Will You Run? The Development of a Risk Assessment Tool to Predict Absconding from Secure

Youth Justice Residences

By

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Abstract

Absconding, or escaping, from usually state-based custody is a growing problem in different settings across the world, including New Zealand's secure youth justice residences. This thesis provides an in-depth review of absconding from Oranga Tamariki's secure youth justice residences in New Zealand, providing important insight that will be useful in preventing absconding in the future. A review of the international and New Zealand absconding literature was conducted looking at the risk and protective factors associated with absconding risk. From this, a coding framework of absconding related factors was developed, and then applied to historic absconding incident reports and interviews with Oranga Tamariki staff members. These were analysed to confirm potential absconding risk or protective factors and identify any new factors. Results fell into four key categories: individual (e.g. previous absconding history), relational (e.g. avoidance goals), contextual risk factors (e.g. significant life stressors), and protective factors (e.g. positive staff relationships). Several implications and conclusions were drawn from the findings. Absconding factors identified in international research were also present in the current research adding weight to these as potential risk and protective factors in a New Zealand context (Martin et al., 2018; Powers et al., 2018; Pyrooz, 2012). Novel absconding related factors were identified which were not found in the extant literature, such as planning indications, ringleaders, and hope. The reasons young people abscond are complex and individual, however, they abscond for reasons that make sense—often as a coping strategy—and thus are identifiable. By identifying these underlying reasons, it is possible to intervene and reduce their absconding motivations. A preliminary risk assessment tool aimed at doing this, was created for Oranga Tamariki use, incorporating factors drawn from the current research and the wider literature.

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Chapter 1. Literature Review

Introduction

Young people absconding or escaping from the care of a typically state-based organisation they are placed with, is an increasing problem internationally, and comes with significant costs to both the young people and those around them. Young people are exposed to a number of serious risks whilst on the run, including sexual abuse, drug abuse, homelessness, and increased criminality, whilst the community and staff who work with the young people are often exposed to harm as well. The issue of young people absconding is recognised as an international social problem (Bowden, 2017; UNICEF, 2012). In England, for example, an estimated 10,000 young people go missing from foster or care homes annually, whilst, in New Zealand (NZ) some absconding events from secure Youth Justice (YJ) residences (residential facilities for young people who have, or are suspected of, committing serious crimes) have even reached the media (Makiha, 2020; Sharpe, 2017; Sherwood, 2017c, 2017b, 2017a, 2019; The Children's Society, 2012; Wade, 2020).

Sixteen young people absconded or attempted to abscond from youth justice residences, in the first month of 2020 – in some previous years less than that amount of young people absconded annually, suggesting it might be a growing problem (see Table 1). Absconding is an issue in a number of different contexts and comes with many associated costs to young people and those around them (Bowden, 2017). It is important to understand why young people abscond – if this can be understood then these motivations can be targeted for interventions and identified to extrapolate absconding risk (Bowden, 2017). This thesis aims to examine absconding and the risk and protective factors for absconding in the context of YJ residences in NZ.

This thesis will draw on both international and NZ literature, across various settings and incorporating different definitions of absconding. The literature drawn upon includes research undertaken in various countries (i.e. the United States, United Kingdom, and New Zealand), settings (i.e. forensic mental health wards, community probation, foster care homes, youth prisons),

age ranges (i.e. children, youth, adults), and organisational contexts (i.e. hospitals, corrections departments, foster care, child protection agencies). Throughout this study, findings from these different settings will be drawn on, the reasons for, and limitations of, will be discussed later.

Appendix C. Reference Table of Absconding Studies. provides a table summarising each piece of absconding research utilised in this study. This appendix drew inspiration from Bowden (2017), however, included are additional studies and information related to absconding. The following subsections will consider the prevalence and costs of absconding and then will review the existing literature on the risk and protective factor related to absconding. Following this, several existing absconding tools that informed the development of the pilot tool developed from the results of the current study will be outlined, followed by a summary and overview of the current research. This next section will first consider the research setting for this thesis, Oranga Tamariki youth justice residences (YJ).

Youth Justice Residences

Young people aged 10-29 years are responsible for a substantial amount of violence and criminal activity across the world (United Nations, 2015), with the same pattern seen in NZ (Ministry of Justice, 2019b; Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2016). Young people in NZ who commit crimes can be put into the care of Oranga Tamariki. Oranga Tamariki (or the Ministry for Children, formerly known as Child, Youth & Family Service or CYFS) is the statutory agency responsible for the welfare of children in NZ, including young people who have committed criminal behaviours between 13-17 years. A small amount of these young people are placed in YJ residences, which are secure youth facilities, with rehabilitative components and lower levels of security than adult prisons (Ministry of Justice, 2019a; Oranga Tamariki, n.d.).

YJ residences in NZ have a range of developmental opportunities for young people, ranging from schooling, vocational training, and teaching of life skills, to access to rehabilitation activities for mental health difficulties, anger or substance use (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.). The variety of tasks

young people might engage in throughout their time in a youth justice residence consequently also affords opportunities to abscond. As well as absconding from the residences, young people may also abscond while on day release, whereby they leave the residence for required activities such as court appearances, doctor's appointments, as well as recreational, and rehabilitation-based activities (Oranga Tamariki, n.d.). Recreational and rehabilitative focused activities increase the likelihood of reintegration to society once released, and are aimed at ensuring the young people are not unnecessarily affected by their interactions with the criminal justice system (Ministry of Justice, 2019b; Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2016). Thus, the benefits of day releases and activities need to be balanced with mitigating any risk of absconding. The next section will review the prevalence of absconding from a number of different settings.

Prevalence of Absconding

Prevalence of absconding can be difficult to accurately estimate, due to the lack of literature in this area. Absconding data often comes from varied sources (Bowden, 2017). These can be police reports, case files, retrospective file audits, staff reports in residential care settings and homeless shelters, or interviews. All of these present significant issues in terms of accuracy, primarily due to only collecting data on a subset of the absconding population (Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Nesmith, 2006). A number of studies also use data only from individuals who have returned after absconding or only interview young people who have absconded to homeless shelters, when research suggests most young people run to family or friends (Bowden, 2017). Neither does the literature capture data on attempted absconding, which occurs for the same reasons as successful absconding and can still have significant costs attached to the behaviour. Deriving our understandings of absconding prevalence based solely on these methods of data collection, therefore, should be done with care (Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Bowden, 2017).

Several studies do report absconding frequency, which offers some insight into the prevalence internationally, across settings. Treatment termination in youth drug and alcohol treatment facilities

due to absconding ranges from 13% to 57% (Eisengart et al., 2008; McIntosh et al., 2010; Milette-Winfree et al., 2017). Foster care, and residential care, appear to have very high instances of absconding, with young people in the care system making up the majority of the absconders at any one time (Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Biehal & Wade, 1999; Bowden, 2017; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Pyrooz, 2012). In an NZ review of absconding events by young people, between 2013 and July 2014, Bowden (2017) found 37% of young people in YJ or Care and Protection residences had absconded before.

Table 1 outlines the number of successful absconding from Oranga Tamariki YJ residences each year. Approximately 500-600 young people per year stay at least one night in a YJ residence in NZ and, averaged over the 5 years, absconding from residences occurs at an average rate of just under 5%, suggesting absconding from residences has a low base rate of occurrence. Concerningly, however, the data suggests a possible increase in the number of young people attempting, and succeeding, in absconding, at least based on the trend emerging in 2019, and the first part of 2020. If these trends hold going forward, young people appear to be attempting to abscond at an increasing level. It is also likely young people are in fact both attempting and successfully absconding at a higher level than these numbers suggest due the reporting issues mentioned previously (Bowden, 2017). Taken together, these findings suggest NZ has an increasing issue with absconding occurring from YJ residences. The costs of this increasing absconding behaviour will now be reviewed.

Table 1.

The Number of Attempted and Successful Absconding Events and Number of Young People Involved

in Absconding from Oranga Tamariki Secure YJ Residences February 2015 - January 2020.

Years	Attempted		Successful		Total	
	# of events	# of YP	# of events	# of YP	# of events	# of YP
2015	3	4	6	8	9	12
2016	6	13	5	9	10	22
2017	2	6	4	5	6	11
2018	4	13	6	7	10	20
2019	14	32	10	12	24	44
2020	2	9	2	7	4	16
Total	29	77	34	48	63	125

Note. YP = Young people.

Costs of Absconding Behaviour

Absconding from settings across the world, such as foster care, drug, or alcohol treatment units, YJ residences and youth mental health facilities, is frequently harmful to young people. Youth may harm themselves, staff, and their community during the actual absconding event and once they are out in the community (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Jones, 2017; Kurtz et al., 1991). Direct costs to staff include negative experiences as part of the absconding attempt, e.g., physical violence on the part of the young person; whilst indirect costs include time spent by care staff and police filling out paperwork related to the absconding event, time spent looking for the

absconders, and time off for staff after an absconding event (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Finkelstein et al., 2004).

Absconding predicts further interactions with the justice system, with young people having a heightened risk of criminality whilst they are on the run (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Crosland et al., 2018; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Lin, 2012; Sarri et al., 2016). Over one in five absconders carry out offending behaviour whilst on the run, with this leading to emotional, physical, and financial harm to the victims of this offending, on top of further justice consequences for the young person themselves (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Bowden et al., 2018). Absconding behaviour is also predictive of being exposed to serious harm. Youth who abscond are more at risk for a range of factors including substance abuse, physical and sexual abuse or exploitation, trafficking, assault, sexually transmitted diseases, and homelessness compared with youth who do not abscond (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2013; The Children's Society, 2012).

Absconding can cause significant disruption to any schooling, psychological treatment, or other activities the young person was undergoing (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Crosland et al., 2018; English & English, 1999; Kim et al., 2013; Lin, 2012). This can be especially damaging, as young people in YJ residences are already a high-risk group reliant on adults for protection; and face difficulties such as traumatic histories, come from lower-class backgrounds, have impaired social and learning skills, lack of family support, and present with high levels of mental illness and impulsivity, when compared to young people not in YJ residences (Karnik & Steiner, 2007; Lount et al., 2017; Osgood et al., 2010; Zelechoski et al., 2013).

Youth who abscond also have a range of poorer outcomes in later adulthood, including poorer mental health, increased difficulty finding housing, higher levels of substance use, poorer academic performance, higher levels of unemployment, and higher criminality levels (Bowden et al., 2018; Crosland & Dunlap, 2015; Guest et al., 2008; Latzman et al., 2019). However, these outcomes are

not solely due to the absconding, rather, they are also indicative of deeper problems, as Taylor et al. states "Going missing is a key indicator something is not right in a child's life" (2013, p. 399). As demonstrated by the preceding discussion, it is clear there are definite costs to both the young person and others when absconding occurs. The review will now turn to consider risk and protective factors associated with absconding risk in young people.

Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Absconding

This section will provide an overview of the literature around risk and protective factors that are developmentally relevant to young people within a YJ setting. A summary can be found in **Error! Reference source not found.** Factors will be listed from those with the strongest association with absconding down to the weakest association in each section. This overview focuses primarily on factors drawn from the literature that are most applicable and appropriate to the YJ population as there are challenges in measuring absconding risk with this population. For instance, NZ law specifies that for the young people to be sent to the residence they need to pose a risk of absconding, serious risk of reoffending, or serious risk of tampering with evidence or witnesses (Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989. Section 239: 1, 2.). Many young people in this setting should, by definition, therefore, pose a high risk for absconding, underlying some of the difficulty in delineating absconding risk differences amongst these young people. With this in mind, the review will now consider a coherent set of absconding related factors, focusing on those with the best predictive ability, and applicability for secure YJ residences in NZ.

Absconding risk factors appear to cluster into three categories: individual, contextual, and relational (Bowden & Lambie, 2015). Individual factors denote characteristics unique to a young person that are predictive of absconding risk; contextual factors denote environmental and societal factors that surround the young person, such as the context of their residence, and wider care system the residence operates under; relational factors denote factors related to family or peers that influence absconding risk; whilst protective factors refer to characteristics and aspects that lesson a

young person's risk of absconding (Bowden et al., 2018; Bowden & Lambie, 2015). The different risk and protective factors drawn from the absconding literature will now be described, separating them into the different categories proposed by Bowden and Lambie (2015).

Individual Risk Factors

The characteristics of young people can impact the likelihood of absconding behaviour. This section will outline risk factors that are unique to an individual and are predictive of absconding risk.

Ideation of Absconding. People who abscond often express or display ideation (thinking about and wanting to engage in a behaviour) of absconding in the four weeks preceding the behaviour (Hearn et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2018; McIntosh et al., 2010; Simpson et al., 2015; Wilkie et al., 2014). There are usually either direct or indirect indications of leave planning, such as getting rid of personal items or preparing bags or food, expressing ideation of absconding, or telling a staff member or other young person they want to run in previous weeks, such as " I want to get out of here" (Hearn et al., 2012). Nesmith (2006) suggests absconding warning signs are usually visible to staff before absconding. Taken together, ideation of absconding, or other similar warning signs, in the preceding four weeks, appears to be a possible predictive risk factor for absconding in a youth residential setting.

Previous Absconding History. Previous absconding history, from almost any setting, is one of the best predictors of future absconding behaviour (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Hearn et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2010; Muir-Cochrane & Mosel, 2008; Nesmith, 2006; Simpson et al., 2015; Sunseri, 2003, 2003; Tyler et al., 2011). Previous absconders have a 92% higher likelihood of future absconding than non-absconders (Nesmith, 2006). Further, a higher frequency of previous absconding is predictive of more severe and frequent absconding in the future (Bowden, 2017).

Interestingly, in one study, once factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and previous offending were controlled for, previous absconding lost its predictive ability (Mews, 2014). It seems previous absconding is an important predictor of future absconding, by acting as a *proxy* for underlying factors that motivated the previous absconding events. That is, previous absconding history is indicative of the presence of other motivations and risk factors for the occurrence of absconding, and these other factors or motivations are likely not as easily known to staff; therefore previous absconding serves as an important absconding predictor.

Mental Health. Mental health issues are moderately predictive of absconding in a variety of settings (Fasulo et al., 2002; Sarri et al., 2016). Both current and previous mental health diagnoses, appear to be predictive of absconding risk (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Eisengart et al., 2008, 2008; Milette-Winfree et al., 2017; Sarri et al., 2016; Wilkie et al., 2014). Further absconders were more likely to receive a mental health diagnosis (17%) than non-absconders (12%; Lin, 2012). High levels of suicidal risk, and suicidal ideation, are also predictive of absconding, whereas being at a medium level of suicide risk was not predictive (Bowden et al., 2018; Grotto et al., 2015).

However, only some mental disorders are predictive of absconding: eating, alcohol, or other substance-related disorders have all been found to be predictive of absconding risk (Courtney & Zinn, 2009). Conduct disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are also predictive of absconding risk. Comparatively, anxiety, schizophrenia, personality, somatoform, and dissociative disorders are not predictive of absconding risk and seem to reduce absconding risk (Bowden, 2017; Courtney & Zinn, 2009). This suggests some mental health difficulties and suicidal ideation are predictive of absconding, but potentially, if a mental health problem is too debilitating (e.g., symptoms of psychosis), then they may predict less absconding (Bowden & Lambie, 2015). Therefore, the presence of some mental health issues for a young person appears to predict absconding risk.

Externalising Behaviours. Externalising behaviours, being disruptive, or 'acting out' is a robust predictor of absconding risk, especially if it has occurred in the immediate one month preceding the assessment of risk (Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Nesmith, 2006, 2006; Sarri et al., 2016; Tyler et al., 2011; Wilkie et al., 2014). For instance, youth with behavioural challenges are significantly more likely to abscond than youth without behavioural issues (Lin, 2012). Further, externalising behaviours had been found to predict absconding in both secure and foster care settings (Milette-Winfree et al., 2017; Sunseri, 2003). Non-compliance, in general, appears to be predictive of absconding risk in a range of settings, and will likely be an absconding risk factor for the young people in the residence as well (Bowers et al., 1998; Department of Corrections, 2016a; Mayzer et al., 2004). Finkelstein et al. (2004) suggest this occurs because the young person engages in externalising behaviours, gets in trouble, which in turn causes them to have more restrictive rules laid upon them – leading to a worse experience, and an increased desire to abscond. Similar to mental health issues, as behavioural issues increase to a more serious level, they instead predict a decrease in absconding risk, perhaps due to more staff resources or higher security levels being allocated to these young people (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; McIntosh et al., 2010). Nonetheless, at a low to moderate level, this variable appears to be associated with absconding.

Propensity for Violence. A history of violence and a higher risk of violence is predictive of absconding (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Hearn et al., 2012). In an adult offender sample, higher scores on two risk assessment tools (the HCR-20 and LSI-R, which measure violence and a general recidivism risk respectively), predicted higher absconding risk (Powers et al., 2018; Wilkie et al., 2014). An examination of the cases of adults who had absconded while on electronically monitored home detention and bail (i.e. removed their electronic monitoring bracelet), found violent index offences were present in over half of the absconders (Department of Corrections, 2016a, 2016b). Other research has similarly found violence risk, and previous convictions were predictive of absconding, again albeit for adult offender and psychiatric populations (Martin et al., 2018;

Simpson et al., 2015; Wilkie et al., 2014). It is not clear if similar findings would be found within a YJ population as there does not appear to be any research exploring the ability of violence risk to predict absconding risk for youth. However, it is a potential risk factor for absconding based on adult research.

Previous Offending History. A high level of previous offending (i.e. significant amounts of criminality), appears to be predictive of absconding (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Mayzer et al., 2004). Youth with higher levels of previous offending, and/or a history of delinquent or antisocial behaviours are more likely to be repeat absconders and abscond again more quickly, than youth who did not abscond (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Mayzer et al., 2004). Further, property or dishonesty offences are also seemingly indicative of absconding risk (Bowden, 2017; Sunseri, 2003). Taken together, these suggest a repeated and/or very serious level of previous offending (i.e. differentiated from other young people in the residences, such as terrorism-related crimes, or a very significant amount of burglaries) for a young person is predictive of future absconding risk.

Substance Use History. Having a substance use problem, or a history of substance misuse, is predictive of absconding within youth forensic, mental health, and foster care settings, as well as in prison and parolee populations (Clark et al., 2008; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Eisengart et al., 2008; Grotto et al., 2015; Guest et al., 2008; Muir-Cochrane & Mosel, 2008; Powers et al., 2018; Pyrooz, 2012; Wilkie et al., 2014). For instance, the majority of people who absconded from a forensic psychiatric hospital, did so to access substances (Martin et al., 2018). Similar trends have been found with youth, who often run from care to access alcohol (Bowers et al., 1998). Youth who abscond are 30% more likely to have a substance use issue than those who do not abscond (Lin, 2012).

McIntosh et al. (2010) found absconding risk increased in tandem with the severity of substance use, up to a point. Once the substance use becomes severe, the absconding risk decreases. In contrast, Bowden (2017) did not find substance use impacted absconding risk, potentially due to

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young people under-reporting their substance use. Further, if a substance use problem is too debilitating (e.g., withdrawal symptoms that mean an individual cannot leave their room), it acts as a protective factor (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; McIntosh et al., 2010). The predictive ability of this factor is also reduced when other absconding predictive factors are controlled for, which suggests this variable could be utilised as a proxy for other risk factors in situations where an in-depth analysis of these other risk variables is not possible. Taken together, the research suggests substance use history can be an important predictor of absconding.

Smoking Dependency. Similar to substance use issues, smoking has been suggested as a significant predictor of absconding behaviour, with many young people reporting a desire to smoke was a critical factor in them deciding to abscond (Bowden et al., 2018). 'No smoking' rules or being caught and punished for smoking, also often influence young people in their decision to abscond (Bowden et al., 2018; Finkelstein et al., 2004). The literature indicates young people with a smoking habit before entering the residence, are at a higher risk of absconding than non-smokers.

Self-Regulation Difficulties. Greater levels of self-regulation difficulties appear to be predictive of absconding risk, with young people often absconding to emotionally self-regulate (Karam & Robert, 2013). Impulsivity is suggested as a predictor of absconding for some populations, and individuals in YJ residences frequently have higher levels of impulsivity and other self-regulation issues than the general population (Department of Corrections, 2016a; Karnik & Steiner, 2007; Martin et al., 2018; Pyrooz, 2012). Further, an inability to control their anger appears to increase young people's absconding risk (Milette-Winfree et al., 2017; Morgan, 2012; Powers et al., 2018). These results indicate poor self-regulation skills may predispose a young person to abscond, and therefore predict absconding risk.

Placement History. The number of previous in-care placements, amount of removals from home, or interactions with the foster care system is predictive of absconding, perhaps due to these events being indicative of a greater amount of instability in a young person's life, and potentially

exposing the young person to several risks (Bowden, 2017; Hearn et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2013; Lin, 2012; Pyrooz, 2012; Sarri et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2013). For instance, Lin (2012) found young people who ran away from foster care had an average of six placements, compared to a non-absconder's average of three placements. This suggests, the number of previous foster care placements, or other similar instances of placement (e.g., YJ placements), may be predictive of absconding risk.

Age. In general, studies have found absconding peaks between 13-15 years (i.e. manifests during adolescence; Biehal & Wade, 2000; Sunseri, 2003). However, it is unclear what age group are most at risk. In one group of studies, it was found older youth (16-18 years) were more likely to abscond (Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Guest et al., 2008; Lin, 2012). In contrast, Clark et al. (2008) found those aged 13-17 years were most at risk of absconding. Fasulo et al. (2002), found those in mid-adolescence (14-16 years) were more likely to abscond, while McIntosh et al. (2010) found those aged 15-16 years were most at risk. Bowden, (2017), however, found no significant relationship between age and absconding risk in NZ YJ and care and protection contexts. Therefore, it is not clear what, if any, specific age group could be predictive of absconding in the YJ residential population and is a variable worth investigating further.

Gender Differences. Gender appears to be important in the measurement of absconding, with multiple studies finding females are more likely to run away than males, especially if separated from their children (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Eisengart et al., 2008; English & English, 1999; Fasulo et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2013; Lin, 2012; Pyrooz, 2012; Sunseri, 2003). Comparatively, fewer studies found have males are more likely to run (Bowers et al., 1998; Tyler et al., 2011). There are also possible gender differences in the predictiveness of risk factors, with young women who experience psychological distress at higher risk of absconding than young men who experience psychological distress (Jeanis, 2017). There is mixed evidence regarding this factor, though the

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trend runs towards females being more at risk of absconding than males. Therefore, it is likely that being female is predictive of absconding risk in a youth population.

This section has outlined several individual factors associated with a risk of absconding. These factors are the ideation of absconding, previous absconding history, mental health issues, externalising behaviours, risk of violence, previous offending history, substance use history, smoking dependency, self-regulation difficulties, placement history, age, and gender differences. The next section will discuss contextual factors related to absconding behaviour.

Contextual Risk Factors.

Contextual risk factors, related to environmental and societal factors, can impact the likelihood of absconding behaviour. This section will outline research surrounding some of the key factors related to absconding risk.

Significant Life Stressors. Absconding often occurs due to stress, distress, or the occurrence of a significant event (Bowers et al., 1998; Martin et al., 2018). The occurrence of a significant life stressor in the past two weeks or one upcoming in the immediate future appears to be a significant predictor of absconding (Martin et al., 2018; Morgan, 2012, 2012). Significant events include upcoming court dates, sentencing outcomes, dental appointments, family visits being cancelled, or being transferred to another residence (Martin et al., 2018). Hearn et al. (2012) suggest stressful events can also include recent disagreements with the care team, distressing news or visits by friends or family, a recent accusation of wrongdoing, being found with contraband, or rejection and disappointment. Stressful events can evoke negative feelings and negatively impact a young person's problem-solving and coping abilities, resulting in an increased absconding risk. Therefore, this factor is an important predictor of absconding risk.

Feelings of Frustration. Young people's feelings of frustration at their situation appears predictive of youth absconding (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Milette-Winfree et al., 2017). This

frustration occurs frequently because of boredom, but can also occur due to anger with their situation, a lack of agency, not understanding how long their sentence will be, staff or peer relationships problems, or programme demands (Bowden et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2018; Milette-Winfree et al., 2017). Not being able to see family, friends or being denied leave are also common reasons given by young people for their decision to abscond (Finkelstein et al., 2004). An inability to cope when frustration arises can lead to young people absconding, likely as they do not have another, appropriate way to deal with the frustration that has arisen (Morgan, 2012). Frustration, therefore, appears to be predictive of absconding risk for young people.

Feelings of Boredom. Boredom is related to frustration and is also predictive of absconding (Chaudhary et al., 2018; Crosland & Dunlap, 2015; Grotto et al., 2015; Martin et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2013). Young people frequently identify boredom in residences due to not being able to engage with outside activities, and not having enough to do in the residence as the motivating factor in their decision to abscond, often running to parties, or other things they deemed more enjoyable (Bowden, 2017; Crosland & Dunlap, 2015; Finkelstein et al., 2004). Consequently, boredom appears to be a key factor in the prediction of absconding.

Geographic Location of Home Region. The geographic location of a young person's home region is also a potential risk factor in the prediction of absconding. Many young people abscond due to trying to get back to family, therefore the location of the young person's home region may be important (Bowden & Lambie, 2015). For instance, if a young person is far away from their home region, they may be less likely to run, but if they are close to home this may increase their absconding risk. A young person in their home region has access to more resources through family and friends, as well as knowledge of the local area which provide an elevated absconding risk. This suggests the location of the residence young person is placed in may be predictive of absconding.

Time Spent in YJ Residence. The amount of time a young person spends and has left to spend in a youth residence or foster care home has been found to have a relationship with absconding risk.

Young people earlier into their stay have been suggested to be more at risk of absconding, due to being less settled and comfortable in the setting, and lacking understanding around why, and how long they were to be in care (Bowden et al., 2018; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Guest et al., 2008; Lin, 2012; Sunseri, 2003). Some studies have found no relationship between the length of stay and risk of absconding (Fasulo et al., 2002). Nonetheless, the earlier into care a young person is, the higher their risk of absconding appears to be.

This section has outlined a number of contextual absconding risk factors. These factors are significant life stressors, feelings of frustration, feelings of boredom, geographic location of home region, and time spent in YJ residence. The next section will discuss important relational risk factors and their association with absconding behaviour.

Relational Risk Factors.

Relational risk factors are factors related to family, staff, peers, or similar relationships that influence absconding risk. This section will review the research concerning the key factors in this category.

Approach Goals. One of the most important risk factors that can be gleaned from the literature as predictive of the occurrence of absconding is that of approach goals, or running *to* something (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Clark et al., 2008). Looking at residential and foster care placement absconding, Biehal and Wade (2000) described approach goals as 'pulling' an individual outside the residence. These approach goals are generally stimuli outside of residential or care settings that are positively reinforcing for the young people, such as fast food and activities not available in the residence such as upcoming parties, and a desire to reconnect with family, friends or romantic partner (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Crosland & Dunlap, 2015; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Karam & Robert, 2013). The risk of absconding also appears to be elevated around the holidays for both young people and adults (i.e. Easter, and Christmas periods; Department of Corrections, 2016a, 2016b; Makiha, 2020). Essentially, many young people abscond

to meet connection needs, e.g., to see family, friends, or significant others/partners and avoid distress (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Bowden et al., 2018; Bowers et al., 1998; Hearn et al., 2012; Lin, 2012; Martin et al., 2018). In this context, absconding is a functional behaviour that allows young people to avoid negative emotions and access positive factors outside of the residences (Clark et al., 2008; Karam & Robert, 2013; Milette-Winfree et al., 2017). Research suggests there are a number of reasons young people have approach goals outside the residence, and if these approach goals are identified, they will be useful in determining a young person's absconding risk.

Avoidance Goals. Another important risk factor for absconding is avoidance goals or running *from* something. Avoidance goals entail absconding from residential settings due to negative stimuli inside the residence, or due to 'push factors' (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Morgan, 2012). Avoidance goals are about efforts to avoid negative stimuli. For instance, maltreatment or bullying, from either peers or staff in residences, and feeling that their care setting is unsafe, often precipitated youth absconding (Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Bowden et al., 2018; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Kurtz et al., 1991; Muir-Cochrane et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2013; The Children's Society, 2012). Young people also report having their belongings stolen, a fear of other people in care, or a lack of privacy in residences as contributing to their decisions to abscond (Clark et al., 2008; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 2013). Recent rule-breaking, and subsequent punishment for this, has also been identified as a probable cause of wanting to leave the residence (Finkelstein et al., 2004). Thus, young people may abscond from residences, or care homes, to avoid difficult relationships with either staff or peers, mistreatment, unsupportive conditions in the residence, or other perceived negative stimuli being present.

Antisocial Associates. Absconders are commonly subject to negative peer influence before absconding events and having antisocial associates has been suggested as a possible predictor of absconding (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Pyrooz, 2012). However, all young people socialise with antisocial associates by virtue of being in YJ residence. This, therefore, provides limited utility for

this risk factor, unless there is an ability to delineate differences in how antisocial a young person is. A young person being very violent, and non-compliant in residences compared to others in residence, being in, or having close peers in gangs, potentially allows delineation. For instance, Powers et al. (2018) found gang membership increased the likelihood of absconding by about 15%, though this finding did have marginal significance when combined with other predictive factors. This suggests gang membership, and the host of associated risks and increased levels of violence and criminality may denote a higher antisocial level when compared to others in residence–i.e. 'antisocial' even for the residence. That is, young people, spending time with, or being, the *most antisocial* young people in the residence appears to be predictive of a young person being more at risk of absconding than others.

    Isolation. Loneliness, isolation, and a lack of positive peer relationships within the residence predicts absconding (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Chaudhary et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2013). Isolation and loneliness are often caused by failures in the therapeutic relationship or treatment for mental health or substance use, or due to a lack of support from peers and staff members (Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Simpson et al., 2015). Missing family and friends were reported by Taylor et al (2013) to be vital, as identified by youth, in their decision to abscond. Clark et al. (2008) analysed absconding in foster care and found feeling alienated was an important predictor of absconding. Thus, alienation, isolation and loneliness are likely predictive of absconding.

    This section has outlined several relational risk factors. These factors are approach goals, avoidance goals, antisocial associates, and isolation. The next section will turn to discuss important protective factors associated with the occurrence of absconding behaviour.

Protective Factors.

    This section outlines several protective factors that appear to guard against the risk of absconding behaviour occurring. Protective factors work by *decreasing* the absconding risk for young people. Unfortunately, there is a lack of research on protective factors for absconding risk,

with only four factors identified in the literature reviewed: impulsivity, family contact, positive staff relationship and access to food. Each will be considered in turn.

Self-Control. Impulsivity is suggested as a predictor of absconding for some populations, yet individuals in YJ residences almost all have significantly higher levels of impulsivity than the general population (Karnik & Steiner, 2007; Martin et al., 2018). Although the simple absence of a risk factor is not indicative of a protective factor being present, due to the elevated risk the presence of impulsivity suggests, the presence of self-control provides an opportunity for delineation of risk (Ward & Fortune, 2016). A young person demonstrating they have a *relatively* elevated level of self-control suggests their absconding risk is lessened.

Family Contact. Maintaining contact with family (particularly siblings) and feeling cared for is important for young people to feel supported, therefore regular contact with family or friends is considered a protective factor (Taylor et al., 2013). Moreover, young people often run to be with their families, thus it is probable having contact with family while in a residence would be a protective factor (Bowden et al., 2018). Therefore, the maintaining of connections with family members may be a protective factor for absconding risk.

Positive Staff Relationship. Having a warm and positive relationship with at least one staff member inside the residence is important, with lower rates of absconding among young people who saw staff members as more supportive, and less strict (Attar-Schwartz, 2013). A warm and protective relationship is supportive and facilitates better interactions for young people, through the fostering of connection, and giving a sense of control to the young people over their situation (Bowden et al., 2018; Nesmith, 2006; Taylor et al., 2013). Therefore, research suggests this factor is likely to reduce the risk of absconding for a young person.

Access to Food. Having access to regular food in the residence is potentially a protective factor for young people. Quite often young people can experience homelessness, neglect, and food deprivation, before coming into the residence, or similar settings, as well as after absconding (as

noted previously). Thus, having regular access to food is likely to be a protective factor impacting a young person's decision not to run.

This section has outlined several protective factors research suggests is associated with reduced risk of absconding. These factors are having access to regular food in the residence, having a good relationship with a staff member, maintaining contact with family members, and an elevated level of self-control. Although there is a lack of research in this area, these factors are important to consider in the estimation of a young person's absconding risk.

New Zealand Research

There has been some recent NZ research by Bowden et al. (2018) on absconding from NZ YJ and care and protection residences. Bowden et al. interviewed 40 young people (both absconders and non-absconders) about why they did or did not abscond from their residences. Many of the factors they identified overlap with other literature and the factors discussed above. For example, they found absconding was often motivated by boredom and frustration with the residences, no-smoking rules, or young people lacking understanding around why and how long they were to be in care or to avoid negative 'push' factors inside the residences. Absconding was also motivated by relationships outside the residence or 'pull factors.' As part of their study a retrospective file audit occurred and found being female, presenting with an elevated risk of suicide, and having more admissions to out of home care were all predictive of absconding risk. In combination, this NZ and international research provide a vital underpinning to the current study. It suggests the international literature on absconding, although based in different settings is, in principle, applicable to an NZ YJ setting.

Table 2.

Risk and Protective Factors Identified in the Literature Review

Risk and Protective Factors			
Individual:	Ideation of absconding.	Contextual:	Significant life stressor.
	Previous absconding history.		Feelings of frustration.
	Mental health.		Feelings of boredom.
	Externalising behaviours.		Geographic location of their home region.
	Propensity for violence.		Time spent in YJ residence.
	Previous offending history.		
	Substance use history.		
	Smoking dependency.		
	Self-regulation difficulties.		
	Placement history.		
	Age.		
	Gender differences.		
Relational:	Approach goals.	Protective:	Self-control.
	Avoidance goals.		Maintaining contact with family.
	Anti-social associates.		Positive staff relationship.
	Isolation.		Access to food.

Existing Risk Tools

This section reviews several absconding assessment tools that are currently available. While a number of absconding tools have been developed, none have been designed to capture the population of interest in the current study, limiting their direct applicability. The strengths and weaknesses of each will be briefly considered.

Hearn et al. (2012) created a structured decision-making risk tool that focused on socio-environmental absconding risk factors for a United Kingdom secure adult mental health forensic facility. The tool focused primarily on offering considerations for leave planning in the facility. The tool has several limitations, it has not been evaluated or validated, nor are all risk factors directly transferable into YJ residences given it was designed for a different population and setting. There are, however, aspects of this tool that could be utilised to inform the development of a future tool suitable for the NZ YJ residential context, as it contains several risk factors which are also referenced in the wider literature.

Pyrooz (2012) created an absconding tool that was drawn on in the current study. The author analysed characteristics of criminal juveniles in Arizona, United States (US) to create an tool which measured absconding risk from probation engagement, successfully categorising 70% of the sample. It does, however, have some limitations. It utilised data drawn only from juvenile records, capturing only static risk factors, and thus could not measure acute changes in a young person which are vital to capturing an accurate measure of the risk of absconding. Their definition of absconding – not engaging with probation as per parole conditions, differs significantly from the definition of absconding that was used in the current study (i.e. a young person running from the care of Oranga Tamariki staff). Nonetheless, this tool has several factors, such as gang membership and previous absconding history, which overlap with the above review of the literature.

McIntosh and colleagues (2010) developed an absconding risk tool in a Midwestern US youth psychiatric residential treatment facility. They found several predictive factors which were consistent with those in the above literature review (e.g., absconding history and ideation). However, this tool had several limitations. For instance, the tool only utilised eight factors, drawn from a retrospective assessment tool used by mental health providers to guide decisions related to care and treatment plans; nor did it capture either the acute risk or protective factors. The study population was not a criminally based population and its setting differs from a secure YJ one.

However, this risk tool provided several useful factors that could be integrated into the current study.

The tools reviewed in this section provide several key factors that are predictive of absconding. As observed, the tools outlined above each have several limitations – not least that they were not based in an NZ context, nor within YJ judications, both of which limit their direct use for the current purpose. Nonetheless, these absconding tools have some usefulness for the present study, in demonstrating that the risk of absconding is measurable for the young people and identifying risk factors that could be integrated into a risk assessment tool.

Limitations of Literature

Several crucial issues are facing this area of research, namely, there is a dearth of existing research literature around young people absconding from youth justice settings. The available research is almost entirely from different contexts or populations to YJ residences in NZ. Many of the studies on absconding focus on mental health settings, or foster care settings which are very different settings to secure YJ residences, nor does the literature delineate between attempted or successful absconding. There is almost no research on absconding from prisons, presumably due to the very low base rate of such events.

Most of the research on absconding is based in the United States, or the United Kingdom, operating under different legal frameworks, with differences in age, settings, legislation for sentencing, and their youth justice and care systems (Bowden, 2017). The literature varies significantly in definitions around absconding, likely contributing to some of the inconsistencies in findings (Bowden, 2017). There is an overemphasis on risk factors, at the expensive of protective factors. In turn, this contributes to research primarily being done with small samples of young people who have absconded and returned, resulting in the exclusion of non-absconders, and those who did not return (Bowden, 2017).

There is almost no NZ literature on youth absconding from residential placements, which is problematic considering the deep impact colonisation has on our criminal justice system (Department of Corrections, 2007) and the overrepresentation of Māori and Pacifica in our youth justice system (Ministry of Justice, 2019; Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre, 2016). There is a vital need to bring a NZ cultural lens to this topic in order to develop a deeper understanding of the importance and relevance of cultural factors in the occurrence of absconding of the young people from NZ youth justice residences.

Internationally there is a scarcity of research measuring acute, state-based, risk and protective factors relevant to estimating the risk of absconding. Rather, most studies are either retrospective examinations of static risk factors, or qualitative interviews attempting to understand the individuals' motivations for the absconding. Further, differing results have been found across studies, and populations, due to the differences in sample sizes, definitions of absconding, or the different legal and physical settings the research is conducted in. Notably, there are no evidence-based absconding assessment tools applicable to a youth justice residence. The current study will move beyond the existing literature and assessment tools. Although the extant literature has its limitations, our study seeks to utilise the useful material from across different settings and apply the findings, as a starting point, to ascertain which factors are relevant, and applicable to secure YJ residences in NZ.

Summary and Aims of Current Research

This study seeks to expand the extant literature on absconding, particularly in a NZ YJ residential context. As highlighted earlier, absconding, whether successful and attempted, is a very costly behaviour, even when it occurs at low rates. These costs of absconding make it worthy of further exploration. This thesis is attempting to quantify these motivations for absconding and provide a tool for use in NZ YJ residences. It was developed in collaboration with Oranga Tamariki, who had identified a need in this space due to concerns absconding events were occurring

without understanding why they occurred. They were also concerned about the level of consistency and transparency around how these events were measured, and for the safety and wellbeing of the community, staff, and young people.

This research is building upon research done by Bowden et al. (2018), which interviewed youth in residences around why they absconded. It seeks to build on this by understanding how staff understand absconding risks, as they will be the ones utilising any developed risk tool to identify absconding risks in young people. It is also an applied piece of research—this study is seeking to meet a business need for Oranga Tamariki. Currently, there are no appropriate risk assessment tools designed to measure absconding from secure YJ residences in NZ. Therefore, the overarching goal of this project is to identify variables that could predict absconding or attempted absconding from secure YJ facilities in New Zealand and to fill the identified gap in the literature, and in practice, through creating an absconding risk assessment tool. In order to achieve this, several tasks were undertaken.

Firstly, this study reviewed the past five years of Oranga Tamariki absconding incident reports, drawing out common motivations, and risk and protective factors for absconding. Secondly, staff members who were involved in the decision-making process in establishing the risk of absconding in YJ residences in NZ were interviewed. These interviews aimed to capture staff members' unique insights and understandings around young people's absconding risk that may not be captured in incident reports. The research aims were as follows:

1. To identify risk and protective factors of young people's absconding risk from Oranga Tamariki youth justice residences as indicated through incident reports.

2. To draw on the knowledge and experience of the staff at YJ residences to identify risk and protective factors for absconding risk.

3. To understand the current risk assessment process and how to this could be improved.

4. To create a pilot risk assessment tool for Oranga Tamariki use.

Pertinent to these aims, specific research questions were:

1) whether the risk and protective factors identified in absconding incident reports overlap with those factors identified in the international literature?

2) whether the risk and protective factors identified in interviews overlap with those factors identified in the international literature?

3) whether there are any risk or protective factors unique to the NZ context?

4) what works and does not work with the current risk assessment process? and

5) what systems related issues impact absconding risk?

This thesis aimed to provide an in-depth review of absconding from YJ residences in an NZ context, providing important insight that may be useful in preventing absconding in the future. Absconding related factors, identified from incident reports and interviews, as well as the key risk and protective factors identified in the review of the literature, will then be integrated into a pilot absconding risk assessment tool, with scope for further development and evaluation.

Chapter 2. Method

Introduction

The current study involved an exploratory, directed content analysis on absconding incident reports and interviews conducted with Oranga Tamariki staff members. This section will provide an overview of the methodology beginning with a consideration of the ethics review process and design of our study, followed by a short overview of qualitative research. Subsequently, the theoretical framework of the study, procedure, methodology, and data analysis process will be discussed. Finally, a short overview of the pilot risk assessment tool will be provided.

Ethics

Ethical approval was granted by the School of Psychology Human Ethics Committee, operating under the delegated authority of the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee. Approval for this project was also granted by the Oranga Tamariki Research and Data Access Committee.

Design

The study consisted of two parts, both examining the risk factors associated with absconding for youth held in New Zealand youth justice residences. The literature review was utilised as a theoretical framework for understanding our phenomena, absconding. An a priori coding framework was applied through a deductive, directed qualitative content analysis of archived Oranga Tamariki absconding incident reports and then to interviews conducted with Oranga Tamariki staff members around absconding. This analysis drew out common variables, motivations, and characteristics that were perceived to have led to absconding behaviour by the young people, as identified by staff members. In this context, absconding refers to a young person attempting to, or successfully, escaping from the care of Oranga Tamariki staff.

Data Sample

This study collected data about young people placed in New Zealand (NZ) secure youth justice (YJ) residences, aged 13 - 17 years who had absconded or attempted to abscond. Data was drawn from four YJ residences: Korowai Manaaki in South Auckland; Te Maioha o Parekarangi in Rotorua; Te Au rere a te Tonga in Palmerston North; Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo in Christchurch.

Absconding Incident Reports

Sixty-three Oranga Tamariki absconding incident reports, from February 2015 to January 2020, were reviewed and analysed. These incident reports were generated as part of standard practice within Oranga Tamariki following a successful or attempted absconding event. They typically contained a general description of the circumstances leading up to and during the absconding event, including any criminal acts or damage that occurred, as well as Oranga Tamairki staff's response to the event, such as calling the residence or police, and if the young person was placed in secure care. Reports could be about the same young person if they absconded more than once and could be about one or more young people. All identifying information (e.g., names of young people and staff) were removed from these reports prior to the researchers receiving them.

Interviews

Thirteen Oranga Tamariki staff members accepted an invitation to take part in individual semi-structured interviews. Interviews were held between mid-January and early March 2020. Researchers contacted staff members who were involved in release decisions for YJ residences through an intermediary at Oranga Tamariki. Staff were provided information about the project and invited to take part in an interview on absconding with participation voluntary. A range of staff were invited to take part in interviews, including managers at head office and residences, team leaders, clinical team workers, and care and escort staff at the four Youth Justice residences in New Zealand. Participants are not described aside from their job roles to protect their confidentiality.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research was selected as the most appropriate method for addressing the research questions. Qualitative research is a scientific method aimed at gathering non-numerical data by studying phenomena in their particular context (Gray, 2018). It aims to develop an understanding of the way individuals construct their social reality, by studying phenomena in their context and providing in-depth information about human behaviour (Gray, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is relevant to the goals of the current project of identifying factors in a YJ context that may later be tested quantitatively (Gray, 2018). While we have an understanding of what young people identify as motivating their absconding (e.g. Bowden, 2017; Finkelstein, Wamsley, Currie, & Miranda, 2004; Taylor et al., 2013), we have a dearth of research looking at how staff members in this context understand absconding and evaluate absconding risk. A qualitative design is useful for understanding how staff members understand, describe, and view the phenomena of absconding. It was expected that using qualitative methods would provide rich, and New Zealand specific, data that could then be applied by Oranga Tamariki to assess absconding risk in the future. It was also selected in an effort to locate the findings within the context research will be utilised.

Theoretical framework

Epistemology refers to assumptions about the nature of knowledge and how we communicate this to others. In qualitative research, it guides the research process (Graneheim et al., 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Mertens, 2015). The theoretical framework or epistemology this research operates under is a constructivist one, this epistemology understands knowledge and reality is the active product of humans, as socially constructed (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). In regard to research, this means it understands any data or results found as being constructed between the researcher and participants (Mertens, 2015). There are a number of different constructivist approaches for qualitative research, but this thesis utilised a basic qualitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Basic qualitative research seeks to comprehend the ways people make sense of their experiences

and worlds, and has no additional dimensions, as opposed to other qualitative types of research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This thesis sought to understand what staff members identified as absconding related factors for young people based on their experiences and their descriptions of absconding incidents. The following section will outline the analysis undertaken to achieve this.

Deductive Qualitative Content Analysis

A deductive, directed qualitative content analysis (DQCA) was conducted on archived absconding incident reports and on transcripts of interviews with staff members. Qualitative content analyses are a set of solely qualitative methodological approaches, as the name implies, that analyses text-based data through a systematic process of coding (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Qualitative content analysis involves drawing inferences from the text by systematically and objectively identifying codes or categories within them (Gray, 2018). This coding process allows for the interpretation of text-based data and produces both latent and manifest categories and themes (Assarroudi et al., 2018; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The deductive approach to qualitative content analysis begins by identifying key concepts or variables as initial coding categories of analysis, drawn from relevant research findings, theory, or explanatory models (Graneheim et al., 2017). These theoretically derived categories serve as a priori codes, 'tested' against the phenomenon under study; that is, checking theory against real-life examples (Graneheim et al., 2017). Directed content analysis is useful when a study is aiming to test theory and provide supporting or non-supporting evidence for a theory or theoretical framework (Cho & Lee, 2014; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It is also a flexible method of analysis, that can integrate additional inductive factors drawn from the data if they are present (Cho & Lee, 2014; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The purpose of the directed content analysis in the current study was to provide confirmatory evidence about the risk and protective factors associated with absconding from YJ residences, which had been identified from a review of the absconding literature.

Strengths and Limitations of DCQA.

A crucial factor considered in this thesis was the selected research method. There were several methods that were considered, such as thematic and quantitative content analysis. Deductive, directed qualitative content analysis (DCQA) was judged to be the most appropriate methodological tool due to its strengths. DQCA's ability to test the existing absconding framework against real-life examples was a way to provide validity for the absconding factors identified in the literature and by extension the items to be included in the pilot risk assessment tool (Graneheim et al., 2017). One of the most important strengths of DCQA is its ability to support and extend existing theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It can also provide meaningful understanding of how individuals construct and understand their reality (Graneheim et al., 2017). This is especially useful when trying to create a tool that will be utilised by participants – they inform the tool, through their knowledge and ways of understanding absconding. Lastly, DQCA is also effective when conducting retrospective research.

DCQA has several limitations. The purpose of directed content analysis in the current study was to provide confirmatory evidence for the risk and protective factors identified in the extant research. It cannot, however, infer a cause-effect relationship. The use of theory as a guiding framework means researchers approach data with a bias – they are more likely to find confirmatory evidence than non-confirmatory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This was addressed in the current study by utilising an iterative process through the research and allowing inductively drawn categories to arise during analysis. Content analysis also faces challenges of generalisability. Due to sampling difficulties, it can be difficult to generalise the results from content analysis to other settings, but this was addressed in a number of ways, as outlined below in the methodological considerations section. On balance, DCQA was judged to be the most appropriate research methodology and its limitations were addressed in several steps.

Procedure

There were two distinct data sets used to this study: absconding incident reports and semi-structured interviews. The procedure for collecting and analysing each will now be outlined.

Incident Reports

Archived incident reports for successful and attempted absconding events from YJ residences between February 2015 and January 2020, with identifying information removed, were drawn from Oranga Tamariki's case recording system by a staff member at Oranga Tamariki head office and given to the researchers. Absconding incident reports were then uploaded to NVivo, and the transcripts were reviewed to increase familiarity with the data. During this phase or these phases, all text that appeared to be related to the absconding event was highlighted. The text was coded as per the predetermined categories (or factors), where possible. The predetermined categories included in the codebook were based on the literature review. Examples of the predetermined categories can be seen in Table 2.

Two researchers first coded the initial eight incident reports separately, and then compared results of the preliminary coding, discussing any disagreements that arose. Amendments to the codebook occurred during the analyses of the incident reports due to these discussions, as the coding manual was a dynamic document, with new categories being added as they were identified in the text. These changes were integrated as data was reviewed and refined. After the initial preliminary coding was completed, the codebook was finalised for coding the remaining incident reports, resulting in a single agreed-upon application of the categories to the data (Bradley et al., 2007). The same process occurred for interviews, with several new codes developed and included in the final coding framework, found in Table 3.

Once the content of the incident reports was coded, it was formed into categories by matching the underlying meanings of codes. The presence of a keyword indicative of an absconding risk or

protective factor was coded as the presence of this factor. An example of this in the text is given below.

> *When we all started walking to our gate to wait to board. Staff 1 was walking beside YP [young person] 1 and I was walking in front leading the way. YP 1 ran for the exit door… but he stated that he only wanted a cigarette that his uncle had given him at the FGC [Family group conference]."*

This example was coded as relating to absconding and categorised under smoking motivation for absconding. The coding process is explained further in the analysis section.

Interviews

Key staff in Oranga Tamariki were invited to take part in interviews regarding absconding risk. The interviews were semi-structured, ranged from 30-70 minutes in duration, and were audio-recorded for later transcription. Some interviews had both researchers present, whilst others had one researcher present. The majority of the interviews were conducted by telephone, but some took place at Oranga Tamariki head office or a YJ residence. Participants received the participant information sheet and consent form in advance of interviews. Interviews began with a short reminder of the project's aims, an opportunity to address any questions they might have, confirmation of their consent to take part and the participants introducing themselves. Interviews concluded with discussion around what would happen with their interviews and the final report (thesis).

Interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed per intelligent verbatim (fillers such as uh, um, etc. were left out). Once this had occurred, transcripts were sent to each participant for review and clarification. Participants were given two weeks to respond with any changes to their transcripts and were still able to withdraw from the research during this period. Interviews were then uploaded to NVivo for coding and went through the process expounded on in the aforementioned section.

Preliminary coding was undertaken using the codebook developed based on the literature review, with changes that occurred as a result of coding the incident reports integrated. Several new categories were identified and integrated into the codebook, with these changes occurring through consensus discussion between the co-researchers.

Semi-structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate method of collecting interview data from our participants as we only had one opportunity to interview them (Partington, 2011). Semi-structured interviews also allowed content to be directed by the researcher towards what the theory suggested was important. They also allowed participants to contribute and provided space for the interviewer to follow up on unique insights the participant may have had (Partington, 2011). Finally, semi-structured interviews also gave reliable data in a qualitative form that could be coded and analysed (Partington, 2011).

Methodological Considerations

Qualitative research has been criticised as being vulnerable to bias and there is disagreement about how to best address this; there are a number of different suggested methods to achieve trustworthiness of research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, the trustworthiness of the study was sought through achieving credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability in both incident reports and interviews.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent results drawn from the research align with the reality of what is being researched (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Firstly, a member check was utilised to increase the credibility of the research, whereby transcripts were sent to participants to ensure what they had said was correct and accurately captured their opinions. Providing participants with a copy of the transcribed interview enables them to review detailed interview responses and verify the interpretive accuracy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data saturation and sampling were also important considerations in attaining trustworthiness and credibility. The first fifty-five incident reports covered a sufficient period to attain a good sample of the phenomena and covered all occurrences of this behaviour within a 5-year time frame. With the addition of eight further absconding incidents, no new significant codes arose that had not been captured either in the a priori coding framework or codes found in earlier incident reports. This was judged to be a sufficient amount to reach data saturation. In this context saturation signified when no additional data was found in subsequent reports, no new insights or themes were found, and the further addition of more absconding incident reports did not add to the quality or richness of the data (Assarroudi et al., 2018; Creswell, 2014; Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Participants were selected for holding appropriate knowledge of absconding as all of those interviewed had experience either directly with young people absconding or evaluating the young people's absconding risk. This purposeful sampling strategy was utilised to ensure those interviewed included people with important and unique perspectives on absconding (Creswell, 2014). Data saturation for theory-based interviews is suggested to be when data collection will not bring any benefit to the study (Creswell, 2014). Francis and colleagues (2010) suggest the initial sample should include at least ten interviews, and after another three interviews have been completed, if no new themes emerge, that this is a sufficient number to reach theoretical saturation. In the current study, after our initial sample of ten interviews, it was found that no new themes arose in the three following interviews.

Prolonged engagement is another suggested method of increasing credibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To achieve this method the primary researcher immerses themselves in residential and Oranga Tamariki organisational culture. This involved becoming familiar with the setting participants or data was coming from, so findings were understood within their context. Persistent observation was also undertaken through the literature review and data gathering process. This ensured the researcher understood the phenomena of absconding, in sufficient detail that the

researcher was able to delineate the relevance of data in relation to the phenomena (Korstjens &
Moser, 2018; Lincoln, 1985). Credibility can also be provided through the use of two different
sources of data, or triangulation of sources and acquiring data from multiple inquirers (Brannen,
1992; Creswell, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Specifically, this was done by coding factors
drawn from the absconding literature and applying these codes to the archived absconding incident
reports, as well as to the staff interviews.

Dependability

Dependability is another important aspect of trustworthiness. Dependability denotes the ability
of the study's findings to be consistent and repeatable. To achieve this, the primary researcher first
transcribed all interviews, which facilitated familiarisation with the data set (Braun & Clarke,
2006). The impact of the co-creation of the interviews between researcher and participant was
another challenge for the dependability of the research. This was addressed by having two
researchers coding the data to consensus (Graneheim et al., 2017; Syed & Nelson, 2015). To
increase dependability, an iterative process was also followed whereby the codebook was 'alive'
and changing throughout the process to allow space for any new codes, categories, or themes to
arise. Lastly, there is a challenge to dependability in selecting which categories should be created
and in maintaining a similar level of abstraction between categories (Graneheim et al., 2017). Clear
rules were followed with the creation of categories, for instance, categories (or factors), needed to
outline a clear grouping of meanings related to absconding which did not appear to be able to be
placed in, or overlap with other factors.

Confirmability

Confirmability, or objectivity, was established through consensus coding, and the use of
percentage agreement was utilised to estimate the reliability of coding between raters, and an
agreement level of $\geq .80$ was judged acceptable (Campbell et al., 2013). Percentage agreement was
selected for a number of reasons but was judged most appropriate to estimate coding agreement for

our study (see Campbell et al., 2013 for a more in-depth discussion of this). Percentage agreement was calculated on the incident reports coding, finding a good inter-coder agreement of 0.96 or 96%. Percentage agreement was calculated on the interview coding, finding a good inter-coder agreement of .82 or 82%. Coding is a decision-making process and inherently has the researchers bias imprinted upon them. To ensure reliability and trustworthiness, the primary researcher and associate researcher completed pilot analyses of these incident reports and interviews separately, and then compared results of the pilot coding, working through any disagreements that arose through to consensus, followed by another separate coding with the updated coding framework (Syed & Nelson, 2015).

Transferability

Transferability or external validity refers to the ability of findings from our study to fit into other contexts. In our study, this was somewhat limited. However, our study was aimed at creating a risk assessment tool for an NZ YJ specific context, to this end, it utilised data samples from young people and the staff members working with them from across NZ, providing validity for its ability to be used in an NZ YJ specific context. Through drawing on an international literature base, it is likely our research applies to other contexts regarding absconding. Furthermore, a thorough description of the participants and research process was given, providing an in-depth methodological description to allow for replication of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Analysis

To examine absconding related factors, a directed content analysis of both the absconding incident reports and interviews were conducted. Firstly, a coding framework was developed. This served as the basis for the codebook categories. The units of analysis were words, sentences, or paragraphs indicating the presence of an absconding relevant code. The coding framework was applied firstly to incident reports, and then to the interviews. In each case, the data set was read several times to increase familiarity with the written text, and to allow the researcher to attain a

complete view of the data. The goal of the research was to identify and categorise all instances of absconding related content, therefore both underlying and manifest factors related to absconding were highlighted (Hsieh, 2005). The highlighted text was then coded as per the categories in the theoretically based factors outlined in **Error! Reference source not found.**

Codes were analysed to see if they fitted with any of the pre-existing categories in the coding framework. Categories denote a collection of codes bearing similar meanings, grouped together (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Any text that could not be appropriately categorised was given a new code through discussion between the co-researchers. For example, during the coding of the incident reports, planning of absconding was separated from ideation of absconding as there was text that was not appropriate to code within the ideation category. The pre-existing coding framework categories were refined to fit the codes and language used in the incident reports and interviews, with the updated codebook found in **Error! Reference source not found.** Text that could not be placed into a category, or that was inappropriately placed within a category, were examined and if appropriate, a new category was developed. If text was not relevant to the researcher questions, it was not included as a code.

The data was then analysed again with the updated coding framework and identified codes were sorted into categories. Sitting above these categories, overarching themes were drawn out. Our study was rich with latent meaning and was, therefore, able to be analysed for underlying themes, which are 'red thread's running through and linking two or more categories, expressing underlying meaning (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). For instance, individual risk factors were identified as a theme in our text, running between multiple categories (Elliott, 2018; Graneheim et al., 2017). This process occurred first with the incident reports, and then again with the interviews. This analysis was a reflexive process, with researchers working through the coding process multiple times (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

The process followed is based on the one outlined by Roller and Lavrakas (2015).

1. Absorb content

2. Determine unit of analysis

3. Develop unique codes

4. Conduct preliminary coding

5. Code content

6. Identify categories across codes

7. Identify themes/patterns across categories.

8. Draw interpretations and implications

The study design and analysis did not result in coded data that could be compared meaningfully using statistical tests of difference. Therefore, it was sufficient to evaluate the interrater agreement for each category, assessed by percentage agreement. This content analysis aimed to aid the development of the risk instrument tool, rather than as a standalone statistical analysis. Factors drawn from the theoretical framework not found to be present in the two data sets were identified and are discussed further in the results and discussion section. Findings are illustrated with quotes. Incident reports were also used to provide some demographic information.

Risk Tool Development

A pilot absconding risk assessment tool (found in Appendix B. Pilot Risk Assessment Tool) was created based on the results of the analysis of the incident reports and interviews. The rationale for its creation was as follows. The literature suggests young people often abscond because of serious underlying issues (Taylor et al., 2013). Instead of conducting a lengthy interview with the young people to identify absconding related factors, which could be problematic for multiple reasons such as bringing up trauma for the young people and biased responding by young people, a tool would

allow staff members to complete a risk assessment based on their observations and knowledge of the young person.

Covert observation (i.e. collecting the data second-hand through staff) can be more valid and reliable than overt observation, as the data can be easily replicated, and does not involve large amounts of personal interpretation (Gray, 2018). It is also cost and time-efficient, and in the YJ setting, there are limited resources available. Further, actuarially based risk assessment measures have been found to be more accurate than clinical judgement in assessing risk (Bonta & Andrews, 2017; Moore & Hammond, 2000). A number of scales and questionnaires were drawn on to inform the development of questions in the pilot risk assessment tool; questions, phrases and language from these scales were utilised in the current tool to increase its validity (Farmer & Sundberg, 1986; Harrington, 2005; Tittle et al., 2003).

Table 3.

Final Coding Framework

Individual:		Contextual:	
	Ideation of absconding.		Significant life stressor.
	Indications of planning (new).		Feelings of frustration.
	Previous absconding history.		Feelings of boredom.
	Mental health.		Geographic location of their home region.
	Externalising behaviours.		Time spent in YJ residence
	Propensity for violence.		Ability of staff members (new).
	Previous offending history.		Environment and culture (new).
	Substance use history.		Remand vs sentenced (new).
	Smoking dependency.		Consequences (new). assessment process (new).
	Self-regulation difficulties.		Risk management process (new).
	Placement history.		
	Age.		
	Gender differences.		
Relational:	Approach goals.	Protective:	Self-control.

Avoidance goals.	Maintaining contact with family.
Anti-social associates.	Positive staff relationship.
Isolation.	Access to food.
Ringleaders (new).	Hope (new).

Chapter 3. Incident Report Results

This section will now review the results drawn from the data, it will fall in two chapters; the first will discuss results drawn from incident reports whilst the following chapter will discuss the results from interviews with Oranga Tamariki staff members.

Incident Reports

From the data analysis of incident reports, several themes were found that related to our research questions: 1) whether the risk and protective factors identified in absconding incident reports overlap with those factors identified in the international literature?, and 3) whether there are any risk or protective factors unique to the NZ context? The themes identified are found in **Error! Reference source not found.** Factors discussed in more detail below are those that were present at a higher frequency in incident reports[1].

Individual Risk Factors

Individual factors denote characteristics unique to a young person that are predictive of absconding risk. The incident reports, which were completed by staff members, identified many different individual characteristics that young people presented with in relation to absconding events. The factors found were ideation of absconding, indications of planning (new), previous absconding history, mental health, externalising behaviours, propensity for violence, smoking dependency, and self-regulation difficulties.

Ideation of Absconding. Ideation of absconding was identified by staff members in a number of ways and was present in the majority of incident reports. In some cases, this was evident from things young people said, "*While doing his schoolwork, YP1 said "I feel like running away",* while

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[1] [Note: Young people are referred to throughout by the abbreviation YP, with the inclusion of a number to identify different young people involved in the same incident, e.g., YP1, YP2, YP3, etc., but not across incidents. That is, YP 1 was not necessarily the same young person involved in subsequent incidents. The same principle was applied to staff members, e.g., Staff 1, Staff 2, etc. (also identified as response team or RT's). All identifying information such as names of places and locations were replaced with a X].

for others it was found in notes they wrote. In some instances, other young people shared information about their peers absconding plans prior to the event, "*Vital information was handed over to care staff 1 that YP 1 was planning a serious abscond attempt tonight via ceiling light*".

A new, and possibly unique NZ subcategory of ideation, was also identified by staff, who recorded a number of instances where it seemed the absconding was motivated by a desire for infamy or the 'glory' the young person would get from absconding "*When we have a ride we run for glory*", or by trying to copy other young people's absconding behaviours "*staff member 2 overheard him telling the other Rangatahi [young people] about the escape from residence 1*". Although ideation is closely related to the category of indications of planning, we have included them as separate categories.

Indications of Planning. Planning indications were present in almost every absconding attempt. A significant amount of absconding events occurred with indications of coordination occurring between young people, such as acting at the same time to take keys, letting others out of their units, or acting at the same time to overwhelm staff, "*6 YPS from unit X have used the key they took off Staff 3 to open the courtyard gate of unit X allowing 4 other clients to escape*". Young people displayed absconding planning through attempting to get information from staff or displayed an awareness of staff procedures (i.e. had successfully got information from staff) "*YP 2 … asked me a question. Does your key open the back door? This raised red flags for staff*". They also blocked off doors so other staff could not gain access and cut radio wires to stop staff radioing for help.

Young people also coordinated with family and friends on the outside to help them abscond while outside the residence "*he whispered "on the way out" towards his brother … we saw his family waiting outside to the left of our car"*. These suggested a high level of planning, as there were no cell phones or social media allowed in residences, and the young people organised for people outside the residence to be at a certain place, at specified times, to help them abscond. There were also clear indications of physical planning in most absconding events, with young people

kicking out windows, taking off window seals, preparing tools or weapons, and hiding their preparations. Young people often wore clothes suitable to the weather, or double layers to change their description "*both young people had changed their clothes & were not wearing what they initially had when they left site*".

Previous Absconding History. Previous absconding history was only noted by staff once in the incident reports as a potential risk factor.

Mental Health. Mental health issues were only noted once in the incident reports as contributing to absconding: "*her [YP1] repeatedly saying it's the voices telling me to do this*".

Externalising Behaviours. Externalising behaviours occurring prior to an absconding event were present in the majority of the incident reports. Young people often had been behaving poorly preceding an absconding attempt, being non-compliant with staff instructions, talking over them and pushing boundaries with their words or behaviours "*YP 1, YP 2, YP3 and YP 4 have been admitted to secure … These young people's behaviours have been case noted throughout the past 3 days*". Young people often damaged the property in the unit, including kicking out their windows or tagging "*YP1, 2 and 3 continued damaging property outside in the courtyard. They then smashed their way into bedroom 3 to retrieve items to abscond over the fence.*". Young people also often absconded after being found with contraband such as phones, cigarettes, lighters etc. Generally, a number of indications of non-compliant behaviours were present in the days prior to an absconding behaviour.

Propensity for Violence. Incident reports noted a number of young people displayed significant violence prior to, during, and after absconding events including attacking staff and the public in their efforts to abscond "*YP 3 suddenly lunged at staff 1 hitting her in the face and knocking her glasses off, making it difficult to see*". As noted previously, young people also attacked staff to take keys and cut radios cords:

YP1, YP 2 & YP 3 enter the area were the young people continue to attack staff with bins, chairs and kicks to their bodies … during this … YP 3 manages to yank Staffs belt off her [to]which her keys were attached.

Young people often threatened violence to staff members who were trying to deescalate situations prior to absconding "*3 other YPs had come out of their rooms also threatening to assault staff … and held the spanner above my head threatening to hit me with it if I did not hand over my RT and keys".* Yet others threatened other young people to not tell staff about absconding attempts or even attacked them.

Smoking Dependency. Smoking dependency was only noted once in the incident reports as contributing to a young person's decision to abscond "[*YP1] stated that he only wanted a cigarette that his uncle had given him at the FGC*".

Self-Regulation Difficulties. Absconding due to impulsivity, or opportunity, was also present in a number of incident reports, i.e. when planning was not present. From the incident reports it became clear that in a number of instances young people would take opportunities presented to them, such as a staff member turning their back, even if they did not present with any other obvious risk factors. In several incidents the young people were noted as particularly compliant and engaging with programmes, activities, and work experience in the residence, but then seemed to impulsively take advantage of absconding opportunities. Staff also identified that young people, when faced with frustrating situations where they did not get their way seemed not to be able to control their emotions, lashed out, with this emotional arousal culminating in absconding attempts.

Contextual Risk Factors

A number of factors were identified by staff members in the incident reports that broadly sit under contextual risk factors. Contextual factors denote environmental and societal factors that surround the young person, such as the context of their residence, and the wider care system their

residence operates under. Factors found were significant life stressors, feelings of frustration, geographic location of a home region, and time spent in YJ residence.

Significant Life Stressors. Staff members identified significant life stressors in a number of instances leading up to absconding events. Young people seemed to struggle to cope with upcoming stressful events and appeared to try to deal with their feelings through escaping the stressful stimuli, i.e. absconding. Young people often absconded prior to these events occurring:

YP1 understands that the most likely outcome is that he'll receive a Sentence to Residence Order and will have to return to Residence to serve this … It is plainly obvious that YP1 is dealing with a lot of stress associated with tomorrow's events.

Some young people also absconded after attending court, FGC's, or assessment/therapy appointments. Further, some young people admitted feeling anxiety in the lead up to other events including interviews for jobs outside of the residence "*YP1 leant up against a post breathing heavily, spitting and becoming very agitated verbalising. He was nervous and couldn't go through with the interview.*" Some young people absconded because they were anxious about the methods of getting to necessary outings "[he] *stated he hated flying. He appeared to be quite anxious and had been pacing continuously since his hand over to Staff 1 and Staff 2*".

Feelings of Frustration. A number of young people articulated feelings of frustration with procedures and situational factors, prior to absconding events "*YP 1 expressed feeling frustrated around his current plan*", "*he was saying he didn't want to go to X and there was no reason for him to go*". Others showed their frustration through their actions, prior to absconding "*He continued asking if he could have his dinner and I persisted & said No … YP1 then got angry & kicked the little door to where the food is served*".

Geographic Location of Their Home Region. Young people who lived in the area they were travelling seemed to be more at risk of absconding, making absconding easier as the young person

may know the area well, and have contacts that can help them "S*taff 2 received a call from Residence saying YP 1 has family in the street of X*".

Time Spent in YJ Residence. This factor was present in one incident report. Prior to an absconding event, a young person expressed their anger for the amount of time they have been in residence "*YP 1 was at times disrespectful towards YJ social worker, Staff 1, blaming her for the length of time he has been in residence.*"

Relational Risk Factors

Relational factors denote risk factors related to family or peers that influence absconding risk. These were present in the incident reports in a number of ways. The factors found in the incident reports were approach goals, anti-social associates, and ringleaders. The first two factors were consistent with the literature, however, the third factor, ringleaders, appears to be a novel factor emerging from this NZ data.

Approach Goals. Approach goals for absconding were identified several times in the incident reports. For instance, one young person absconded to steal makeup and lighters, and another absconded when they saw a family member:

On our way out the young person saw his sister and wanted to inform her that he was going to another town court, so I opened the window just enough for them to speak … then suddenly turned around to see the young person jumped out of the car and ran towards the town.

Antisocial Associates. The factor of antisocial associates was identified a substantial amount of times in the incident reports by staff. Young people displayed this in a number of different ways – from groups of young people attacking other young people, to antisocial peers threatening other young people to keep quiet about absconding plans. The young people also displayed this factor through threatening or attacking staff "*YP1, YP 2 & YP 3 enter the area where the young people continue to attack staff with bins, chairs and kicks to their bodies*". Young people in groups who

absconded or attacked other young people or staff while other young people did not, clearly outlined the delineation between the more and less antisocial young people.

Ringleaders. A new, and potentially unique factor identified during the coding process of interviews, and then brought back to the coding of incident reports, was the factor of ringleaders. This is where a single young person influences other young people to abscond with them – even if the other young people did not have a high amount of risk factors present. For instance, when staff were de-escalating a group of young people after an absconding attempt, this influence was clear "*YP1 was trying to influence the group not to move as he wanted to be spoken to in front of all the Rangatahi*". Further, one young person making the 'call' to abscond was present in another incident report "*YP1 … tried to get down the east wing yelling out ace that's us YP 2, that's us boys!*"

Protective Factors

Protective factors work by decreasing absconding risk with their presence. Two protective factors self-control and positive staff relationship were identified in the incident reports.

Self-Control. One young person displayed self-control when he discussed wanting to run away with staff members due to upcoming sentencing, but controlled himself as he did not want to increase negative consequences *"'I feel like running away, but don't want to make [the situation] worse for myself". He discussed his feelings about this openly, which he was commended for*".

Positive Staff Relationship. Positive staff relationships were identified as protective factors in the incident reports. For example, during absconding events, young people were de-escalated by staff "*Staff … tried to convince YP 1 to return to the vehicle. YP 1 was defiant and looked aggressive in body language however after 5 minutes of verbal de-escalation and encouragement YP 1 became compliant*". In another event, even after the young person attempted to abscond, he indicated he had a good relationship with the staff member and trusted them enough to ask to keep the incident quiet from other young people, becoming compliant with staff:

He wasn't angry … I escorted YP 1 back to site by car. He asked us if we could keep this

incident quiet from the other YP on site … I also assured YP 1 this would take place. In transit

YP1 was very compliant.

The example of a young person discussing their feelings openly in the self-control factor above is also clearly an example of a young person able to trust staff members with what they were thinking and feeling – even when those thoughts were about absconding.

Demographic Information.

Demographic data was drawn from the incident report data. These were not analysed for statistical significance due to the small sample size but do allow us to look for any trends that might be present. As can be seen in the below tables, it appears there were differences in absconding levels between residences. The demographic information suggests inter-residential variance, with residence 1 and 2 presenting with the highest levels of absconding. There were also variations in absconding across months, with the data suggesting more young people abscond in spring (September-November). Finally, the data suggests absconding has either been increasing over the past two years or is being reported more accurately. The suggested reasons for these patterns will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Figure 1.

Absconding Events Across Youth Justice Residences 2015-2020.
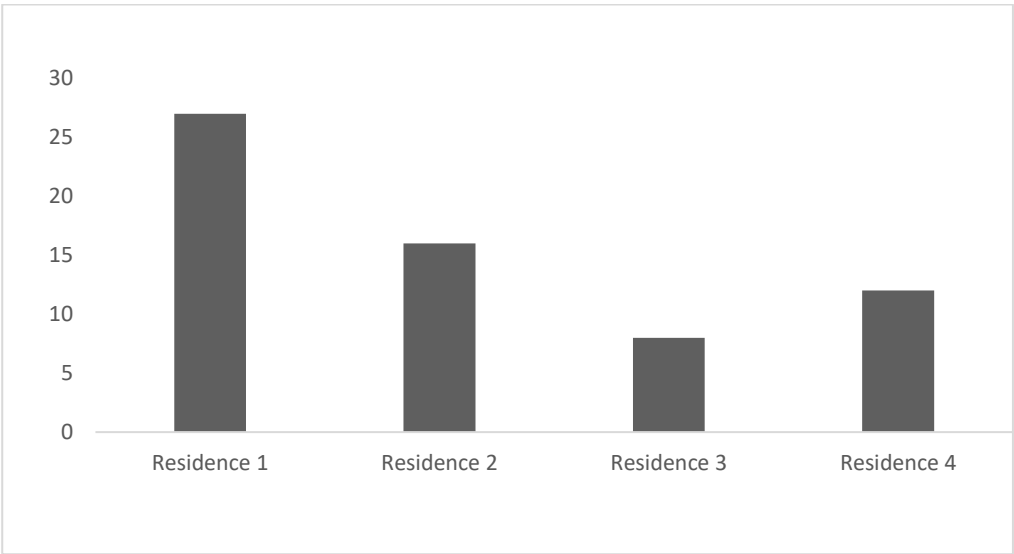
Figure 2.

Number of Young People Absconding, by Youth Justice Residence and Year (February 2015 –

January 2020).
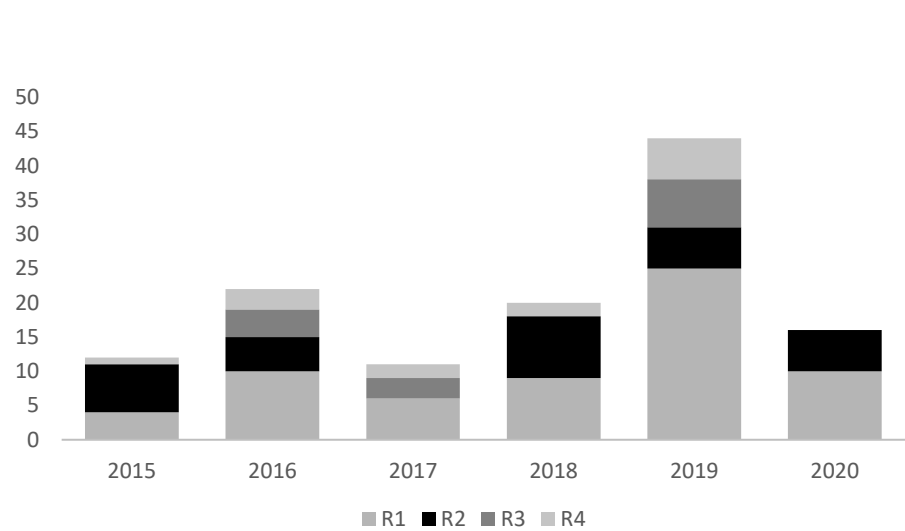
Figure 3.

Absconding Events Aggregated by Month 2015-2020.
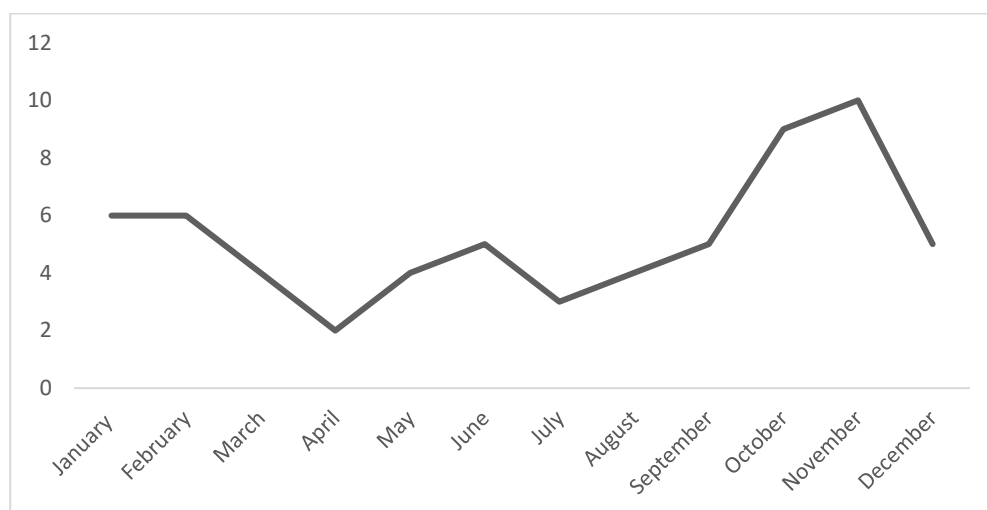
Table 4

Themes and Categories Found in Incident Reports.

Individual:	Ideation of absconding.	Contextual:	Significant life stressor.
	Indications of planning (new).		Feelings of frustration.
	Previous absconding history.		Time spent in YJ residence
	Mental health.		
	Externalising behaviours.		
	Propensity for violence.		
	Smoking dependency.		
	Self-regulation difficulties.		
Relational:	Approach goals.	Protective:	Self-control.
	Anti-social associates.		Positive staff relationship.
	Ringleaders (new).		

Key Findings

A number of factors were found from this review of incident reports, falling broadly under four key themes; individual (e.g., externalising behaviours), relational (e.g., avoidance goals), contextual risk factors (e.g., feelings of frustration), and protective factors (e.g., positive staff relationships). The factors identified from the incident reports are outlined in Table 4. Novel factors of indications of planning, and ringleaders were also identified. However, we did not find a number of factors we expected to be present, based on the review of the extant literature. Reasons for this will be expounded in the discussion.

Chapter 4. Interview Results

This chapter will review the results drawn from interviews with Oranga Tamariki staff members.

Interviews

From the data analysis of the interviews, a number of themes were found that broadly answered our research questions: 2) whether the risk and protective factors identified in interviews overlap with those factors identified in the international literature? 3) whether there are any risk or protective factors unique to the NZ context? 4) what works and does not work with the current risk assessment process? and 5) what systems related issues impact absconding risk? The analysis allowed for themes and categories to be identified from the interview transcripts, with these largely pertaining to the groupings laid out in the introduction and are similar to those identified in the incident reports. These themes are found in Table 5. Factors discussed more at length were those identified by staff members more prominently.

Individual Risk Factors

Staff members identified a number of individual-based risk factors related to absconding in the interviews. Individual risk factors are characteristics unique to a young person that are predictive of absconding risk. Individual risk factors found were ideation of absconding, indications of planning, previous absconding history, mental health issues, externalising behaviours, previous offending history, propensity for violence, substance use history, smoking dependency, self-regulation difficulties, placement history, age, and gender differences.

Ideation of Absconding. The risk factor of ideation of absconding was referenced by staff in several ways. Young people often said outright they wanted to abscond, for various reasons (e.g., to see family, in response to significant life stressors such as upcoming court appearances and sentencing). Young people also seemed to be influenced to abscond by other absconding events, that is, if young people at that residence, or another, had recently absconded, the word spread

quickly to others "*and then they start thinking if he can get away then I can do it you know*". Staff identified if young people were asking questions about offsite activities, security protocols or which staff had keys or radio's etc. it was evidence the young person was thinking about absconding. As mentioned in the prior chapter, the presence of planning for absconding also indicates the presence of ideation.

Further, a novel subcategory of ideation was identified. This was infamy, whereby young people absconded to add to their reputation – they did it for bragging rights, or as a badge of honour "*They will take pride in their ability to be able to abscond even if it's just for a couple of days or a day*". For instance, staff mentioned several young people said they wanted to be the first to abscond from a particular residence or the first to abscond from all four. Young people wanting to join a gang also sometimes wanted to abscond so they could be closer to that goal or did it to try and be the kingpin or KP of their unit. Essentially, escaping could be seen as a badge of honour for some young people, and some believe it would give them status in the eyes of their peers:

> *Yeah well he has managed it a couple times, at the courthouse, one here, which makes him quite … in the eyes of his peers, bit of a mastermind, someone you possibly should listen to because he has done it twice.*

Staff members highlighted young people who were either repeat absconders, very grandiose, or repeat offenders as presenting with this idea that absconding will give them, or increase their, status.

Indications of Planning. Staff members stated young people often engaged in planning behaviour. They identified young people sometimes feigned illness to get taken to the hospital and absconded when there. Young people would test out car locks, try to open doors, and test boundaries such as by asking staff members which keys open which door and ask for information around staff rosters, times and dates of day release. Young people often spoke with friends or family outside about where and when they were going on day release so they could help them

abscond. Staff identified a number of young people attempting to physically break out by kicking out windows, ripping lights off ceilings and creating weapons or tools to aid this behaviour – in some cases they worked on obtaining or preparing tools, or damaging the structure (e.g., window frames) in the days leading up to the absconding event.

As identified in the incident reports, young people stockpiled clothing or shoes in their rooms (normally not allowed), so were better prepared for the outside conditions (e.g., cold), or wore double layers of clothing so they could change their clothes and therefore change their description once they got away. Finally, young people planned joint attempts, such as groups rushing staff to get access to keys and disable radios. There were a number of very clearly identified ways young people presented with planning behaviours for absconding, and almost all staff identified at least one of these methods.

Previous Absconding History. Previous absconding history was noted by almost every staff member as vital to understanding a young person's absconding risk:

The first things to look at. Known to run away from past escorts or running away from family homes. Things like that, we look at, if they have that history, where they normally go, and what the risks are to themselves and the community.

If a young person had absconded once from a residence, they were believed to be likely to attempt it again. Staff provided a number of anecdotes about young people who had absconded at least once before, presented with further absconding ideation, planning, and subsequent absconding events. Young people with a prolific history of absconding were noted as not being able to go on day-release without serious indications of change in behaviour and lowering of risk. Staff also differentiated between types of the previous absconding, for instance, escaping from foster care or non-secure residential settings, which were not seen as high risk as absconding from custody – prison, YJ residences, and police custody.

Mental Health. Mental health issues were noted by staff to be important to absconding behaviour. Poor mental health, such as low mood, was seen as negatively impacting young people's behaviour, and increasing their risk of absconding. A number of specific mental health issues were noted as important to consider in relation to absconding, such as mood disorders, chaotic thought processes, suicidal ideation or suicide risk, and low cognitive ability.

Externalising Behaviours. Externalising behaviours were identified by staff as a risk factor for absconding. Young people who were non-compliant had been involved in assaults or had recently been presenting with behavioural difficulties were highlighted as at higher risk of absconding. Young people showing the opposite – settled behaviours and compliance with staff directions were identified as at a lower risk of absconding. Noncompliance also included behaviours outlined previously, such as young people flicking locks on cars, going into areas they are not allowed into, or being caught with contraband:

yeah they'll be non-compliant, particularly for the previous 24-48 hours, their behaviours are very up and down, so if they show signs of settled behaviour then [that] gives us a little bit of confidence that maybe they aren't going to run.

Previous Offending History. Several staff members identified the charges, or tariffs a young person was facing as providing essential information to judge absconding risk. Young people who were facing more serious and/or a significant number of charges, and could potentially be looking at prison time, were perceived as being more at risk of absconding than others, due to the severity and nature of their offending.

Propensity for Violence. Staff stated young people's violence risk was taken into account when considering whether a young person was suitable for any day-release activities, or to assess their absconding risk, with staff associating more serious violent charges with higher absconding risk. Staff believed that if a young person was facing charges for very serious violent charges, they may present a unique absconding risk, as they may try to abscond and engage in further similar criminal

activity. Staff also believed, over time, young people with increasingly serious aggravated offending behaviours were being placed in the residences, and this was seen as increasing both their means (physical ability, increasing planning and coordination with other young people) as well as motivation to abscond from YJ residences.

Substance use history. Young people withdrawing from drug use, most prominently methamphetamine, was highlighted as a motivation for young people to abscond, as they wanted to leave and get access to these drugs. Staff also identified withdrawal as a risky process due to associated behaviours (violence, being irrational and erratic, etc.). One staff member identified a young person who was a heavy drug user as particularly risky, as any opportunity he got he would abscond (from Oranga Tamariki care, home, foster care, etc.) to access drugs. Contrary to this, however, other staff said young people with drug habits who they thought would be at risk of absconding did not abscond.

Smoking Dependency. Young people wanting to smoke was seen as related to absconding by staff. For example, often young people wanted to smoke with their family when they saw them at court or FGC's, and that desire to smoke was an important motivator for absconding "*The smoking one's interesting, I know that is a real big driver for wanting to get out".* Others indicated youth almost always accessed cigarettes when they absconded. However, several others did not believe absconding to access cigarettes was a significant issue for young people in NZ residences. These staff indicated they were not aware of any young people who had absconded for this reason.

Self-Regulation Difficulties. Self-regulation difficulties were discussed in a number of interviews, with impulsivity, or opportunity taking, seen as often being present in absconding events when planning indications were not. Staff stated young people often absconded impulsively when it was not in their best interests, for instance when they were a day away, or even within hours, of being released. The young people in the YJ residences were non-voluntary clients and took opportunities to abscond when/as they arose:

"then there's some kids, actually we know, any chance they're gonna be runners … Which way the wind is blowing sometimes, the opportunistic you know, they may not have planned anything, and they think shit there's an opportunity for me to run then I'm going to run and run they go.

Staff said the young people tended to have a lack of consequential thinking, which likely contributed to why they were in the YJ residence in the first place. Staff stated there were often indications of emotional arousal or anger in the lead up to absconding events which the young people struggled to manage appropriately. For instance, staff spoke of several occasions where young people were denied small requests, reacted badly, and started becoming non-compliant, with this behaviour escalating and eventuating in an absconding attempt.

Placement history. The number of times a young person had been in a residential setting or into care was noted as an absconding risk factor. "*So, I definitely think their risk elevates significantly the more a young person comes back*". Some staff suggested repeat service users became institutionalised, disempowered, and lost hope, which increased their absconding risk. In contrast, some staff said the more a young person had been in the residences, the less risk of absconding they posed, as they were more familiar and comfortable in the environment. This familiarity, however, was also identified as contributing to the risk, as the young people felt comfortable absconding for a short period, and then coming back "*so you are just running away from home and I'll be back again – I'll see you guys soon".*

Age. Age was highlighted as important in the occurrence of absconding. Staff suggested younger adolescents who were new to residences were more likely to abscond, as they were often facing less serious consequences due to their age. In contrast, older adolescents were more settled in residences and so were considered lower risk. Opposite to this, some staff believed the older cohort were more at risk of absconding as they were often engaged in more serious criminal behaviour prior to coming to the residence, were more physically able, and more likely to engage in serious violent behaviour to successfully abscond.

Gender difference. Several staff members identified gender as related to the risk of absconding and stated being female was a protective factor for absconding. It was suggested girls felt safer in residence than outside where they were more likely to experience or re-experience trauma and abuse. In contrast, boys were identified as more at risk due to outside stressors:

For our boys, a lot of girl stuff that motivates them to take off, so just a bad phone call or no phone call if she [their girlfriend] hasn't answered on a Saturday night, they start thinking the worst, then bang they're motivated to go as soon as they can.

Contextual Risk Factors

A number of factors were identified by staff members in the interviews that sat under contextual risk factors. Contextual factors denote environmental and societal factors that surround the young person, such as the context of their residence, and the wider care system that their residence operates under. These were significant life stressors, feelings of frustration, geographic location of their home region, time spent in YJ residences, the ability of staff members, environment and culture, remand vs sentenced, consequences, assessment process, and risk management.

Significant Life Stressors. Significant life stressors were identified by some staff members as the motivators for absconding events, such as anxiety when they are being released, anxiety coming into the residence when the young people got bad phone calls from family, or their girlfriend or family cancelled their visit. Young people going to court or an FGC may be confronted with quite stressful things, such as being criticised by the victims, whānau or police which could cause stress. Similarly, young people worried about upcoming court dates and their future such as if they will be placed in residence, sentenced to prison, granted bail, etc. These feelings of anxiety were seen by staff as potentially leading to absconding behaviour. As one staff member identified "[YJ] *kids are not typically your anxious internalisers if they don't like something, they are going to run away … the immediate relief that comes from not being in an unpleasant situation*".

Feelings of Frustration. A small number of staff identified young people who were frustrated at being locked in a residence, or felt resentment when privileges were stripped (e.g., due to having contraband), as being potential absconding risks, however, this factor did not come through strongly in interviews.

Feelings of boredom. Staff identified young people being bored in residence as an absconding risk, as this boredom not only gave them a motivation to abscond and find fun on the outside but also gave them the means, through multiple bored young people working together to plan their absconding, in order to relieve their boredom. Keeping young people occupied with fun and meaningful activities was suggested as being a vital part of mitigating this, as it kept them engaged and ensured they did not have time to plan to abscond: "*boredom's a biggie in ressie* [residence] *if you don't keep the kids busy then shits gonna get real*".

Geographic Location of Their Home Region. A young person on a day-release in their home region was suggested to be more at risk than a young person on day-release not in their 'home' region. Staff members suggested this was because the young person knew the area, and might have local contacts and so found it easier to abscond:

> *In terms of our offsites, we also have a look at where they are from, like location-wise, so we're not gonna take someone to the beach out X if they are going fishing should they be 50/50 we think. What we call is 50/50, could run away, familiar with the area, so we try and take kids in different areas that they are not familiar with.*

Others thought the risk of 'home' areas was also associated with avoidance or approach goals in that in 'home' areas young people might be more likely to see victims, co-offenders, peers, and family. Staff also mentioned young people may abscond if they knew the area in order to access local sources of drugs, with reports of young people openly disclosing they would not abscond from some residences because they did not know the area.

Time Spent in YJ Residence. The first few weeks of admission were highlighted as the highest risk time for young people. This was because the staff often did not know the young people at this point. Once young people had been at the residence for some time, relationships with staff had usually developed, young people had demonstrated their willingness to comply, and had sometimes moved up on the behavioural management programme, etc. However, staff also highlighted some instances of young people who absconded very close to their sentence end date, or on activities to help them reintegrate back into the community, suggesting there may be some variability in the relationship between time spent in residence and absconding risk.

Ability of Staff Members. Staff identified the ability of staff members as vital in the consideration of absconding behaviour. This ranged from the actual physical ability of staff members being matched to young people, to more experienced and skilled staff being noted as better able to manage a young person's absconding risk, especially off-site through observing potential signs of impending absconding and de-escalating situations. Some staff also expressed concern that young people were more at risk of absconding on night shifts, as there tended to be older and fewer staff on shift at that time.

Other staff identified fatigue as in issue due to working strenuous hours and working with more high-risk young people if they were one of a small number of more experienced staff available. A lack of training for staff was identified as problematic, with some not knowing what they were legally allowed to do to restrain a young person or not having defensive driving training. Finally, a lack of skilled staff was identified by some as an issue, particularly around not having social worker qualifications or other relevant tertiary qualifications. However, other staff believed a lack of university qualification was a strength for some staff as they felt these staff tended to have more life experiences, assisting them in relating better with the young people.

Environment and Culture. The environment and culture of a residence were identified by staff as important to the occurrence of absconding. Staff believed the residential environment, for

instance, could be a safe and good one for the young people, acting in a protective manner or alternatively increasing their absconding risk if it was not a safe place for them "*I think that is a huge protective factor for young people, they know they are safe in here*". This could be affected by the quality of staff (training, qualifications, experience, ability), management, and quality of staff relationships, with each other and the young people. The way the care team worked together was also noted as being vital to the culture of residence with a high need for strong teamwork and trusting staff relationships.

Staff believed there was variability between residences, in terms of staff and young people. They felt these differences were the result of a range of factors including it being more difficult to hire skilled people due to a more competitive job market in some areas, whilst certain residences held more high-risk young people. The characteristics of young people going into residences were also identified as changing and leading to an overall increase in the risk of absconding, due to more low-risk young people being diverted to other parts of the youth justice system:

We are starting to see a higher concentration of serious aggravated offenders, there is a correlation between the criminality of a young person and their willingness to engage in ... the biggest escape risk I see is when they come to us and have to integrate into residential life as well so that whole fact of them organising themselves and that is starting to change.

Further, due to the residential culture being less secure and prison-like for youth in NZ, compared to other countries, the opportunity for absconding was seen as being higher. This was due to Oranga Tamariki helping the young people to experience normal adolescent activities and working to facilitate their reintegration into the wider community with day-release activities. However, staff who spoke of this saw this as acceptable on balance due to offsite activities occurring for legal reason (e.g., court appearances) or being in line with Oranga Tamariki's values and ethos. Overall, this factor indicated if a residential culture was not working well that this could increase a young person's absconding risk.

Remand vs Sentenced. Young people on remand were noted to be a higher risk for absconding than sentenced young people, for several reasons. Sentenced youth had more incentive to *not* run, compared to young people on remand "*if they have already been sentenced then their reason for absconding is a little less because they know if they behave, they get out on the early release*". Young people on remand often had little to no information about how long they would be a residence, nor what the outcome would be for them, meaning they often had no clear end date due to the unresolved nature of their charges. This relates to the factor of hope. Further, remanded youth often do not have detailed court-ordered care plans, and therefore do not participate in as many reintegrative activities. Additionally, for some, their remand periods could be extensive.

Consequences. Several staff members noted a lack of consequences for young people as influencing their decision to abscond from residences. Young people who absconded were often just reintegrated back into the residence due to a desire to avoid a punitive based system. Staff also suggested younger adolescents were more likely to abscond, as the young people believed they would face less serious consequences due to their age.

> *Some kids tell me it doesn't make much difference in terms of the process. They might not get their early release, but basically, they can abscond and be brought back in, and be integrated relatively easily ... the kids have sort of told me that in the scheme of things the consequences in the youth space, they can live with that*.

Assessment Process. As part of the interviews, staff were asked what, and how they currently assessed young people's absconding risk. To assess absconding risk staff reported they considered a range of factors including charges, history, and proximal and distal behaviour. They also considered the particular activity they were going on, where, how many staff, what were the risks to the community, and any victim information (i.e. were they going near victims). Staff emphasised it was important to note and communicate well with other staff about even small attempts and behaviours,

and said a huge part of their job was communicating with other professionals who interacted with the young people and might see things of concern – e.g., court officers, police officers.

Staff were asked what they thought was positive about the current assessment process. Staff said there was great communication between teams, mentioned they had a good wide-ranging initial assessment on entry to a residence, and good noting of any current presentations and behaviours the young people had (e.g., on an offsite activity or in school). They also said there was an appropriate level of individual assessment considering the young person's particular circumstances, risk factors, history, and young people's *current* level of risk. This attention to current risk was seen as important as it allowed young people to be recognised for improvements in their behaviour and engage in reintegrative release and other activities in the future.

Lastly, we asked how the assessment process could be improved. Staff mentioned there needed to be a stronger focus on evidence-based processes and factors, as it was currently primarily based on clinical judgment. There was also variability in the weighting of risk factors across residences. Staff indicated there was a tendency to rely on static risk factors, missing the opportunity to consider more acute and dynamic risk factors. Staff believed it was important to ensure the assessment was kept up to date, and not just a cut and paste job. They suggested they needed a clearer process, and felt the assessment process should integrate information from all relevant staff, such as escorts and care staff that know the young person well and had spent time with them recently, so they were able to fully articulate and identify all relevant factors.

Risk Management. Staff identified a variety of current risk management processes they undertook when going on day release activities. Planning was seen as critical to successful offsite activities, not only for managing absconding risk, but also in keeping staff, the community, and young people safe. The physical aspect of planning was also mentioned as important to consider, such as where they were going, what route they were taking, what they would using as transport,

how long it would take, and any particular risks a release activity might present with (i.e. bike ride provides an easy escape mechanism).

Staff mentioned trying to match the risk management plan to the level of risk the young person presented with, such as putting on extra staff to manage young people perceived as high risk, as well as matching staff and young people based on both staff ability and rapport. They also identified taking precautions such as contacting police for support with very high-risk young people and contacting police and/or the residence if things went wrong (e.g., when the youth attempts to abscond). Staff also mentioned ensuring the young person was not aware of all the information regarding a release activity too far in advance (e.g., date, time of flights, etc.), "*we don't let them know that they are going until that morning so there's no risk of them telling their mates*".

Staff recognised, in terms of risk management, that sometimes they had no or little choice about whether a young person went on a day-release (e.g., court or an FGC) but for privileged activities were more able to control who did or did not go on them. Further, staff identified it was important to take young people offsite, and it was considered appropriate due to the developmental level of YP and supporting the occurrence of developmentally appropriate opportunities and reintegration. Staff mentioned they could take even high-risk young people offsite, as long they had appropriate resourcing and staffing to mitigate the risk, as much as possible.

Lastly, staff mentioned interventions to reduce absconding risk. They identified if they heard talk about absconding or misbehaviour in the residence, that they would get a staff member who had a strong relationship with a young person to talk with them and outline how that behaviour would not improve things for them. They said staff would also identify any presenting issues or motivations for absconding and attempt to follow up with the young person to reduce this and address the problem. Staff would also reinforce expectations with youth on how to get onto offsite activities and reinforce consequences if the young person did try and run away.

Relational Risk Factors

During interviews, staff identified relational risk factors in a number of ways. Relational factors denote risk factors related to family, or peers that influence absconding risk. The ways they were identified are outlined in the following factors, approach goals, avoidance goals, antisocial associates, and ringleaders.

Approach Goals. Approach goals for absconding were identified in a number of ways. One of the most important things staff identified as causing absconding were pull factors drawing young people out of the residence, such as family. Staff stated young people might abscond when they were worried about a family member or a family crisis occurred (e.g., a family member being hospitalised, or they were worried about who was caring for younger siblings), if they got a 'bad' phone call from a family member or partner or if they saw whānau at FGCs or court. Young people also had approach goals in the forms of events happening on the 'outside' such as a partner's birthday, or parties. Staff stated some young people absconded if their partner or family had not been in contact and they wanted to find out what was happening:

> *There are relationships, the whole boyfriend and girlfriend, and all of those dynamics. Like any boyfriend and girlfriend scenario, girlfriends are breaking up and that sort of thing, that can play a part, putting ideas in their head about getting out.*

The time of year was also identified by staff as an important risk factor, sitting as a new sub-factor under approach goals. Some staff mentioned young people did not want to be in residence over summer and Christmas, as this coincided with the school holidays and they wanted to be with their family and friends. Staff also highlighted that young people had more downtime during the summer school holiday period and thought the loss of the structure that school provided increased their absconding risk. The most important approach goals were that young people "*want to connect with key people in their lives whether that be girlfriends or family*".

Avoidance goals. Several avoidance goals were highlighted by staff members as important in the occurrence of absconding behaviour. For instance, young people feeling unsafe was highlighted as a very important aspect, as in a residence it could directly lead to absconding behaviour – often due to the presence of opposing gangs or the presence of other high-risk young people "*If life is going well in a residence that will influence them wanting to stay, if it's not, if everything's turning to shit and they are feeling unsafe then again, they will try and run*".

Another staff member identified that a young person known for absconding from residence may experience an avoidance goal, especially when they were new to a residence, due to other young people pressuring him[2] to demonstrate his expertise (related to the infamy subtheme) and show them how to abscond "*He is terrified of being here because … he is under pressure to try and abscond otherwise he may get roughed up by some of the older kids who want to learn the tricks of the trade*". Being bullied in residence, arguing with peers, or having negative relationships with staff were all also identified by staff as factors that may 'push' someone to abscond (i.e. avoidance goals).

Antisocial Associates. Antisocial associates were identified as an important risk factor in the occurrence of absconding behaviour by staff members. Staff identified the influence of antisocial peers, starting to act up and completely changing group dynamics, leading to non-compliance, and absconding. They mentioned the youth residence population was starting to consist of more serious offenders. Staff members also felt that "'*2%*' of very antisocial young people could take over a residence and make it unsafe for other young people. Other young people had to be non-compliant and join the '2%', or else face the consequences "*that drives them, that's the 2% ... that 2% can influence the rest of the 98%, they start thinking that we can get away.*" The contamination factor caused by this small number appears to be vital to understanding how absconding behaviour could

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[2] Most young people were referred to as he/him by staff as they represent the dominate gender in NZ YJ residences.

occur *"I think it's just one when they hear their mates run away that increases ... once one runs it becomes like a dominos effect"*.

Staff recognised young people were heavily influenced by their peers during adolescence, were vulnerable to behaving impulsively, and that some aspired to be gang members, which staff believed could all contribute to absconding behaviour occurring. For instance, one young person was identified as compliant, engaging in activities, etc. and did not present as at particular risk of absconding. However, as he aspired to be a gang member, he engaged in absconding behaviour to progress his goal. Young people engaging in criminal behaviour at the behest of gang members were also noted to be of concern. Some staff members, however, identified the antisocial peers' risk factor as just "*normal adolescent behaviour*" not contributing to absconding risk.

Ringleaders. A new and possibly unique absconding risk factor was identified by staff members during the interview process. Staff members identified being a ringleader, or KP (kingpin), could both predispose a young person to abscond, but also this ringleader could influence other young people around him to abscond. This ringleader might use other young people to facilitate their escape, such as distracting others:

> *Only one of them was really planned and fully dressed that night ... Even though they got over the front gate they weren't able to get far because they had no shirts on, no shoe. The boy got them all involved in it.*

Staff believed these ringleaders potentially acted by planning their absconding attempt and inviting other young people to participate in this. One young person, for instance, was the first person to abscond from a particular residence, and he seems to have planned out the absconding event, prepared for it, then invited other young people to join him. These ringleaders were potentially more calculating, and their absconding events may involve more elements of planning. Staff stated these ringleaders did more preparation for absconding events "*Kids who lead, and even some adults struggle with this, [they have] the ability to think for themselves*".

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Staff members also directly pinpointed ringleaders in a number of recent group absconding events, whereby a high-risk ringleader (identified as having serious offending backgrounds, a number of approach goals, a high level of violence propensity), influenced other low-risk young people to abscond with them:

Six of them absconded, all for totally different reasons, one sort of I think was the ringleader and it was more about a gang, I'm gonna do this, you guys follow me ... that peer influence, in that case, had a huge impact. There was a leader ... who instigated the whole thing, and then everyone else just sort of followed".

This suggests young people, who present with several protective factors and a low amount of risk factors could be influenced by a high-risk young person who leads the absconding event.

Protective Factors

Protective factors work by decreasing absconding risk. Protective factors identified in the interviews were self-control, family contact, positive staff relationships, access to food, and hope (new).

Self-control. Self-control was identified as a protective factor by staff members for absconding behaviour. For example, young people who were better at processing their feelings and what was going on for them, and thinking through the consequences if they did abscond, were highlighted as less risky. Staff stated young people who were slightly older or already facing serious charges, tended to decide not to abscond so as to not make things worse for themselves (e.g., harsh legal consequences, being moved to Corrections care), even when other young people were absconding around them:

[They] were conscious enough to know the impact for them, if they were facing distract court charges, or if they were slightly older, because most of the kids who escaped were 15/16. The 18/17-year-olds were like the impact for me could be pretty significant for me, like I could get

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transferred to prison for doing that. So, they are conscious enough to be able to make that

decision.

Family Contact. A young person's contact with their family was pinpointed as an important protective factor. Staff mentioned trying to help young people keep in contact with their family and partners whilst in the residence, to lower their absconding risk:

They have plenty of contact with people who are important to them … girlfriends' things like that, so they have lots of incentive to stay … because if we don't then they will just get annoyed and bored with us and go.

This contact ensures young people maintain important relationships with loved ones outside the residence – which can be difficult given the young people are placed around the country. A young person having a family member who was encouraging to them to stay in a residence was seen as important in supporting a young person to engage more with activities and people in the residence "*if the whānau [family] are engaged in the process then it makes the young person more motivated to stick to whatever's happening for them*".

Positive Staff Relationship. Positive staff relationships, or rapport, was identified as one of the strongest factors that influence young people do not abscond. Almost every staff member interviewed, pinpointed the young person having a positive and trusting relationship with staff members as vital to them not absconding, and/or staff stopping absconding through de-escalation. Staff believed the establishment of positive rapport involved trust-building, such as assisting young people in trusting the staff with how they were feeling and what they were thinking "*definitely if they are feeling anxious and they know they can come talk to you*". Staff believed the development of a relationship with young people also meant staff had a better understanding of the young person and their behavioural triggers.

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Other staff members emphasised that having a cultural affiliation or speaking the same language could positively impact their ability to form a positive relationship with a young person, as it improved their ability to understand, and engage with them "*I thought about how myself and other Samoan speaking staff managed to de-escalate potential risk while off-site … the ability to converse in one's native tongue really helped in some really prickly situations both on and off-site*".

Showing staff members could relate to young people's life experiences was seen as a very important aspect of this category. This could be seen whereby young people often offended to come back into a residence or tried to contact staff members they may have had good relationships with inside, emphasising how positive staff relationships could impact the young people. Staff members highlighted that ensuring young people were supported when they were going to court and participating in other stressful events (e.g., Tangihanga/funerals) and having a staff member travelling with them who had a positive relationship with them was vital to reducing absconding risk:

> *That's the reason I went last time … YP1 requested for me to go with him … he said look I would feel real safe if you came with me … and ok I said, so what's your concern? And it's quite valid, he said if I lose my shit in the dock, I can't trust any of the others to hold me back, I don't get on as well with them.*

Access to Food. Several staff members identified food could be important to some young people "*Three hot meals and enjoying that, they're having positive engagement with the kids and the staff*". Although staff stated young people often complained about the food, they mentioned young people were often not able to access enough food outside of the residence and put on weight after being in the residence. They saw that providing food met a basic need young people may have been lacking in the community "*Food can also be seen as being more indicative of meeting that basic need, rather than loving the food per se, they love that the food is there. And that's really the motivator*".

Staff members even indicated young people would sometimes try to come back to a residence because of the access to food, among other things.

Hope. A new factor identified by staff members in the interviews was the idea of hope. Staff members identified that in order for young people to comply with the rules and engage with staff members, programmes, and education, they needed to see there was something in it for them. For example, they needed to have hope they could get to the end of their sentence (e.g., have an end date) and have positive outcomes when they left *"if the kids can't see the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow then why would they hang around? If there is an opportunity that presents itself, they will go"*.

Staff believed young people needed the motivation to be good, as quite often young people may not see any particular cost to absconding. A staff member shared what one young person had said to him "*He said "what's the point of being good" you know*". For young people, this motivation may involve moving up in the behavioural management system or being given opportunities to engage with enjoyable activities such as working on the farm, swimming, bike riding, etc. "*So, control over their lives and maintaining some sense of hope. That keeps them buoyant I guess, and also keeping them occupied with meaningful activities in here*".

If young people were potentially facing serious consequences already (i.e. prison time) they also may not care as much about the consequences of absconding and may just want to "*cause mayhem*". This idea seemed to be especially prominent for staff if the young people had been in the residence multiple times, causing cumulative consequences:

I have talked to a few kids around why they escaped and some of them just don't see any hope … some of them are in so much shit they are going to end up in jail for a long time … [They] have got to the point where why not just create pandemonium.

Young people attaining positive educational outcomes and achieving things they may not otherwise be able to achieve in the community were all seen by staff as being part of this hope. Staff also highlighted the importance of a young person having input into their own care plan, and ensuring the young people understood they had some autonomy over their own lives, limited though it was by their current circumstances. Finally, adults in young people's lives were also pinpointed as vital to supporting a sense of hope in young people. Staff believed if professionals were doing their jobs and helping the young people to engage with programmes, supporting them in court, creating meaningful care plans, and giving them opportunities for reintegration, then young people were more likely to have hope for the future.

Key Findings

A number of factors were identified during interviews with Oranga Tamariki staff members, falling broadly under four key themes; individual (e.g., self-regulation difficulties), relational (e.g., approach goals), contextual risk factors (e.g., feelings of frustration), and protective factors (e.g., maintaining contact with family). These factors are summarised in Table 5. Several novel factors were identified during the interviews, including ringleaders, hope, and Oranga Tamariki specific contextual factors (i.e. young people being on remand vs sentenced). The factor of isolation was not identified during staff interviews, in spite of it being factor identified during the review of the extant literature. The next section will discuss the key findings, their applications, and implications, and some of the limitations of the research.

Table 5.

Summary of Themes and Categories to Emerge from Analysis of Incident Report

Individual:	Ideation of absconding.	Contextual:	Significant life stressor.
	Indications of planning (new).		Feelings of frustration.
	Previous absconding history.		Feelings of boredom.
	Mental health.		Geographic location of their home region.
	Externalising behaviours.		Time spent in YJ residence
	Propensity for violence.		Ability of staff members (new).
	Previous offending history.		Environment and culture (new).
	Substance use history.		Remand vs sentenced (new).
	Smoking dependency.		Consequences (new). assessment process (new).
	Self-regulation difficulties.		
	Placement history.		Risk management process (new).
	Age.		
	Gender differences.		
Relational:	Approach goals.	Protective:	Self-control.
	Avoidance goals.		Maintaining contact with family.
	Anti-social associates.		Positive staff relationship.
	Ringleaders (new).		Access to food.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Introduction

Absconding behaviour has wide-ranging consequences. Young people who abscond are exposed to a number of significant risks such as exploitation, abuse, worse life outcomes, and often engage in further offending. Absconding also has significant impacts on the staff who work with young people and the wider community. Importantly there is a dearth of research in this area limiting our understanding around what causes young people to abscond and how to predict its occurrence. This research was conducted to evaluate what risk and protective factors of absconding were present in a youth justice residential context in NZ and to understand the existing risk assessment process. The research achieved this by conducting a review of historic incident reports, conducting interviews with staff, and evaluating the absconding literature. This study then compiled this information and created a pilot absconding risk assessment tool.

This qualitative study answered the followed questions: 1) whether the risk and protective factors identified in absconding incident reports overlap with those factors identified in the international literature? 2) whether the risk and protective factors identified in interviews overlap with those factors identified in the international literature? 3) whether there are any risk or protective factors unique to the NZ context? 4) what works and does not work with the current risk assessment process? and 5) what systems related issues impact absconding risk?

Themes and categories were identified in incident reports and interviews and were similar to a number of risk and protective factors found in the international literature. These themes were individual, contextual, and relational risk factors, as well as protective factors. In addition to those factors identified which were consistent with the extant literature, several novel factors were also identified, including hope, and ringleaders. Lastly, staff members also spoke to the risk assessment process in residences and identified several system-related factors (sitting under contextual risk

factors). This chapter provides an overview and discussion of the important findings from this research, with a brief discussion of each of the themes. Consideration of the implications and applications of this research are offered, followed by an outline of the limitations identified in this research. Lastly, future avenues for research are offered.

Findings

The risk and protective factors identified in the literature as being potential predictors in the occurrence of absconding behaviours, as put forward in this study, are composite constructs rather than explanatory (Ward & Fortune, 2016). They are hypothetically predictive and posit correlational relationships to absconding, as opposed to causational relationships. Nonetheless, absconding appears to occur for reasons that are identifiable and measurable, and potentially predictive. Absconding behaviour occurs because of a combination of issues or events that are occurring in a young person's life, and risk and protective factors identity some of these events or issues (Bowden, 2017). The principle of risk assessment underpinning this research, suggests that as the number of risk factors increases so too does the risk of reoffending, or in current studies case, absconding (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). However, young people do not abscond if they have a certain number of risk factors, or never abscond if they have several protective factors, rather absconding is complex and multifaceted, and all factors must be considered together to construe absconding risk.

Individual Risk Factors

This study found a number of prospective individually based risk factors were present for the young people as identified by staff. Absconders were very often identified to have displayed the presence of ideation of absconding and the planning of absconding behaviours. Interestingly, these two factors did not come through strongly in the literature with few studies identifying ideation or planning as absconding risk factors (Martin et al., 2018; McIntosh et al., 2010; Simpson et al., 2015). Ideation of absconding was identified strongly in both the interviews and incident reports,

with numerous examples of young people presenting with ideation of absconding. Interestingly, a new example of this aspect of ideation was identified – that of infamy. Young people often presented with absconding ideation to gain recognition from peers and establish their reputation. This did not come through strongly in the literature, however, one study previously found young people sometimes absconded to gain peer recognition for 'beating the system' (Clark et al., 2008).

Absconding ideation was separated into two factors, creating a new factor, indications of planning, consistent with researchers understanding of suicidal behaviours. In the literature on suicidal behaviours, people can think about, and want to undertake a behaviour (ideation) but do not attempt it. They are two separate, if heavily related factors; to undertake planning to abscond, ideation is a necessary precursor to drive the planning, however, ideation can be present without planning indications being present (May & Klonsky, 2016). Connected to ideation, indications of planning entail all planning aspects around absconding, such as being found kicking out windows, preparing tools or weapons, wearing different clothes, as well as planning with other young people to abscond. This factor offers a very clear and easily identifiable one to measure – if a young person presents with planning behaviours, they are likely at risk for absconding. Both factors, absconding ideation, and planning, were included in the pilot assessment tool to assess their predictive ability.

Previous absconding history was only noted once in incident reports as important, however, in interviews, it was noted several times. Staff believed, if a young person ran once, they were very likely to run again. Interestingly, in one study, once factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and previous offending, were controlled for, previous absconding incidents lost their predictive ability (Mews, 2014). That is, the factors predictive ability was subsumed beneath the other factors. This makes sense, as previous absconding generally does not then cause further absconding. Rather, absconding is an important predictor of future absconding, as it is most likely indicative of the underlying issues that motivated the previous absconding events. It serves as a proxy factor for the presence of other absconding risk factors. As we cannot be sure we will be accurately collecting all

of these underlying factors, previous absconding history appears to be a vital predictive factor to include in the pilot risk tool due to its possible strong association with the occurrence of future absconding behaviour.

Mental health did not come through strongly in incident reports as a factor, however, several staff members identified it during interviews. It was noted that mental health impacted absconding risk by causing more challenging behaviour, possibly, as the young people attempted to deal with their emotions and mental health state by absconding. Several staff members also indicated young people in residences often presented with severe mental health issues. Interestingly, some studies have noted young people who are not receiving enough in-depth therapeutic interventions may abscond (Biehal & Wade, 1999; Lin, 2012). This possibly indicates young people in NZ YJ residences require more therapeutic interventions that address their mental health to reduce absconding risk. Although this factor was not strongly present in our results, ultimately the weight of evidence on mental health indicates it should be investigated further in the pilot risk tool.

Staff also identified particularly high absconding, and other risks around young people withdrawing from methamphetamine, noting were are often erratic, violent, and non-compliant when withdrawing, which aligned with risk factors identified in the literature (violence, externalising behaviours; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Eisengart et al., 2008; Lin, 2012; Sarri et al., 2016). They also noted some young people, even when not withdrawing, would abscond to access drugs, which sits in line with the extant literature (Grotto et al., 2015; Milette-Winfree et al., 2017). Young people were also believed to be influenced to abscond by a desire to smoke, with one staff member noting almost all young people accessed cigarettes when they absconded – but others did not seem to think it was a motivator. More research will need to be done to ascertain the predictive utility of this factor with only a few studies indicating smoking is important (e.g., Bowden, 2017). Both substance use history and smoking dependency, therefore, were included in the pilot assessment tool as risk factors.

Externalising behaviours, previous offending, and violent propensity were noted by staff as possible absconding predictive factors. The current study found externalising behaviours seemed to occur concurrently to absconding attempts, understandably, as absconding is a form of non-compliance. Often multiple examples of externalising behaviours were present in a single incident report, with behaviours often escalating from low-level non-compliance into absconding over preceding days. If a young person presents with non-compliance, and disruptive behaviour, they seem to be at risk for absconding behaviour. Similar to this previous factor, propensity for violence was identified in many absconding reports and interviews, with young people often engaging in violence prior to absconding. Research suggests previous violence not only indicates an absconding risk but also, consistent with the incident reports, indicates the level of damage a young person is willing to enact during absconding events (Martin et al., 2018; Simpson et al., 2015; Wilkie et al., 2014).

Related to the previous two factors of externalising behaviours, and violent propensity, previous offending history was not noted in incident reports, however, it was noted in interviews. There was a sense amongst staff that young people in YJ residences could sometimes be in there for very serious crimes, and they could sometimes be motivated to abscond to go and perpetuate more crimes, particularly if their criminal behaviour had ideological motivations to it. Thus, a more extensive, or more serious criminal history seems indicative of absconding risk. These three factors may also act in a manner that is similar to the previous absconding history, as a proxy of other risk factors, for instance, problematic behaviour is noted to be a mask for often deeper trauma, previous offending can be indicative of negative home life, and violence has been identified as being predictive of absconding in several other settings (Department of Corrections, 2016a; Sarri et al., 2016; Simpson et al., 2015; Wilkie et al., 2014; Zelechoski et al., 2013). These factors, therefore, are important to include in the pilot absconding risk assessment tool.

Self-regulation difficulties were identified as a precursor to absconding by staff. This factor comprised of several aspects, including anger, impulsivity, and emotional arousal, and was indicated by staff members, and the literature, to be influential in absconding behaviour occurring in situations where a young person was confronted with emotional events (Karam & Robert, 2013; Milette-Winfree et al., 2017; Morgan, 2012). Incident reports suggested young people were often reacting to negative events, and in turn, their flight or fight system kicked in (or sometimes both simultaneously. This is consistent with the literature, which has found young people often abscond when they experience strong emotions or to escape negative stimuli inside care homes or residences (Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Bowden, 2017; Karam & Robert, 2013). Further, young people are impulsive, and this group, in particular, are non-voluntarily in care – if they saw an opportunity to abscond, many would take it, as indicated by staff (Cutuli et al., 2016; Pyrooz, 2012). These results indicate this factor should be included in the risk assessment tool as an absconding risk factor.

Placement history was not present in incident reports; however, it was identified in interviews, and the literature, as a factor which may contribute to potential absconding (Bowden, 2017; Kim et al., 2013; Lin, 2012; Pyrooz, 2012; Sarri et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2013). Staff pinpointed increased familiarity and comfortableness as being related to absconding risk. This appears, based on the literature, to be acting as another proxy factor, with multiple admissions to care, especially beginning at a young age, reflective of poorer family background and more significant history of misbehaviour (Sarri et al., 2016). It is important to include this risk factor in the risk assessment tool, to assess if it predicts absconding occurrence in NZ youth justice residences.

Identifying information, such as young people's demographic information, was not collected to maintain the anonymity of young people, thus age and gender were not mentioned in incident reports. Results from interviews did not make it clear what age or gender was risker – younger youth are potentially more impulsive and possibly face fewer consequences, whereas older youth

are more able to abscond but may have more self-control, and staff identified both of these aspects as influencing absconding risk (Karam & Robert, 2013; Osgood et al., 2010).

Similarly, staff stated boys were more at risk for absconding, often running to see their partners and to achieve infamy with their peers, however, this may be because they make up more of the population of young people in NZ YJ residences (Ministry of Justice, 2019b). In contrast, running for females is suggestive of a much larger underlying problem than for males, fewer females ran but ran more often, and seemed to do so due to deeper and more serious underlying problems (Jeanis, 2017). These conflicting findings are consistent with the existing literature, which has found contrasting results on both age and gender concerning absconding. Despite this, previous literature does suggest both age and gender are important in predicting absconding behaviour (Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Bowden, 2017; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Eisengart et al., 2008; Jeanis, 2017; Kim et al., 2013). Therefore, these two factors are important to include in the pilot tool to measure their predictive ability but won't be utilised as a risk factor as it not clear what age or which gender will predict absconding.

Contextual Risk Factors

Staff identified several potential contextual risk factors. Significant life stressors were identified by staff as a very significant absconding related factor, which fits with the literature, indicating this factor is therefore important to include in the pilot risk assessment tool. Staff, in incident reports and interviews, identified young people often absconded prior to, or just after stressful events such as court or FGC's, likely to avoid the emotions that arose because of those events or due to wanting to avoid the consequences of their actions. Similarly, Clark et al. (2008) found young people ran to avoid the consequences of their actions which fits with our results.

Feelings of frustration were also identified by staff as related to absconding, due to young people having issues with care plans, the length of time they were in residences, and losing privileges. Frustration seemed to arise when young people had privileges removed – potentially providing a

link between externalising factors and absconding, as the young people engaged in non-compliance, lost privileges, and then in response, could abscond. Several other studies have noted frustration was an important absconding risk factor, particularly around young people lacking information on their care, or how long they would be staying in residence (Bowden, 2017; Finkelstein et al., 2004). High levels of frustration, contributing to absconding, have also been noted to be commonly present in restricted settings, which the youth justice residences are (Finkelstein et al., 2004; Milette-Winfree et al., 2017; Wilkie et al., 2014). This factor, therefore, appears to be an important absconding predictor and was included in the risk assessment tool.

The risk factor of boredom was not identified in incident reports but was in interviews, where it was noted as important in the occurrence of absconding. Staff suggested youth may experience boredom due to not enough activities or more free time in residences, and this may also give young people time to plan to abscond with other young people. Finkelstein et al. (2004) found similar results when interviewing foster care youth on why they absconded. It appears to be both a motivation for absconding, and also provides an increase in opportunities to abscond, through allowing opportunities for planning to occur with other young people (Bowden, 2017; Crosland et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2013). Boredom, therefore, should be included in the absconding risk assessment tool.

The geographic location of their home region appeared, as indicated by Oranga Tamariki staff, to increase the opportunity for absconding by young people, as they could draw on resources (friends and family) and also knew the area better – which street to run down, which fence to jump, etc. (Bowden, 2017). If a young person knows an area well, or alternatively, does not know an area, this appears to provide important information and should be assessed for usefulness further through its inclusion in the pilot absconding risk tool.

Similarly, the time spent in YJ residence also appears to impact absconding risk. If a young person was earlier into their sentence, they were identified by staff as higher risk, as they were less

settled, and possibly coming down from substances. Most importantly, their time until they finish their sentence was at its longest, therefore, they did not have a strong motivation to stay in residence. Previous literature has found those earlier in a sentence or placement were more at risk for absconding (Bowden et al., 2018; Courtney & Zinn, 2009; Guest et al., 2008; Lin, 2012; Sunseri, 2003). However, there was some variability noted in incident reports and interviews, with young people often absconding close to their release date, possibly due to the presence of other factors (e.g., peer influence). Although there were some mixed findings, this factor does appear to be important in predicting absconding risk and it will be included in the risk tool to be measured but won't be utilised as a risk factor.

Staff identified a number of system related issues that were not present in other literature. If a young person was on remand or was sentenced (new) also seemed to affect their risk in a host of ways, with staff stating young people were more at risk for absconding if they were on remand, as opposed to if they were sentenced. Staff identified this was due to a number of reasons, from not knowing how long they still had to spend in the residence, to facing fewer consequences if they absconded when on remand. There is no research on this factor, as it was a new factor identified in our research, therefore it should be investigated further as part of the pilot risk tool, but not as a risk factor, as it is not yet clear how it might predict absconding risk.

The ability of staff members seems to impact a young person's absconding risk. For instance, more physically able staff were suggested to be more able to stop an absconding attempt, whilst experienced and skilled staff were better able to intervene to de-escalate high-risk absconding situations. Related to this, there also seems to a difference between residences absconding rates, perhaps related to their number of skilled and experienced staff. Therefore, the residence environment and ability of staff, seem to be important factors to consider in the occurrence of absconding, as indicated in Figure 1.

The characteristics of young people in residences also appear to impact absconding. In 2019 there was an increase in the youth justice age, there had also been changes in the youth justice system with more young people having their charges dealt with at a lower level (i.e. warnings, community sentences). It is possible the young people reaching residences were riskier and had an increased willingness to engage with more criminal and absconding behaviour (Lawrence, 2018; Ministry of Justice, 2019a, 2019b). Lastly, the youth justice residences, or environment (new) where youth are placed in NZ, are less secure than their equivalents in other countries – as indicated by interviews. This less secure setting may impact absconding rates, and we suggest makes it much more comparable to other settings such as foster care, as opposed to prisons.

The similarity between YJ residences in NZ and foster care contexts in overseas jurisdictions is also found in a lack of consequences for absconding behaviour. For young people, staff stated they often did not intend to run away for a long time, rather they were often intending to escape for a short period. They were also getting some perks alongside this, achieving notoriety, or seeing family and friends, and then, as staff indicated, they could and sometimes intended to, return to the residence. This is consistent with findings of Morgan (2012, p. 16) who found young people often absconded intending to return "it's to make a point, but you mean to come back". Interestingly, the literature suggests that if the consequences are severe when young people return from absconding, this may, in turn, cause them to abscond again (Clark et al., 2008; Morgan, 2012). These broader environmental factors will be considered in the risk tool on the final page. However, more investigation of the impact of these factors (staff ability, environment, lack of consequences), and how to quantify their risk, particularly in a New Zealand context, is necessary before they can be integrated as risk factors into the absconding risk tool, as it is not clear how to measure these for each young person.

The noted variability between residences in the risk assessment and risk management process also appears to be an issue. There is a clear need to focus on more acute and dynamic absconding

factors, increase transparency and provide a clear process to follow for staff. Hence the need for an inter-residence, evidence-based, risk assessment tool. However, it seems residences do currently have a strong process to follow for planning and managing the risks of young people – absconding is an atypical behaviour, that only occurs in a very small amount of cases. In a setting such as youth justice residences, where almost all the young people should be fairly risky (Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989), their relatively low rates of absconding indicate the risk management and assessment process currently utilised are likely significantly impacting absconding rates (Moore & Hammond, 2000).

Relational Risk Factors

We found a number of relational risk factors were present for the young people, as identified by staff. Approach and avoidance goals were less present in the incident reports; however, they were frequently identified as important in the interviews. These pull and push factors seem to be vital to understanding the decision of a young person to run. Young people were noted to be particularly concerned with their safety, with staff stating that when young people felt unsafe in residences, generally due to their peers, they would then abscond to deal with this. This is in line with findings in the literature, which found individuals will often abscond in response to an unsafe environment (Push factors; Bowden, 2017; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Morgan, 2012; Muir-Cochrane et al., 2013).

Young people were also noted by staff to abscond due to many different approach goals, such as to reach family, friends, partners, fun activities, or family crises on the outside. The time of year particularly around spring (See Figure 3.), had a higher number of absconding events occurring. Interestingly, Finkelstein et al. (2004) found staff thought their young people were particularly at risk over weekends and summertime. They suggested this was due to boredom and the need for more engaging and fun activities to be scheduled at this time. Staff members in our research reported the same periods were particularly risky but suggested absconding during these periods was due to young people wanting to be with their family and friends – the factor likely includes

aspects of both. It seems not having schooling or programmes also gives young people more time to plan absconding behaviour.

Building upon these approach and avoidance goals, Karam and Robert (2013) suggest absconding is a functional coping mechanism, which allows young people to meet important needs. It appears young people often believe running away is a logical action to meet their needs, such as the need for connection with people outside the residences, and to access fun experiences (pull factors), to deal with strong emotions they felt they could not manage inside the residence, to avoid stressful situations, or to regain autonomy over their life (push factors; Bowden, 2017; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Morgan, 2012; Taylor et al., 2013). The presence of either factors would, therefore, be an indication of potential risk for absconding. Thus, it is important to include these factors in a pilot risk assessment tool to evaluate if they are predictive in the New Zealand youth justice residential context.

Staff noted antisocial associates as important in understanding absconding risk– if there were a "2%" of risky young people, and a young person was hanging around those youth they were seen to be more at risk for absconding. Staff also noted antisocial behaviour occurring if a young person was aspiring to be in a gang, or at the behest of gang members. This is consistent with similar findings in several American studies which found gang membership in criminal populations was important in predicting absconding (Powers et al., 2018; Pyrooz, 2012). Another factor of ringleaders was identified in our research that was not present in the international literature. Staff noted that particularly influential young people, 'Kingpins' – or KP's, seemed to have an adverse influence on those around them. It seems that in a number of instances low risk-young people followed a leader during some absconding events. However, it seems that if a young person was what would be typified as a high-risk absconder, they were able to influence those around them to abscond, even when those around them have almost no reason or motivation to do so. These two factors will be included in the pilot risk assessment tool to assess their predictive ability.

Interestingly, isolation or alienation was not heavily identified in either the interviews or incident reports. It may be subsumed beneath avoidance or approach goals for instance. If a young person is feeling lonely, then it makes sense they would deal with this by running to family. Although this factor did not come through strongly in our results, it may also be a factor staff were not aware of. It has, however, been found to be important in the literature (e.g. Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Chaudhary et al., 2018; Clark et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2013). Therefore, its predictive ability should be tested in the pilot risk assessment to assess if it predicts absconding risk or its predictive ability it subsumed beneath other factors.

Protective Factors

We found a number of protective factors were present for the young people as identified by staff. Staff believed self-control seemed to be important in helping a young person weather the aforementioned risk factors. If they were able to process negative experiences and emotions healthily, they could avoid resorting to absconding behaviour. This was identified particularly in the older youth as important, as they were seen by staff as being more likely to face greater consequences for absconding due to their often longer offending history. Therefore, the self-control of a young person should be included in the pilot risk assessment tool. Maintaining contact with family was also noted to be important for a young person to engage positively with residences, particularly if family supported a young person being in the residence. This sits in line with approach goals to see family causing young people to abscond (Bowden, 2017; Crosland et al., 2018). Therefore, assessing if young people remain in contact with their family, and if the family supports them being in residence should predict absconding risk, and this factor should be included in the risk assessment tool.

Staff identified positive staff relationships or rapport as very important to understanding absconding risk. Relationships were identified as being vital to help young people not abscond. Staff believed good relationships acted to mitigate absconding risk on multiple levels. They also

believed these positive relationships helped young people feel safe in residences, helped them achieve in a number of domains, allowed them to settle young people if they had traumatic experiences or raised emotions, and also helped staff to de-escalate young people in the midst of, or subsequent to, an absconding event. This is consistent with the literature, with a number of studies identifying staff relationships as important, with negative relationships motivating absconding behaviour (Attar-Schwartz, 2013; Bowden, 2017; Finkelstein et al., 2004; Morgan, 2012; Muir-Cochrane et al., 2013). Staff relationships, therefore, appear to be an important protective factor in the consideration of absconding risk and should be included in the pilot risk tool.

Access to food was not found in incident reports but was noted by staff during their interviews. It was noted as important because youth often lacked access to food outside the residences, and youth were stated to often gain significant weight when in residences. This factor appears to be important, as young people often experience negative family homes, deprivation, and homelessness prior to entry to a residence (Lin, 2012; Sunseri, 2003; The Children's Society, 2012; Tyler et al., 2011). Therefore, this factor seems important for understanding absconding behaviour and should be included in the risk assessment tool to assess its usefulness in predicting absconding in the NZ YJ residential context.

The idea of hope was a new factor identified in the interviews by staff. It was a compilation of other aspects of young people's life. Staff believed if young people had hope that they would be less risky. It was also noted young people having an input (autonomy) into their care and sentence plan was important. These findings are in line with the literature – some studies have found people run to regain autonomy and control over their lives or are more at risk of absconding if their education or employment is poor (Bowden, 2017; Clark et al., 2008; English & English, 1999; Fasulo et al., 2002). If young people do not have hope that things will get better, they seem at risk of absconding and other non-compliance. If young people do not have hope of reintegrating with

their family, they may also be more likely to abscond, highlighting another aspect of how hope can be important (Kim et al., 2013).

The factor of hope may potentially be a unique New Zealand factor, given the differences in an NZ youth justice system, as compared to other youth jurisdictions across the world, which are much more like adult prisons (i.e. juvenile detention in the United States; Juskiewicz, 2009), and have far less prosocial opportunities for young people to engage with. However, there is a lack of research outlining protective factors in general, and this factor in particular, however, hope has emerged as a potential protective factor in this study. The factor of hope, although lacking confirmatory research, will be included in the pilot risk tool to assess its predictive ability.

Demographic Information:

There was some variability found between residences absconding rates. Although not assessed through a statistical measure, it still provides some information towards underlying levels of absconding. For instance, the variability was potentially due to the differences in the makeup of young people at residences (i.e. only currently one residence holds young people sentenced as adults and this group is often older and have engaged in more serious offending). Alternatively, aspects such as the differences in the skill of staff, level of staff teamwork, residence culture and physical environment may impact absconding rates. It is not, however, clear how these factors interact.

There also seems to be increasing rate of absconding over the past two years, possibly due to an age change in youth justice mid-way in 2019, with those aged 17 years now being included in the youth justice system (Lawrence, 2018). This means older young people, with potentially more serious criminal offending, are now being managed in youth justice residences. However, these results were not measured statically due to the small sample size, and further research should be done to ascertain the significance of these noted differences. The findings from our research have

been overviewed and interpretations offered, with the next section offering implications and applications that arose from the findings.

Cultural Factors

Cultural factors are important to consider in this context. It is vital to consider the ethnic identity of young people placed in NZ YJ the residence. This cultural context encompasses and impacts each of the overarching themes described above. Young people in the care of Oranga Tamariki are predominantly Māori and Pacifica, and to consider their risk of absconding without first norming our research in this context, and understanding the particular context that residences operate in, would be a breach of our Treaty of Waitangi obligations (Department of Corrections, 2007; Ministry of Justice, 2019). In the current study Oranga Tamariki staff were asked if they thought there were any factors unique to the New Zealand YJ residential context, and whilst many did not have any additional factors specifically identified, they, in the course of their answers, identified a number of factors that had not emerged in the general literature (e.g., ringleaders and hope). Novel factors were also identified during the analysis of the incident reports (e.g., indications of planning, and ringleaders were also identified). This suggests there may be unique factors that may impact the occurrence of absconding, particular to New Zealand YJ residential context.

Applications & Implications

I think a lot of it comes down to how they are feeling, the pressures of what's happening both here, and on the outside, and the opportunity, most of it. When you have a perfect storm of all those things.

Ultimately, the overarching goal of this research was to reduce rates of absconding and to improve overall outcomes for young people in out-of-home care, as they constitute a high risk and high need group (Zelechoski et al., 2013). Our results broadly fall in line with the absconding literature, with some new factors associated with absconding for young people in a secure youth justice residence in NZ also identified. This information was used to create a pilot absconding risk

assessment tool, addressing a research and practice gap, namely the lack of risk assessments designed to assess young people's absconding risk from YJ residences. There are a number of important implications that stem from this study. Future evaluation of the pilot absconding risk assessment tool will allow insight into which risk factors are predictive of absconding risk in a residential YJ setting in NZ and create a systematised process for all residences, based on the best available evidence (See Appendix C. Reference Table of Absconding Studies.; Simpson et al., 2015). This risk assessment tool should also make going on day activities much safer for young people and staff, as it will help provide information to the staff around the young person's current risk of absconding.

If found to be reliable and valid, this tool could be modified for use in similar settings, where absconding is a significant concern. For instance, New Zealand and other jurisdictions across the world are increasing their use of electronic monitoring (EM) for community-based sentences, including for young people (Martinovic, 2017). Absconding from these EM sentences is a significant concern (Department of Corrections, 2017), therefore having a baseline absconding risk tool, that could be modified to be applied to high-risk individuals on electronic monitoring is one practical, and theoretical benefit arising from this tool. This tool will need to be validated before it is utilised in these settings.

It is difficult to measure absconding, as absconding events are not that common (Moore & Hammond, 2000). Young people identified as high risk for absconding are often subject to more secure care and oversight, and thus are afforded fewer opportunities to abscond, whilst the opposite is true for lower-risk individuals (Moore & Hammond, 2000). Further, the YJ residences in NZ are currently using clinical judgement to make their assessments about who is or is not at risk for absconding, which research shows have very low levels of accuracy (Bonta & Andrews, 2017). Therefore, understanding which factors are predictive of absconding behaviour is vital to more accurately manage and reduce risk (Bowden, 2017; Guest et al., 2008). A number of novel factors

were identified in the current research, not identified in the international literature on absconding. These novel factors may potentially be unique to New Zealand but should also be further explored in other contexts.

Absconders are a heterogeneous group and abscond for multiple individual and complex reasons (Bowden et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2013; Morgan, 2012; Sarri et al., 2016). Our research suggests absconding risk factors identified in the literature are likely relevant in New Zealand, as a number of staff members identified the presence of many of the same absconding related factors. If Oranga Tamariki staff members are aware of absconding related factors and can identify their presence in young people, they should be able to accurately record these in the risk tool and will be more able to intervene and reduce absconding rates. From our study's findings and the general absconding literature, it is clear people abscond for identifiable reasons, for instance, if they feel unsafe in a residence, are stressed over an upcoming court date, if they want to spend time with family or friends, if they are bored, angry, frustrated, or because they see an opportunity and believe they will not face significant consequences (Bowden & Lambie, 2015; McIntosh et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2013). Absconding also appears to be a coping strategy that, from the youth's perspective, ameliorates issues and allows them to either escape their issues or run to something positive outside of the residence (Karam & Robert, 2013).

Staff also appeared to place absconders into two primary groups, one consisting of the majority of young people, who exhibit low levels of absconding – these are 'opportunity takers' who abscond impulsively, for instance, due to an upcoming transfer, if they see an absconding opportunity or to avoid a current stressful occurrence (Jeanis, 2017; Moore, 2000). The other group is a minority group of chronic absconders, or 'opportunity makers', who are higher risk and seem to abscond at every opportunity they can, and also create absconding opportunities (Jeanis, 2017; Moore, 2000). This chronic absconder group seems to be characterised by an early and varied history of absconding, likely due to underlying issues that began early on in their life and motivated

the absconding. However, this is just an observation and needs to be explored in future research to establish if these two distinct groups do exist in the NZ YJ residential context.

There are several practical applications of our study. We expect that once the pilot risk assessment tool has been validated, and the significant predictive variables identified, use of the finalised tool with the YJ residences in NZ will positively impact absconding rates, reducing the occurrence of absconding when compared to previous years. It will do this by assisting staff to better understand young people's absconding risk and then manage this appropriately. Systematic consideration of absconding risk factors, and a regulated and systematised policy, aimed at reducing absconding has been found to be effective (Simpson et al., 2015). Such research suggests our risk assessment tool will have a positive impact on absconding rates. This risk assessment tool will allow residences to measure and categorise the risk levels of young people. They will be able to better allocate their resources, such as the amount of staff on a day-release activity or targeting interventions at areas of risk identified in the risk tool.

Particularly for Oranga Tamariki, a number of system related implications arose from the research. A need for a clearer process for assessing absconding risk was identified, and it is intended that the pilot risk assessment tool will provide this, once evaluated. Young people should first have a risk tool completed early into their stay at a residence, to identify any pressing absconding concerns. There should also be an improvement in the review process after an absconding event. Young people and staff should be debriefed, and antecedents, motivations, and mistakes should be identified and responses to mitigate the particular issue/s that led to an absconding event should be implemented. There is also a need for further training with staff on what they are legally able to do to restrain young people (staff were unclear on this), and more training (e.g., defensive driving). Additionally, there are issues around young people on remand in residences lacking coherent care plans and potentially being at higher risk for absconding, when compared to sentenced young people, and this offers a clear avenue for improvement.

The results from this study and the existing literature suggest several possible interventions. Some Oranga Tamariki staff identified talking to young people and problem-solving issues that might motivate absconding as a clear and practical action that could be taken to reduce absconding risk. Such responses should be encouraged more widely, and staff could use the pilot risk assessment tool to assist with this process. This is in line with other research which has found simple interventions can reduce absconding motivations (Bowden, 2017; Crosland et al., 2018). Children who ran from foster care in the United Kingdom explicitly stated staff asking about their problems and then the staff intervening was one method to help them not run away, or to reduce their absconding risk after returning from an absconding event (Morgan, 2012).

Further, staff relationships were identified as hugely important in helping the young people not abscond, whilst more intense therapeutic interventions may also help reduce absconding risk (Fasulo et al., 2002; Karam & Robert, 2013). Research has found simply increasing security may result in more violent absconding attempts, limiting this as an intervention, which Oranga Tamariki staff also agreed with. However, the quality of staff relationships and possible interventions identified above may help to avoid this (Simpson et al., 2015). A number of implications and applications arising from this research have been outlined. The next section will outline some limitations with our research and data set.

Limitations

The most important limitations of this research were the data sets utilised. Although the incident reports provided rich information that was useful in our research, they had aspects which also reduced their usefulness, such as limited factors reported, antecedents and motivations often not identified, and variability in the information given across incidents. Additionally, some factors were identified in the incident reports, but it was not clear what role, if any, they played in absconding, potentially resulting in some important absconding factors being ignored. Further, before 2016, escapes and attempted escapes were less reliably recorded in incident reports, meaning we may not

have captured all absconding incidents that occurred during the period of interest, and this may account for the rise in absconding seen in youth justice residences.

However, the incident reports were not created to be used for research, but rather were for internal purposes. The incident reports were limited in some richness and depth as they were created for internal purposes within Oranga Tamariki and then retooled for our purposes; however, our data was deemed appropriately rich to conduct an investigation testing the literature in a New Zealand context. The interviews conducted with staff members were also utilised to address possible gaps in the incident reports, as they held knowledge of events not included in incident reports. Due to the nature of qualitative research, there is the risk the interpretation of the data will be biased due to factors such as the researchers prior understanding and experience. As outlined in the methods section, a number of steps were taken to help mitigate against the impact of factors that could impact the credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability of the findings (e.g., by providing participants with copies of their transcripts to review and edit, triangulation of data sources, having two coders independently code the data). The, at least partial, effectiveness of these processes is evident in the fact a number of novel factors, not found in the extant literature, were identified as part of the current research.

Another limitation with our research was that we were relying on what the staff knew or reported, this meant some key factors that predict absconding were likely under-reported or not recognised by staff. It is difficult to know the internal psychological processes each young person undergoes which limits factors to the observable external factors, or ones identified by staff through conversations with young people. An additional limitation was one identified in the introduction. The research base for absconding is not extensive and is often does not involve secure youth justice settings, or New Zealand (Bowden et al., 2018). Further, the literature presents with variability in absconding definitions, is often based on small or unrepresentative populations and, importantly, often does not consider protective factors (Bowden et al., 2018). Lastly, as we based our research in

a particular context, our pilot risk assessment tool may not be directly applicable to other contexts. There will likely be differences across settings, thus it should be tailored appropriately to any new setting it might be used in.

Future Avenues for Research

There is a clear future direction for this research – to test the pilot risk assessment tool's predictive ability. It will be necessary to explore the predictiveness of factors and remove redundant factors. A multiple logistic regression, measuring factors predictive ability in a longitudinal manner, for instance, would be a useful method of measuring the effectiveness of our tool. It should be tested in different settings to identify its validity and expand and refine the tool as necessary, as it is crucial to examine the model's stability, reproducibility, and external validity (Bensen & Clark, 1983; Siontis et al., 2015). Interviews with staff who have used the tool would also likely improve its utility. Further research should ensure the tool is normed in the context in which it will be used and that it captures factors relevant to the setting.

There is a need for longitudinal research and to collect absconding specific data rather than retrospective analysis conducted on file data that is not absconding specific. There is also a need to test variables across gender, and groups as there may be two different typologies of young people who abscond, as we suggested in the implications and as identified in other research (Jeanis, 2017). Possible further research should aim to delineate if there are different typologies of absconding youth and ensure absconding factors are gender-responsive (Kim et al., 2013). As mentioned earlier, some factors act as proxies for others (for instance previous absconding history), therefore a number of potential factors may overlap and lose their predictive validity when combined. However, there may some issues in finding which factors are statically significant or not as absconding risk is difficult to quantify due to the low base rate of absconding, and any future study will need a large number of participants to accommodate this (Moore & Hammond, 2000). More research and understanding around motivational influences for absconding, rather than just

characteristics that are indicative of these motivations, may further increase our understanding of what causes absconding (Simpson et al., 2015).

By understanding in greater depth, the reasons for absconding, interventions will be better able to target these factors to reduce the absconding risk. For instance, previous absconding is likely not a motivating variable in future absconding but rather indicates there are underlying issues which have led to the previous absconding. Antisocial associates could be predictive because it captures several other risk factors as part of what being a gang member entails. Future research will need to be undertaken to differentiate between factors that act as *proxy* risk and protective factors and those that are motivating absconding. Future research should aim to develop individualised understandings and interventions for young people's motivations for absconding (Crosland et al., 2018). There is a need to create a unified theory of why absconding occurs – but this would require having explanatory understandings of absconding, rather than simply predicative composite factors.

Future studies should include more protective factors and consider how the system that the absconding occurs in can impact absconding rates (i.e. systems issues, definitions of absconding, level of security; Bowden & Lambie, 2015; Guest et al., 2008). Additionally, it is worth noting there is a dearth of evidence that addresses interventions aimed at preventing or managing absconding, with only a few studies that have focused on this (i.e. Bowers et al., 2005; Clark et al., 2008; Simpson et al., 2015), and none in a youth justice space. Thus, further research is needed in this area, as are studies to evaluate the effectiveness of such interventions.

Conclusion

Absconding from care can have serious short and long-term consequences, exposing young people, and those around them, to a number of serious risks. The reasons young people abscond are complex and individual. However, they abscond for reasons we can identify, for reasons that make sense, and by identifying the underlying issues, it is likely possible to intervene and reduce or even remove their absconding motivations. The study identified a number of potential factors relating to

absconding from a youth justice residential context. These include individual, relational, contextual, and protective factors. The most prominent factors identified were the ideation and planning of absconding, externalising behaviours, violence, previous absconding history, and antisocial peers. Notably, indications of planning, hope, ringleaders, and several contextual related factors, were novel factors not identified strongly in the existing literature, but which were identified in our research, possibly due to the focus being the YJ setting.

These findings have important practical and theory-based implications, not the least that a pilot risk assessment tool was proposed, drawing variables from the literature and new factors from our research. It is hoped the creation of a pilot absconding risk tool, developed for use in a New Zealand YJ residential context will provide an important tool to identify young people with a high risk of absconding behaviour, filling a clear gap in the literature and practice. The findings from this research also provide an important understanding of the applicability of the absconding literature to a New Zealand context and the ways Oranga Tamariki staff understand the absconding risk of their young people.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured Interviews were conducted with staff to seek their views on the risk and protective factors associated with absconding from secure youth justice residences in New Zealand. Prompt questions and topics covered in the interviews are provided below. Short introductions and explanations of key concepts (e.g., what was meant by risk factors) were provided at the start of each topic.

Section 1. Current process

Question 1.

What is the current procedure at your residence for evaluating the absconding risk of a young person?

Question 2.

Do you think this decision-making process around absconding could be improved? If yes, how do you think it could be improved?

Question 3.

What's good/effective about the current process?

Question 4.

Do you record attempted absconding if it occurs (i.e. find someone trying to escape, preparing etc. and this is stopped by staff)?

Section 2. Risk factors

Question 5.

How do you/your residence decide who does, or does not go on day-release activities? I.e. What factors do you consider?

Question 6.

What do you think are the important risk factors to look at when considering if a young person should be allowed to go on a day-release activity or not?

Question 7.

What important risk variables are not considered currently, that in your opinion, should be?

Question 8.

Do you think there are any unique risk factors for young people in a New Zealand context?

Question 9.

What do you think are important motivations?

Question 10.

Are there any other factors you think increase risk of absconding that we have not talked about?

Section 3. Protective factors

Question 11.

What do you think are important protective factors to look at when considering if a young person should be allowed to go on a day-release activity or not?

Question 12.

Do you think there are any unique protective factors for young people in a New Zealand context?

Question 13.

Are there any other factors you think reduce risk of absconding that we have not talked about yet?

Sections 4: Outline of risk tool. (Show them draft risk tool based on literature)

Question 14.

What do you think of the risk factors we have included in the tool? Do you think there are any important risk factors we have missed out?

Question 15.

What do you think of the protective factors we have included in the tool? Do you think there are any important protective factors we have missed out?

Question 16.

Do you have any feedback on how the questions could be improved?

Question 17.

Do you have any feedback on how the format could be improved?

Prompts might include: Do you think it would be easy to use. If yes, why? If no, why not? How might we improve on that [specific aspect] or it [if broad issue]?

Question 18.

Do you have any other feedback regarding this risk tool? Any other thoughts on how we could improve it?

Are there any aspects I did not ask you about that you would like to comment on?

Section 4: Opportunity for any further feedback or questions

Did you have any further you wanted to say or feedback to offer?

Appendix B. Pilot Risk Assessment Tool

(Tick when done): Sent to Manager: ☐ Upload to CYRAS: ☐

(Put X for the correct box). Is the young person on remand, ☐ or sentenced ☐. How long does the young person have left in the residence? (if sentenced):_____ How long has the young person spent in residence? _____

Study #: _____ Type of release activity:_____ Date: ___ / ___ / ___ Staff name:_____ Peer review signature:_____

Age of Participant:_____ Gender:_____ Ethnicity: _____

Please only give ratings for factors you believe are present. If you are confused about a question, please consult the instructions provided alongside this risk assessment. If you do not know the answer to a question, please try to follow up with records held, or consult with colleagues. If you still cannot find an answer, then circle no. Please have a colleague review your responses, so they can sign off above to say they have reviewed the tool.

Absconding Risk Factors	Circle	Circle the number that best represents the severity level of the risk factor present.			
1. Are there of any current approach goals i.e. are they 'running *to* something'?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4

		Give evidence of how variable is present below.
Approach goals are often significant events happening outside the residence. For example, upcoming holidays (e.g., Christmas or Easter), a crisis in the young person's family, having a significant relationship (partner) with someone outside of the residence, a wish for fast food or to take part in activities, parties or other events outside the residence.		Give evidence of how variable is present below.
2. Are there of current avoidance goals or reasons for 'running away' *from* the residence?	Yes/No	1 2 3 4
This variable is about absconding from residential settings or the care of Oranga Tamariki staff due to negative events/people inside the residence, or due to 'push factors. These are such things as bullying by peers or negative relationships with staff members. They could also be friction with others, social stress, etc.		Give evidence of how variable is present below.
3. History of previous absconding, or attempted absconding from placements?	Yes/No	1 2 3 4

This can include if the young person has run from foster homes, forensic mental health units, or other Oranga Tamariki care, or residential settings, jail, or police custody. The more secure a setting a young person has absconded from, the riskier this is. Please give the total of previous events if known (including attempted absconding). E.g., how many times have they run away before, what setting did they run from, and what happened during absconding?		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>
4. Displays a desire or wish to abscond. Has expressed thoughts around absconding from the residence, or has prepared to leave?	Yes/No	1 2 3 4
For instance, have told staff member they want to run in the previous 4 weeks, or expressed a desire to abscond – such as " I want to get out of here", or have told other young people they want to abscond, or have displayed indications they want to 'run for glory' and gain infamy through absconding attempts (i.e. abscond from all four residences).		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>
5. Are there any indications of absconding planning?	Yes/No	1 2 3 4

There are usually either direct or indirect indications of leave planning. These also include the young person being found kicking out windows, preparing tools or weapons, wearing different clothes, planning with other young people or people outside the residence to abscond, getting rid of personal items, preparing bags, or extra food, asking staff members about when, where, and how they are going on day-release, or asking questions about unit procedures, which staff are on shift, etc.		Give evidence of how variable is present below.
6. Has there been the occurrence of significant life stressor in the past two weeks or feelings of stress over upcoming events?	Yes/No	1 2 3 4
These could be such things as upcoming court dates, a dentist appointment, family visits being cancelled for some reason, or due to being transferred to another residence. Particularly if court outcomes are bad (residence order, further remand), young people seem to be at risk for absconding. These stressful events also include recent disagreement with the care team, distressing news or visits by friends or family, a recent accusation of wrongdoing, being		Give evidence of how variable is present below.

found with contraband, or rejection and disappointment.					
7. Is there a history of mental health issues, current presence of a relevant mental disorder, or presence of a <u>high</u> level of current suicidal ideation?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4
Not all disorders are relevant, please circle which of the following the young people present with (you may choose more than 1). [Specifically, these are: ADHD, eating disorders, alcohol, or other substance use disorders, and reported current suicidal intent or history of suicide attempts].		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>			
8. Is there a history of substance misuse, substance use disorder, or recent heavy substance abuse (prior to entry to residence)?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4
Consider, how long did they use for, what did they use, were they diagnosed with a substance use disorder, did index offence involve alcohol or drugs other than cigarettes? Evaluate to what level – i.e. 4 = usually uses or has used large amounts of substances. If they are withdrawing from a substance, especially methamphetamine, they seem particularly risky.		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>			

9. Is the young person a smoker or smokes regularly when outside the residence?	Yes/No	1 2 3 4
Has the young person mentioned they smoke, has cravings, have a desire for cigarettes, or dislike the no-smoking rules, etc.? Evaluate to what level – i.e. Usually a frequent smoker outside the residence.		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>
10. Does the young person present with disruptive behaviours in the residence or is generally non-compliant with residence rules?	Yes/No	1 2 3 4
Has conduct disorder, displays severe behavioural disruption whilst in the residence, displays externalising behaviours that involve harming others such as bullying, theft, vandalism or defiance, or has a history of non-compliance with court orders, probation, or programmes in the residence.		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>
11. Does the young person present with high violence risk or has a history of violent behaviour?	Yes/No	1 2 3 4

These are such things as a history of violent offending (assault, murders, sexual offences), high violent risk assessment scores, thoughts about wanting to engage in violence, elevated current emotional state, such as agitation, aggressiveness, distress, or recent violent actions in residence.		Give evidence of how variable is present below.			
12. Does the young person have a severe offence history?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4
This involves a high level of previous offending (i.e. significant amounts of criminality even when compared to other young people). Or if they have committed or are on remand for serious crimes with ideological motivations (terrorism, white supremacy).		Give evidence of how variable is present below.			
13. Are they in or associated with a gang, or have a very antisocial (more than others) peer group?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4
For example, the young person said they are part of a gang, others have reported they are part of a gang, the presence of gang tattoos, are a patched		Give evidence of how variable is present below.			

member, associate, or index offence is related to gang membership. Or they are part of a very disruptive, and anti-social group in the residence.		
14. Is the young person a ringleader, or in the same unit as a ringleader?	Yes/No	1 2 3 4
Is this young person an influential person who often gets others to join in non-compliance, or is this young person around another person who does this? This ringleader could be a high-status young person or the Kingpin of the unit.		Give evidence of how variable is present below.
15. Do they display boredom or self-report being bored often?	Yes/No	1 2 3 4
Some examples in the residence are: they seldom get excited about work or school, often complain about boredom and time passing slowly, they do not find it easy to entertain themselves, or they often sit around doing nothing. Seems to be, or has said they are, bored with their current situation and have better things to do outside the residence.		Give evidence of how variable is present below.

16. Displays frustration or self-reports being frustrated.	Yes/No	1 2 3 4
Some examples include: the young person cannot deal with feeling frustrated or overlooked. Can't bear it if people stand in the way of what they want, having to wait for things they want now, having certain thoughts, the hassle of having to do things immediately, or doing tasks when they are not in the mood. Seems to be, or has said they are, frustrated at their current situation or justice system. They could be frustrated at a programme or school demands or with staff, etc. Is frustrated they are not allowed to see family, friends, or partners.		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>
17. Does this young person display self-regulation difficulties (impulsivity)	Yes/No	1 2 3 4
This is seen in young people who struggle to control their emotions, falling easy to anger, or other similar emotions. If they have poor self-control and react poorly to being confronted by emotional events it is also present. For this to present the young person needs to be more impulsive than other young people.		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>

18. Has the young person experienced multiple in-care placements?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4
If the young person has had a number of placements in residence before or other similar settings and are very familiar with the process and staff, their absconding risk seems to be elevated. The more care placements (in and out of the system) a young person has, the more at risk for absconding they are. This factor is particularly present if the placements were in youth justice residences.		Give evidence of how variable is present below.			
19. Is the young person alienated or isolated from their peers and/or staff?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4
This could be aspects such as seems lonely and isolated, does not have close friends in the residence, does not relate well with residence staff, or has a lack of connections with family or friends on the outside (is not visited often by family for instance). This involves a change from their normal level of social contact. Do not tick this if they are *normally* socially isolated from others.		Give evidence of how variable is present below.			
20. Where is the geographic location of a young person's home region?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4

The geographic location of their home region increases the opportunity for absconding by young people, as they are able to draw on resources (friends and family) and also knew the area better – which street to run down, which fence to jump, etc. Consider this if a young person knows an area well and the day-release activity is based there.		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>

Protective Absconding Factors	Circle	Circle the number that best represents the severity level of the risk factor present.			
1. Does the young person present with a reasonable level of self-control, compared to other young people in the residences?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4
Does this young person display a high level of self-control, i.e. is not very impulsive with their actions? Consider if, and to what level, the following are true, e.g., the young person seems to think about their actions, does not react immediately to provocation, does not quit when things become complicated, does not take risks for fun, does not lose their temper easily, or lash out when they are angry.		Give evidence of how variable is present below.			
2. Is the young person maintaining contact with significant others outside the residence?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4
Does this young person have contact with their family, such as regular visits or		Give evidence of how variable is present below.			

contact with their family members, or other significant others? Do they seem, or report being happy with the amount of time they spend with their family or friends? Is their family supportive of the young person being in residence?					
3. Does the young person have a good relationship with the staff?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4
Does this young person have a warm and protective relationship with at least one staff member who is going on the day-release activity? For instance, they feel comfortable confiding in and talking with a staff member. Does the staff member feel they have a good rapport with this young person?		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>			
4. Young person displays an appreciation of food in the residence?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4
This can be measured by the expressions of gratefulness, or appreciation around having regular, or good food easily available in a residential setting.		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>			
5. Does the young person display hope in residence?	Yes/No	1	2	3	4

This is present if a young person has hope, such as achieving educationally when they haven't before, doing employment training, are on a programme they are enjoying, are on a high level of the BMS, feel safe in residence, if they have an end date for their sentence, are starting to reintegrate with their whanau etc. This is also present if they express the belief things are going better for them, and show significant changes in behaviour (e.g., are more compliant and engaged).		<u>Give evidence of how variable is present below.</u>

Summary

Please fill in all answers from the above risk/protective factors to this page.

Risk Factors	Risk Factors (tick those that apply)	Rating of Severity (1-4)	Protective Factor	Protective Factors (tick those that apply)	Rating of Severity (1-4)
1. Approach goals 2. Avoidance goals 3. Previous absconding 4. Ideation of absconding 5. Indications of planning 6. Significant life stressor 7. Mental health 8. Substance use 9. Smoking 10. Externalising behaviours			1. Appreciation of food 2. Good staff relationship 3. Contact with family 4. Self-control 5. Hope		

11. Offending history			
12. Violence			
13. Antisocial associates			
14. Ringleaders			
15. Boredom			
16. Frustration			
17. Self-regulation difficulties			
18. Number of in-care placements			
19. Loneliness and isolation			
20. Geographic location of their home region			

Did the young person attempt or succeed at absconding on this day-release activity? Y / N

Guided Questions.	
1. How likely is this young person to abscond, based on your knowledge of their motivations and previous absconding attempts? (Consider your knowledge and answers on the risk assessment tool).	Rate from 1-4 (With 1 being the least and 4 the most likely to abscond). 1 2 3 4
2. Outline reasons or motivations for why this young person is likely to abscond.	
3. Are there any people who might aid this young person in an absconding attempt, either in or outside the residence?	
4. Are there things about day activity that may be a potential risk? Think about environmental factors such as being able to get lost easily in town amongst crowds, or having easy access to transport such as bikes, cars, kayaks, are their traffic lights you will stop at on route to the activity – this is a risky point as they may jump out there.	
5. Are the staff members going with this young person physically appropriate? (i.e. fast or strong enough). If they are not, do they have a good rapport with this particular young person?	

6. On outings from the residence, what is the most likely risk scenario for this young person to abscond? (Consider index and previous offences, previous absconding, any risks they present with - as raised in the semi-structured risk tool, motivations identified in question 2 and environmental and human factors identified in question 3.)	
7. If the young person does successfully abscond, what risks does this present to themselves, the community, and professionals (e.g. Oranga Tamariki, Police, staff).	
8. What are at least three things practical things you can do to reduce the risk of this young person absconding?	
9. If leave is not allowed for this day activity, what can be done in the future to alleviate the absconding risks posed by this young person, so they can go on future activities?	

Overall judgement of risk of absconding for _this day activity_: Low / Medium / High.

Appendix C. Reference Table of Absconding Studies.

Study	Country	Setting	Participant information	Type of Analysis	Definition of absconding behaviour	Key factors related to absconding
Attar-Schwartz (2013)	Israel	Residential rehabilitative and therapeutic care	N = 1324: Male (54%); Jewish (75%); Arab (25%); Age range 11-19 years	Hierarchical Linear Modelling	Runaway and attempted runaway behaviour since admission to current residential care setting	Risk factors: being older, male, longer stays in institution, adjustment difficulties, experiences of physical violence from peers and staff, perception of staff as less supportive and stricter. Protective factors: being Arab female, staying in a large institution.
Biehal and Wade (1999)	United Kingdom	Foster and residential placements	Survey N = 210 Interview N = 36	Survey and interviews	Missing from care; included running away from care, and unauthorised absence from placements (absences	Risk factors: higher levels of previous and current placement instability, truancy, previous offending, and substance misuse.

					overnight or daytime absences reported to the police).	Identified two main typologies of absconding friends and runaways. 1) Friends: going missing to be with friends or family, were older and more likely to be a foster child. 2) Runaways: younger, more likely to be in residential placement, truant, have attachment issues and substance misuse, higher instances of previous absconding, and previous offending.
Bowden (2017); Bowden et al. (2018)	New Zealand	Care and protection, and Youth Justice residences	Retrospective file audit, $N =$ 241 youth: Female $n =$ 125; Age range	Multiple logistic regression	Running away from out of home care	Risk factors: female, high suicide risk, and more prior admissions to care. Absconding motivated by positive relationships outside of residence (family and friends) and negative relationships in

in four local authorities — Age range 11-16 years

| | | | 12-19 years; M = 15.86 years. Interviews N = 40: Male n = 20; M = 14.80 years | Thematic analysis | | residences (staff and peers), boredom inside residence, the need for freedom and autonomy, frustration at the care system, not receiving clear information around their sentence and it's length, and due to wanting to smoke. |
| Clark et al. (2008) | USA | Foster care | $N = 39$: n = 13 absconders participating in behavioural interventions; n = 26 absconders not treated; Age | Functional behaviour analysis | Running from caregivers home, foster home, or residential facility. | Risk factors: seeking to avoid restrictions, feelings of alienation, isolation, and mistreatment by caregiver or peers, gang pressures. Absconding also occurred to access positive reinforcers such as access to greater control and autonomy, family, partners, friends, exciting activities such |

						as drugs, parties, for fun and risk, to gain peer recognition for beating the system, due to opportunity, to avoid a consequence, or after having either a negative or positive telephone conversation with family.
Courtney and Zinn (2009)	USA	Out-of-home care	$N = 14,282$ youth: Female $n = 7326$; Black $n = 9952$ Hispanic $n = 794$; White $n = 3695$; 90% in 12-18 years old age range	Multivariate modelling analysis	Youth who abscond from out-of-home care for at least one night.	Factors related to increased risk of first absconding event were being female, Black/Hispanic ethnicity, older age (16-18 years), lack of supervision, diagnosed mental health problems, substance use disorders, behavioural problems. Risk factors for subsequent of absconding events; being female, substance use disorder. General risk factors: other mental health disorders, administrative

range 12-17 years

region placed in, placement instability (more prominently for first absconding event).

Protective factors for first absconding event: experiencing sexual abuse, developmental disorders, or cognitive delay, psychosis, anxiety, dissociative, somatoform, dissociative and personality-related mental health conditions, multiple placements in care. General protective factors; being placed in more secure facilitates, presence of siblings in care.

Crosland et al. (2018)	USA	Foster care placements	$N = 81$ Youth $n = 2$: $n = 17$ 13-17 years old; $n = 11$ 18+ years old. Care staff $n = 30$ School staff $n = 23$	Focus groups, qualitative analysis	Youth who is in the custody of a licensed state social services agency, disappears either voluntarily or involuntarily, without the consent of said agency.	Risk factors were separated into two categories. 1. To access things outside of care such as family, friends, partners, for activities outside of care (movies, malls, parties, drugs/alcohol, sex/prostitution), or to increase their feelings of autonomy or independence. 2. To avoid things in care such as negative social interactions from peers or staff, due to boredom, due to a restrictive, hostile, or controlling placement.
Departme nt of Correction	New Zealand	Individuals in the community	$N = 20$ Age range under 30 years.	Case review	Removing electronic tracking bracelet without permission	Risk factors were index offending of a violent/impulsive nature, escalating circumstances in their domestic/living

s, (2016a; 2016b)		on Electronic monitoring.	$N = 5$		from Department of Corrections.	situations, younger age (average 20-22 years), previous non-compliance with community sentences, non-engagement with rehabilitative interventions, Christmas/Easter time.
Eisengart et al. (2008)	USA	Residential treatment setting	$N = 1927$ youth: Male $n = 1359$; Age range 17-18 years; $M = 16.33$ years	Logistic regression, multi-level modelling, t-tests	Youth who were discharged from residential treatment due to absconding.	Risk factors: older or female, high substance use, more security and management needs, deterioration of symptoms, overtreatment and the specific programme youth was in.
English and English (1999)	Canada	Child welfare placements	$N =$ 64Absconders $n = 12$; Female absconders $n =$	File analyses	Youth in care who abscond from their caregivers.	Risk factors: female, aged 15, in an emergency placement, more placement breakdowns, a higher level of involvement with corrections, f issues, and dysfunctional families.

10; Age range

12+ years

Fasulo et al. (2002)	USA	Specialised foster care	*N* = 147: Female *n* = 79; Age range 12-18 years; *M* = 15.01 years	Multivariate logistic regression	Youth who ran from specialised foster care.	Risk factors: female, age 14-15 and having fewer psychotherapy sessions.
Finkelstein et al. (2004)	USA	Congregate care facilities	*N* = 47 Young people aged 12-20 years (*n* = 30): Female *n* = 2 Staff *n* = 17	Qualitative interviews	Young person who was in the care and custody of licenced foster care facility, direct or contracted, and who disappeared, absconded or is otherwise absent voluntarily or involuntarily without the	Risk factors categorised as either push factors or pull factors. Push factors: leaving due to problems in placements, the young people's behaviour, organisational problems, social stress, frustration with the system and restrictive rules, boredom especially during

						weekends, evenings, and summers due to not having things to do.
						Pull factors: Youth often left to see their partners, friends, and family, or because there was family crisis.
Grotto et al. (2015)	Australia	Acute inpatient mental health units	Mental health nurses $N = 11$	Qualitative thematic analysis	Leaving a hospital ward or grounds without permission.	Risk factors: prior absconding history, current patient behaviour (pacing, hypervigilant, anxious, or distressed), patient functioning, suicidal ideation, level of awareness, leaving to access illicit substances.
Guest et al. (2008)	USA	Residential treatment centre	$N = 234$: Male $n = 234$; Age range 12-16 years; $M = 13.8$ years	Retrospective chart review	Defined as both absconding from the campus and not returning from a home visit.	Risk factor: history of substance abuse. Most absconding occurred early in treatment.

| Jeanis (2017) | USA | Youth running away from caregivers | $N = 295$: Female n =150; Age range 6-17 years. | Group-based trajectory modelling | When a child left home overnight without permission, when a child 14 or younger (or mentally incompetent) left home overnight or did not return when expected, when a child 15 -17 left home without permission for two nights. | Risk factors: autumn and early winter months, having an incarcerated parent (males especially at risk), a history of foster care, suffering abuse from a non-familial person, early runways behaviours. Female risk factors: psychological problems, delinquent behaviour. Male only factors: offending history. |
| Karam and Robert (2013) | Canada | Foster care, special units for adolescents in difficulty | $N = 10$: Age range 14-17 years | Thematic and conceptual analyses | Unauthorised absence from Child Protective Services. | Risk factors: adolescents need for reconnection with their natural environment, taking back control of their lives (empowerment), and emotional regulation. Absconding understood as a coping mechanism. |

| Kim et al. (2013) | USA | Foster care | N = 110,576: Female = 52.9%; Age range 12-17 years; M = 14.99 years | Multilevel modelling analyses | Utilised data from 39 states; definitions of absconding episode differed across counties and states. | Risk factors: older age, female, clinically diagnosed conditions, single father headed homes, higher number of removals from home and number of placements, court directed removal, and long-term foster care/emancipation as case goal. Also, county-level variations (i.e. differences in ethnicity, economic status, type, and policies of agency etc). |
| Lin (2012) | USA | Foster care | N = 8047: White = 39.3%; Black = 33.5%; Hispanic = 13.1%; Age | Regression analyses | Running away from foster care placement. | Risk factors: aged 16, female, African American, behaviour problems or a diagnosed disability, placement instability, and substance use history. Absconders were also more likely to have been removed from a single-parent family, were |

| | | | range 0-23 years | | | older at first removal, and spent a shorter time in foster care. |

A protective factor was living in more familial style foster care.

| Martin et al. (2018) | Canada | Public psychiatric hospital | N = 33: Male n = 28 | Retrospective chart review | Unauthorised leave of absence from a facility without express permission. | Risk factors: having specific tasks or goals to achieve outside of hospital, being frustrated, bored, experiencing psychiatric symptoms, co-morbid diagnosis or psychosis and substance use disorders, having opportunity, experiencing a stressful, significant event in the two weeks prior to the absconding event, expressing absconding ideation, having high scores on the HCR-20 (risk assessment tool). |

Mayzer et al. (2004)	USA	Offenders on probation supervision in the community	$N = 1157$: Male $n = 928$; Absconders $n = 82$; Age range 17-76 years; $M = 29.7$ years	Multivariate analysis of variance	Those who repeatedly did not show up for required contacts with their probation officer and with whom the probation officer had lost contact.	Risk factors: having more misdemeanours and violations of probation, younger onset of offending, an extensive criminal history, a lower level of supervision, residential instability, low education levels, and low employment stability.
McIntosh et al. (2010)	Canada	Residential treatment settings	$N = 667$: Males = approx. 60%; Absconders $n = 84$; Age range 7-20 years; Median $n = 16$ years	Logistic regression	Youth who discharge themselves from residential treatment settings by absconding.	Risk factors: history of absconding, truancy, ideation of absconding, and aged 15-16 years. Substance use and delinquency were also predictive of absconding risk at a low and moderate level, however, lost some of their predictive ability at a severe level. Youth aged 13 or 19 had the lowest risk of absconding.

Mews (2014)	United Kingdom	Prisons	$N = 23,701$: No age range given	Logistic regression	Incident in which a prisoner escapes or attempts to escape from prison or escort; or fails a temporary release licence (release from prison for reintegration purposes).	Risk factors: previous absconding, and previous failing temporary release; however, previous absconding lost its ability after adjusting for offender, offence, and prison level characteristics.
Milette-Winfree et al. (2017)	USA	Residential care settings	$N = 1261$: Male = 62.4%; Absconders n = 531; Age range 10-18; M = 15.37 years	Multi-level logistic regression. Directed content analysis	Youth leaving a residential care setting without permission.	Risk factor: disruptive behaviour disorder diagnosis. Absconding motivations were to escape from negative stimuli inside setting, or approach reinforcing stimuli outside setting, due to anger/frustration, peer influence, and to access substances.
Morgan (2012)	England	Residential care settings	$N = 98$: Female $n = 62$; No further	Discussion groups with	Running away from care.	Risk factors: anger, stress, pressure, unhappiness in care, fear of peers in placement, to get away from bullies, staff,

						violence, or conflict, annoyance, not liking or finding a placement strange, wanting to change placements, running to escape police, anxiety around consequences, to meet needs with outside stimuli (i.e. running to a place or person), due to isolation, lack of autonomy, because of restrictive rules.
information given			young people			
Muir-Cochrane et al. (2013)	Australia	Acute psychiatric inpatient units	$N = 12$: Female $n = 8$; All over 18 years	Thematic analysis	Leaving hospital without permission.	Absconding occurred due to perception of hospital environment as being unsafe, which was influenced by relationships with staff and other patients or experiencing severe mental illness.
Nesmith (2006)	USA	Private treatment	$N = 343$: African American $n =$	Multiple failure time hazard	Youth running from child welfare placements.	Risk factors: spending longer care length, being American Indian, older (one year increased absconding risk by 18%),

		family foster care	22; Caucasian $n = 257$; American Indian $n = 28$; Female n = 139; Absconders n = 78; Age range 11.8-18.6. years; M = 15.1 years	model analyses, variation of Cox Proportional Hazards model		previous absconding history, permanency plan changes, and permanency plans that did not involve reunification with family, and higher scores for externalising behaviours. Protective factor: Foster home rated as warmer and better quality.
Powers et al. (2018)	USA	Parolees on community probation supervision	$N = 30,181$ cases: 28,572 offenders (offenders	Logistic regression	Individuals who failed to report to their probation or parole officer and their	Risk factors: substance use needs, mental health needs, education (having a high school diploma), unemployment, overall scores on the LSR-R[3] (particularly

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[3] LSI-R: The Level of Service Inventory – Revised assesses risk of reoffending.

			could be measured across multiple sentences)		whereabouts become unknown.	financial, accommodation stability and leisure scales), parole violations (such as drug, treatment, or curfew violations), being non-white, younger, having gang affiliation. Protective factors: parole violations (weapons, minor infractions, mandatory arrests), sex-related offences, medical needs, anger, and self-destructiveness.
Pyrooz (2012)	USA	Juvenile offenders on community supervision	$N = 1063$: Female = 15%; $M = 16.79$	Bivariate mean analysis, multivariate logistic regression	The active or passive avoidance of contact with correctional supervisory agencies.	Risk factors: younger, female, wards of the state, involvement with gang activity, less religious activity, substance dependency. Male only risk factors: previous absconding or getting ejected from homes,

low self-control. Female only protective

factor: parenthood.

| Sarri et al. (2016) | USA | Foster care settings | N = 742: Age range 12-18. Absconders n = 371: M = 12.66 years; female = 56.3%. Non-absconders n = 371: female = 55.5%; M = 12.53 years. | Cross-tabulation, chi-square, t-tests, event history analysis | Absent without leave from a placement, or "AWOL". | Risk factors: more time in placements, female, aged approx. 15-15.5 years, placement instability, behavioural problems (abuse, mental health difficulties, homelessness, and crime). |

| Simpson et al. (2015) | Canada | Adult forensic hospital | Absconders: N = 91; M = 40.76 years. Controls: N = 88; M = 39.86 years. Age range not given | ANOVA tests, thematic analysis | Any unauthorised absence from hospital. | Risk factors: recent changes to medication, non-compliance with treatment, absconding ideation, threatening behaviours, longer status in health system, higher scores on HCR-20[4] (risk assessment measure), higher prior absconding attempts, comorbid substance use disorder, problematic personality traits or disorder. Motivation typologies for absconding were goal-directed, frustration/boredom, symptomatic/disorganised, accidental/no intent. |

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[4] The Historical, Clinical, Risk Management-20 assess risk of violence.

Sunseri (2003)	USA	Residential treatment settings	$N = 7477$; Age range 12-18 years; Male = 64%	Chi square tests, logistic regressions	Running away from treatment.	Risk factors: prior absconding history, being placed in a low level of service facility, low functioning family background and externalising behaviours.
Taylor et al. (2013)	USA	Out-of-home care settings	$N = 28$; Female $n = 13$	Focus groups, framework approach	Absconding from care	Four primary themes were identified as absconding motivators. 1. Authority and power; rules and restricted time, lack of freedom, confined and restrained. 2. Friction; argument with key workers, arguments with parents, friction with other young people. 3. Isolation; wanting to be with friends, missing family. 4. Environment; boredom, peer pressure, lack of privacy.

						Youth reported preventing friction, isolation, boredom and treating youth as adults/giving more freedom would prevent absconding.
Tyler et al. (2011)	USA	Middle and High School students	*N* = 7162; Female *n* = 3914; White = 62.3%	Structural equation modelling	Having ever spent the night away from home without permission and having ever run away from home within the past 12 months.	Risk factors: higher levels of family instability and abuse, delinquency (problem behaviour such as previous absconding history, using alcohol or drugs).
Wilkie et al. (2014)	Canada	Adult forensic hospital	Absconders: *n* = 57; *M* = 40.07 years. Controls: *n* = 56;	T-tests, cox regression, thematic analysis	Any unauthorised absence from hospital	Risk factors: history of absconding attempts, diagnosed substance use disorder and assessed as high risk of violence on the HCR-20.

$M = 40.18$ years.

Age range not given

Motivation typologies for absconding were goal-directed, frustration/boredom, symptomatic/disorganised, accidental/no intent.