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Where for Art Thou? Transient Sex Offenders and Residence Restrictions

Jill Levenson[1], Alissa R. Ackerman[2], Kelly M. Socia[3], and Andrew J. Harris[3]

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to better understand transient (homeless) sex offenders in the context of residence restriction laws. Using the entire population of registered sex offenders (RSOs) living in the community in Florida (n = 23,523), transients were compared with other sex offenders on relevant demographics, risk factors, county characteristics, and residence restriction variables. Significantly higher proportions of transient sex offenders were found in counties with a larger number of local-level restrictions, vast territory covered by these laws, wide-distance buffer zones, higher population density, and expensive housing costs. Sex offenders were more likely than the general population to become homeless. Transients were more likely than non-transients to have a history of registry violation. Few transients absconded, but when they did, they were more likely to abscond from registration than probation. When implementing sex offender management policies, lawmakers should consider transience as an unintended negative consequence.

Keywords

sex offender, registration, transient, homeless, residence restrictions, housing

Introduction

The problem of homeless sex offenders has commanded media attention across the United States (Vick, 2008). The proliferation of residence restrictions prohibiting sex offenders from living within close proximity to places where children congregate has

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resulted in limited housing options in many metropolitan areas. These well-intended laws appear to create unintended consequences including transience, homelessness, and housing instability—outcomes that may carry significant public safety implications. This exploratory study is the first to specifically identify and examine factors associated with sex offender transience in a population of community-based registered sex offenders (RSOs).

Sex Offender Residence Restrictions (SORRs)

As publicly accessible sex offender registries have gone online nationwide, citizens have become more aware of convicted sex offenders living in the community. Concerns about residential locations of RSOs have resulted in the passage of policies restricting where these particular criminals can live. There are at least 30 state laws designating where sex offenders can reside (Meloy, Miller, & Curtis, 2007, 2008). The first state law was passed in 1995 in Florida and applied only to sex offenders on probation who abused minor victims. This law created 1,000 foot buffer zones around schools, parks, playgrounds, day care centers, and other places where children congregate. By 2004, 15 states had passed similar laws, but within 2 years of the 2005 murder of nine-year old Jessica Lunsford by a convicted sex offender in Florida, the number of states with SORRs doubled. The most common buffer zones are 1,000 to 2,000 feet around protected venues, such as schools, parks, playgrounds, and day care centers. In some states, facilities such as arcades, amusement parks, movie theaters, youth sports facilities, school bus stops, and libraries are also protected (Meloy et al., 2008).

Too abundant to count are local SORR ordinances passed by cities, towns, and counties. The first municipal sex offender ordinance in the United States was passed in Miami Beach in June 2005, modeled after zoning regulations that prohibit adult establishments (e.g., strip clubs and adult bookstores) from operating within a certain distance from schools. Local ordinances can be found in most states, even those without statewide laws, and often exceed state laws by expanding restricted areas up to 2,500 feet (almost a half mile) surrounding places frequented by children. When one city or county enacts such a law, a domino effect can sometimes result when neighboring towns pass similar ordinances in order to prevent exiled sex offenders from migrating to their communities (Levenson, 2010; but see Socia, 2012).

Proximity and Recidivism

SORR laws are based on the seemingly logical premise that by requiring child molesters to live far from places where children congregate, repeat sex crimes can be prevented. The limited existing research, however, finds no support for the hypothesis that sex offenders who live closer to child-oriented settings are more likely to reoffend (Zandbergen, Levenson, & Hart, 2010). Repeat sex offenders often live far from a crime scene, suggesting that their residential proximity to a particular location did not facilitate their crimes (Minnesota Department of Corrections [DOC], 2003). A close analysis of 224 repeat sex offenses in Minnesota led the authors to conclude that residential restriction laws would not have prevented even one reoffense

(Duwe, Donnay, & Tewksbury, 2008). In Colorado, recidivists and non-recidivists were found to be distributed randomly throughout the geographical area with no evidence that recidivists lived closer to schools and day care centers (Colorado Department of Public Safety, 2004). Similarly, in New Jersey, relatively few (4.4%) sex offenders met victims in the types of locations designated as off-limits by residential restriction laws (Colombino, Mercado, Levenson, & Jeglic, 2011). Sex offenders do not appear to abuse children because they live near schools or parks; they create opportunities for sexual abuse to take place by cultivating relationships with children and their families (Duwe et al., 2008). Some researchers have argued that policies restricting where sex offenders live, rather than where they go and what they do, ignore empirical evidence, and thus misdirect prevention strategies (Colombino et al., 2011).

SORR Laws and Housing Availability

A quickly growing body of evidence illustrates how SORR laws can profoundly diminish housing options for sex offenders. In Orlando, Florida, it was found that 99% of all residential dwellings are located within 2,500 feet of schools, parks, day care centers, or school bus stops (Zandbergen & Hart, 2006). The vast majority of residential territory in Nebraska and New Jersey is also located within 2,500 feet of a school (Bruell, Swatt, & Sample, 2008; Chajewski & Mercado, 2009; Zgoba, Levenson, & McKee, 2009). In Broward County, Florida (the greater Fort Lauderdale area), a task force report revealed that the number of compliant dwellings decreased as buffer zone sizes increased (Broward County Commission, 2009). For example, when a 1,000 foot SORR buffer zone was increased to 1,200 feet, available housing decreased by 40%, and a 2,000 foot buffer zone left only four compliant housing units.

Affordable housing is especially impacted by buffer zones, as less affluent areas tend to be more densely populated, and therefore homes are in closer proximity to places frequented by children. Of nearly one million residential parcels studied in Miami-Dade County, Florida, only about 4% of residential units were compliant with the overlapping state and local residence restrictions in effect at the time, and only 1% had a monthly housing cost of $1,250 or less (Zandbergen & Hart, 2009). In upstate New York, those census block groups that would be the most restricted from statewide residence restrictions offered the most affordable and available housing (Socia, 2011). In Nebraska, average home values were significantly lower within a buffer zone of 2,000 feet than home values outside the restricted areas (Bruell et al., 2008), and in Ohio, compliant addresses were also more likely to be located in less affordable census tracts (Red Bird, 2009). Thus, few compliant dwellings may be found in urban and suburban areas with extensive residential restriction policies, and lower-cost housing may be especially limited.

Transience and Homelessness

Prior research suggests that as buffer distances increase, so do transience, homelessness, and reduced employment opportunities (Levenson, 2008). Sex offenders have

reported in surveys that residence restriction laws forced them to relocate, that they were unable to return to their own homes after incarceration, that they were not permitted to live with family members, and/or that they experienced a landlord refusing to rent to them or to renew a lease (Levenson, 2008; Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Levenson & Hern, 2007; Mercado, Alvarez, & Levenson, 2008). Many indicated that affordable housing is less available due to limits on where they can live, and that they are forced to live farther away from employment, public transportation, social services, and mental health treatment (Levenson, 2008; Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Levenson & Hern, 2007; Mercado et al., 2008).

When prisoners are released from incarceration, they commonly seek housing with relatives, but large and comprehensive buffer zones can eliminate such options for sex offenders (Levenson, 2008; Levenson & Cotter, 2005; Levenson & Hern, 2007; Mercado et al., 2008). Unable to reside with family and without the financial resources to pay for security deposits, furnishings, and rent payments, some sex offenders face homelessness. Young adults seemed to be especially affected by these laws; age was significantly inversely correlated with being unable to live with family and having difficulties securing affordable housing (Levenson, 2008; Levenson & Hern, 2007). Family members of RSOs also reported that residence restriction laws created housing disruption for them; larger buffer zones increased the chance of a housing crisis for the family (Levenson & Tewksbury, 2009).

Paradoxically, housing instability is consistently associated with criminal recidivism and absconding. In Georgia, every time a parolee moved, the risk of re-arrest increased by 25% (Meredith, Speir, & Johnson, 2007). Residential instability was a robust predictor of absconding in a study of California parolees (Williams, McShane, & Dolny, 2000), and in a national sample of 2,030 offenders, those who moved multiple times during probation were almost twice as likely as stable probationers to have some sort of disciplinary hearing (Schulenberg, 2007). In New Zealand, sexual recidivists were more likely to have unstable housing, unemployment, and limited social support (Willis & Grace, 2008, 2009). Surprisingly, some prosecutors and victim advocates have publicly denounced residence restrictions, cautioning that the transience created by housing restrictions undermines the very purpose of sex offender registries and makes it more difficult to track and supervise sex offenders (Iowa County Attorneys Association, 2006; National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, 2006)

California data illustrate a salient example of unintended consequences associated with a 2,000 foot statewide SORR law (California Sex Offender Management Board, 2011). In April 2011, it was reported that 6,012 (over 8%) of California's 71,803 registrants were registered as "Transient." The number of transient RSOs in California had risen steadily since the inception of "Jessica's Law" in 2006, and has more than doubled since 2007. It was reported that "nearly 32% of sex offenders on parole are homeless due to Jessica's Law" (California Sex Offender Management Board, 2011, p. 4). The sex offender management board raised concerns that these conditions created barriers to the offenders' prospects for employment, stability, and support systems. They identified SORR as a primary contributor to the transience problem due to the large territories rendered non-compliant, particularly in major metropolitan areas.

As well, they warned that SORR laws compromised the ability of probation and parole agents to closely supervise offenders without a permanent address (California Sex Offender Management Board, 2011).

In Florida, where residential restrictions render over 95% of residential dwellings off-limits for sex offenders in major metropolitan areas (Zandbergen & Hart, 2006, 2009), several homeless colonies have emerged around the state, and sex offenders who are forced to reside outdoors are instructed to register with law enforcement agents as "transient." When researchers assessed the impact of transience on registration compliance in Florida, they found that transients were more likely to become non-compliant, but not to abscond (Levenson, Ackerman, & Harris, 2013). When the RSOs *did* abscond, they were much more likely to do so from registration than from probation, suggesting that once out from under the watchful eye of probation officers, some transients disappear from their last known "address," perhaps willing to risk arrest in exchange for more civilized accommodations in the home of a friend or relative.

Purpose of the Study

This exploratory study is the first to examine transient sex offenders as a group. The first objective was to describe the characteristics of transient (homeless) sex offenders living throughout the state of Florida. The second aim was to compare transients with other sex offenders on relevant characteristics and risk factors. A final goal was to compare transient and non-transient sex offenders on the county and SORR ordinance variables that were hypothesized to potentially influence transience. Based on the existing literature, it was hypothesized that higher proportions of transient (homeless) sex offenders would be found in counties with more plentiful and restrictive ordinances, in more densely populated counties, and in counties with more expensive housing costs.

Context of the Current Study: RSOs and SORR Laws in Florida

The current study is set in the state of Florida, home to approximately 18.8 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), in April 2011 there were 55,847 RSOs listed on Florida's registry. Of these RSOs, their mean and median age was 45, 74% were White, 77% had a minor victim, and 16% were designated as sexual predators. However, only 40% of these RSOs were living in the community, as 28% were confined, 28% were living out of state, and 4% were deceased or deported (Ackerman, Levenson, & Harris, 2012).

Florida's statewide law prohibits RSOs from living within 1,000 feet of a school, day care, park, playground, or other place where children congregate. According to the Florida DOC, by 2011 a total of 140 local ordinances had been enacted in 44 of Florida's 67 counties (see Appendix A). There was an average of 5.5 prohibited venues named in any given ordinance (range = 1-10). In addition to city ordinances, county ordinances

also exist in some areas; some apply only to unincorporated areas but others cover the entire county. The most common distance restriction for local ordinances is 2,500 feet (mean = 1,503, median = 2,250), and they cover an assortment of venues in their scopes, including schools, parks, playgrounds, day care centers, libraries, churches, public pools, sports fields, and school bus stops. The oldest ordinance existed in Broward County (Fort Lauderdale; 71 months), and the newest was in Holmes County (the Panhandle; 14 months).[1] Appendix A also shows the average rental price for a one-bedroom unit (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2011) and population density (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010) for each county.

Collectively, the ordinances cover 253 (52%) of the state's 482 municipalities and unincorporated areas (see Appendix B). Living near bus stops is prohibited by 104 of the ordinances, covering 22% of the total number of jurisdictions in the state (see Appendix B).

Method

Data for this study were obtained from several sources. Details about data collection for each set of pertinent variables are described below.

Subjects

Data on the sex offenders and their offenses were obtained from two sources. The first data file was obtained on request from the FDLE and included publicly available information regarding all RSOs on the Florida registry, as well each offender's last registration date and registration requirements (bi-annual or quarterly). This file was obtained in April 2011, but did not include offense data.

In order to obtain information about the offender's sex crime convictions, a second data file was obtained via an automated data-downloading process known as a spider-scrape. This method allows for the automated download of all relevant information on a given website. In January 2011, the researchers worked with a computer programmer to obtain a data file with all available information on the actual Florida sex offender registry. The file obtained from the FDLE included 55,848 offenders, while the scraped data included 55,942 offenders.

Offenders in each file were matched by last name, first name, and birth date. This process allowed the researchers to merge the two files into one data set that included all the variables provided by the FDLE and the offense data provided by the scrape. The offense data was linked to the offender by a unique identifier created with the scraped data file. As such, each row of the offense data contained one specific offense and the full file included 83,699 offenses. Given our interest in the number of sex crime conviction dates (rather than the types of charges) and because an offender can incur multiple charges for one crime event, when an offender had multiple sex crime convictions on one adjudication date, only one charge was kept.

The offense-level file captured each individual offense as a row, whereas the offender-level file identified each row as one specific offender. As such, the offense-level data was aggregated by offender, and then matched and entered into the offender-level file.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics.

	RSO living in community (*N* = 23,523)	RSO total population (*N* = 55,721)
	Mean/%	Mean/%
Offender	90%	84%
Predator	10%	16%
AWA Tier 2 (bi-annual updates)	69%	63%
AWA Tier 3 (quarterly updates)	31%	37%
Race (minority)	25%	26%
On supervision[a]	25.3%	13%
Gender (male)	97.4%	98.1%
Age at conviction	34.7	34
Minor victim	81%	77%
Repeat sex offender[b]	5.3%	9.5%
Ever convicted of Failure to Register	11.5%	8%
Listed as absconded	2.9%	1.3%
Absconded from probation	1.7%	0.75%
Absconded from registration	1.2%	0.56%
Transient	3.2%	N/A

Note. RSO = registered sex offenders; AWA = Adam Walsh Act; DOC = Department of Corrections.
[a]DOC Probation, DOC community control, DOC administrative probation, Parole, or Federal Probation.
[b]More than one sex crime conviction.

Offenders with no offense data ($n = 110$) and those with a FTR listed as their first offense ($n = 17$) were deleted from the data set, providing a total population of 55,721.

Because we were interested in investigating transience while living in the community, we removed from the data set all offenders who were listed as living out of state ($n = 12{,}793$), deported ($n = 2{,}024$), deceased ($n = 445$), civilly committed ($n = 580$), or otherwise incarcerated ($n = 16{,}302$). Thus, the final sub-population under study included only those individuals living in the community in Florida in April 2011 ($n = 23{,}523$). Characteristics of the population are given in Table 1.

Independent Variables

Several variables were readily available in the FDLE offender file. Other key variables were created or calculated based on data available within the FDLE file. These items are explained in more detail below. Independent variables included offender and offense characteristics, as well as county and SORR factors hypothesized to contribute to transience.

Individual-Level Variables

Offender/predator. According to the FDLE, RSOs are designated as predators if they have (a) a conviction for a qualifying Capital, Life, or First degree felony sex offense

committed on or after January 10, 1993 or (b) a conviction for any felony violation or attempt thereof for a qualifying offense committed after January 10, 1993 in addition to a prior conviction for any felony violation or attempt thereof for a qualifying offense, and (c) a written court finding designating the individual a sexual predator. In addition, as of July 1, 2004, regardless of whether an individual meets or does not meet the criteria listed above, anyone civilly committed under the Florida Jimmy Ryce Sexually Violent Predator Act will be registered as a sexual predator. Individuals were coded as 0 = offender and 1 = predator.

Adam Walsh Act (AWA) tier designation. The state of Florida is in compliance with the federal Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006. The AWA requires offense-based risk designations based on the charge of conviction. Tier 2 offenders are required to provide in-person verification every 180 days for a period of 25 years. Tier 3 offenders, who are considered highest risk to the community, are required to provide in-person verification every 90 days for life. The data file provided by FDLE contained a variable called "registration frequency," from which the individual's AWA Tier assignment was inferred. A variable called AWA was created and was coded as 2 = AWA Tier 2 and 3 = AWA Tier 3. (There are no Tier 1 offenders in Florida as these misdemeanor offenders are not required to register under Florida law.)

Minority. The Florida registry includes White, Black, and Asian as potential race categories. For the purposes of this study, all offenders who were not listed as White were coded as a minority, where 0 = White and 1 = minority.

Female. Offenders were coded as 0 = male and 1 = female.

Minor victim. The Florida Registry designates whether the registrant has ever been convicted of a sexual offense against a minor victim. This variable was coded as 0 = no minor victim, 1 = minor victim.

On supervision. The FDLE registry file included a variable titled "status." This variable denotes 13 mutually exclusive categories: absconded from probation, absconded from registration, administrative probation, community control, DOC supervision (probation), Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) incarceration, DJJ supervision, escaped, federal incarceration, federal supervision, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, parole, and released (no supervision but required to register). For offenders living in the community, we identified those offenders who were still under some form of supervision. To this end, a variable was created called "on supervision" (0 = no, 1 = yes) by flagging those individuals who were on probation (n = 5,384), community control (n = 299), administrative probation (n = 41), parole (n = 96), or federal supervision (n = 156).

Repeat sex offender. By identifying discrete conviction dates, we created a variable for the number of conviction dates for each RSO. The FDLE data set included convictions

for all sexual crimes and all FTR crimes. Noting, however, that FTR convictions are not sex crimes, we created a "repeat sex offender" variable in which more than one sex crime conviction was coded yes (0 = no, 1 = yes) after subtracting the number of FTR conviction dates from the number of overall conviction dates.

Non-compliant. Using the date of the FDLE file, we first calculated (as a continuous variable) the number of days since last registration update by adding the registration requirement (every 90 days or every 180 days) to the date of the offender's last registration. Based on this first calculation, we could determine whether an individual was delinquent in updating his registration in a timely manner. In Florida, however, an RSO is required to register *not* on a specific date, but any time within the month of his/her birthday, and every 3 or 6 months thereafter (depending on the AWA Tier). Therefore, if an offender was within a 30-day window of the 90 or 180 days, he/she was considered compliant. A dichotomous variable was created to denote registration non-compliance (0 = compliant, 1 = non-compliant). An additional ordinal-level variable was created noting the amount of time since the last registration date with the following categories: more than 1 year out of compliance, 6 months to 1 year, 3 to 6 months, 1 to 3 months, and less than 1 month (compliant).

Convicted of FTR. Using the conviction data provided by the data scrape, the number of FTR convictions was calculated for each individual. From this calculation, we devised two variables: the number of overall FTR convictions (continuous) and a dichotomous variable denoting whether the individual ever had an FTR conviction (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Absconded. Offenders who have absconded were flagged by their FDLE "status" as absconded from registration or absconded from probation. The state of Florida defines absconded as those who no longer reside at the last reported address given to the Florida Sexual Offender Registry. All offenders with an absconded status were noted and a new variable was created (not absconded = 0 and absconded = 1). For those with "absconded" status, a separate variable was generated noting whether the RSO had absconded from probation or from registration.

Residence Restriction Variables

To assess the impact of SORR laws on transience, we compiled the following variables from the data provided by the Florida DOC on the 140 local ordinances throughout Florida: the largest ordinance distance in each county; the average ordinance distance in each county; the percent of jurisdictions in the county covered by SORR ordinances; and the length of time (in months) of the oldest ordinance in each county.[2] Because SORR laws which include bus stops in their scope can render over 95% of residential dwellings off-limits in major metropolitan areas in Florida, diminishing housing availability and increasing the likelihood of homelessness and transience (Levenson, 2008; Zandbergen & Hart, 2006, 2009), we also calculated the percentage of jurisdictions in each county in which bus stops were a prohibited venue. Most of the

ordinances have been passed by independent municipalities; some county ordinances cover the entire county and some cover only unincorporated territories.

County-Level Variables

To assess the impact of county characteristics on transience, we created a number of other variables that the prior literature has indicated could be potentially relevant. First, we calculated the RSO count in each county as well as the RSO rate per 100,000 population in each county. We obtained the population density for each county from the U.S. Census (2010), and the average rental price in each county from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2011). Finally, we obtained information about the number of homeless individuals in each county, as well as the homeless rate and percentage in the general population, from the 2010 report of the Florida Council on Homelessness (Florida Council on Homelessness, 2011).

Dependent Variable

Transient. Since 2009, the FDLE has required homeless sex offenders to register as "transient." In the scraped data file, the word "transient" showed as the permanent address for homeless sex offenders. Those individuals listed as transient in the scraped data were matched by first name, last name, and birth date to the FDLE file. A variable called "transient" was then created (0 = no, 1 = yes) and added to the data set.

Analyses

Frequencies and means were calculated to provide descriptive statistics. Various group comparisons were conducted using chi-square analyses for categorical independent variables, and *t* tests were utilized to examine group differences for continuous independent variables. Analyses were conducted using SPSS version 21.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

As noted earlier, the sub-population of all RSOs living in the community in Florida in April of 2011 was comprised of 23,523 individuals, and their characteristics can be seen in Table 1. One in 10 RSOs living in the community was designated a Predator, and less than one third fell into the AWA Tier 3 (highest risk) group. Most were White, though minorities were over-represented relative to the U.S. population. About one quarter were under some sort of correctional supervision. Less than 3% were female, and the average age at conviction was 35 (median = 33, mode = 19). About four of five have had a minor victim, and only 5.4% met our definition for "repeat sex offender" with more than one sex crime conviction. Over 3% of RSOs living in the community were registered as transient.

About 11% had been convicted at some time for FTR and fewer than 2% of the offenders had multiple convictions for FTR. About 3% were officially listed as absconded. An individual can be out of compliance for failing to update his registration during the specified month, but FDLE defines absconders as those who no longer reside at the last reported address provided by the RSO to the Florida Sexual Offender Registry.

As reflected in Table 1, the RSOs living in the community appear to be somewhat lower risk than the full RSO population, which is not surprising because the full population includes those who have been subsequently returned to prison for a new offense or violation since their initial registration, and those who are confined under civil commitment. For instance, the community group had a lower proportion of Predators, AWA Tier 3 offenders, and repeat offenders (presumably because many of the recidivists are confined). The community group also had a slightly higher proportion with minor victims (these include child pornography cases).

Table 2 describes the status of transient and non-transient RSOs living in Florida communities. The majority of transients (84%) were no longer under any type of probationary supervision (see Table 2). Only 14 transients were listed as absconded.

County Characteristics

Table 3 shows the counts and proportions of transients in each of Florida's 67 counties. Statewide, 3.2% of the RSOs living in the community were homeless and registered as transient. Broward (the greater Fort Lauderdale area) and Miami-Dade Counties had the highest numbers and proportions of transients: 8.5% and 8.9%, respectively. These two counties are home to 37% of the state's transient RSOs (but only 13% of the state's RSO population). Table 3 also reports the percentage of the general population who are homeless in each county. In the vast majority of counties, homeless individuals account for less than 1% of the population. As such, sex offenders are much more likely than the general Florida population to become homeless.

Group Comparisons

Transients and non-transients were then compared to determine whether significant differences existed in certain demographics and characteristics associated with reoffense risk (see Table 4). The transient group had significantly higher proportions of predators and racial minorities. However, transients were less likely to have minor victims and to be under probationary supervision. Transients had significantly more days non-compliant with registration mandates, had more FTR convictions, and were slightly younger than non-transients. In general, transients were no more likely to abscond, but when they did, they were more likely to abscond from registration rather than from probation.

Finally, Table 5 depicts group comparisons to determine differences between transients and non-transients with regard to the types of restrictions and characteristics of

Table 2. Status.

	Transient		
	No = 22,777	Yes = 746	Total RSOs in community = 23,523
Absconded from probation			
n	399	2	401
%	1.8	0.3	1.7
Absconded from registration			
n	268	12	280
%	1.2	1.6	1.2
Administrative probation			
n	41	0	41
%	0.2	0.0	0.2
Community control			
n	296	3	299
%	1.3	0.4	1.3
DOC supervision			
n	5,247	103	5,384
%	23.0	13.8	22.9
Escaped			
n	4	0	4
%	0.0	0.0	0.0
Federal supervision			
n	156	0	156
%	0.7	0.0	0.7
Parole			
n	96	0	96
%	0.4	0.0	0.4
Released (but required to register)			
N	16,266	626	16,892
%	71.4	83.9	71.8

Note. RSO = registered sex offenders; DOC = Department of Corrections.

the county in which the offender resided. Because large samples increase the likelihood of a Type 1 error, and multiple *t* tests can lead to spurious findings, the Bonferroni technique was used to adjust the statistical significance threshold for rejecting the null hypothesis. The Bonferroni correction is calculated by dividing the alpha level by the number of comparisons (Vogt, 1999). In this case, the significance level, $p < .05$, was divided by 12, which reflected the number of items that were tested for each group comparison [.05 / 12 = .004]. All statistically significant findings in these analyses were significant below the .001 level.

A greater proportion of transients were found in counties with higher rental costs and in more densely populated counties. A higher RSO rate in the county's population

Table 3. Count and Percentage of Transient RSOs in Each County.

	Total RSO in county	% of total RSOs in FL	No. of transient in county	% of all transients in FL	% of RSOs in county who are transient	% of population in county who are homeless
Alachua	336	1.4	9	1.2	2.7	0.42
Baker	40	0.2	0	0.0	0.0	0.01
Bay	322	1.4	4	0.5	1.2	0.22
Bradford	85	0.4	0	0.0	0.0	0.14
Brevard	711	3.0	21	2.8	3.0	0.35
Broward	1,198	5.1	102	13.7	8.5	0.22
Calhoun	40	0.2	0	0.0	0.0	0.01
Charlotte	205	0.9	2	0.3	1.0	0.45
Citrus	220	0.9	2	0.3	0.9	0.36
Clay	324	1.4	4	0.5	1.2	0.06
Collier	215	0.9	2	0.3	0.9	0.12
Columbia	203	0.9	0	0.0	0.0	0.68
De soto	63	0.3	1	0.1	1.6	0.04
Dixie	66	0.3	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Duval	1,654	7.0	32	4.3	1.9	0.50
Escambia	660	2.8	7	0.9	1.1	0.18
Flagler	78	0.3	1	0.1	1.3	0.10
Franklin	27	0.1	1	0.1	3.7	No count
Gadsden	174	0.7	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Gilchrist	38	0.2	0	0.0	0.0	0.04
Glades	18	0.1	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Gulf	29	0.1	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Hamilton	36	0.2	0	0.0	0.0	0.70
Hardee	48	0.2	0	0.0	0.0	0.38
Hendry	22	0.1	0	0.0	0.0	0.04
Hernando	313	1.3	4	0.5	1.3	0.09
Highlands	138	0.6	2	0.3	1.4	0.11
Hillsborough	1,578	6.7	14	1.9	0.9	0.60
Holmes	65	0.3	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Indian river	142	0.6	3	0.4	2.1	0.44
Jackson	116	0.5	0	0.0	0.0	0.07
Jefferson	32	0.1	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Lafayette	17	0.1	0	0.0	0.0	0.64
Lake	408	1.7	9	1.2	2.2	0.34
Lee	577	2.5	3	0.4	0.5	0.17
Leon	436	1.9	2	0.3	0.5	0.25
Levy	134	0.6	0	0.0	0.0	0.00
Liberty	25	0.1	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Madison	40	0.2	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Manatee	324	1.4	15	2.0	4.6	0.16
Marion	655	2.8	3	0.4	0.5	0.28
Martin	137	0.6	3	0.4	2.2	0.21
Miami-dade	1,907	8.1	169	22.7	8.9	0.15
Monroe	121	0.5	2	0.3	1.7	1.27
Nassau	131	0.6	1	0.1	0.8	0.22
Okaloosa	280	1.2	10	1.3	3.6	1.19
Okeechobee	84	0.4	2	0.3	2.4	0.08
Orange	1,661	7.1	64	8.6	3.9	0.25
Osceola	381	1.6	10	1.3	2.6	0.31

(continued)

Table 3. (continued)

	Total RSO in county	% of total RSOs in FL	No. of transient in county	% of all transients in FL	% of RSOs in county who are transient	% of population in county who are homeless
Palm beach	868	3.7	28	3.8	3.2	0.16
Pasco	697	3.0	2	0.3	0.3	0.96
Pinellas	1,351	5.7	78	10.5	5.8	0.42
Polk	942	4.0	28	3.8	3.0	0.18
Putnam	250	1.1	1	0.1	0.4	0.19
Saint johns	185	0.8	2	0.3	1.1	0.73
Saint lucie	343	1.5	3	0.4	0.9	0.28
Santa rosa	267	1.1	1	0.1	0.4	0.05
Sarasota	394	1.7	10	1.3	2.5	0.21
Seminole	300	1.3	3	0.4	1.0	0.19
Sumter	125	0.5	0	0.0	0.0	0.06
Suwannee	91	0.4	2	0.3	2.2	0.67
Taylor	66	0.3	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Union	30	0.1	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Volusia	768	3.3	41	5.5	5.3	0.45
Wakulla	95	0.4	0	0.0	0.0	No count
Walton	116	0.5	4	0.5	3.4	1.12
Washington	69	0.3	1	0.1	1.4	No count
Total	23,523		746	100.0	3.2	0.3

Note. RSO = registered sex offenders.
Source. Florida Council on Homelessness (2011).

Table 4. Group Comparisons on Offender Characteristics.

	Group comparisons		
RSO living in community (N = 23,523)	% of transient	% of non-transient	χ^2
Predator	12.3	9.5	6.94**
AWA tier 3	31.4	30.7	0.154
Race (minority)	37	24.2	156.73***
Gender (male)	98	97.4	1.076
Minor victim	73.5	80.7	24.20***
On supervision	14.2	25.6	49.84***
Repeat sex offender	6.2	5.3	1.185
FTR	22	11.5	76.31***
Listed as absconded	1.9	2.9	2.84
From probation	14.3	59.8	
From registration	85.7	40.2	11.74**
	M (SD)	M (SD)	t test
Days non-compliant	295 (393)	44.4 (291)	−8.01***
Age	45 (10.9)	47 (13.4)	5.29***
No. FTR convictions	0.26 (.523)	0.13 (.397)	−6.55***

Note. *Note.* RSO = registered sex offenders; AWA = Adam Walsh Act
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

did not lead to a higher proportion of transients. Counties with greater percentages of transient sex offenders had larger buffer zones in terms of both the largest distance (1,875 feet vs. 1,598 feet) and the average distance (1,831 vs. 1,552 feet). Restrictions in place for longer periods of time were not associated with significantly higher proportions of transients. However, more transients lived in counties with a larger number of ordinances and in counties with a greater number of SORR laws which included bus stops in their scope. The number of municipalities covered by SORR laws was greater in counties with more transients, as was the number of municipalities with bus stop restrictions. As well, transients were more likely to be found in counties with a greater percentage of territory covered by both SORR laws and bus stops restrictions.

Table 5. Group Comparisons on County and SORR Characteristics.

	Transient	Valid *n*	*M*	*SD*	*SE M*	*t*
County characteristics						
Average rent in county	No	22,762	809.66	135.102	0.895	−15.72***
	Transient	708	887.76	130.062	4.888	
Population density of county	No	22,763	837.01	767.383	5.086	−13.23***
	Transient	708	1,226.07	867.926	32.619	
RSO rate per 100K in county	No	22,763	141.57	61.784	0.410	14.01***
	Transient	708	108.63	46.513	1.748	
SORR characteristics						
Largest SORR distance	No	22,763	1,598.69	1,141.849	7.568	−7.08***
	Transient	708	1,875.71	1,021.731	38.399	
Average SORR distance	No	22,763	1,552.30	1,113.003	7.377	−7.29***
	Transient	708	1,831.50	999.362	37.558	
Oldest ordinance	No	22,763	42.15	28.806	0.191	1.15
	Transient	708	40.84	29.601	1.112	
No. of SORR ordinances in county	No	22,763	3.86	6.926	0.046	−7.51***
	Transient	708	6.77	10.240	0.385	
No. of ordinances with bus stops	No	22,763	2.35	6.087	0.040	−7.29***
	Transient	708	4.88	9.176	0.345	
Total no. of municipalities covered by SORR laws	No	22,769	7.87	11.285	0.075	−14.94***
	Transient	708	16.34	14.961	0.562	
No. of municipalities with SORR bus stop restrictions	No	22,769	2.94	6.812	0.045	−6.94***
	Transient	708	5.44	9.521	0.358	
Percent of county covered by SORR laws	No	22,769	43.33	41.110	0.272	−9.71***
	Transient	708	58.78	41.701	1.567	
Percent of county with SORR bus stop restrictions	No	22,769	14.00	28.483	0.189	−5.06***
	Transient	708	20.33	32.898	1.236	

Note. SORR = sex offender residence restrictions; RSO = registered sex offenders.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Discussion

This study is the first to examine transience in a population of community-based RSOs. The state of Florida has some of the most extensive residence restrictions in the country, and more than 3% of its sex offenders are officially designated as transient. Sex offenders are more likely to become homeless than the general Florida population (<1%, according to the Florida Council on Homelessness, 2011). It should be noted that while we used the term "homeless" synonymously with "transient," homelessness is not necessarily a dichotomous construct, but rather represents a continuum of substantial housing instability.

The counties in which transience is the greatest problem are Broward (Fort Lauderdale) and Miami-Dade, which together contain 37% of the transient sex offenders in Florida. In each of these counties, nearly 9% of the RSOs are listed as transient. To put these data in perspective, these two counties are home to 13% of Florida's sex offenders, 22% of Florida's general population (about 4.2 million people), and about 13% of Florida's homeless population (Florida Council on Homelessness, 2011). The results suggest that a combination of the number of restrictions, the amount of territory in a county covered by SORR laws, wide-distance buffer zones, high population density, and expensive housing costs may come together to create a perfect storm for sex offender transience. For instance, in Broward County, home to 5% of Florida's sex offenders, SORR laws prevent RSOs from living, on an average, 2,362 feet from a school, park, playground, day care center, or bus stop. Broward's restrictions cover 97% of the territory in a densely populated county where the average one-bedroom rental price is over $1,000 per month, leaving nearly 9% of its sex offenders without a compliant place to call home. Prior mapping studies had already cautioned that lodging in these two counties (especially affordable housing) became progressively limited as buffer zones increase (Broward County Commission, 2009; Zandbergen & Hart, 2009).

These results further suggest that counties endure a greater proportion of transients when a higher number of municipalities have bus stop restrictions and a larger amount of territory in the county is covered by bus stop restrictions. Indeed, previous mapping research concurred that school bus stops generate the most onerous of restrictions; because they are so plentiful, they render over 95% of residential dwellings off-limits in major metropolitan areas in Florida, greatly diminishing housing availability for sex offenders (Zandbergen & Hart, 2006, 2009). Notably, in Miami-Dade, where 9% of the county's sex offenders are transient, the bus stop restriction was repealed in 2010. By that time, however, scores of sex offenders had become homeless, perhaps reducing their capacity to procure the resources necessary to obtain suitable housing. Research suggests that many barriers to housing stability exist after an extended period of homelessness, and that the chaotic lifestyle inherent for many homeless individuals may become a vicious cycle which is difficult to interrupt (Culhane & Metraux, 2008).

Predictably, transients were more likely than non-transients to have a history of failing to register. Few transients abscond, but when they do, they are more likely to abscond from registration than probation. We might surmise that once out from under the close surveillance of probation officers, some transients depart from their last

known "address," prepared to risk a failure to register arrest in order to enjoy more humane accommodations in the home of a friend or a relative which may be located in a restricted zone.

Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research

These findings support other data suggesting that SORR laws play a significant role in homelessness and transience for sex offenders (e.g., see California Sex Offender Management Board, 2011). If SORR laws are a primary contributor to sex offender transience when large territories are rendered non-compliant by overlapping buffer zones, then transience as an unintended consequence of SORR should be acknowledged. The California Sex Offender Management Board, for instance, raised concerns that SORR laws and resulting transience created barriers to sex offenders' prospects for employment, stability, and support systems. As well, they cautioned that transience due to SORR laws compromised the ability of probation and parole agents to closely supervise offenders without a permanent address (California Sex Offender Management Board, 2011). Housing instability is also consistently and significantly associated with criminal recidivism and absconding (Meredith et al., 2007; Schulenberg, 2007; Williams et al., 2000; Willis & Grace, 2009). Furthermore, sex offenders who are prohibited from living with family members because their homes are within buffer zones may be denied the protective factors of prosocial influences and support systems. The transience created by SORR laws may therefore undermine the very purpose of sex offender registries by making it difficult for authorities to monitor sex offenders and by increasing the risk factors associated with recidivism.

One paradoxical aspect of SORR laws is that sex offenders who live closer to schools or day care centers do not reoffend more frequently than those who live farther away (Zandbergen et al., 2010), and residential restrictions seem to have no discernible impact on sexual recidivism (Blood, Watson, & Stageberg, 2008; Nobles, Levenson, & Youstin, 2012; Socia, 2012). In the absence of evidence that SORR laws are effective in preventing repeat sexual victimization, lawmakers should consider the potential negative unintended consequences of these laws on reintegration and community safety.

Limitations

When using secondary data, variables are sometimes defined or collected in ways that are imperfect for the researcher. For instance, we did not have true recidivism data, but rather we created a proxy called "repeat offender," which was defined by more than one sex crime conviction listed on the registry. As well, our data set did not contain non-sexual arrest histories, so we were unable to examine transience in relation to non-sexual criminal tendencies. Limited information about offender characteristics restricted our ability to study the influence of a broad range of potentially relevant factors. It is likely that unemployment (or underemployment), low education, inadequate finances, lack of social support, addiction, and mental illness also contribute to

homelessness due to limited resources or compromised psychosocial functioning. The major limitation of the spider scrape method is that it pulls only data that are active on a website and thus may not account for every registered offender in a given state. This may lead to variation in how data are captured. Because the makeup of a sex offender registry changes daily, our data represent only one snapshot in time. It was therefore impossible for us to explore the impact of residence restrictions in a county over time.

Though using an entire population is often considered to be the strength of a study, large samples enhance the possibility of a Type 1 error in which statistical significance is found despite minimal substantive differences between groups. The differences between groups in our results demonstrated substantive as well as statistical significance. This exploratory study was intended to be primarily descriptive and comparative, and our objective was simply to identify county and SORR variables that *might* be related to transience. A follow-up study is planned in which regression techniques will be used to examine the strength of the association and inter-relationship of factors that predict transience in a sex offender population.

Conclusions

It probably comes as no surprise that addressing the housing needs of convicted sex offenders—a population that evokes little sympathy—has remained low on the list of political priorities. Residence restrictions garner considerable support from legislators and the public, but there is relatively little initiative geared toward minimizing the reintegration obstacles facing RSOs. Indeed, one survey found that 71% of citizens would support such laws even if there were no scientific evidence that they reduced sexual abuse (Levenson, Brannon, Fortney, & Baker, 2007). Nonetheless, given our findings indicating that SORR laws contribute to transience, policy makers should consider that there is a public safety rationale for addressing homelessness among sex offenders. As a society, we should question whether laws that instigate homelessness (even for criminal offenders) represent sound public policy. Humanitarianism notwithstanding, negative unintended consequences of SORR laws and related public safety implications must be explored. Alternatives such as child safety zones, which prohibit sex offenders from lurking within close proximity to child-oriented venues, might be better designed to accomplish the goal of reducing sex offenders' access to children without compromising their housing needs (Broward County Commission, 2009; Colombino et al., 2011).

Sex offenders may experience housing instability for a variety of reasons, including those related to individual characteristics in addition to those attributable to externally imposed housing barriers. Regardless of the cause, housing instability is a risk factor for recidivism, and policies that lead to transience may be counter-productive. Sex offenders are a diverse population, reflecting varying degrees of threat. They therefore require a range of controls and services that are best applied when individualized to reflect the unique risk factors and needs of a particular offender. Effective policy responses to sex offenders are those that promote effective community-based management without contributing to the overall reoffense risk.

Appendix A

Table A1. County Variables.

County	No. of ordinances	Largest distance	Average distance	No. of with bus stops	Oldest (months)	Average rent cost in county	Population density in county
Alachua	3	2,500	2,166.67	1	65	$723	282.7
Baker	1	2,500	2,500	0	19	$536	46.3
Bay	7	2,500	2,500	5	62	$705	222.6
Bradford	1	2,500	2,500	0	63	$580	97
Brevard	2	1,000	1,000	0	63	$770	535
Broward	30	2,500	2,362.07	26	71	$1,069	1,444.9
Calhoun	1	2,500	2,500	0	36	$540	25.8
Charlotte	0	0	0	0	0	$708	235.2
Citrus	3	2,500	2,500	0	42	$627	242.8
Clay	0	0	0	0	0	$779	315.8
Collier	0	0	0	0	0	$1,042	160.9
Columbia	1	2,500	2,500	0	64	$581	84.7
De soto	0	0	0	0	0	$580	54.7
Dixie	0	0	0	0	0	$537	23.3
Duval	1	2,500	2,500	0	71	$779	1,133.9
Escambia	0	0	0	0	0	$712	453.4
Flagler	4	2,500	2,000	0	68	$798	197.1
Franklin	0	0	0	0	0	$540	21.6
Gadsden	0	0	0	0	0	$756	89.8
Gilchrist	0	0	0	0	0	$723	48.4
Glades	1	2,500	2,500	0	45	$635	16
Gulf	3	2,500	2,000	2	60	$540	28.1
Hamilton	1	2,500	2,500	1	47	$537	28.8
Hardee	1	2,500	2,500	1	33	$615	43.5
Hendry	1	2,500	2,500	0	65	$648	34
Hernando	0	0	0	0	0	$792	365.6
Highlands	0	0	0	0	0	$615	97.2
Hillsborough	0	0	0	0	0	$792	1,205
Holmes	1	2,500	2,500	1	14	$546	41.6
Indian river	1	2,500	2,500	0	62	$750	274.5
Jackson	2	2,500	2,500	2	60	$535	54.2
Jefferson	0	0	0	0	0	$756	24.7
Lafayette	1	2,500	2,500	1	24	$537	16.3
Lake	12	2,500	2,500	4	69	$865	316.6
Lee	2	2,500	2,500	0	58	$874	788.7
Leon	0	0	0	0	0	$756	413.1
Levy	2	2,500	2,500	1	60	$537	36.5

(continued)

Table A1. (continued)

County	No. of ordinances	Largest distance	Average distance	No. of with bus stops	Oldest (months)	Average rent cost in county	Population density in county
Liberty	1	2,500	2,500	1	45	$540	10
Madison	1	2,500	2,500	1	36	$540	27.6
Manatee	0	0	0	0	0	$923	434.5
Marion	2	1,500	1,500	0	63	$667	209.1
Martin	0	0	0	0	0	$756	269.2
Miami-Dade	1	2,500	2,500	0	15	$976	1,315.5
Monroe	0	0	0	0	0	$1,096	74.3
Nassau	1	2,500	2,500	0	43	$779	113
Okaloosa	1	2,000	2,000	1	64	$759	194.4
Okeechobee	1	2,500	2,500	1	54	$631	52
Orange	5	2,500	2,500	1	64	$865	1,268.5
Osceola	1	2,500	2,500	0	63	$865	202.4
Palm beach	17	2,500	1,882.35	15	69	$1,106	670.2
Pasco	1	2,500	2,500	0	67	$792	622.2
Pinellas	0	0	0	0	0	$792	3,347.5
Polk	4	2,500	2,250	4	68	$744	334.9
Putnam	0	0	0	0	0	$553	102.2
Saint johns	0	0	0	0	0	$712	316.4
Saint lucie	2	2,500	2,500	0	30	$923	485.7
Santa rosa	2	0	0	0	51	$865	149.6
Sarasota	0	0	0	0	0	$779	682.6
Seminole	2	2,500	1,750	0	68	$756	1,367
Sumter	2	2,500	2,500	1	65	$536	170.8
Suwannee	2	2,500	2,500	1	66	$538	60.3
Taylor	1	2,500	2,500	1	58	$594	21.6
Union	1	2,500	2,500	0	33	$576	63.8
Volusia	8	2,000	2,312.5	3	69	$754	449.2
Wakulla	0	0	0	0	0	$694	50.8
Walton	2	2,000	2,000	2	44	$621	53
Washington	0	0	0	0		$451	42.7
Florida	140			77			350.6
Mean FL		1,544.78	1,503.34		35.70	710.42	
Mode FL		2,500	2,500		0	540	
Median FL		2,500	2,250		43.5	712	

Appendix B

Table B1. Territory Covered in Florida by SORR Laws.

County	Total municipalities (cities + unincorporated)	No. of municipalities covered by SORR	% municipalities covered by SORR	No. of municipalities with bus stop restriction	% municipalities with bus stop restriction
Alachua	10	3	30	1	10
Baker	3	3	100	0	0
Bay	9	7	78	5	56
Bradford	5	1	20	0	0
Brevard	17	17	100	0	0
Broward	32	31	97	26	81
Calhoun	3	3	100	0	0
Charlotte	2	0	0	0	0
Citrus	3	3	100	0	0
Clay	5	0	0	0	0
Collier	4	0	0	0	0
Columbia	3	1	33	0	0
DeSoto	2	0	0	0	0
Dixie	3	0	0	0	0
Duval	5	1	20	0	0
Escambia	3	0	0	0	0
Flagler	6	6	100	0	0
Franklin	3	0	0	0	0
Gadsden	7	0	0	0	0
Gilchrist	4	0	0	0	0
Glades	2	2	100	0	0
Gulf	3	3	100	2	67
Hamilton	4	4	100	4	100
Hardee	4	4	100	4	100
Hendry	3	3	100	0	0
Hernando	3	0	0	0	0
Highlands	4	0	0	0	0
Hillsborough	4	0	0	0	0
Holmes	6	1	17	1	17
Indian River	6	1	17	0	0
Jackson	12	2	17	2	17
Jefferson	2	0	0	0	0
Lafayette	2	2	100	2	100
Lake	15	15	100	4	27
Lee	6	6	100	0	0
Leon	2	0	0	0	0
Levy	9	2	22	1	11

(continued)

Appendix B (continued)

County	Total municipalities (cities + unincorporated)	No. of municipalities covered by SORR	% municipalities covered by SORR	No. of municipalities with bus stop restriction	% municipalities with bus stop restriction
Liberty	2	2	100	2	100
Madison	4	4	100	4	100
Manatee	7	0	0	0	0
Marion	6	2	33	0	0
Martin	5	0	0	0	0
Miami-Dade	36	36	100	0	0
Monroe	6	0	0	0	0
Nassau	4	4	100	0	0
Okaloosa	10	1	10	1	10
Okeechobee	2	2	100	2	100
Orange	14	5	36	1	7
Osceola	3	1	33	0	0
Palm Beach	39	17	44	15	38
Pasco	7	1	14	0	0
Pinellas	25	0	0	0	0
Polk	18	18	100	18	100
Putnam	6	0	0	0	0
St. Johns	5	0	0	0	0
St.Lucie	4	2	50	0	0
Santa Rosa	4	4	100	0	0
Sarasota	5	0	0	0	0
Seminole	8	8	100	0	0
Sumter	6	6	100	1	17
Suwannee	3	3	100	1	33
Taylor	2	2	100	2	100
Union	4	4	100	0	0
Volusia	18	8	44	3	17
Wakulla	3	0	0	0	0
Walton	4	2	50	2	50
Washington	6	0	0	0	0
Florida	482	253	52	104	22

Note. SORR = sex offender residence restrictions.

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Notes

1. It should be noted that while Miami-Dade County's current ordinance was only 15 months old in April 2011, the city of Miami Beach had passed the state's first local SORRs ordinance in June 2005, and 24 of the county's 35 municipalities soon followed (Zandbergen & Hart, 2009). All of the city ordinances created a buffer zone of 2,500 feet except two: Bal Harbour created a 1,300 foot zone and North Miami created a 3,000 foot zone. Most included bus stops. The county government set an additional 2,500 foot buffer zone, which covered the unincorporated areas of the county. In January 2010, after widespread national media attention to dozens of registered sex offenders (RSOs) living under a causeway connecting Miami Beach to the mainland, all city ordinances were rescinded and replaced with one county-wide 2,500 foot zone (covering all 35 municipalities and the unincorporated county territory) prohibiting RSOs from living within 2,500 feet of a school.
2. We decided to use the percentage of jurisdictions covered by an ordinance because using the raw number of ordinances can be somewhat misleading if one ordinance covers multiple jurisdictions over an expansive geographical area. For instance, in Miami-Dade County in 2010, the county commissioners rescinded all the existing municipal residence restrictions laws and replaced them with one county-wide ordinance covering each independent municipality as well as the unincorporated territory of the county. In calculating this percentage, we started by tallying up the total number of ordinances in each county. When a county ordinance existed, we determined whether it covered all cities and territory in the county, or whether it covered only the unincorporated areas. We then tallied up the total number of jurisdictions (municipalities plus unincorporated areas) covered in each county, and divided by the total number of county jurisdictions to obtain the percentage covered.

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