香港城市大學
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**Public Perception of Government Performance:
Cognitive Biases & the Importance of Effective Communication**

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Key Ideas

My research has shown that:

- Most citizens do not know or think about what the government has done for them

  - Especially about services that they don't use (e.g., emergency medical response and fire services) and services that they do not see (e.g., utility infrastructure underground, maintenance, etc.)

  - They take things for granted until things do not work (e.g., traffic management, street lighting ..)

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Key Ideas

- There is a "natural" negative bias
    - They tend to focus on problems, especially problems that have an emotional appeal/impact
- Personal experience and social contexts frame their perception of the world, including government performance
    - "Objectively" measured performance or statistics may not matter.
   - They need "personal" connection to numbers.

Key Ideas

- There is a "natural" negative bias
    - They tend to focus on problems, especially problems that have an emotional appeal/impact
- Personal experience and social contexts frame their perception of the world, including government performance
    - "Objectively" measured performance or statistics may not matter.
   - They need personal connection or context when they read those numbers.

Case Study: Kansas City, MO

- Quarterly survey data in 2011-2017 (about 4,000 obs. per year)
- About 60,000 police incidents per year
- 311 requests
  - >90,000 311 cases per year
- The data are joined at the census block group level (neighborhoods)
- Population and housing data from the 2010 Census data at the block group level
- We also matched the survey timing with the timing of the city data.
- Twitter data
- Newspaper data
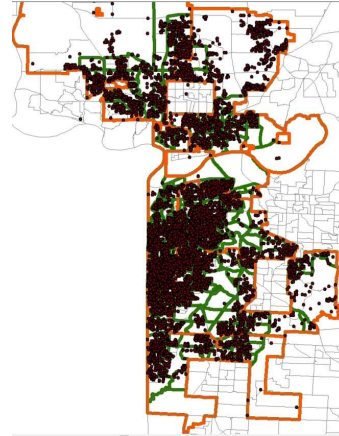
Hotspots of Crimes in KCMO:
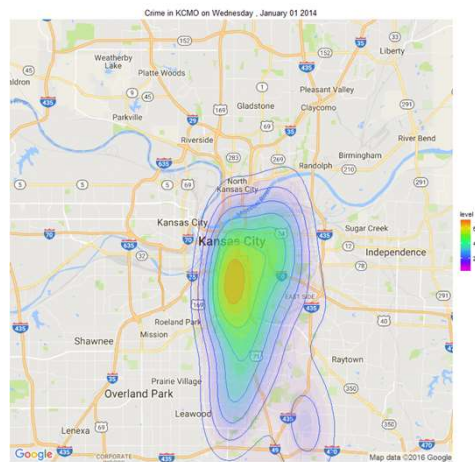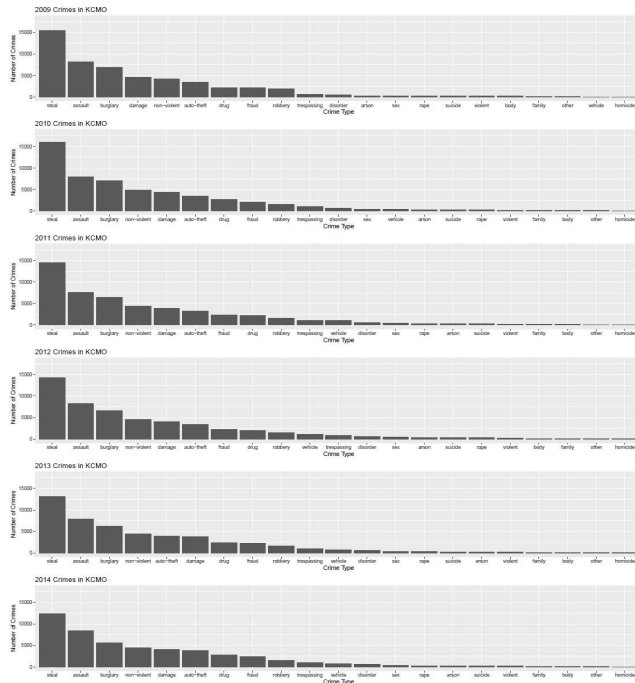
Patterns of Crime Incidences in Kansas city
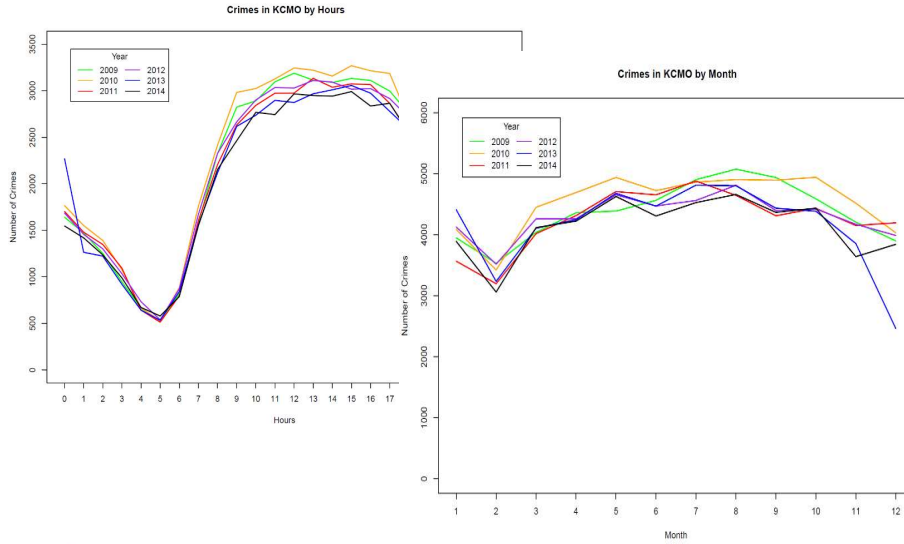
Patterns of Crime Incidences in Kansas city

Twitter Word Clouds Related to Crime, Violence, and Policing

Do they reflect the crime incidence patterns?

What seem to be more concerning to local residents?

What are the implications for policing strategies?
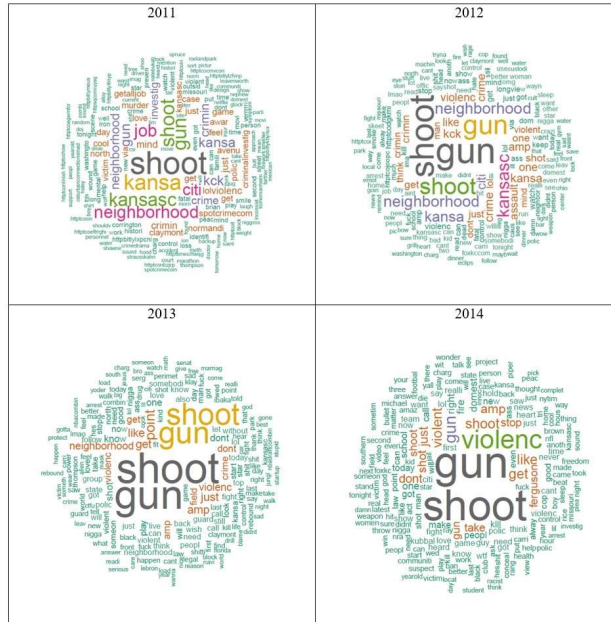
What Influences Public Satisfaction with KCMO Police?

- Regression analyses show that actual crime rates have a very small impact on public satisfaction with the police
  - Most citizens don't experience crimes and don't even know what crimes have happened around them
  - Satisfaction is driven by perception and social contexts:
    - Neighborhood nuisance problems (e.g., graffiti, garbage problems, "broken windows" problems …) make them "feel unsafe" → dissatisfaction with the police

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What Influences Public Satisfaction with KCMO Police?

- Regression results (con't):
  - Personal experience matters – e.g., victimization
  - Social experiences matter – e.g., race (Black, Hispanic vs Whites) and neighborhood factors
  - *Perceived effectiveness of government communication and citizen engagement has a VERY SIGNIFICANT positive impact*:
    - Citizens: "When things go wrong, why? What have you done? What are you going to do? How soon will you fix it? …."

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Conclusion

- Challenges of Public Management:
  - Those who pay a lot of taxes may not be the ones who use a lot of public services
  - Those who use a lot of public services may not have a lot of say or political influence and may not have time to participate in public decision-making
  - Those who enjoy the benefits of public services may not "see" the value of public services until they lose those benefits (i.e., when problems occur)

→ Public service = "Thank-less jobs!". Effective communication & engagement matter!

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Questions and Comments?

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