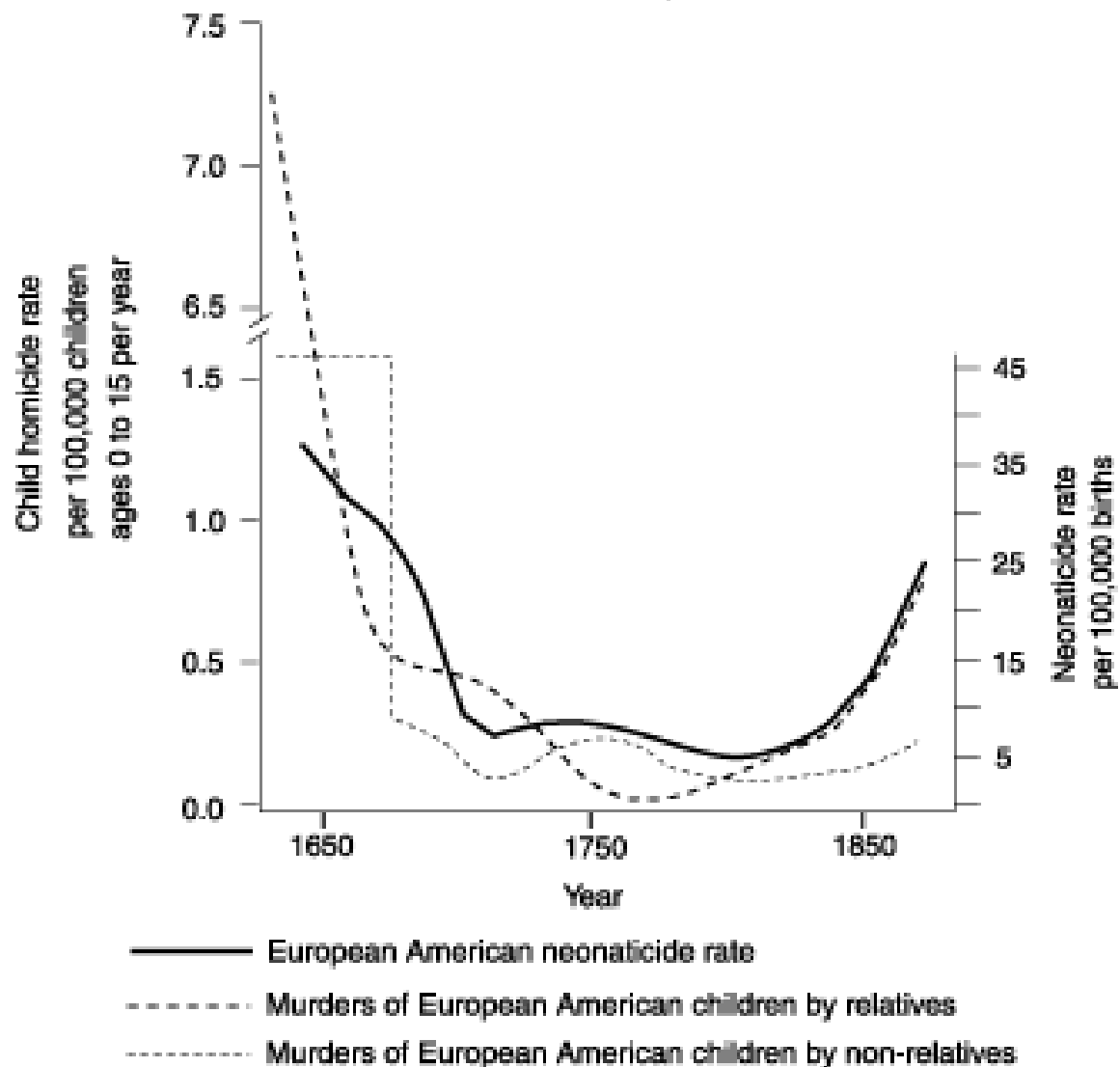


Figure 2.8

New England Neonaticide Rate and Birth Ratio, 1630 - 1880

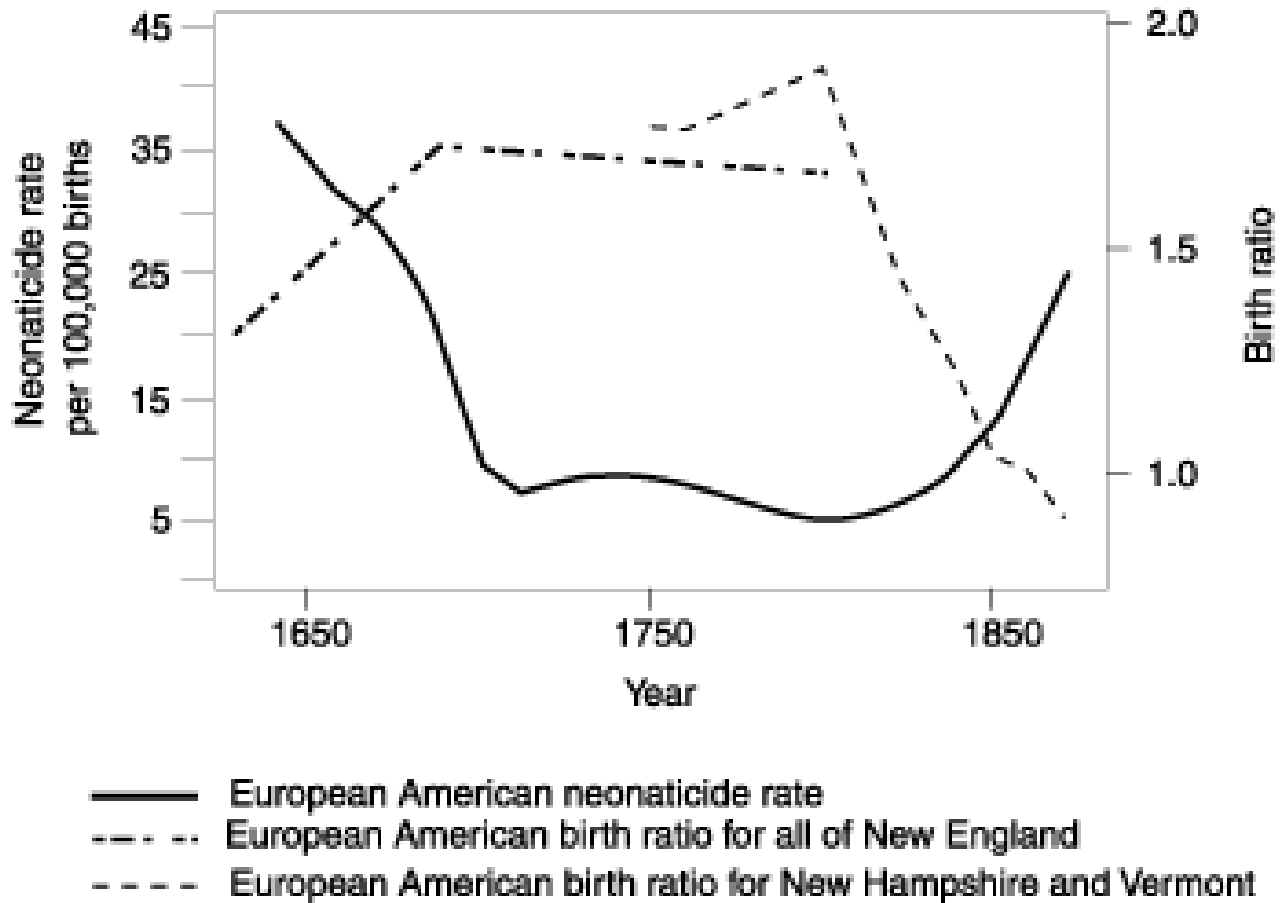


Figure 3.1

New England Neonaticide Rate and Age of Mother at First Birth, 1630 -1880

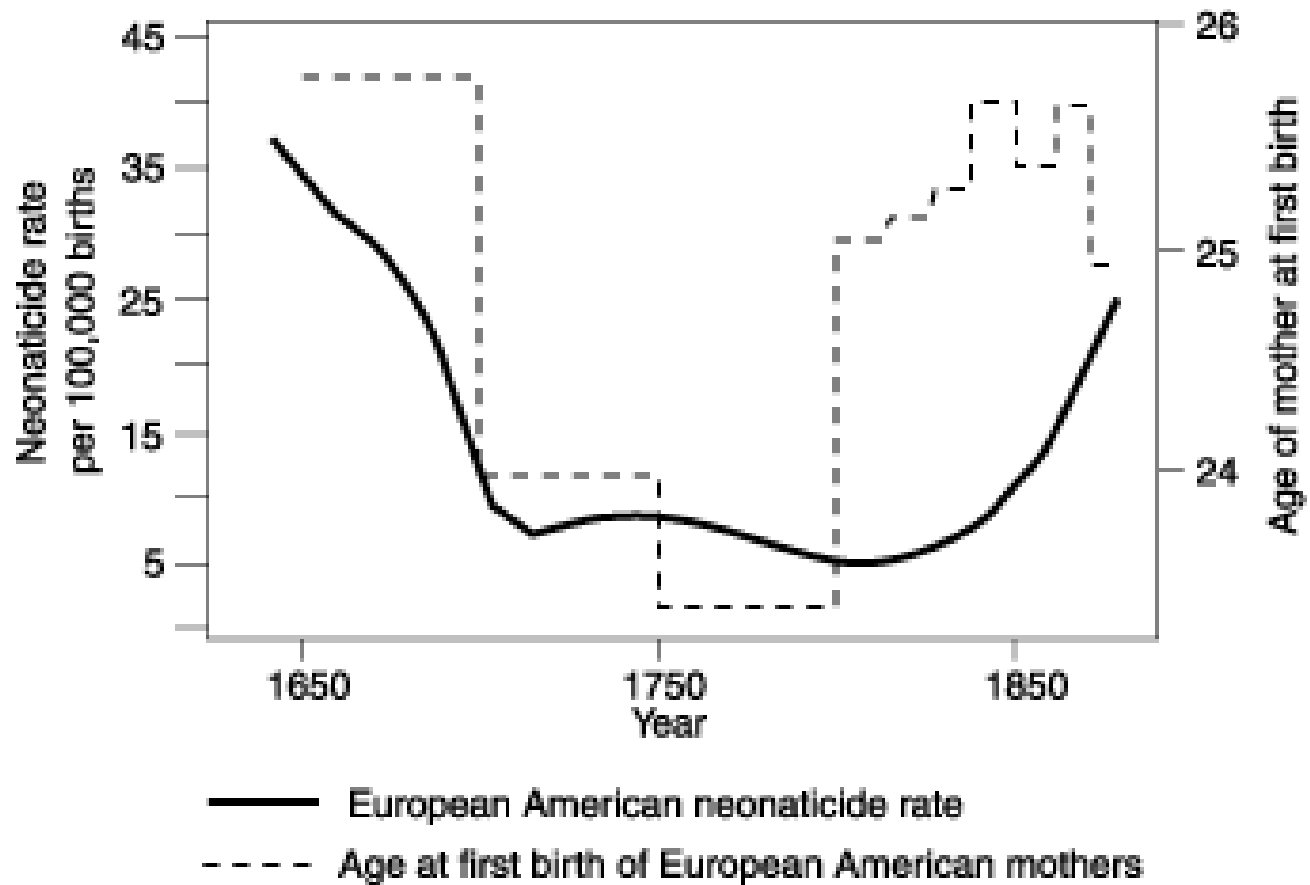


Figure 3.2

**New England Neonaticide Rate
and Premarital Pregnancy Ratio, 1630 -1880**

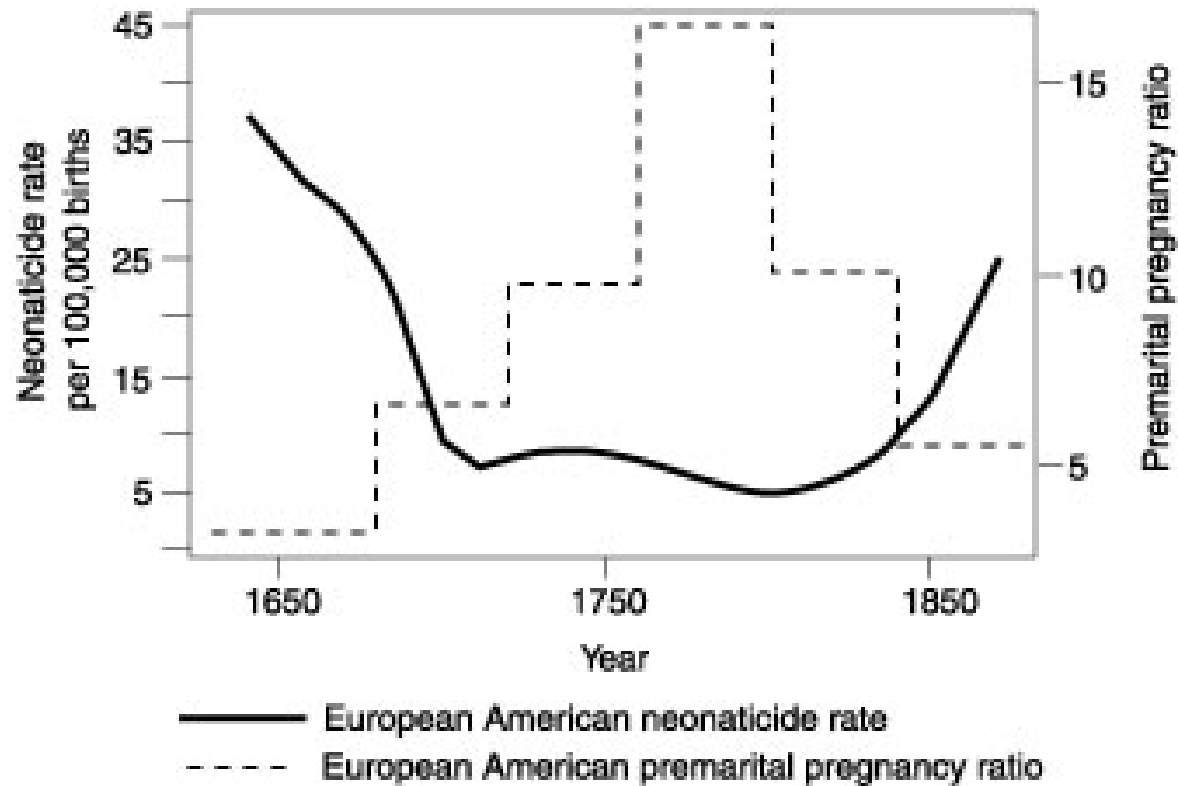


Figure 3.3

New England Neonaticide Rate and Life Expectancy, 1630 -1880

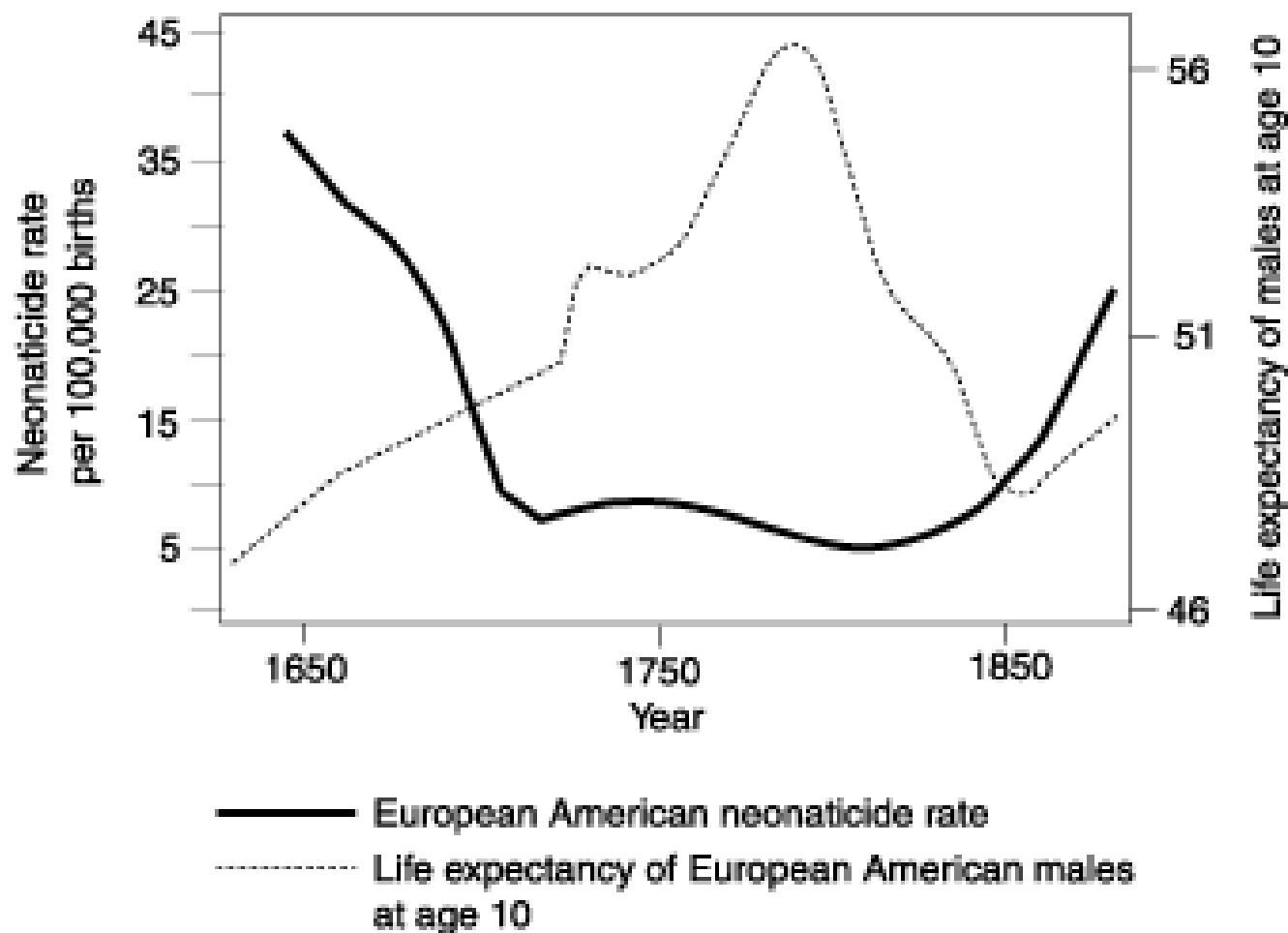


Figure 3.4