

Title — Sex Offender Lists: A Never-Ending Punishment
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Running head and page number — SEX OFFENDER LISTS 2
Heading centered — Abstract
No paragraph indentation — The constitutionality of the United States sex offender registry is questionable. The registry was created to prevent repeated sex crimes by tracking people who have been convicted of a sex crime after they have served their sentences. However, the registry lists ignore the ex post facto clause, which prohibits laws from extending a punishment after a crime has been committed. They also enforce a type of societal banishment by making it difficult for offenders to find housing. Though the public is concerned about offenders reoffending, the housing restrictions ignore differences among sex offenders who are not all the same type of criminal. Finally, the registry

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Title centered — Sex Offender Lists: A Never-Ending Punishment
Double-spaced throughout — Whether someone is 18 years old having consensual sex with his 17-year-old high school sweetheart or 40 years old preying on young children, both are considered sexual predators in the eyes of the law. In both cases, jail time and registration as a sex offender are the penalties for those caught and convicted. No real distinction is made over the severity of the crime when one is labeled a sex offender, even though the extent of the sexual misconduct can vary tremendously. All those deemed sex offenders are required to register their addresses with local police or be rearrested; the police then release this information to the general public. Although the sex offender lists were created with the honorable intention of raising awareness of dangerous citizens in communities, they ultimately inflict unwarranted punishment on offenders in the interest of protecting potential victims. Not only are these lists unconstitutional, but the public's misunderstanding and misuse of the provided information can lead to unintended and sometimes heinous consequences.
First-level heading, bold and centered (second-level heading is bold, at left margin) — History of Sex Offender Registration
Background presented in chronological order — The earliest form of sex offender registration was implemented over 50 years ago in California and slowly spread to a handful of states. The early registries were primarily used to create a database, accessible only to local authorities for reference when sex crimes occurred, of the whereabouts of potentially dangerous citizens. However, with these registries came a "sex crime panic," strongly enhanced by media coverage of more extreme sex crimes (Thomas, 2011, p. 37). During this panic, the public began to push heavily for more stringent legislation.
Specific pages noted — The tipping point came with the case of a young Minnesota boy named Jacob Wetterling. On October 22,

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Figures (not words) used for pages, dates, ages, and numbers with more than one digit — 1989, Jacob was bicycling with his brother and a friend when a masked gunman intercepted them and kidnapped Jacob. It was believed at the time that he had been sexually assaulted and murdered, and in 2016, police were led to Jacob's remains by his attacker, and this longstanding belief was confirmed. In light of this tragedy, the Jacob Wetterling Act was established in 1994, requiring states to create and maintain sex offender registries. Notably, the information on the registries was accessible only to appropriate authorities. While this policy had monumental implications, it did not satisfy the public as communities wanted access to records of sex offenders' residences (Thomas, 2011, p. 42).
On July 29, 1994, another horrific and highly publicized incident occurred that substantiated the argument for public notification and would significantly impact sex offenders' quality of life. Megan Kanka, a 7-year-old girl from New Jersey, was raped and murdered by her neighbor, Jesse Timmenenquas. Jesse, unbeknownst to the community, was a repeat sex offender. This event spurred legislators to create the registry reforms the public desired by passing Megan's Law. This legislation amended the Jacob Wetterling Act by requiring community notification of nearby sex offenders' residences. Along with publishing the registration information, other methods of notification were encouraged. Louisiana, for example, required sex offenders "to post signs at their homes declaring their status as sex offenders" (Thomas, 2011, p. 45).
Constitutional Questions about Sex Offender Registries
Overlooking the rights of perpetrators of abominable crimes can be easy; however, the constitutionality of sex offender registration is entirely questionable. Whatever the crime, the rights of the convicted should be upheld. Because the registration process occurs after an offender is released from incarceration, these lists fail to comply

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Multiple authors joined by and in text — with the ex post facto clause, which prohibits the creation of laws that add punishments after a crime has been committed. These lists have been taken to court on grounds of retrospection, though rulings have not favored the offenders (Pattis, 2011), and also on grounds of due process, as offenders have no opportunity to argue against community notification.
Additional source cited in source where it was mentioned — A third constitutional issue is whether the residential restrictions imposed by the lists constitute banishment, an illegal form of punishment under the constitution. In many states, sex offenders are not allowed within a few blocks of schools, daycare centers, or playgrounds. Particularly in communities with many facilities, acceptable livable areas for registered offenders may be limited or nonexistent. "I never realized how many schools and parks there were until I had to stay away from them," a registered sex offender conceded in Levenson and Cotter's 2005 survey (as cited in Thomas, 2011, p. 129). Essentially, these restrictions, intended to make given areas safer, create potentially dangerous sex-offender communities. This was the case in Broward County, Florida, where 95 registered sex offenders lived within a five-block tract (Thomas, 2011, p. 129). Those who cannot find housing or afford available housing are left homeless though commonly banished from homeless shelters and hostels, too (Thomas, 2011, p. 129).
Public Misconceptions
Those who argue that sex offender registries are constitutional often maintain that the lists are not punitive and provide the public with vital information that can prevent future sex crimes. Even those who admit that the lists may infringe upon offenders' rights argue that any minor violations are outweighed by the contribution to public safety. This argument might be the case if the critically flawed information in sex offender

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Paragraph number supplied for online article without numbered pages — lists was not subject to public misinterpretation. One shortcoming is a lack of specificity: A person who urinated in public is on the same list as one who repeatedly raped young children. In California, one of each 375 adults is registered as a sex offender, a testament to this loose definition of sex crimes (Leon, 2011, p. 119). Although offenders are ranked on a scale of one to three (the worst) in terms of likelihood of reoffending, people tend to ignore these distinctions. As a police officer stated for the *Seattle Times*, "People look at them in a bucket. They say 'Any kind of sex offender is a sex offender, and always will be a sex offender'" (Farley, 2011, para. 13).
Another flaw lies in the accuracy of the rankings. Most crimes require a post-incarceration evaluation to determine whether the criminal is still a threat to society, but sex offenders have no follow-up. When they are released from prison, their names go into a sex offender registry, no matter how much time has passed since the crime. The "threat level" classification represents the level at the time of the crime, not the offender's current risk level. Therapy sessions both during and after prison could result in the offender no longer posing a threat to the community. Studies show that within three years of being released from prison, only 5.3% of sex offenders are rearrested for another sex crime (Smith, 2003; U.S. Department of Justice, 2003, p. 1), which further suggests that the sex offender lists are extremely questionable.
In addition, due to the potentially inaccurate classifications, offenders may be assigned inappropriate punishments for their given crime. For example, many sex offenders whose crimes were not against children (or who may be children themselves) are given the same living restrictions as child rapists. The man imprisoned for having sex with his girlfriend days before she was legally old enough to give consent does not pose enough risk to

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restrict him from living near playgrounds and schools. Although some states such as New Jersey and Washington are working to assess risks more accurately, they are the exceptions (Leon, 2011, pp. 141-142).
Consequences of a Lack of Privacy
These major flaws in the sex offender registry system can have counterproductive and tragic effects. When sex offenders must register, their personal information is not given on a need-to-know basis; it is placed across the community where they live. Their names, photographs, license plate numbers, and home and work addresses are posted online for the world to view. They may struggle to find housing, to avoid public disapproval or embarrassing exposure of their pasts, and to pass background checks necessary to find work. Because these offenders are often shunned by the adult world, they may seek companionship with children, which potentially tempts some to offend again. With their faces plastered on local bulletin boards or e-mail alerts, offenders can grow increasingly aggravated, which also may lead them to new crimes (Chen, 2009).
This lack of privacy also makes offenders vulnerable to public vigilantes who can inflict harsh punishments. According to a Los Angeles County study by Gallo et al.,
A number of judges felt that although the avowed purpose of the registration statute is to facilitate the process of law enforcement by providing a list of suspects . . . the information obtained under section 290 is subject to some abuse—either through police harassment or by indiscriminate revelation to unauthorized persons. (as cited in Leon, 2011, pp. 68-69)
Tragically, public harassment can lead to suicides and murders of registered sex offenders, as was the case for 24-year-old William Elliot. At age 20, Elliot was sentenced

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to four months in jail for having sex with his girlfriend who was two weeks away from turning 16 (the legal age of consent in Maine). Four years later, a young man named Stephen Marshall found Elliot's residential information on an online sex-offender database. Marshall used this information to stalk Elliot and shoot him to death in his own home (Ahuja, 2006). This incident is a horrific example of the unintended effects of public misinterpretation of sex offender lists, but it also calls into question whether these lists can be considered nonpunitive.
Violations of Rights of Citizens
Perceived as monsters, fiends, and psychopaths, sex offenders are not easily seen as victims; however, as American citizens, they have the same right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as anyone else. Although the sex registry laws were created with the best of intentions, they violate these constitutional rights and can have gruesome unintended consequences. Most importantly, they are not especially effective.
Many people believe that the typical sex crime is child rape when in reality most sex crimes are much more benign. The dramatic cases encourage regulation that far exceeds what is necessary for most offenders, placing those who have urinated publicly in the same category as pedophiles (Bonnar-Kidd, 2010, p. 416). However, the sex-crime taboos make it difficult for the public to override emotionally charged ideas of the misconduct that the lists represent and then to see the critical flaws in the current registry system. If these lists are to continue to exist, they should no longer serve as dehumanizing blacklists for the public to use at its own discretion.

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Page numbering continues
Heading centered — References
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