

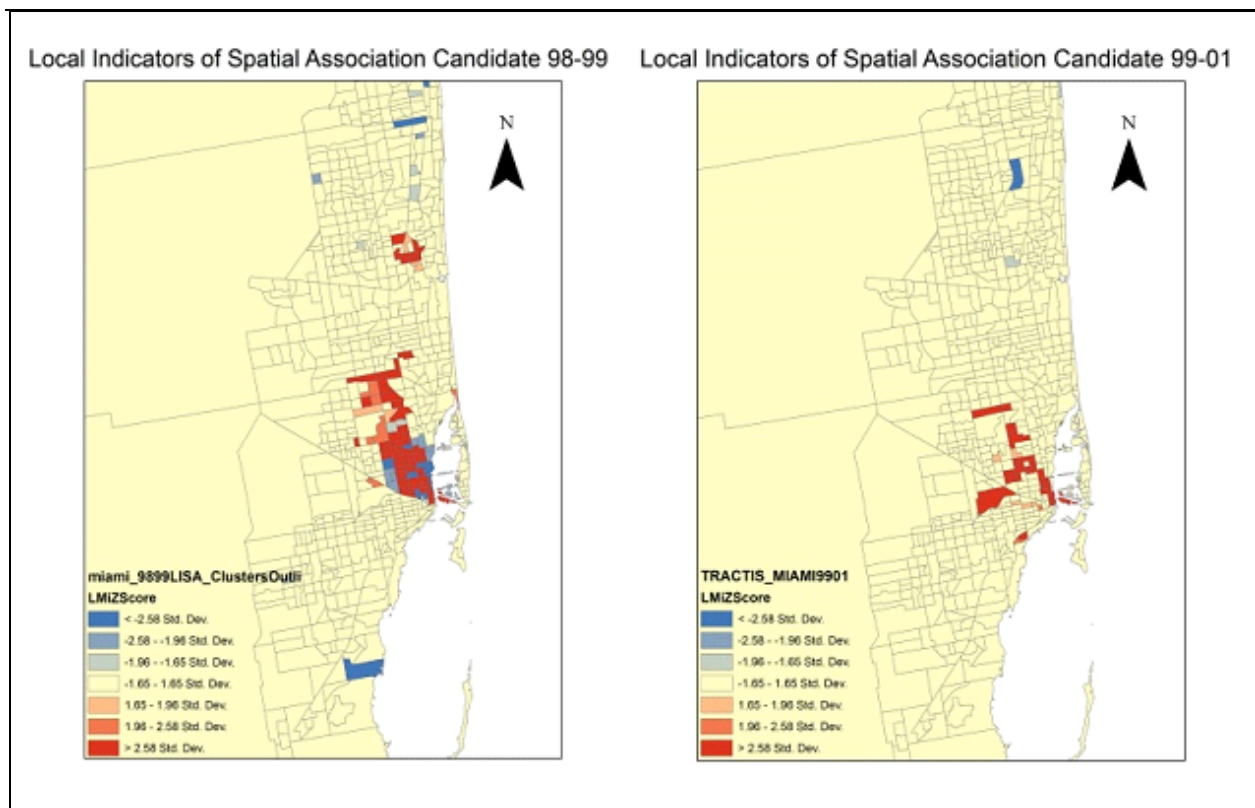
Racial Convergence and Spatial Dispersion: A Spatial Analysis of Florida's Determinate Sentencing Laws

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In July 1999 the state of Florida enacted a law to increase the sentences of violent or dangerous offenders, particularly those convicted of using a firearm. Although criminologists and legal scholars have applied various population-level inquiries to Florida's 10-20-Life Gun Laws, none have examined the law's geographic impact on prisoners and their communities. This study uses a unique 100% population dataset provided by the Florida Department of Corrections containing records on all offending, incarcerated and released persons from 1997 to 2010. Using these detailed public records, I compare the statistical and spatial characteristics of the prisoner population before and after the enhancement law. I find that determinate sentencing laws have both equalized and enhanced sentence length between and within racial groups. Additionally, I argue that determinate sentencing laws have spatially dispersed offenses. This dispersion is a function of changing racial characteristics of offenses and a racially segregated urban composition.



Local Indicators of Spatial Autocorrelation (LISA) maps for Gun Offenses in Miami Area during Pre- and Post-Implementation Periods