

both the offense and first contact locations?” (p. 488). The researchers used Google Earth to calculate the distance from an offender’s place of residence to the place where first contact with the victim occurred and from these locations to the place of the offense.

Duwe and his colleagues (2008) investigated four criteria to classify a reoffense as preventable: (a) the means by which offenders established contact with their victims, (b) the distance between an offender’s residence and where first contact was established (i.e., 1,000 feet; 2,500 feet; one mile), (c) the type of location where contact was established (e.g., Was it a place where children congregated?), and (d) whether the victim was under the age of 18. To be classified as preventable through housing restrictions, an offense had to meet certain criteria. For example, the offender would have had to establish direct contact with a juvenile victim within one mile of his or her residence at a place where children congregate (e.g., park, school). Results indicated that the majority of offenders, as in all cases of sexual violence, victimized someone they already knew. Only 35% of the sex offender recidivists established new direct contact with a victim, but these victims were more likely to be adults than children, and the contact usually occurred more than a mile away from the offender’s residence. Of the few offenders who directly established new contact with a juvenile victim within close proximity of their residence, none did so near a school, a park, a playground, or other locations included in residential restriction laws.

The authors concluded that residency restriction laws were not that effective in preventing sexual recidivism among child molesters. Duwe et al. (2008) state,

Why does residential proximity appear to matter so little with regard to sexual reoffending? Much of it has to do with the patterns of sexual offending in general. . . . Sex offenders are much more likely to victimize someone they know. (p. 500)

Clearly, the power of mapping technologies has changed not only the way law enforcement officials are preventing crime, but also the way in which researchers are examining the factors related to crime and crime control.
