

Educational Equality:

The interplay between media attention, academic attention, and government in the fight to end inequality.

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Soc/PL SC 497B

Term Project

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Purpose

- This project will analyze the media, academic, and government attention to the issue of educational inequality in the United States between the years of 1950 – 2000.

History

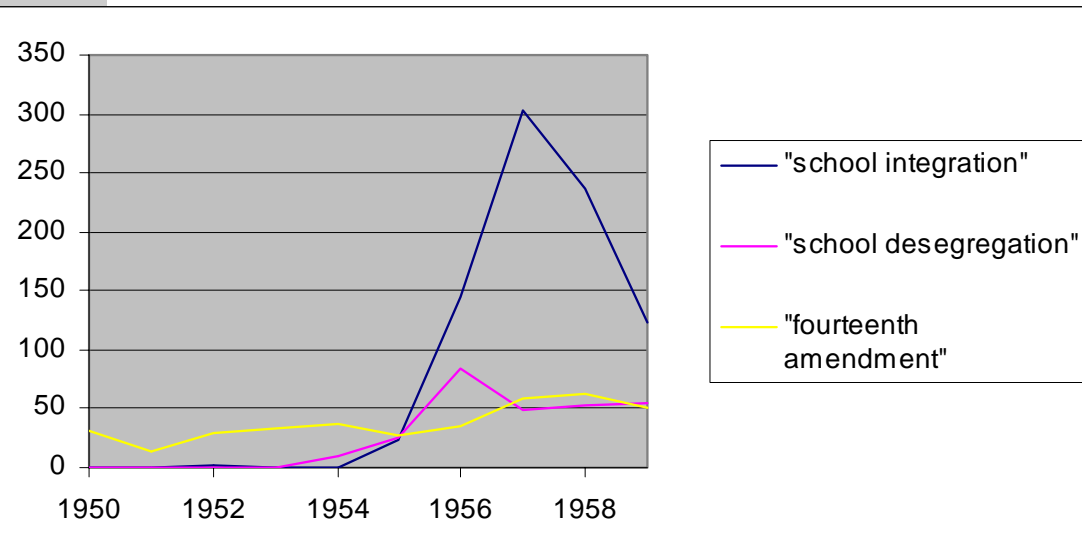
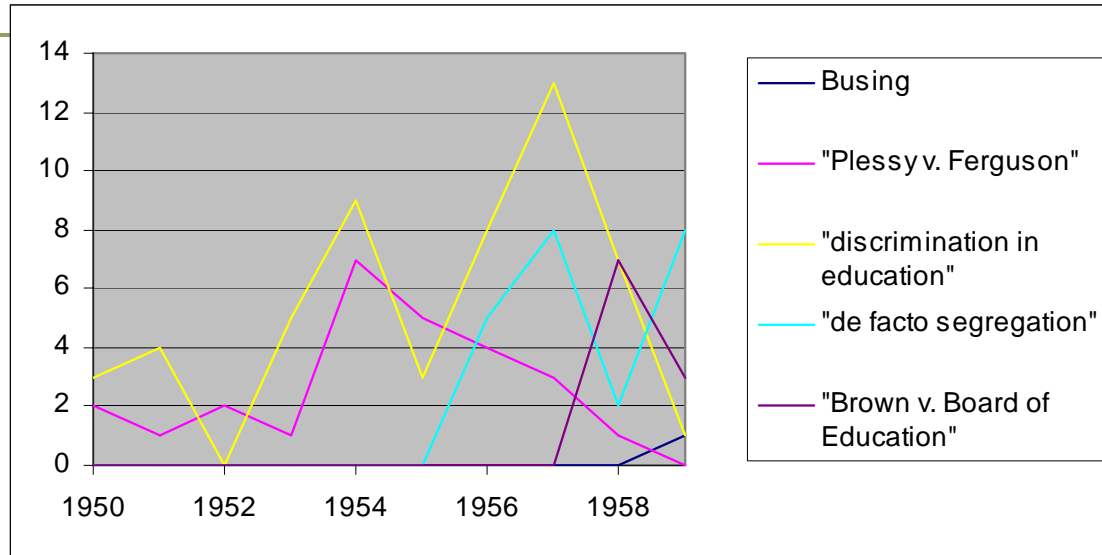
- A brief history of Educational Inequality
- Key Dates:
 - May 18, 1896 – Plessy v. Ferguson
 - May 17, 1954 – Brown v. Board of Education
 - 1960's – Implementation of Head Start
 - 1963 – Desegregation of University of Alabama
 - 1964 – Civil Rights Act

One Issue:

- Throughout the past century there has been much debate over the state of equality in US schools.
- Along with the times, the argument of inequality has changed focus.
- Although the focus has changed, all fall under the category of educational inequality.

Change in Focus:

- Early years of media attention in this analysis:

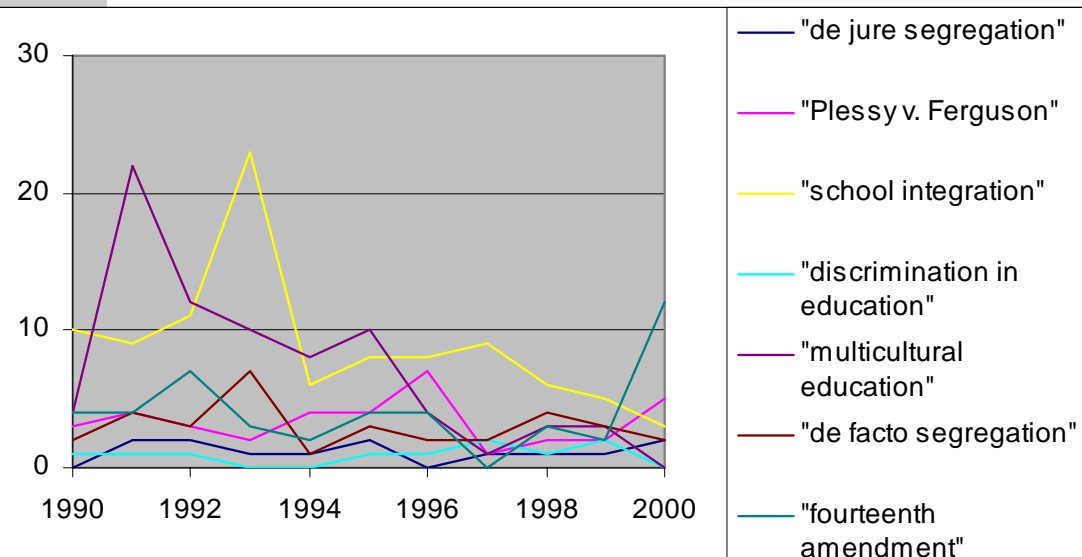
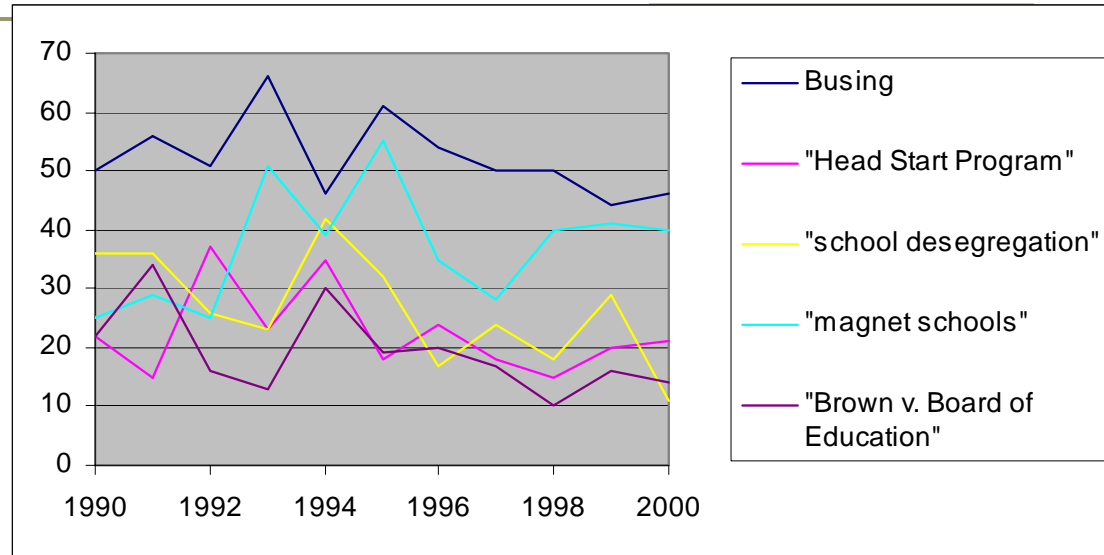


Keywords with zero attention:

- "Head Start Program"
- "de jure segregation"
- "multicultural education"
- "magnet schools"

Change in Focus:

■ Final years of media attention in this analysis:



No unrepresented keywords.

Methods

- Methods of collecting keywords:
 - In order to get the keyword list for this analysis, I read through the sections of three books and one journal article which are relevant to the 1950-2000 time period:

Sources for Keywords

- Spring, Joel. 1994. *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A brief history of the education of dominated cultures in the United States*. New York, New York: McGraw Hill.
- Fraser, James W. 2001. *The School in the United States: A Documentary History*. Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw Hill.
- Fife, Brian L. 1997. *School Desegregation in the Twenty-first Century: The Focus Must Change*. Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Hillis, Michael R. "Allison Davis and the Study of Race, Social Class, and Schooling." *The Journal of Negro Education*. Vol. 64, No. 1. (Winter, 1995), pp. 33-41.

Keywords

- Once a large keyword list was formed, I removed those which returned the most noise and were least effective in returning counts.
- The final keyword list:

- **Busing**
- **“Head Start Program”**
- **“de jure segregation”**
- **“Plessy v. Ferguson”**
- **“school integration”**
- **“discrimination in education”**

- **“multicultural education”**
- **“school desegregation”**
- **“de facto segregation”**
- **“magnet schools”**
- **“fourteenth amendment”**
- **“Brown v. Board of Education”**

Methods

- Methods of data collection:
 - To collect the counts from each area (media, academia, and government), the keywords were used in searches in databases.
 - The counts from each keyword were added together to create a total count for each year.
 - For each area of attention, a specific database was used:

Sources for Keyword Counts

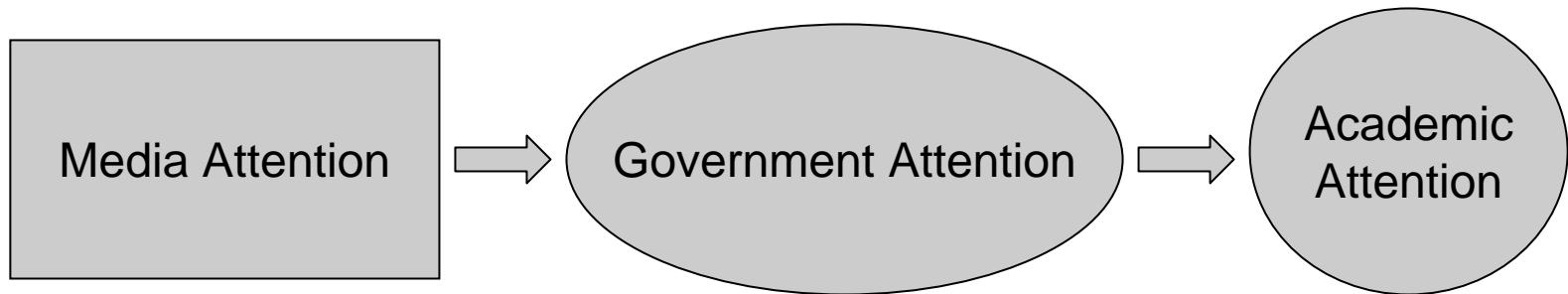
- Media Attention:
 - New York Times Historical
- Government Attention:
 - The Policy Agendas Project
- Academic Attention:
 - Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

Hypotheses

- I hypothesize two separate models to depict the relationship between these three factors.

Hypotheses

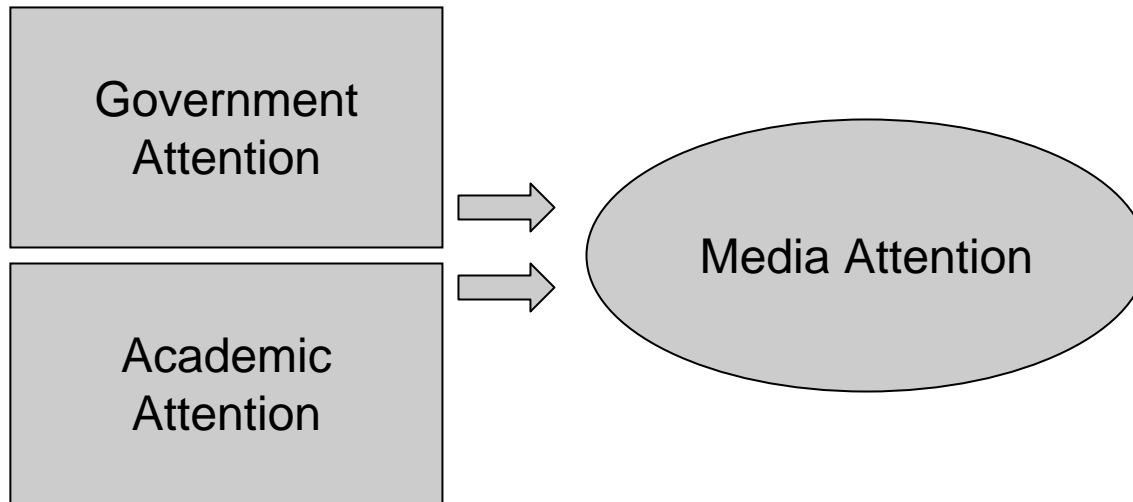
■ Hypothesis #1:



Media attention will lead to Government attention in the form of hearings. Following this, academics will study the effects of the issues represented by the keywords.

Hypotheses

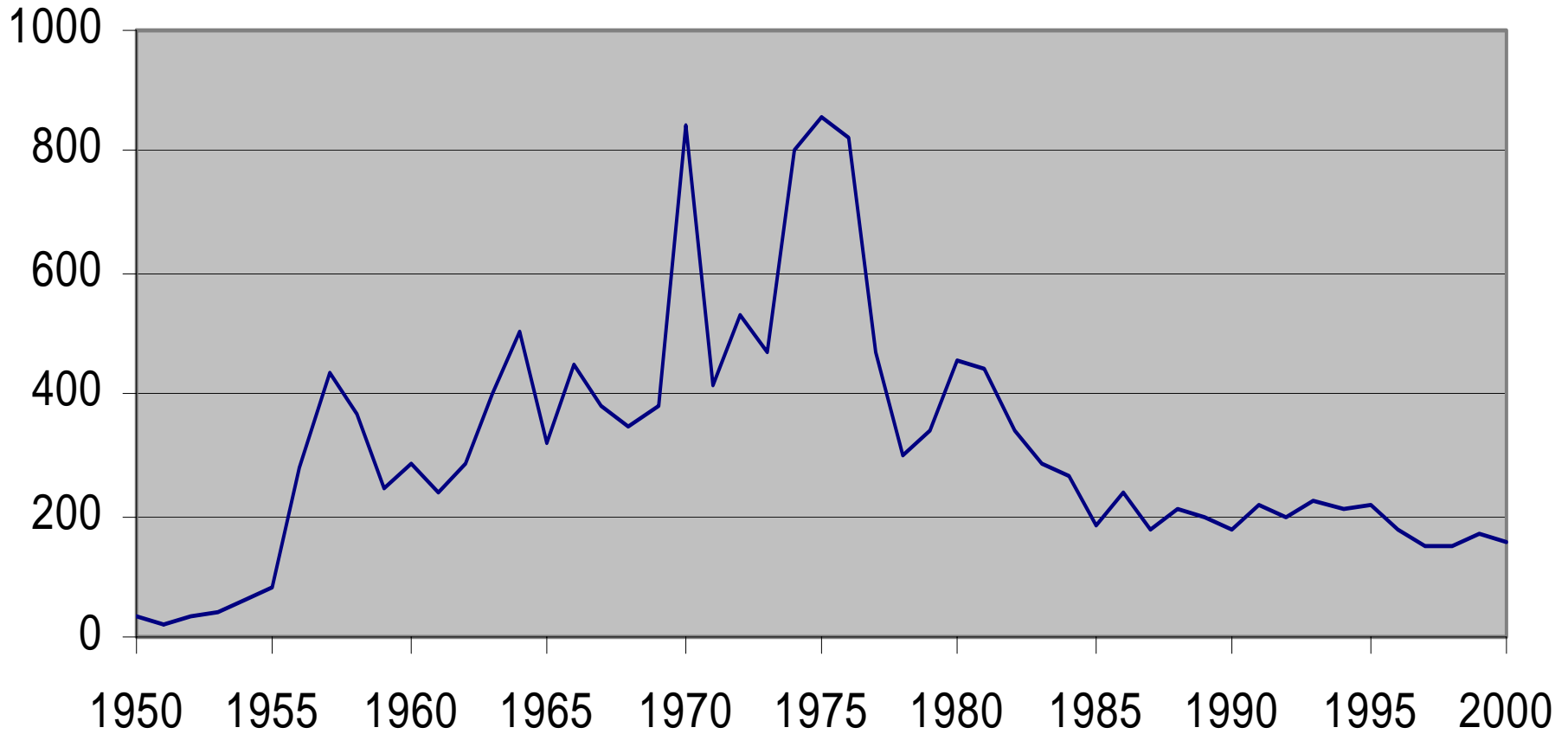
■ Hypothesis #2:



Government and Academic Attention will coincide. After attention is given to the issue, the media will show attention through reports.

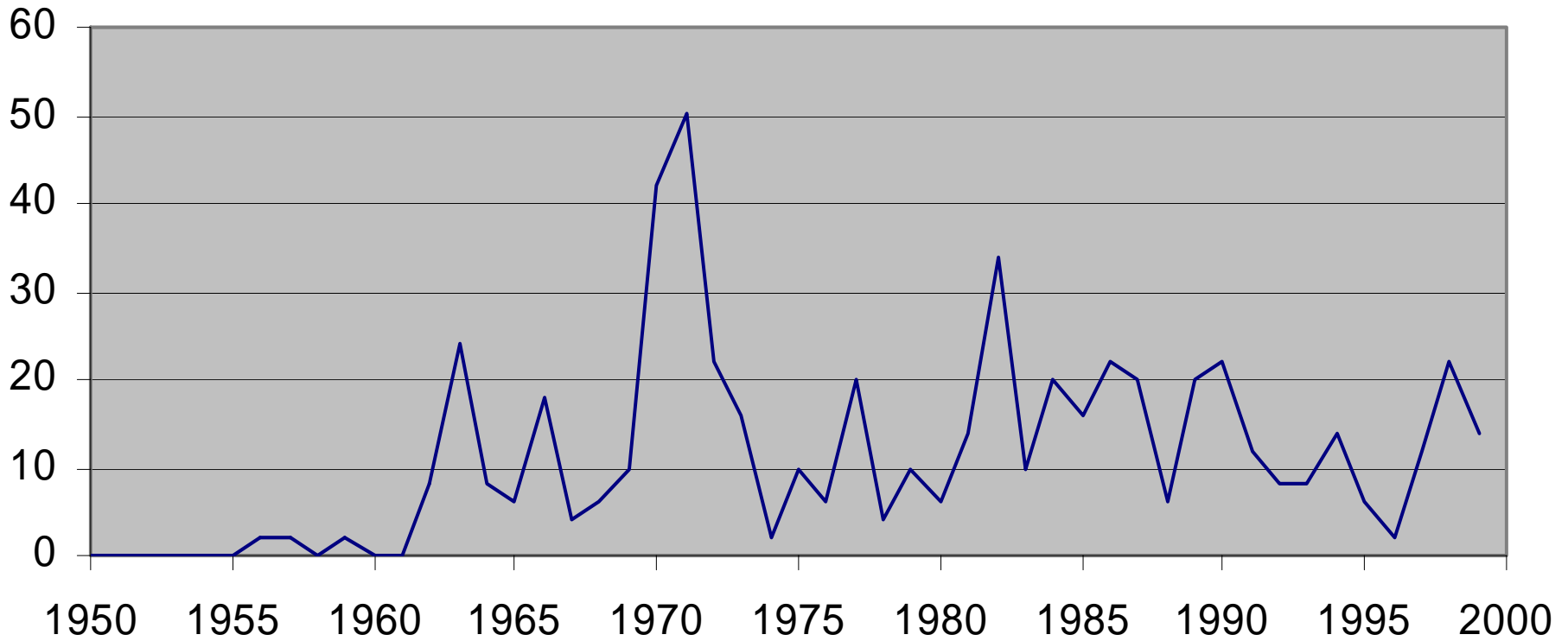
Media Attention

Total Media Attention to Educational Inequality Issues



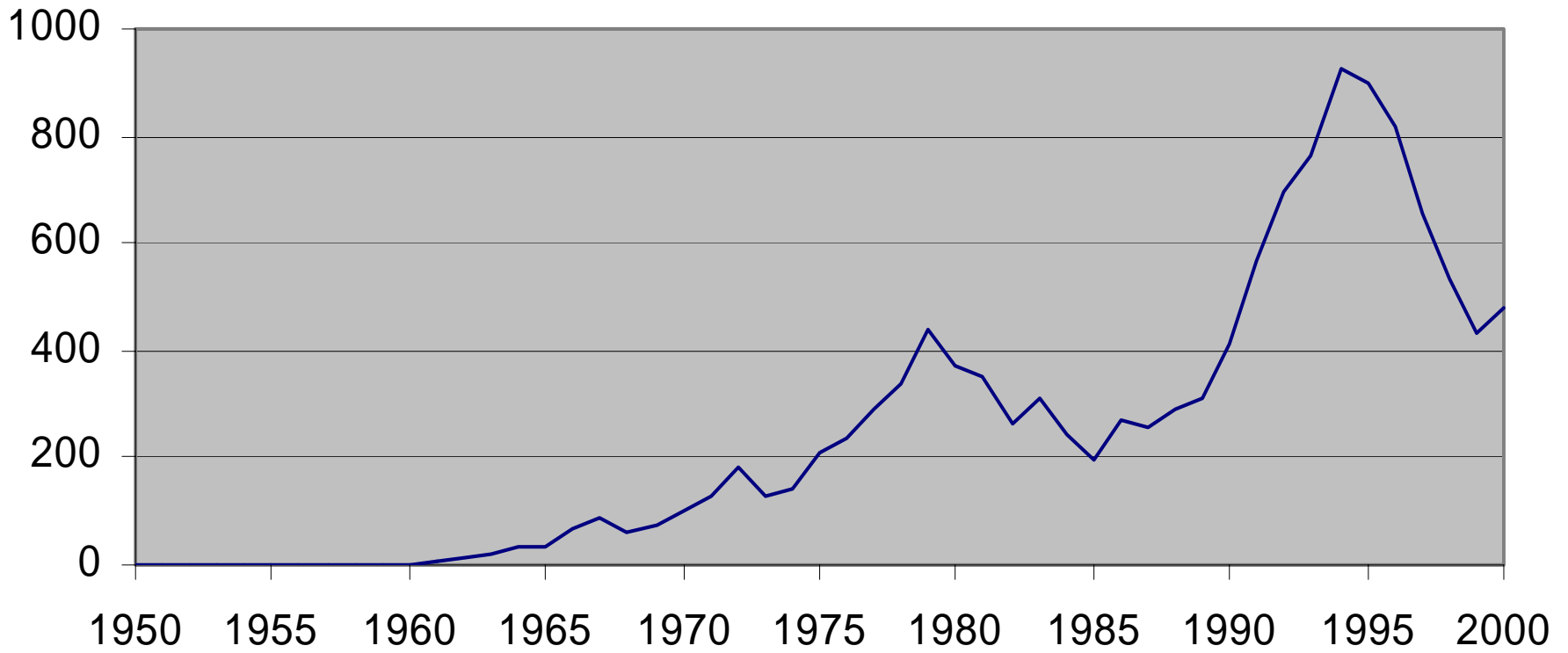
Government Attention

Total Government Attention to Educational Inequality Issues

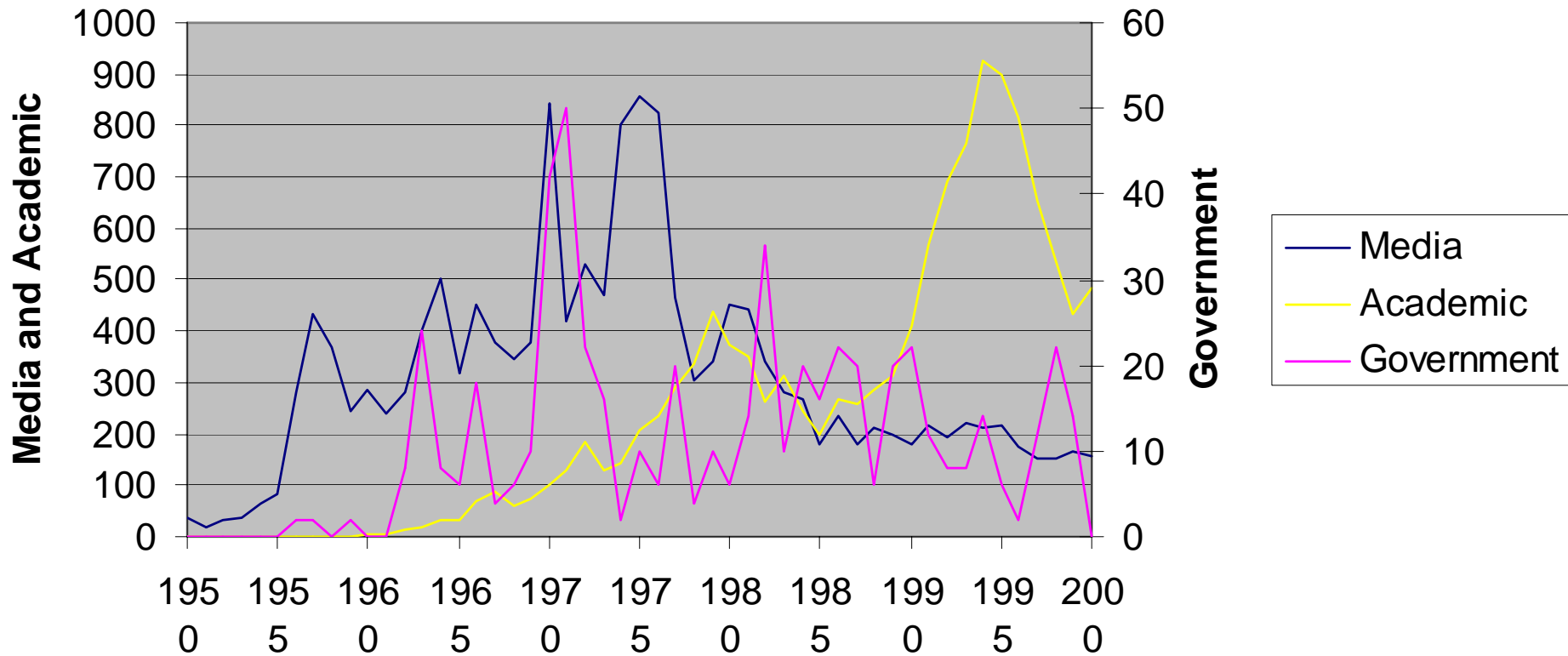


Academic Attention

Total Academic Attention to Educational Inequality Issues



Overall Attention Trends



Analysis

- It appears as though media attention precedes government attention prior to 1970. Following 1970, there is no apparent trend with one leading the other, only government attention bouncing above and below media attention on the graph.
- Academic attention doesn't hit its first peak until nearly five years after media's highest peak and eight years after government's highest.

Possible Explanations

- If these are reliable counts, then the schematic which shows media leading government which leads academic study would hold true.
- Possible errors:
 - ERIC only counts back to 1960 and might not have accurate records of early journals.

Conclusion

- From these data and graphs, only a loose association can be seen. While it appears that media may drive government attention in the earlier years, the two seem to coincide from the 1980's on. Academic attention lags behind and does not begin to rise substantially until after both media and government hit their highest peaks. This suggests that academics focus on studying the effects of the government action. However, a new trend may be forming with academic attention leading government and media since the surge in the 1990's came from "multicultural education," an issue which had not been receiving a disproportionate amount of hits in media and government attention.

Bibliography

- Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 2003. The Policy Agendas Project. Databases distributed through the University of Washington Center for American Politics: www.policyagenda.org.
- Educational Resources Information Center 2003. eric.ed.gov.
- Fife, Brian L. 1997. *School Desegregation in the Twenty-first Century: The Focus Must Change*. Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Fraser, James W. 2001. *The School in the United States: A Documentary History*. Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw Hill.
- Hills, Michael R. "Allison Davis and the Study of Race, Social Class, and Schooling." *The Journal of Negro Education*. Vol. 64, No. 1. (Winter, 1995), pp. 33-41.
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