

*The Development of America's Most Important Problem: Examining 2000-2016 Presidential Election Campaigns*

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Purpose: The aim of this study is examining Most Important Problem (MIP) data collected over 5 election years. It analyzed relationships between the MIP's over the years, the differences in the MIP while different parties are in the White House, and if there is a correlation between the American Peoples MIP and economic trends.

Research Questions:

RQ1. What are the top 10 different issues for 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012, and 2016.

RQ2. Are there evident differences in MIP depending on who is in office?

RQ3. Do unemployment rates influence the frequency of "jobs" as a MIP ?

Method: American National Election Studies (<https://electionstudies.org/>) 's dataset was analyzed using SPSS. I examined the frequencies and rank-order correlations. Unemployment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (<https://www.bls.gov/>) was gathered to show relationships to MIP unemployment issue data.

Results: The top 5 most recurring issues are economy, morals/religion, president, jobs, and healthcare. Though most of the issues are centered on money, the consistent salience of Morals/Religion was noteworthy. The data shows national unemployment rates cause increased frequency of MIP unemployment issues recorded. Over the 5 election years the party in office did not have any relationship with MIP issue differences.

Discussion: The analysis showed that MIP data reflected the real world situation, indeed. The respondents seemed to be more affected by the economic situation rather than the presidency. However, there's also discrepancy between the real world data and MIP. The effects of news media may account for the gap.