ABSCONDING FROM BORSTALS

HOME OFFICE RESEARCH STUDY NO. 41

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Absconding from Borstals

By Gloria K. Laycock

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Foreword

It is a universal assumption, shared by custodians and their charges, that the condition of captivity necessarily gives rise to attempts to escape from it. Yet even in open prisons and borstals it is a minority of inmates who abscond or attempt to do so.

While it could be argued that in individual instances the experience of absconding may be beneficial; absconders defy the order of the Court, are expensive to recover and may commit further crimes. Dr Laycock argues that absconding is a delinquent act, and as such provides evidence of the failure of treatment at an early stage.

The importance of better understanding of absconding, with the twin aims of maximising the population of open institutions and of minimising the occurrence of absconding, scarcely needs to be stressed. Dr Laycock's studies are a notable contribution to the conceptualisation of absconding from borstal. They do not, of course, promise a definitive solution: but the demonstration that, given the borstal population we have, environmental variables are almost certainly more important than individual variables offers possibilities for action.

Finally, it is worthy of note that while prison psychologists have published a variety of reports and papers this is the first to appear in the Home Office Research Study series. It is expected that others will follow.

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GLORIA LAYCOCK

HM Prison
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July 1977

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1 Background to the Research

INTRODUCTION

THE PRESENT BORSTAL SYSTEM

THE ABSCONDING PROBLEM

VIEWS FROM THE FIELD ON ABSCONDING

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Few would disagree that absconding from borstals poses a serious practical problem to the prison department and to the staff within the institutions. It disrupts the regime and the training programme of the individual concerned as well as causing distress and anxiety to local residents who fear that further offences may be committed. Despite this, there is a paucity of research data of both practical and theoretical orientation, which this report hopefully goes some way to correcting.

The theoretical interest of absconding, as Clarke and Martin (1971) point out, lies in its relationship with delinquency in general. They argue that absconding can reasonably be considered as much a delinquent act as theft or burglary and as such it is desirable that it be reduced. In approved schools (Clarke and Martin, 1971) and probation hostels (Sinclair, 1971) absconding is significantly related to post-release failure.

Considered as a delinquent act, absconding provides evidence of the inmates' continuing delinquency and thus of the failure of treatment at an early stage. Techniques for the reduction of absconding other than increases in physical security, provide a challenge to the ingenuity of staff in institutions, as well as to researchers. The development of such techniques may also have implications for the reduction of delinquency in the natural environment.

In this report, on the practical side, the relative contributions of the individual's personal characteristics and of environmental features are considered in the aetiology of absconding. The implications of the results for the control of absconding are discussed. On the theoretical side, a model of absconding is tentatively suggested which attempts to account for the research results from approved schools, borstals and prisons. Some implications of the absconding model for the administrative organisation of the borstal system are also discussed. Finally, some suggestions are made for further work in the area and the general implications of the research results are considered.

The historical development of the borstal system of training for young offenders, which has been in existence since the beginning of the 20th century, has been discussed in detail by a variety of workers (Ruggles-Brise, 1921; Fox, 1952; Hood, 1965), and need not therefore be dwelt upon here. It is appropriate, however, to give a short description of the system of training in operation at the time of this research and an indication of the population characteristics of those committed to borstal. These are given in the next section.

The present borstal system[1]

Any convicted person between the ages of 15 and 21, if sentenced to a period of detention of between 6 months and 2 years, would be likely to be sentenced to a period of borstal training.

[1] This section describes the borstal system at the time this research was carried out between 1969 and 1974. As in any large organisation, changes are constantly being made.

ABSCONDING FROM BORSTALS

At the time of this research there were 22 institutions concerned with borstal trainees; 9 closed training institutions, 12 open and a borstal recall centre to which trainees may have been recalled if they broke the terms of their borstal licence.[1] The buildings varied from old country houses which usually formed the focus of open institutions to relatively new secure institutions. The staff in borstal wear civilian clothes and have done so since the 1920's. In prisons all the discipline staff wear uniform.

About 6000 young men are sentenced to borstal each year. The average trainee is 18 years old and the most common current conviction is breaking and entering or a similar offence such as burglary. On average borstal trainees have 4 or 5 previous court appearances leading to conviction although the population is by no means homogeneous in this respect; 3% have no previous convictions and for 33% borstal is their first institutional experience (HMSO, 1969). Other trainees may have been to approved schools (35%), junior and senior detention centres (39%) or borstal (6%)> on previous sentences. A minority may have had as many as 15 previous court appearances *(ibid).*

Very few trainees serve the full 2 years in borstal and it has become practice in recent years for some institutions to give trainees a 'target date' on reception, that is the date by which they can expect to be discharged unless they commit a serious breach of discipline within the institution. This date is usually about 10 months from sentence date and although it was probably brought about by an increase in the pressure for places it does not seem *to* have had any detrimental effect on the reconviction rate (Borstal Typology Study, 1971).

The borstal population covers quite a wide range of criminal sophistication and borstal institutions must to some extent reflect this. At the time of data collection for this research borstal trainees were received, after sentence, at one of 2 allocation centres. From these they would be transferred to an appropriate training institution where they would normally complete their sentence. One of the most important decisions at this stage of training was whether to allocate to an open or closed institution. The decision to allocate to a closed borstal was based upon a belief that the trainee was likely to abscond, perhaps because of a history of similar behaviour, or the feeling that if the trainee did abscond it would lead to embarrassment for the Department or excessive worry for local residents. The bulk of the data to be reported here was collected at the southern allocation centre, Wormwood Scrubs. Here the decision to allocate to a closed borstal had been found to be predictable in up to 91 % of cases if the following rules were applied (Sewell and Williams, 1967).

Allocate to a closed institution if:

I. there were entered in the individual's record any of the following:

[1] Those trainees recalled (for breaking the terms of their borstal licence) and those returned (for committing a further offence during their licence) are now dispersed to all training institutions. At the time of this research not al) recalls went to the recall centre; some were dispersed to training borstats.

(1) previous or current sexual offences;

(2) previous or current arson;

(3) a current violence offence;

(4) more than one previous violence offence;

(5) more than one or a current abscond;

(6) one past abscond and one past violence;

(7) a previous borstal sentence;

or

II. there were entered in the record or in reports made by the allocation centre medical personnel:

(1) previous mental hospitalisation;

(2) medical problems requiring a full-time medical officer;

(3) suicide attempts or severe depression;

(4) mental sub-normality.

Thus the allocation of a trainee to a closed institution need not necessarily be because he is considered highly likely to abscond, but may also be because he is in need of full-time medical supervision, which is only available in closed institutions. In addition, violent or sexual offenders are also allocated to closed borstals. Again, the reason for this is not because it is known that they are likely to abscond but because of the possible dangers to the local population if they were to abscond. This pre-selection for closed institutions at the allocation stage on grounds other than absconding risk makes it particularly difficult to study absconding itself. Large groups of the population are automatically excluded from open institutions and sent to closed borstals from which absconding is more difficult.

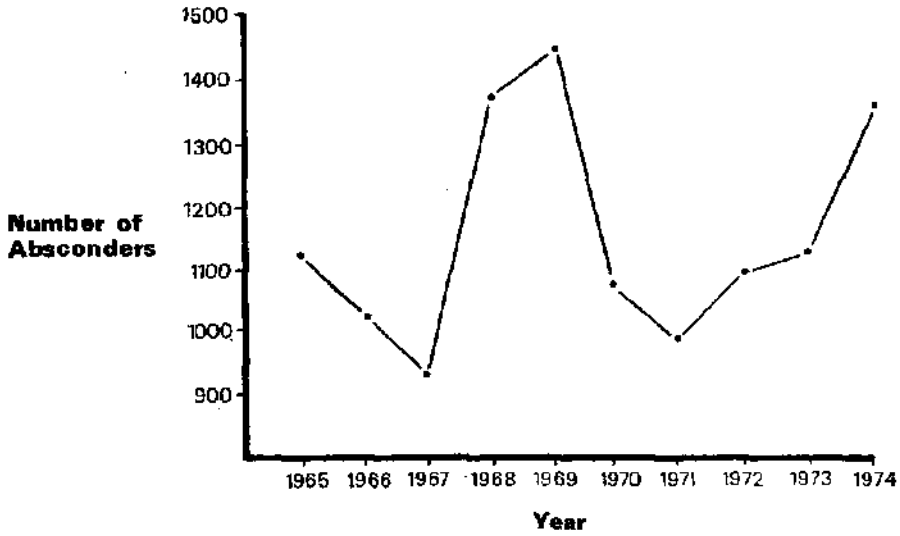
The absconding problem

There was a marked difference between the pre and post-war borstal systems partly as a result of the sudden discharge of a high percentage of trainees and the recruitment of the staff into the armed forces. The ethos that had been developed in the pre-war borstal system was destroyed and never restored. This, combined with the increase in boys in open borstals, is reflected in a dramatic increase in absconding—the rise being from 5 % of the average d^ily population in 1935 to 41 % in 1948 (Hood, 1965). This increase in absconding rate caused great concern toward the end of the 1940's; questions were asked in the Commons and the situation was contributory to the establishment in 1950 of a more 'penal borstal' at Hull for difficult cases of various kinds, including persistent absconders *(ibid).* The absconding problem has become more serious in recent years because of the increase in the number of incidents (Figure 1). This increase is partly explicable in terms of the increase in the number of trainees being committed to borstal. (See Figure *2,* which shows the rate of absconding

over the years 1965-1974[1]). Nevertheless, the increase has led to concern being expressed by the Prison Department to the extent that in 1969 a working party was set up to investigate absconding from open prisons and borstals. Data showing a comparison of absconding rates in prisons, borstals and approved schools are given in appendix A.

FIGURE 1

Number of trainees absconding per year from male borstals (1965–1974)



With the increase in the absolute number of absconders there is a risk of an increase in the number of offences committed in the furtherance of an absconding and while the trainee is 'on the run'. In the last quarter of 1969, for example, there were 277 absconders from borstals (including institutions for female offenders) of whom 69 (25 %) were later charged as a result of offences committed

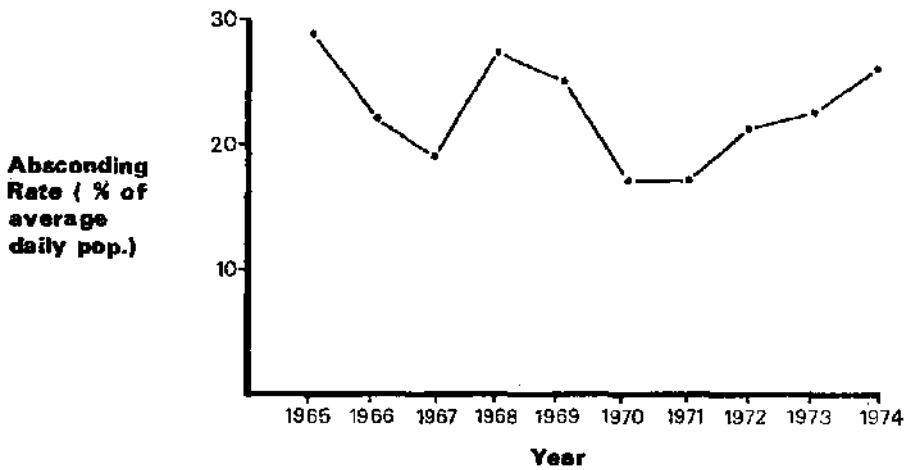
[1] The most frequently used indicator of the absconding rate is the number of trainees absconding expressed as a percentage of annual receptions into the institutions. A common alternative is the number of trainees absconding expressed as a percentage of the average daily population in the institution. The merits of these two indices are discussed fully by Banks *et al.* (1975). They differentiate between risk (the proportion of men who abscond out of the number of receptions) and rate (the ratio of the number of absconders to the average population of men at risk) during any year. The difference between the two indices is quite important in the prison context where sentence lengths vary considerably, however the difference is not so marked in borstals. In the opinion of the present writer, the more meaningful index is that using the reception figures. This index takes account of changes in sentence length which occur occasionally as a result of legislation, or more often, of local policy changes and pressures for space within an institution. These changes in sentence length can considerably affect the number of trainees put at risk in any period whilst the average daily population remains the same. In this investigation absconding rate is indicated by number of absconders as a percentage of annual receptions subject to the figures being available; otherwise the average daily population is used. Since the average borstal trainee serves less than twelve months in custody the rate given using annual receptions will be somewhat less than that using average population.

whilst at large. Some absconders were charged with more than one offence. In fact the average number of offences associated with each trainee charged was 5-5 including offences taken into consideration by the Court (Laycock, 1974). Of those not charged (75%) it remains possible that they committed offences which were not discovered or which were subsequently dealt with by the governor rather than the police. Thus 25% is likely to be an underestimate of the percentage of absconders from borstal institutions who committed offences while absconding.

Apart from allocating those considered to be high risk trainees to closed institutions, the Prison Department attempts to control absconding by removing privileges and extending time in the institution. The numbers of trainees absconding from borstal institutions is recorded and periodically action is taken to reduce high abscond rates which may have built up in a particular institution. Such action may involve transfer of all absconders to closed institutions, changes

FIGURE 2

Absconding rate from male borstals (1965–1974)



in allocation policy or the introduction of additional security measures *(eg* short wave radios for staff as in Feltham borstal in 1973).

In addition to these, practical problems, absconding is also arguably of interest as a manifestation of delinquent behaviour. Compared with other forms of delinquency there are certain advantages in studying absconding as a delinquent act. For example, in the case of absconding the 'dark number' is likely to be small or non-existent; 'offenders' are known by definition; the antecedent conditions leading to the incident are also more easily determined and statistical records are likely to be more readily available than is the case with more conventional forms of delinquency.

Not only can absconding be classed as a delinquent act by virtue of the social disapproval which it incurs but the characteristics of absconding have certain

psychological similarities to other delinquent acts. There is a significant relationship, for example, between an individual's score on the Smalley questionnaire (Smalley, 1964) when completed in respect of current offence and when using the scores obtained by the same individual after an abscond (see appendix B for table and description of questionnaire). Briefly, this questionnaire gives an estimate of the conflict felt by the individual when committing his offences. The data suggest that the act of absconding is perceived by the offender in a similar way to the way in which he perceived his original offence.

There has been a tendency in some institutions to view absconding as an irritating nuisance. However, if absconding is accepted as an offence similar to more conventional forms of delinquency, it assumes a much greater importance. A high absconding rate would demonstrate an inability to control one manifestation of offending within the institution. It is difficult to see how those institutions unable to control absconding can hope to affect post release behaviour. In the present system the institution can exert relatively little control after release; within institutions there is far greater control potential.

In closed borstals this control is achieved by greater physical security; walls and bars. It is not being suggested here that this should be extended to open establishments—the application of behavioural principles to achieve control may prove a cheaper solution. Moreover it may provide valuable expertise which might then be extended to considerations of post release behaviour.

Views from the field on absconding

There is a long-standing and inevitable conflict facing prison and borstal staff of all grades between the aims of treatment/training and the need for security and control. The extent of this conflict varies from one class of institution to the next and is perhaps greatest in borstal where training is emphasised. As Sinclair and Clarke (1973) have pointed out there seems to be a view in some institutions, notably of the open type, that a certain amount of 'acting out' perhaps in the form of absconding, is not only to be tolerated but is to be viewed as a positive sign that progress is being made in the treatment of the particular individual involved. It is possible that this view has arisen as a rationalisation of the relatively high absconding rate in such institutions. Staff holding this view claim that on returning to the institution the trainee is better able to discuss the events that led up to the absconding incident and a useful relationship is established as a result. It is also claimed that the experience of being 'on the run' has a beneficial training effect. (It is probably true that in some institutions, situated as they are in the country and often a fair distance from urban areas, a few absconders become frightened at nightfall and with the added discomfort of bad weather and lack of food decide to return to the institutions of their own accord. Admitting that they made a mistake in absconding is considered a valuable experience). On the other hand, there are those who maintain that if you do not have firm custody over trainees, you cannot train them, and training programmes must be based on a secure institution.

These two views are both rather extreme and there are many members of staff in institutions who would subscribe to neither. In an attempt to discover the views of staff in the borstals a questionnaire was sent out to all the senior staff of borstal institutions (Holloway, 1971). The questionnaire consisted of 27 essentially opposite pairs of statements with a 5-point scale on which the respondents were to indicate the extent of their agreement with one statement or the other. In response to one pair of statements staff in open borstals indicated that a greater proportion of open borstals were needed and staff in closed borstals felt that more closed institutions were required. It is important to point out in this context that staff are often transferred from one type of institution to another and yet their attitude indicated in the questionnaire was related to the type of institution in which they were currently serving.[1] The relatively high absconding rate from the open institutions did not seem to prompt the majority of staff in those institutions to suggest that more closed borstals should be built. From the point of view of job satisfaction this is an interesting result. However, despite this significant difference between open and closed staff, 70 % of all staff in the sample felt that there should be more closed institutions which must reflect the very real concern of the staff with security.

Review of the literature

Absconding from borstals

In this country published studies on absconding from borstal institutions are rare. No systematic attempts to study absconding on a national scale have been reported and the few studies which are available have tended to be locally inspired and therefore of limited general interest (Fergus, 1971; Marriott, 1970; Shapland, 1969; Clarkson, 1974; Stern, 1969; Carnegie, 1969). These studies have been based on specific institutions, and demonstrate *popular' absconding periods or places and make suggestions as to methods of reducing the popularity of these periods. None however has adopted any particular psychological or sociological orientation and frequently statistical analyses have been omitted or considered unnecessary because of the normative bases of the work.

Typical of the work on absconding from borstal is Carter's (1963) analysis of all occurrences of absconding during 1961 from one particular closed borstal. The object of this was to discover some pattern in absconding which would make prevention easier and facilitate capture.

He drew several conclusions from his study:

(i) The majority of absconders were not on a trade course.

(ii) Lower intelligence groups were more successful at absconding.

(iii) Absconders were mainly convicted for larceny, breaking and entering and dishonesty generally.

[1] Some of these transfers may be at the request of the individual concerned which further complicates any interpretation of the data.

(iv) An appreciable number of absconders had no previous institutional experience.

Because of lack of statistical evidence or any suitable comparison group;, it is difficult to comment on these conclusions. He finished his paper by noting that prediction tables may prove useful but that, on the assumption that absconding is motivated by the trainees becoming disillusioned with their training, the money may be better spent on improving training and thus reducing absconding.

Following an earlier survey by Shapland (1969), Marriott (1970) carried out a substantial analysis of the population of an open borstal institution from 1962 to 1968 which enabled some comparison of absconders with non-absconders.

She concluded that:

(i) the reconviction rates for absconders are not significantly different from non-absconders after three years, although absconders appear to be convicted at a slower rate during the first nine months after release.

(U) absconders stay significantly longer at the borstal than non-absconders, even allowing an extra month or two for the offence of absconding.

(iii) no other factors discriminate absconders from non-absconders.

The 'other factors' considered by Marriott were birth area, age, offence at sentence, previous proved offences and the Mannheim-Wil kins' Prediction Score (Mannheim and Wilkins, 1955). She also found absconding to be more frequent in the summer months. Marriott does not in fact discuss her results in any detail but they do not lend much support to the suggestion that absconders can be predicted from their antecedents—many of the more obvious variables, such as the number of previous proved offences, were found not to relate to absconding.

The approved school population (age range 10-17 years), although not directly comparable to the borstal population, has stimulated rather more research.

Absconding from approved schools[1]

Much of the earlier work in approved schools stressed the individual characteristics of absconders rather than the environment from which they had absconded (Chernuchin, 1957; Gurasekara, 1963; Aaron, 1962). This emphasis was probably influenced by the concern of the authorities to predict which individuals would abscond, the assumption being that most of the variance in absconding behaviour was determined by the personality differences between the children. This opinion, despite Clarke (1966, 1968) and Clarke and Martin's (1971) later work in approved schools (see below) persisted at the allocation stage of borstal training at the time of this research. An additional factor (suggested by Clarke) for this emphasis on the individual is that the technology for measuring

[1] Approved schools were merged into a system of community homes as a result of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 and no longer exist in their former state. All research on absconding referred to here was carried out in the old approved schools and they will be referred to as approved schools rather than community homes throughout this report.

environmental factors was not then available. Although it is still not available now to any significant extent (see however Tizard, *et al,* 1975 and Moos, 1974 for attempts at doing this) emphasis is being placed on the environment in current work.

The most comprehensive research on absconding from approved schools was published in this series by Clarke and Martin (1971). This provides a synthesis of much of Clarke's earlier work (1966, 1968), together with more recent data, which obviates the necessity of discussing any of the earlier papers. Clarke and Martin's publication is an extremely well argued and comprehensive study of absconding from approved schools in this country. The object of the research was to 'investigate the contribution made to absconding by individual differences and environmental variables'.

The subjects in Clarke and Martin's research were drawn from the populations of boys and girls in approved schools from 1960 to 1968. They carried out a comprehensive examination of personal 'background' factors such as age, intelligence, height and weight, home circumstances, school record and attainment and delinquent and psychiatric histories. Their conclusions from a comparison of absconders and other boys were as follows:

(i) Absconding from approved schools was a relatively stable type of behaviour in that boys who had absconded once were more likely to abscond in the future.

(ii) Absconders did not differ from non-absconders in extraversion, or neuroticism (Furneaux and Gibson, 1961), psychomotor style (Gibson, 1965), any of the Jesness sub-scales (Jesness, 1963), or Cattell's High School Personality Questionnaire (Cattell and Beloff, 1962) or in a version of Osgood's Semantic Differential (Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum, 1957).

(iii) Absconders were more likely to have absconded from other institutions.

(iv) Absconders were more delinquent, that is, likely to have appeared at Court at an early age.

(v) To have had more Court appearances over shorter intervals.

(vi) To have been more often reconvicted both during approved school training and after release.

(vii) Although the chances of becoming an absconder were not significantly related to age, once a boy had absconded, the older he was the more often he was likely to run away.

Their main conclusion from the above results, together with a finding that absconding rates varied greatly from one approved school to another[1], was 'that the role of environmental variables in causation had been under-estimated'. They went on to investigate some environmental variables and found that most

[1] In one period studied absconding rates in senior schools varied from 10% to 75% of the population.

absconding occurred shortly after admission, that there were peaks after Christmas and summer holidays, and that there were seasonal variations, with increased hours of darkness associated with more absconding. There were also marked variations in absconding according to different days of the week (weekends being most 'popular'). They also showed absconding to be related to weather conditions; when it was particularly dull or particularly sunny for the time of year, absconding rates were high. When the temperatures were very low, absconding rates were lower than would otherwise have been predicted.

Institutionally related variables showed that when a house was particularly full, absconding was disproportionately high and a lack of parental visits increased absconding. They also found that although the use of corporal punishment on a junior boy did not deter other juniors from absconding, caning a senior boy did deter other seniors. They suggested this latter result tentatively on the basis of their data and felt that it needed confirmation.

The finding that boys who run away from one institution generally run away from others was discussed in learning theory terms. Clarke and Martin (1970) have presented evidence in support of this approach. They demonstrated that in the case of the persistent absconder, the time interval between one abscond and the next decreased exponentially following a classical learning curve (Osgood, 1953). They were not able to demonstrate the relevance of a learning approach to the less persistent absconder where more immediate environmental factors seem more important *(eg* stress or lack of parental visits).

More recently Sinclair and Clarke (1973) have argued that the act of absconding itself increases the likelihood of post release failure. If this is in fact the case then it should add greater impetus to institutional attempts to reduce absconding.

The emphasis in the study of approved school absconding seems to have shifted from the study of the individual to the effects of the environment. Early studies of the individual demonstrated significant differences between absconders and non-absconders but these seem likely to have been confounded by the knowledge of who absconded or possibly by testing boys after the absconding incident. Later studies, which cannot be criticised on these grounds, have been unable to find personality variables to be of any value in this area. Although the approved school population is not directly comparable with the borstal population, the main implication from the approved school work is that environmental factors could be more important than personal characteristics in determining who absconds from borstal.

Escapes from prisons

Prior to the mid-1960's little research in this country was carried out on the problem of escapes from adult prisons. One early study (Fitch, Johnson and Twiselton, 1962) presented some data from a sample of escapers from open and closed prisons. Unfortunately there was no suitable control sample with which to compare them. Nevertheless Fitch *et al.* did suggest on the basis of their data

that young recidivists faced with a long sentence constitute a greater risk than the rest of the population. In general, however, their conclusions were related to speculation over the motivation for the escape or escape attempt.

Far more work into escapes from prisons followed the publication of the Mountbatten Report of the Inquiry into Prison Escapes and Security (HMSO, 1966). A result of this Inquiry was a recommendation that prisoners should be categorised on sentence into one of 4 categories A, B, C or D, according to the potential danger or embarrassment their escape may cause.

As a consequence of this development, the Home Office Research Unit carried out a series of unpublished studies into escapes from open and closed prisons designed to aid the Department in this security classification procedure. This work was later continued by a Prison Department Working Party in 1969 and eventually culminated in a Home Office Research Unit report by Banks *et al.* (1975). Again, no specifically psychological data were collected; the variables considered were restricted to age, length of sentence, main current offence, number of previous convictions or findings of guilt, whether or not previously sentenced to borstal training, and total length of earlier prison sentences. Comparison between groups was made in terms of an abscond risk index. This index was defined as the proportion of men who abscond out of the number received in any given period. Banks *et al.* regard this as the probability of an abscond some time during a sentence. Using this index, they found that high risk groups were, at the time of their research, medium-term prisoners age 21-24, with 7 or more previous convictions and they were most likely to be burglars or possibly thieves. For prisoners with 2 or more 'high risk' characteristics the absconding risk is correspondingly high. Prisoners with the highest risk of all were young burglars who (a) had a history of 7 or more convictions, (b) had a history of borstal training and (c) were serving a current sentence of between 18 months and 4 years. They exhibited a risk of 15%—although, as Banks *et al.* point out, very few of them are sent to open prisons.

The open prison results have been summarised here for the sake of completeness but they will be discussed further in Chapter 4 where models of absconding are considered.

2 Individual Characteristics

INTRODUCTION

PERSONALITY AND ABSCONDING

PREVIOUS SIMILAR BEHAVIOUR AND ABSCONDING

PRESENT OFFENCE AND ABSCONDING

PRESENT OFFENCE CATEGORY AND ABSCONDING

A NOTE ON INTELLIGENCE, AGE AND ABSCONDING

REASONS GIVEN FOR ABSCONDING

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the relationship between various characteristics of the individual and absconding. An absconder is defined as any trainee whose absence from the institution was notified to Headquarters on a mandatory abscond report form. In addition three types of absconder are compared; those who abscond alone, in a group as self-confessed leader, and in a group as non-leader.

Although very little attempt has been made previously to differentiate between absconders, it is unlikely that they constitute a homogeneous group. Clarke and Martin (1971) differentiate persistent approved school absconders from casual absconders and suggest that a learning theory approach is a useful method of conceptualising the persistent absconder. This particular method of differentiation is not as helpful in the borstal system, since there are no persistent absconders; normally any trainees absconding more than once would be transferred to a closed borstal and would therefore find it much more difficult to abscond. Absconders in the borstal system have therefore been considered as members of one of three groups as mentioned above. This method of classification is based upon the trainee's statements after the event and has obvious disadvantages when compared with Clarke and Martin's objectively defined classification. It was possible to verify that the trainee did in fact abscond alone rather than in a group[1] but whether he was the group leader could only be determined in this research by asking the trainees. A possibility would have been to ask the institution staff for an opinion as to the group leader but the resources were not available to do this at the time.

Personality and absconding

The results presented in this section do not attempt an exhaustive investigation of the personality attributes of absconders compared with non-absconders from borstal. Only three of the vast battery of personality measures available have been used and in the light of results from approved schools significant results were not expected.

The three tests used were the Maudsley Personality Inventory (MPI) (Eysenck, 1959), the Hostility and Direction of Hostility Questionnaire (HDHQ) (Foulds *et al.* 1967) and a test developed by Smalley (1954) for use on the borstal population.

The MPI is a questionnaire developed by Eysenck (1959) and provides measures on what he considers to be two basic dimensions of personality - extraversion/ introversion (E) and neuroticism (N). There is also a lie score (L) which is sometimes taken as an indication of the reliability of the result.

Eysenck (1965) describes the typical extravert as 'sociable, needing friends and people to talk to and one who craves excitement, generally an impulsive

[1] All trainees appeared truthful in this respect.

individual'. The typical introvert he suggests is one who is 'a quiet, retiring sort of person, introspective and one who distrusts the impulse of the moment'. The high N scorer is described as 'moody, anxious, touchy or restless'.

Eysenck (1964) maintains that criminality is linked to both extraversion and neuroticism and has gone on to argue in his more recent work (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1970, 1971) that it is also associated with psychoticism. Eysenck's postulated relationship between extraversion and crime is based upon the assumption that it is a person's conscience which holds his propensity to crime in check and that conscience is developed by a process of Pavlovian conditioning. The argument is that since extraverts, under stated conditions, condition less well than introverts then they should be over-represented in the criminal population. In addition, since high degrees of neuroticism tend to reinforce any extraverted or introverted tendencies related to anti-social behaviour then it is particularly the neurotic extravert who will be the most delinquent. Evidence related to Eysenck's hypotheses has been reviewed by Cochrane (1974) who maintains that 'we are forced to conclude that Eysenck's original statement of his theory of criminality has been discredited'. Eysenck, not surprisingly, takes issue with this conclusion (1974). It is not appropriate to discuss the merits and demerits of the work here; however, Eysenck and Eysenck (1970) have suggested that one explanation of the fact that some workers (including themselves) have failed to find a convincing relationship between extraversion and criminality may be that the groups of prisoners used in these studies have been too heterogeneous. They suggest that constructing a typology of crimes may lead to greater homogeneity among sub-groups of prisoners some of which may then differ in extraversion scores when compared with the normal population. Although a comparison of absconders, with non-absconders would hardly constitute a 'typology of crimes' in the sense in which Eysenck and Eysenck presumably meant, it does seem reasonable to argue that absconders may be more delinquent, in some sense, than the rest of the borstal population. According to Eysenck's theory they should therefore be both more extravert and more neurotic.

Work on the psychoticism scale, which appears more closely related to criminality than extraversion (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1970, 1971) was only beginning when data were collected for this study and the scale was therefore not used.

So, commensurate with the notion that the more delinquent trainees will tend to abscond, it was expected that extraverts and particularly neurotic extraverts, would have a high absconding rate.

In relation to the absconding classification mentioned in the introduction it is suggested that extraverts will be more likely to abscond in a group and will probably be the group leaders.

The HDHQ was developed by Foulds, Cain and Hope (1967) and gives two composite hostility scores; general hostility (GH) and direction of hostility (D) the general hostility score is obtained by summing live sub-scales (guilt (G), criticism of others (C), projected hostility (PH), self-criticism (SC) and acting-out

hostility (AH)) and the direction of hostility score is obtained from the following formula:

$$\text{Direction} = (2 \times \text{SC}) + \text{G} - (\text{PH} + \text{CO} + \text{AH})$$

The direction of hostility score can be positive or negative, positive corresponding to intropunitive and negative to extrapunitive. It was expected that the more hostile trainees (that is, those scoring highest in the HDHQ general hostility measure) would abscond; this is in accord with the results of a study carried out by the New Zealand Department of Justice (1961) which showed that borstal absconders were more rebellious and hostile to authority. This would also indicate that they would score in the extrapunitive rather than the intropunitive direction on the questionnaire.

Given that the trainees have absconded, it was expected that those scoring high in GH in the extrapunitive direction will be more likely to abscond in a group and as leader rather than alone, on the grounds that they are more likely to be able to 'persuade' others to accompany them. Certain offenders are likely to find the company and approval of such trainees reinforcing and to accompany them for this reason.

Finally, the Smalley questionnaire, which was developed by Smalley (1964) on the borstal population was also administered. It is based on an assessment of the amount of approach/avoidance conflict involved in the committal of an offence. The questionnaire divides the population into three groups which Smalley called the Psychological (P), Sociological (S) and Psycho-sociological (P/S) types. These delinquent types are characterised by supernormal approach/normal avoidance, normal approach/subnormal avoidance and normal approach/normal avoidance[1] respectively.

The trainees completed this questionnaire in relation to their current offence. There were no suggestions from earlier work as to what types, defined by the questionnaire, might abscond, since it has not been used in this way before and there is little in the nature of the questionnaire itself on which to base any predictions. The use of this questionnaire was therefore much more exploratory. Similarly, no predictions were made in comparing the questionnaire responses of the different types of absconder.

Procedure

The three tests were administered at Wormwood Scrubs to groups of trainees by a member of the psychology department. AH testing was carried out prior to allocation and the trainees were followed up in borstal to determine whether or not they absconded. Any trainees who did abscond were asked to complete a questionnaire by the housemaster if returned to the institution from which they absconded or by a member of the psychology department if returned to Wormwood Scrubs for re-allocation. (In a few cases the questionnaire was administered

[1] See Miller (1959) for an explanation of these terms.

by the housemaster in the institution to which the trainee was re-allocated). Every effort was made to ensure that the questionnaires were administered as soon after the absconding incident as possible.

The questionnaire itself (appendix C) was a slightly modified version of Smalley's questionnaire in that it gave an assessment of the approach/avoidance conflict associated with the absconding incident. Several additional questions were inserted at the end concerned specifically with the act of absconding and two of these are relevant here: trainees were asked whether they absconded alone or in a group and whether it was their own idea or someone else had suggested it.

Sample

The sample, which is used throughout this chapter, comprised every alternate reception into Wormwood Scrubs from September 1969 to April 1970 making a total of 1103 trainees. Of these trainees 31 were dropped from the sample due to incomplete data collection making a working sample of 1072 trainees. 585 trainees were allocated to closed borstals after testing and 487 were allocated to open-type institutions. Although the sample was taken from the allocation centre in the South-east, the trainees were allocated to borstals throughout the country. The receiving institutions were therefore representative of borstals generally.

Results

There was a total of 135 absconders, of whom 110 completed the modified Smalley questionnaire; 79 from open institutions and 31 from closed. Complete coverage was not possible since not all trainees were recovered and administrative procedures made it difficult to trace some trainees after transfer within the borstal system.

For detailed results the reader is referred to Laycock (1974); a summary table is presented in appendices D and E of this report where the results are presented in two sections—(i) absconders compared with a sample of non-absconders on test results obtained prior to allocation and (ii) within-absconder comparisons on these same test results. The non-absconder groups for open and closed borstals comprised the first 150 trainees allocated to these institutions who did not abscond. The open and closed data are analysed separately to avoid the complication of differential allocation.

There were no significant personality differences at all between trainees who absconded from borstal and those who did not. There were some differences when comparisons were made between groups of absconders—

(i) in open borstals, group leaders differed from non-leaders in that they were less extravert;

(ii) in closed borstals, trainees absconding alone had lower general hostility scores than those absconding as group leader;

(iii) in open borstals trainees absconding in a group, but not as leader, differed from those absconding alone and those absconding as group leader in their direction of hostility scores—they were more intropunitive.

The Smalley test did not differentiate absconders from non-absconders although again there was a significant difference between absconding types in open borstals. The sociological and pyscho-sociological groups had to be combined since the expected frequencies would otherwise have been too small for the computation of the statistics. The results showed that trainees categorised as sociologically or psycho-sociologically disturbed were over-represented amongst group leaders and under-represented amongst group non-leaders; trainees absconding alone were proportionately represented in the two categories.

Discussion

Trainees absconding from open and closed borstals do not differ in any of the personality test scores from non-absconders, nor does the Smalley test differentiate absconders from non-absconders in either situation. These results are not surprising considering the data from approved schools. Although it would be premature to dismiss the traditional personality approach as being of little value in the study of absconding from borstals since only two tests were used here in addition to the Smalley questionnaire, taken in conjunction with Clarke and Martin's (1971) work, the approach does not seem to hold much promise. Indeed when one considers the diverse set of situations which may lead to an absconding incident there seems little reason to suppose that any one personality type should respond to all such situations by absconding. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that personality factors as measured using pencil and paper tests are unlikely to differentiate absconders from non-absconders in borstals.

The comparison of the personality attributes of absconders of one type and another did produce some significant results. Contrary to prediction, trainees absconding from open borstals as the group leader score in the more introverted direction than trainees absconding in a group but not as the leader. One would have expected this result to be in the opposite direction almost by definition. However, it should be remembered that those absconding as group leader are not introverts; rather they are less extravert than the other group.

In the case of the general hostility scores in closed borstals, the trainees absconding alone are significantly less hostile than those absconding as group leader. This significant personality result may reflect the differing motivation of the absconders and serves to support the notion that one type of absconder can be usefully differentiated from another.

In both open and closed borstals, trainees absconding in a group as non-leaders, score in the intropunitive direction. In the open borstals they are significantly different from both the other groups of absconders *(ie* leaders and lone absconders). This is sufficient to account for the lack of significance in comparing

absconders and non-absconders although it is itself difficult to explain and was not predicted.

The fact that the Smalley questionnaire produced no significant differences between absconders and non-absconders from either open or closed borstals may be explained in open borstals at least by an examination of the 'within absconder' comparisons. Trainees absconding alone were equally represented in the sociological (S) and psycho-sociological (P/S) groups *combined* and in the Psychological group. However, trainees absconding as group leader were over-represented in the S-P/S categories whilst those absconding as group non-leader were under-represented. This result again supports the suggestion that one type of absconder can be meaningfully differentiated from another. Similar comparisons could not be made in the closed situation because of the sample size.

Previous similar behaviour and absconding

Behavioural approaches to problems in psychology are becoming more popular, as evidenced by the increasing amount in the literature in recent years on behaviour therapy and operant environments (Gathercole 1973). A behavioural approach to absconding from borstals would suggest two things:

1. The importance of the consequences of previous similar behaviour.
2. The role of the immediate environment in determining behaviour.

The importance of the consequences of previous similar behaviour lies in the fact that if the behaviour, in this case absconding, has been reinforced in the past (by reduction in anxiety, increased stimulation, a visit home *etc),* then it will be more likely to occur in the future. Clarke and Martin (1970) have pointed out that approved school boys often abscond many times and they argue that it is useful to consider absconding from approved school as a learned response to anxiety. Williams (1974) maintains that in the case of prison, aversive contingencies are set up which one may or may not label as anxiety-provoking and which naturally reinforce escape learning, one form of which is absconding. Clarke (1968) has shown in relation to absconding from approved schools that boys with a record of absconding from remand home or classifying school or who had previously been to approved school are much more likely to be absconders, particularly persistent absconders from training schools.

To extend this finding to the borstal situation, one may hypothesize that trainees with a history of approved school absconding are more likely to abscond from borstal. The allocation centre has tended to accept this hypothesis and has accordingly allocated trainees with a history of approved school absconding to closed borstals. This has made it difficult to test the hypothesis, since the trainees in question have been deliberately placed in a restrictive environment. However, the allocation centres have reserved the right to allocate selected ex-approved school absconders to open institutions. In fact, of 300 consecutive allocatees from Wormwood Scrubs in 1969, 86 had a known history of absconding from

approved school, detention centre, probation hostel, children's home, police custody or borstal. Of this 86, the majority were ex-approved school absconders. Eleven trainees were allocated to open conditions, despite their previous history, leaving 75 trainees or 25 % of the 300 who went to closed borstals. In fact, this 25 % may have included trainees who were allocated to closed conditions for several reasons, only one of which may have been a history of absconding. So, it is possible to affect the allocation of up to 25 % of the population as a result of testing this hypothesis; this could have a beneficial effect on overcrowding in closed borstals. The first study to be reported in this section investigates the hypothesis (separately for open and for closed borstals) that trainees with a history of approved school absconding will be more likely to abscond from borstal.

The second study in this section is also related to the idea that the immediate consequences of previous similar behaviour are important. In this study similar behaviour is more broadly defined as delinquent behaviour. If absconding is considered a delinquent act, as has been suggested earlier, then it could be argued that the more delinquent trainees will abscond. In other words trainees who have behaved in a delinquent fashion in the free environment (and presumably been reinforced by money, excitement, status gained *etc)* will also behave in a delinquent fashion in borstal. One manifestation of this delinquency may be to abscond.

(i) *Approved school absconding and absconding from borstals*

The same trainees were investigated as those described in the previous section. Of the 487 trainees allocated to open borstals, 83 had previously been to approved schools and 28 of the 83 had absconded at some time. Of the 584 trainees in closed borstals, 254 had approved school experience and of these, 174 had absconded at some time.

All trainees were followed up in borstal to determine whether or not they absconded.

Table 1

Previous approved school experience and absconding

	Open borstals		*Closed borstals*	
	absconded	*did not abscond*	*absconded*	*did not abscond*
Previous approved school	21	62	26	228
No previous approved school	74	330	14	317
Total	95	392	40	545
	$\chi^2 = 1{\cdot}71$ not significant		$\chi^2 = 7{\cdot}22$. $p < 0{\cdot}01$ (2 tailed)	

Table I shows that in open borstals there was no significant difference in absconding between those trainees who had previously been to approved school

and those who had not. There was however a significant difference in closed borstals.

Table 2

Previous approved school absconding and absconding from borstal in a sample of ex-approved school trainees

	Open borstals		*Closed borstals*	
	absconded	*did not abscond*	*absconded*	*did not abscond*
Ex-approved school absconder	11	17	20	154
Ex-approved school non-absconder	10	45	6	74
Total	21	62	26	228
	$\chi^2 = 2{\cdot}80$ p < 0·05 (1 tailed)		$\chi^2 = 0{\cdot}566$ not significant	

The results in Table 2 suggest that there is a significant difference in absconding rate between trainees who absconded from approved school and those who did not if they were subsequently allocated to an open borstal but not if they were subsequently sent to a closed institution.

Table 3

Ex-approved school absconders compared with trainees having no previous approved school experience and absconding from borstals

	Open borstals		*Closed borstals*	
	absconded	*did not abscond*	*absconded*	*did not abscond*
Ex-approved school absconders	11	17	20	154
No previous approved school experience	74	330	14	317
Total	85	347	34	471
	$\chi^2 = 6{\cdot}02$ p < 0·01 (1 tailed)		$\chi^2 = 8{\cdot}46$ p < 0·005 (1 tailed)	

Table 3 sHbws that ex-approved school absconders have a higher absconding rate than trainees with no previous approved school experience. This is so in both open and closed institutions.

Discussion

The results presented above suggest that those ex-approved school trainees who are 'risked' in open conditions are significantly more likely to abscond than trainees who have not been to approved school. There is also some suggestion

that trainees who had absconded from approved school were more likely to abscond from open borstal, than were those trainees who had not absconded while at approved school (although this result was of borderline significance). In other words, it is unlikely to be the approved school experience *per se* which affects the absconding rate in open borstals.

It will be remembered that the trainees investigated had been selected for open conditions; it is most probable that the result would be substantially confirmed were an unselected group of ex-approved school absconders to be allocated to open conditions. For the result to be negated, the allocation centre would have to be selecting high abscond risk trainees for open borstals and this is most unlikely to be the case. We may conclude in relation to open borstals that the prediction has been confirmed—trainees absconding from approved school tend to abscond from open borstals.

The picture in closed borstals is not so clear. Trainees who have previously absconded from approved school do have a higher abscond rate than trainees with no previous approved school experience ($p < 0\text{-}005$). However, trainees with a previous approved school sentence are also more likely to abscond from borstal whether or not they absconded from approved school. Therefore for closed borstals 'absconding from approved school' is no better a predictor of borstal absconding than 'attendance at approved school'. Without having control of the allocation process, it is difficult to determine whether trainees with approved school experience who did not abscond from approved school are absconding from closed borstals because they are in a different situation from open borstal trainees or because they are different trainees in other respects (hence their allocation to closed borstals). Unless it is possible to organise the borstal system in future on a more experimental basis these considerations will remain a matter for speculation.

(ii) *Delinquency and Absconding from borstals*

It has been argued in an earlier section that absconding should be considered a delinquent act, thus it might be expected that the more delinquent trainees will abscond.

The more delinquent groups are defined here as having a large number of previous court appearances and being younger at the age of second conviction. The choice of the first variable is self-evident. The second variable, age at second conviction, was chosen in preference to age at first conviction following Johnson (1964). Johnson investigated a sample of young prisoners on remand in terms of a variety of variables, including age at first and second conviction. Johnson argued that what was important was the age at which a 'delinquent breakdown', marked by a succession of offences, occurred. The only way to pinpoint this age was to look at case histories on an individual basis. In this way, Johnson argued, a boy with an isolated conviction at an early age, followed by a long period conviction-free before a breakdown a few years later, would not be classified

with the early onset group. He would have much more in common with the older onset group. Johnson went on to argue that taking age at second conviction to indicate the onset of delinquency would reduce 'misrepresentation of facts'. As he says, in most cases this makes little difference—a second conviction follows hard on the heels of the first: where it does make a difference, the classification by second conviction may more truly represent the situation.

Johnson went on to plot the age at second conviction of his sample. The resulting curve suggested that there may be three constituent distributions making it possible to discriminate three onset groups at the following cut-off points:

Early: Second conviction before the age of 12

Middle: Second conviction ages 12-15 inclusive

Late: Second conviction after 15.

The total sample size used by Johnson was only 212 and although this does not seem large enough to state categorically that there are three distinct onset groups, these categories were used in this study. However, no great significance is attached to them here.

Data were recorded on a sample of trainees who were then transferred to borstal institutions. Any trainee not having a second conviction *(eg* those with no previous convictions) was considered to be a 'late starter' and was included in that group. All trainees were followed up to determine whether or not they subsequently absconded.

Results and discussion

The results are presented for open and for closed borstals. The four categories of previous court appearances were arbitrarily decided upon. Joncheere's (1954) trend test was used in analysing Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

Number of previous court appearances and absconding

Number of previous court appearances	*Open borstals*		*Closed borstals*	
	absconded	*did not abscond*	*absconded*	*did not abscond*
0	2	18	0	25
1–3	39	181	12	179
4–6	42	151	19	238
7 or more	12	42	9	103
Total	95	392	40	545
	$Z = -1{\cdot}358$ not significant		$Z = 1{\cdot}13$ not significant	

It seems clear that in open borstals there is no tendency for the more delinquent trainees, as defined here, to abscond. This may suggest that it is inappropriate to

consider absconding as a delinquent act. Other more complex interpretations are possible if different assumptions are made about the act of absconding, for instance, if it is assumed that absconders are not a homogeneous group.

Table 5

Age at second court appearance and absconding

Age at second court appearance	*Open borstals*		*Closed borstals*	
	absconded	*did not abscond*	*absconded*	*did not abscond*
8–11	5	21	5	42
12–15	29	118	25	251
16–21	61	253	10	252
Total	95	392	40	545
	Not significant by inspection		$Z = 2{\cdot}85$ $p < 0{\cdot}002$	

The picture in closed borstals is slightly different; here the number of previous court appearances is not related to absconding although age at second conviction is. This result is difficult to explain, since one would expect a high correlation between age of onset and number of previous court appearances. The correlation was in fact -0-59—*ie* the earlier the age of onset the more court appearances. However, the number of previous court appearances a trainee has will be affected by the length of time he has spent in institutions, where the opportunity for delinquency is reduced. The earlier the age of onset the more likely a trainee will be to have spent some time at approved school, detention centre or whatever. On these grounds, then, it could be argued that age of onset is a better indication of delinquency (if by this we mean a tendency to act in some anti-social manner) since it is uncontaminated by the length of time spent in institutions. In this sense, closed borstal absconders do tend to be more delinquent than non-absconders but the relationship is not so powerful as to be demonstrable using simply 'number of previous court appearances'.

Present offence and absconding

The relationships between present offence (motor vehicle offence, burglary and the rest) and absconding, and present offence and absconding type are considered in this section. The trainee's present offence was taken to be the last offence committed prior to his arrest. Each trainee in the sample had been interviewed to obtain the necessary information. The offences were classified into three groups—motor vehicle offences (including taking and driving away, theft of a motor vehicle, driving whilst disqualified, being carried in a stolen vehicle, and driving without insurance), burglary (including breaking and entering, warehouse breaking, housebreaking, entering with intent to steal *etc)* and the remainder (including sexual and violent offenders, robbery, theft, drug offences *etc).* For details relating to the choice of category, the reader is referred to Laycock (1974).

Briefly, there was an indication from some experimental work that burglars and motor vehicle offenders were risk takers and as such were more likely to abscond than the rest of the borstal population.

The same trainees were considered as in the previous sections. Again, open and closed borstal results are presented separately. The results show that those convicted of motor vehicle offences who are in open borstals are more likely to abscond than other trainees (Table 6).

Table 6

Present offence and absconding

	Open borstals			*Closed borstals*		
Offence	*absconded*	*did not abscond*	*rate*	*absconded*	*did not abscond*	*rate*
Motor vehicle	33	70	32%	8	88	8%
Burglary	31	177	15%	17	160	10%
Remainder	31	145	18%	15	297	5%
Total	95	392		40	545	
	$\chi^2 = 13{\cdot}82$ $p < 0{\cdot}001$ (2 tailed)			Not significant		

Table 7

Present offence and absconding category in open borstals

	Abscond			
Offence	*Alone*	*Group leader*	*Group non-leader*	*Total*
Motor vehicle	9 (9)	14 (13)	8 (9)	31
Burglary	7 (7)	13 (8)	2 (7)	22
Remainder	8 (8)	4 (10)	14 (8)	26
Total	24	31	24	79

$\chi^2 = 15{\cdot}24$ $p < 0{\cdot}01$ (2 tailed). For clarity on this table, expected frequencies are given in brackets.

Table 7 indicates that trainees absconding alone are equally represented in the three offence groups; those absconding as group leader are more likely than expected to have been convicted of burglary and those absconding in a group but not as the leader are more likely than expected to have been convicted of an offence other than burglary or a motor vehicle offence *given that they absconded.*[1]

[1] If non-absconders are included in Table 7 a different result is obtained (see Table 17 p. 49). In that case motor vehicle offenders are more likely to have been the group leaders. Thus given a group of borstal boys we can say that any group leader is more likely than expected to have been convicted of a motor vehicle offence but given a group of borstal boys *who have absconded* then a group leader would be more likely than expected to have a current conviction for burglary.

Unfortunately there were too few trainees in the groups for the same comparisons to be made in closed borstals as in open. The motor vehicle and burglary groups had to be combined and trainees absconding in a group were compared with those going alone. Table 8 resulted—

Table 8

Present offence and absconding category in closed borstals

	Abscond		
Offence	*Alone*	*Group*	*Total*
Motor vehicle and burglary	7	11	18
Remainder	6	7	13
Total	13	18	31

There is in fact no significant difference between the groups.

Discussion

Motor vehicle offenders have a considerably higher absconding rate from open borstals than do other offenders. However, in closed borstals this is not the case. It is difficult to account for the high absconding rate from open borstals of these motor vehicle offenders. One possible explanation is that they can drive, but if this were the most important consideration, one might expect them to have a high absconding rate from closed institutions also. There appears to be a rather complex interaction between the type of trainee and the environment within which he finds himself. There are problems of course, in making this interpretation, since the trainees are not randomly allocated to open and closed borstals and statistical tests of interaction were not carried out. Those motor vehicle offenders who do go to closed borstals do so because they are presumably different from the rest. This question is discussed further in Chapter 4 when a model of absconding is considered.

The relationship between offence and type of absconding incident was also significant in open borstals. Given that they have absconded, burglars, and to a much lesser extent, motor vehicle offenders, differ from the remainder of the population in the extent to which they claim to be the group leader in any absconding incident. Unfortunately, due to sample size, it was not possible to make the same comparisons in closed borstals. Here group absconders were compared with trainees absconding alone and no difference was found in their offence. To return to the open borstal result, comparing present offence and absconding type; trainees absconding alone are not predictable in terms of their current offence; those absconding as group leader are more likely than expected to have been convicted of burglary; next most likely to have a motor vehicle conviction, and least likely to have any other conviction. The reverse is true in the case of those trainees absconding in a group but not as leader. Although

these results are difficult to explain, they may be of some importance in the control of absconding. Clearly, a reduction in the number of group abscondings, even if not accompanied by a reduction in the number of absconding incidents would be well worthwhile. In this context a significant relationship between offence and group abscond leaders is perhaps worth further consideration. It should be remembered, however, that the result is based on the trainee's own statement that he was the leader and it could therefore simply reflect the exaggerated claims of burglars. Also it is important to note that this result was obtained given a group of absconders; the reader is referred to Table 17 (page 49) for a consideration of the most likely group leader from the general population.

Present offence category and absconding

Current offence was classified as against person or property. An offence against the person would include any offence involving an assault, any drug offence, blackmail and possession of an offensive weapon. An offence against property would include such offences as burglary, theft, taking and driving away, malicious damage and arson.

The relation between absconding and offence category is of interest, since it is those convicted of offences against the person that are debarred from open institutions because of the nature of their offence rather than because they are known absconding risks. It may be possible, if they are shown to be less likely to abscond than property offenders, to increase the number of such trainees 'risked' in open conditions and thus ease the pressure on 'closed' places.

The hypothesis under investigation, is that trainees convicted of offences against the person will be less likely to run away than trainees convicted of property offences. The hypothesis is based upon an experiment on risk taking reported in Laycock (1974) in which it was shown that property offenders make decisions *on* the basis of less information than person offenders. On these grounds it was suggested that they were risk takers and were thus more likely to abscond.

Again, as in previous sections, the results are presented separately for open and closed institutions. Since there were so few absconders convicted of offences

Table 9

Offenders against person or property and absconding

	Open borstals			*Closed borstals*		
	absconded	*did not abscond*	*rate*	*absconded*	*did not abscond*	*rate*
Person offenders	4	53	7%	9	192	4%
Property offenders	91	339	27%	31	353	8%
Total	95	392	20%	40	545	7%
	$\chi^2 = 5{\cdot}54$ $p < 0{\cdot}001$ (1 tailed)			$\chi^2 = 2{\cdot}14$ Not significant		

against the person, there seemed little advantage in considering the relationship between abscond type and offence classification.

The same sample of trainees were investigated as in the previous section.

Trainees convicted of offences against property are significantly more likely to abscond from open institutions than are trainees convicted of offences against the person (Table 9). It is relevant to this result that motor vehicle offenders who also have a high abscond rate from open institutions are all classified as offenders against property. If they are excluded from Table 9 then we have the result shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Offenders against person or property and absconding from open borstals excluding current motor vehicle offenders

	Absconded	*Did not abscond*	*Total*
Person offenders	4	53	57
Property offenders	58	269	327
Total	62	322	384

$\chi^2 = 3{\cdot}003$ $p < 0{\cdot}05$ (1 tailed)

This result is of borderline significance. There remains, therefore, some justification for suggesting that more trainees convicted of offences against the person could be allocated to open institutions.

In closed institutions there was no significant relationship between absconding and offence classification.

Discussion

Again, there is a significant relationship between the variable under investigation (in this case, offence category) and absconding from open institutions but not from closed. This particular aspect of the results will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4 where an absconding model is considered. From the administrative point of view, the 'open' result does suggest that more trainees convicted of offences against the person could be risked in open conditions, since they have a lower absconding rate than those trainees convicted of offences against property. To some extent in support of this, is the finding that closed borstal person offenders also have a lower absconding rate than property offenders; however, this result did not reach significance. It must also be remembered that the open borstal result was based on a selected sample; selected that is, for open conditions.

A note on intelligence, age **and absconding**

The investigation of the relationships between intelligence, age and absconding in the borstal system is difficult, not only because trainees are differentially

allocated to open of closed institutions but also because, at the time of this research, there was some differential allocation *within* the open and closed systems based on measures of intelligence and age (Sewell and Williams, 1967). Since, in addition, the absconding rates vary within the open and closed systems quite markedly (Laycock, 1974), it proved difficult to consider these variables in the context of the present research. The reason for this was primarily one of sample size. Because the work reported here was based on a national sample rather than an institutional sample, there were not enough trainees absconding from any one borstal to consider these variables and their relation to absconding. It is true that statistical techniques do exist which allow the statistic to be summed across all the institutions thus testing the hypothesis despite the small institutional sample sizes. However, in this context any effect of age and intelligence on absconding was likely to be marginal. Even if there were a significant result, the interpretation was likely to prove difficult. It was therefore decided not to investigate these variables in the context of the present research; institutionally based investigation would be preferable at some future date.

Reasons given by trainees for their abscond from borstal

The results presented here describe a study investigating the reasons given by trainees for absconding from borstal.

The relationship between the reasons given and number of previous proved offences, type of institution *(ie,* open or closed), and nature of present offence are investigated. This section should be seen as exploratory since none of the reasons given by the trainees were validated, and, perhaps more importantly, no data were collected on non-absconders.

The same sample of trainees were studied as in the previous sections (see p. 20 for details). Questionnaires were sent to all returned absconders after their recovery asking them, amongst other things, why they absconded. Details concerning their present offence and previous convictions were collected before allocation. A total of 110 trainees completed the questionnaires, 79 from open institutions and 31 from closed.

Table 11

Classification of reasons given for absconding

Reason	*Open borstals*	*Closed borstals*	*Total*
1. Girl friend, wife, family	33	7	40
2. Bored, fed up, didn't like it, wanted freedom, depressed, had no reason, just left	20	12	32
3. Mixed reasons (*ie* 1 and/or 2 combined with other unclassified reasons *eg* training difficulties)	11	5	16
4. Unclassified	10	6	16
5. No reason given (*ie* space left blank)	5	1	6

The reasons given for absconding were classified into six groups by the writer; this classification was not cross-validated. The reasons were taken as they were presented; no attempt was made to verify or refute them. Indeed in many cases it would not have been possible to verify the reasons since they were descriptions of subjective states *eg:* 'I was bored'.

The classification of the data is shown in Table 11.

Reasons placed in the 'unclassified' category included—'I was drunk', 'To prove to myself that I could do it', 'I was mixed up with a certain party'; it was felt that these reasons did not fall readily into any other category.

Since the majority of reasons given fell into one of two categories *viz*: 'family reasons' and 'boredom and related states', only these two categories were analysed in relation to the variables of number of previous proved offences, type of institution and nature of present offence.

Previous proved offences

Reasons given for absconding (boredom and 'family' reasons) were not related to previous proved offences in open borstals. It was not possible to analyse the results in closed institutions since there were too few trainees in each category.

Nature of present offence

As with previous proved offences there were too few trainees in the closed borstal sample for statistical analysis. Only the open borstal figures are presented. The offences fell conveniently into three groups—burglary, motor vehicle offences and the remainder.

Table 12

Nature of current offence and reason for absconding

	Reason related to:		
Offence	*family*	*boredom*	*Total*
Burglary	7	10	17
Motor vehicle	14	5	19
Remainder	12	5	17
Total	33	20	53

$\chi^2 = 7{\cdot}50$ $p < 0{\cdot}05$ (2 tailed)

Burglars are more likely than the rest of the open borstal population to give boredom and related states as the reason for their absconding.

Discussion

There was not a significant relationship between previous proved offences and reason given for absconding, although there was a tendency for trainees with larger numbers of previous proved offences to say that they were bored rather

than to give family-type reasons. Instead of investigating the number of previous proved offences, it may have been more interesting to have considered the length of time spent in institutions in the past in relation to the reason given for absconding; trainees having spent a long time away from home would perhaps be less likely to miss their parents, or, at least, to give this as a reason for their absconding. There was a slight tendency for trainees in closed borstals to say that they were bored rather than that they left for family reasons, although again this was not significant. It would have been interesting to determine whether trainees in closed borstals who did not abscond also found the environment more boring than trainees from open institutions not absconding. These data were unfortunately not available. Any comparison between responses of trainees in open and closed institutions is difficult, of course, because of the problem of differential allocation.

Trainees convicted of burglary who had absconded from open borstals were significantly more likely to give boredom as a reason than trainees convicted of any other offence. This result is perhaps worth further investigation if only because it demonstrates another significant relationship between absconding-related behaviour and present offence.

Summary of results

On the basis of the tests used here (MPI, HDHQ, and Smalley) there seems little evidence to suggest that personality factors play a significant part in the aetiology of borstal absconding. Given that trainees have absconded, their extraversion, general hostility and direction of hostility scores do become relevant in that they appear related to the type of absconder in certain situations. Three types of absconder were considered here, those absconding alone, as self-confessed group leader, and in a group but not as leader.

Previous similar behaviour appeared important in differentiating absconders from non-absconders. This was particularly true in open institutions where a history of approved school absconding was associated with a higher absconding rate. In closed borstals the same appeared to be the case, although it was difficult to separate out the effect on borstal absconding of the approved school experience *per se.*

Number of previous proved offences was not related to absconding from either open or closed borstals, although early age of onset of delinquency was so related in closed institutions.

The most significant finding in the present research was that motor vehicle offenders have a higher abscond rate from open institutions than other trainees, although this was not the case in closed borstals. Finally, burglars and to a lesser extent motor vehicle offenders, were more likely to claim to be the group leader when absconding with other trainees than were the remainder of offenders. Burglars were also more likely to give boredom as a reason for absconding from open institutions.

3 Environmental Effects

INTRODUCTION

TIME IN SENTENCE

EFFECT OF INDUCTION UNITS ON ABSCONDING

GROUP ABSCONDING

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

Introduction

Environmental effects have proved to be related to absconding from approved schools. In this chapter some environmental effects are considered in relation to absconding from borstals. The time in sentence at which abscondings take place is considered and the results of this lead on to a consideration of the effect on absconding of introducing induction units into the institution.

The incidence of group abscondings in open or closed borstals is also compared and some implications of the results are discussed.

Time in sentence

Of trainees who abscond, the proportion absconding early in sentence is considerably greater for open institutions than for closed. This is illustrated in Figure 3 which shows absconding data collected during the period July 1969 to August 1970. During this period, 250 trainees absconded from closed borstals and 701 from open.[1]

FIGURE 3

Time in sentence of absconding in open and closed borstals

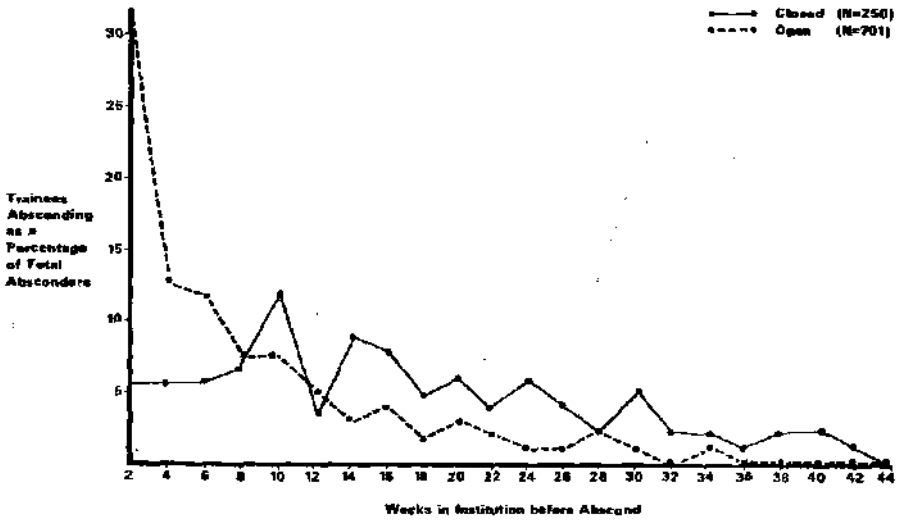


Figure 3 shows the number of trainees absconding as a proportion of the total number of absconders plotted against the time spent in the institution. As stated above, trainees from open institutions clearly absconded early in sentence: 32% of trainees absconded within two weeks from open borstals, compared with only 6 % after the same time at closed borstals.

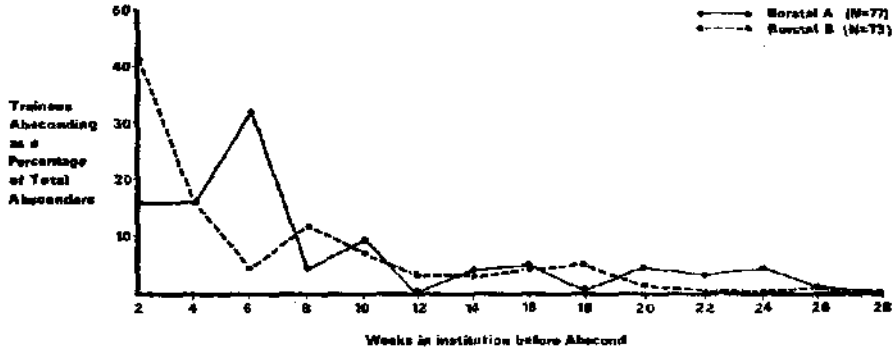
[1] This approximately corresponds to rates of 38 % for open borstals and 7 % for closed using average population figures for 1969. This is probably an over estimate.

The result led to speculation about the relationship between 'patterns' of absconding, absconding rate, and particularly, the psychological pressures in the situation.

Absconding from borstal is an extremely risky act, in that it involves a high probability of eventual recapture (90% of absconders from open and closed borstals are recaptured within eight weeks, 67% within one week). Psychological literature, and indeed coromonsense, suggests that one consideration in the decision process regarding risky choice is the cost of an error. It seems reasonable, therefore, to suggest that the most 'popular' time for absconding from open institutions would be early in sentence, when prospects of downgrading are no deterrent. In behavioural terms there are few reinforcers at this time to encourage an individual to stay in the situation and a semi-indeterminate sentence stretches out ahead. New residents experience what is essentially a different environment from old residents. It is perhaps worth mentioning that in any system, faults are particularly likely to emerge at the beginning as it is at this point that components with a high risk of failing are first put to the test. So it is with absconding.

FIGURE 4

Time in sentence of absconding in two borstal institutions



An important prediction derived from the above discussion would be that if one suppresses absconding early in sentence, not only does the suppressed early peak move to a later time but the overall absconding rate for the institution is decreased. In other words, 'releasing' trainees from a more secure reception unit later in sentence, when they have perhaps been promoted to training grade,[1] increases the cost to the individual of an unsuccessful abscond and might deter some trainees.

This is illustrated in Figure 4 which shows data from two open institutions, Borstals A and B.

[1] At the time of this research borstal trainees entered borstal in a basic grade and progressed through training grade, senior training grade and discharge grade before their final release.

Data were again collected over the period July 1969 to August 1970, during which time 73 trainees absconded from Borstal B and 77 from Borstal A. As may be seen from the chart, Borstal A has reduced absconding within the first month. Borstal B has a typical open borstal pattern with the majority of absconding within the first two weeks. The argument here is that this initial suppression of Borstal A's absconding curve is directly related to the lower absconding rate for that institution (the absconding rates during the first 6 months of 1969 were 14% for Borstal A and 32% for Borstal B). The absolute number of absconders for both institutions over the period is virtually the same, despite the fact that Borstal A has approximately 100 more trainees in the institution.

Of course, it could very well be argued that the lower absconding rate of Borstal A is not due to the initial control in the institution but to any one of a number of things *eg* geographical location, staff difference, different allocation policy. It is claimed, however, that the effect is primarily due to the high staff concentration which Borstal A has in the induction unit and to the subsequent psychological effect of release from that unit.

The sort of control necessary to test the prediction directly has not been possible to achieve and the best alternative has been to take advantage of changes within the system which resemble the desired change.

Such a change did in fact take place in mid 1969 when Borstal C changed from the more traditional house system[1] to a 'progressive' system akin to that at Borstal A. The data from this institution are presented in the next section.

Effect of induction units on absconding

An induction unit with a high staff/inmate ratio was introduced at Borstal C in mid 1969 when the traditional house system was replaced. This was not the only change that took place and any reduction in the absconding rate subsequent to the introduction of the new system may be attributed to other factors, however the most likely cause, in view of the evidence discussed above is that change is related to the more secure induction unit.

Two sets of absconding data were collected, first from January to June 1969 when the more traditional structure prevailed. The institution changed at the beginning of July and after a six month run-in period, the second set of data was collected from January to June 1970. Thus time of year was controlled in the comparison.

Figure 5 shows trainees absconding as a percentage of the total number of absconders for each period. As can be seen, the difference between the two patterns is similar to the difference between Borstals A and B. The peak period has moved from the first two weeks before the change to the second two weeks

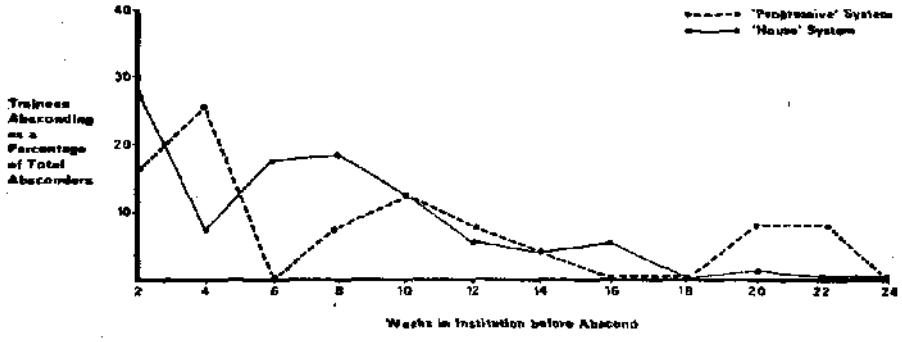
[1] Traditionally borstal trainees were allocated to a 'house' on reception in which they remained for the duration of their sentence. Under the 'progressive' system they would move house as their sentence progressed beginning with an induction unit and ending in a discharge unit.

after the change. (The further smaller peaks associated with the 'progressive' system which occur at around 10 weeks and 20-22 weeks are probably related to trainees anticipating changes in grade and being disappointed).

The correlation between the number of trainees absconding in the five one-monthly periods up to the end of the 20th week and time in the institution is -0-80 before change, and -0-50 after the change. There is less relationship with time in the system after the change; in other words, in this respect absconding has become more random.

FIGURE 5

Time in sentence of absconding in borstal with a "progressive" system and a "house" system



The original hypothesis, that the induction unit would lead to reduction in the absconding rate, has also been confirmed. The rate dropped from 43% of receptions absconding during the first period to 13 % during the second period. Remembering the two points mentioned earlier, that the cost of absconding is affected by prospects of loss in grade and indeterminacy of sentence, it is worth comment that the new system at Borstal C involves promoting the majority of trainees out of the induction unit and giving them a target date for release before the end of the induction period. Therefore, exit from the secure induction unit is accompanied by the introduction of 'something to lose' as the cost to the individual, of an absconding. This could be interpreted in risk-taking terms as an increase in the cost of deciding to abscond, or in behavioural terms as reinforcing the trainees for staying in the institution.

Discussion

Data presented in the above 2 sections are intended to be at least suggestive of the fact that suppression of absconding at the beginning of training leads to an overall reduction in absconding. In other words, reduction during the first 2 weeks or so may lead to an increase in the following 2 weeks but it will not be sufficient to raise the absconding rate to the level it would otherwise have reached. It is not the intention here to suggest that every institution should adopt a structure similar to that at Borstals A or C. The structure in these institutions is appropriate for the training regimes there and it may not be appropriate for

adoption in other institutions. Nevertheless, it does suggest that institutional factors, such as a 'target date' approach or a concentration of staff at the beginning of training, may play a much more important part in the control of absconding than has perhaps been recognised to date. It also pinpoints the period of training during which effort could most profitably be concentrated.

The possibilities in terms of experimentation in this area are considerable. For example, there are implications for proposed 'semi-closed' institutions. Rather than build units that are semi-closed for the whole of training as has been suggested, consideration may be given to a closed system operating at the beginning and becoming less 'secure' as the sentence progresses.

Group absconding

It is generally the number of individuals absconding from an institution which gives cause for concern rather than the number of absconding incidents. This is understandable although it does detract from the concept of the group absconding incident which has implications for the control of absconding. A situation in which trainees encourage others to abscond will naturally increase the absconding rate of an institution even though the number of incidents may remain the same. This process could account for the higher absconding rate from open institutions. The rationale behind this is that in a secure institution, from which escape is difficult, one would expect potential escapers to be careful in whose presence they discuss their plans, to be less likely to ask friends to accompany them. One would predict that there would be a greater number of absconding incidents from open borstals involving more than one trainee than from closed and that trainees absconding from open borstals would be more likely to have discussed their intentions with peers. These two hypotheses are investigated in this section.

In the context of reducing the number of group abscondings, the characteristics of the absconding group leader become important. On an exploratory basis, returned absconders were asked whether they discussed their problems with staff or not and whether they thought they would get away or not. The results are presented here in terms of whether the absconding was alone, in a group as leader, or in a group as non-leader. The implications for the control of absconding are discussed.

Two sources of data were used in investigating the hypotheses in this section. First, in determining the relative frequency of group absconding incidents in open and closed borstals, data were collected from the abscond report forms sent to Headquarters from the institutions. These give the number of absconding incidents and number of trainees involved in each. Data were collected for the period July-September 1969.

Secondly, a group of absconders (N = 108) were asked on recovery: whether or not they had asked others to accompany them, whether they had talked to staff about their problems and whether they expected to get away.

Table 13 shows the frequency of absconding incidents involving one and more than one trainee in open and closed institutions. The result is significant at the 5% level indicating that there are more incidents involving single trainees in closed institutions than open.

Table 13

Incidence of single and group absconding from open and closed borstals

		Open borstals	*Closed borstals*	*Total*
Number of incidents involving one or more than one trainee	Alone	40	34	74
	Group	53	21	74
	Total	93	55	148

$\chi^2 = 4{\cdot}17$ $p < 0{\cdot}05$

Table 14

Discussion of absconding in open and closed borstals

	Open borstals	*Closed borstals*	*Total*
I asked other people to come with me	19	5	24
I did not talk about it	62	22	84
Total	81	27	108

$\chi^2 = 0{\cdot}07$ not significant

Table 14 shows the results of asking trainees who had absconded from the institutions whether or not they discussed their intentions. There was no significant difference between open and closed institutions in this respect.

Table 15

Discussion of problems with staff and absconding sub-group

	Open borstals			*Closed borstals*		
	alone	*group leader*	*group non-leader*	*alone*	*group leader*	*group non-leader*
Keep problems to self	16	24	10	10	8	6
Talk to staff	7	6	14	3	4	0
Total	23	30	24	13	12	6

$\chi^2 = 8{\cdot}91$ $p < 0{\cdot}02$ (2 tailed) Frequencies are too small for analysis[1]

[1] It was not possible to analyse the data from closed institutions because of the low frequencies; the table is presented because it seems that fewer trainees talk to staff about their problems at all in closed institutions. Although this is of no relevance to the hypothesis under investigation it seems interesting and worth further, more systematic, consideration. It could reflect staff, trainee or environmental differences between open and closed institutions.

Table 16

Subjective estimate of capture and absconding sub-group

	Open borstals			*Closed borstals*	
	alone	*group leader*	*group non-leader*	*alone and group leader*	*group non-leader*
Get caught	10	19	6	14	0
Get away	14	12	18	10	6
Total	24	31	24	24	6
	$\chi^2 = 7{\cdot}32$ $p < 0{\cdot}05$ (2 tailed)			Groups were combined on the basis of the open borstal result P = 0·014 (Fisher exact)	

In open borstals trainees absconding alone or as group leader were significantly more likely to say that they kept their problems to themselves than were those absconding in a group, but not as leader (Table 15).

Finally trainees absconding as non-leaders in a group see themselves as more likely to get away than trainees absconding alone or as group leader (Table 16).

Discussion

Table 13 shows that although there were more incidents in open compared with closed borstals, there were also significantly more group abscondings from open institutions. Obviously a reduction in the proportion of group abscondings, even if it were not accompanied by a reduction in the number of incidents, would reduce the total number of absconders. This could possibly be achieved by a publicity campaign, which emphasised the high probability of eventual recapture, since it seems that trainees absconding in a group, but not as leader, were under the misapprehension that they would get away (Table 16). It was suggested above that the greater number of group absconding incidents in open institutions could be due to the fact that trainees in open institutions discuss their plans more freely. This does not appear to be the case (Table 14) although it should be remembered that the data came from trainees who did actually abscond. It could be the case that trainees in open borstals who discuss absconding, do persuade others to go with them, whilst trainees in closed borstals who discuss absconding are unable to persuade others to go with them, and as a result go alone. Thus there may be trainees in closed borstals who discuss absconding and have not absconded, whilst trainees in open borstals who discuss absconding have absconded. An alternative explanation is that the trainees in open borstals (and perhaps some of those in closed institutions) did not admit to discussing their intention to abscond with other trainees, although they had in fact done so.

Finally, it appears that trainees absconding alone and as group leader from open borstals are less likely to have discussed their problems with staff. This result has some implications for the treatment of these trainees both before they abscond and after their recovery. It is true, of course, that there may be many trainees in open institutions who do not discuss their problems with staff but who do not abscond either; a sample of non-absconders would need to be interviewed to determine this and it was not done in the context of this research. It is tempting to suggest however that trainees should be further encouraged to discuss their problems with staff as a possible means of reducing absconding, at least in open borstals. The corresponding table for closed borstais could not be analysed statistically, as was pointed out above, but the fact that so few trainees did discuss their problems with staff was in itself interesting and may merit further investigation at some time.

Summary of significant results

The studies in this chapter were concerned with the control of absconding behaviour. It was shown that a high percentage of those trainees who are going to abscond from open borstals do so early in sentence. It was suggested that a reduction in this early peak would lead to a reduction in the absconding rate and that one method of achieving this would be to introduce secure induction units into open borstals for the first two to four weeks of training.

It appears from this result that it is more fruitful to consider trainees as having a variable probability of absconding throughout their sentence, initially high and subsequently decreasing. If we consider trainees as being at higher risk at the beginning of sentence and decreasing as the sentence progresses, then instead of building more secure and therefore expensive institutions, consideration should be given to facilitating the movement of trainees between different degrees of security. This can be done in two ways. One is the introduction into open borstals of closed induction units as discussed. Another is the transfer of trainees from closed conditions to open, at some point in time when the probability of absconding has fallen to some acceptably low level.

The final section of this chapter was concerned with the incidence of group compared with single abscondings. It was shown that there were significantly more incidents involving more than one trainee in open institutions. It was not possible from the data presented here to relate this to the frequency with which trainees in open borstals discuss their intentions to abscond when compared with trainees from closed borstals. It was also shown that those trainees absconding from open and closed institutions in a group but not as leader felt that they were more likely to get away than those going alone or as group leader, suggesting that publicity within institutions of the high recovery rate of absconders may deter these trainees from absconding. Finally, it was suggested that in open borstals at least, additional encouragement to trainees to discuss their problems with staff may reduce the absconding rate.

4 Summary of the Findings and their Implications

INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

A NOTE ON THE MOTOR VEHICLE OFFENDER

THE ABSCONDING MODEL

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

Introduction

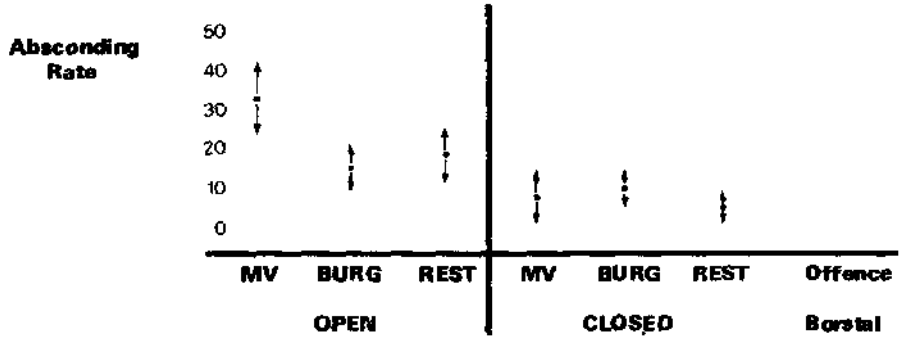
This chapter is mainly concerned with implications of the results for the borstal system and with suggestions for further work in the area. First, however, a summary is given of the significant results in this report plus a note on the motor vehicle offenders—**a** group who have appeared to have a consistently high absconding rate from open borstals.

Summary of results

The most significant finding in the present research was that current motor vehicle offenders have a higher than expected absconding rate from open institutions, although not from closed. This is further illustrated in Figure 6 (data from Table 6) which gives the 95% confidence limits[1] for the absconding rates of the various offender groups. It should be stressed, however, that significance in one class of institution and not in the other does not of itself imply a significant differential effect of the two types of institution. To establish this a significance test of interaction would need to be carried out.

FIGURE 6

95% confidence limits of estimates of absconding rates of groups of offenders in open and closed borstals



The diagram illustrates the extent to which the motor vehicle offenders have a higher absconding rate than burglars and the rest of the open population, although this is not the case in closed borstals. A current motor vehicle offender with a history of motor vehicle offending had an even higher absconding rate (over 44%, Laycock, 1974).

[1] Each offender group has a 'true' absconding rate for a given set of environmental conditions. It is this which we are attempting to estimate when we give the number of absconders as a percentage of receptions in any time period. Taking measures in different time periods will give different estimates of the absconding rate. The 95% confidence limits give the range of rates within which we can be 95 % certain that the true rate lies. Thus in this case we can be 95 % certain that the true rate of absconding for M/V offenders in open conditions lies between 24 and 43 %.

In addition to the motor vehicle offenders, offenders against property allocated to open borstals also tended to have a high absconding rate, as did trainees with a history of absconding from approved school when risked in open conditions. The situation in closed borstals was less clear. There were fewer significant results and those that there were, were not as highly significant as the open borstal findings. Property offenders tended to have a high absconding rate from closed borstals (although this result was not statistically significant), as did trainees who were younger at the age of their second conviction. The most significant finding in relation to absconding from closed borstals was that trainees with a history of approved school absconding had a high rate. However, unlike the situation in open borstals, approved school experience was also related to absconding even if there were no history of absconding from approved school.

Personality factors derived from pencil and paper tests were not related to whether trainees absconded. The battery of tests used in this study was by no means exhaustive and it could be argued that different or a more extensive battery of tests might produce significant results. Nevertheless in view of evidence from approved schools (Martin and Clarke, 1971) this appears unlikely.

Given that a trainee does abscond, there are several variables related to whether or not he absconds alone, as group leader or just as a member of a group. It is important to note that trainees were asked whether they absconded alone or in a group and whether it was their idea or whether someone else suggested it. It was possible to verify whether they had absconded alone or in a group but not possible to check whether it was in fact their idea or someone else's. All the results in this area, therefore, relate to the trainee's own description of the incident.

Trainees absconding from open institutions as group leader were the most predictable. They were more likely to have been convicted of burglary or a motor vehicle offence, more likely to be sociological or psycho-sociological types on the Smalley questionnaire and more likely to score in the introverted direction on the MPI.

Trainees absconding as a member of a group but not as the leader tended to have been convicted of something other than burglary or a motor vehicle offence, to be psychological types on the Smalley questionnaire to score in the extraverted direction on the MPI and to be more intropunitive on the HDHQ. In other words they tend to have the opposite characteristics to the group leaders.

Trainees absconding alone were heterogeneous with respect to the offence and the Smalley score and were not conspicuous in the other personality test scores. This heterogeneity within the group of trainees who absconded alone would suggest that the environmental variables could be more important in the aetiology of the behaviour (as Clarke suggests for approved school boys).

In closed borstals, trainees absconding as the leader of a group scored higher in general hostility (Foulds, Cain and Hope, 1967) than those going alone. Only post hoc explanations can be offered for these results and they are more usefully considered as providing guidance for further work, particularly in the control of absconding.

Trainees absconding as group leader from either situation are a particularly interesting group from the point of view of reducing absconding and the fact that there are more group absconding incidents from open borstals gives this further emphasis. If the number of group absconding incidents can be reduced in open borstals by allocation of selected individuals to closed institutions, or by special watch or control in the open situation of potential group leaders, then the number of trainees absconding could be reduced considerably. It has been demonstrated that trainees absconding as group leader are more likely to have been convicted of burglary and motor vehicle offences than other absconders. By combining the open borstal data from Tables 6 and 7 we obtain Table 17.

Table 17

Current offence and absconding type (including non-absconders) in open borstals

	MV	*Burg*	*Remainder*	*Total*
Non-abscond	70 (84)	177 (166)	145 (142)	392
Group leader	14 (7)	13 (13)	4 (11)	31
Group non-leader	8 (5)	2 (10)	14 (9)	24
Alone	9 (5)	7 (10)	8 (9)	24
Total	101	199	171	471

$\chi^2 = 31{\cdot}21$ $p < 0{\cdot}001$. Expected values in brackets.

It can be seen that motor vehicle offenders are slightly over-represented in all three absconding groups but this is particularly true of the group leaders. Not only are the motor vehicle offenders significant in that they abscond, but they also take other trainees with them (this could be because they can drive of course!). This finding seems to be an argument for allocating current motor vehicle offenders particularly those with a history of motor vehicle offending to secure conditions for the commencement of their sentence, at least (Laycock, 1974).

Another significant finding from open borstals was that trainees absconding alone or as group leader claim to keep problems to themselves rather than talk to staff, more so than trainees absconding in a group but not as leader. Assuming its validity, this could be because they do not feel that they have any problems, rather than that they are uncommunicative, although it is tempting to suggest that these trainees are rather more alienated from the staff than are the trainees who claim to have absconded at someone else's suggestion. This may be worth following up when trainees are recovered.

Trainees absconding in a group but not as the leader felt that they were more likely to escape from both open and closed conditions than the other two groups. This may reflect the fact that these trainees had to be persuaded that they would be successful before they would abscond. It also suggests that publicity within borstals of the high rate of recovery of absconders may deter these trainees from absconding at the suggestion of their friends. Such publicity may not, however, affect the trainee who absconds alone or the trainee who intends to abscond and leads others to go too; the probability of recovery was not so important a determinant of their absconding behaviour. Finally, more trainees absconded in a group from open borstals than closed. This suggests that trainees in open institutions discuss their plans more freely, although this was not substantiated by the data presented in Table 14. It may be the case that the same proportion of trainees talk of absconding from both situations but that more trainees are persuaded to go from open conditions. This would further support the suggestion that it may be possible to reduce group absconding incidents from borstals by extensive publicity of the high recovery rate within the institution.

A note on the motor vehicle offender

Motor vehicle offenders have emerged from the work reported here as a most significant group. A motor vehicle offender was denned as anyone having a current offence involving a motor vehicle, including theft of a motor vehicle, driving whilst disqualified, taking and driving away a motor vehicle (TADA), no insurance and being carried as a passenger in a stolen vehicle—it was a broadly defined offence category, although the majority of convictions were for TADA.

The reason for their high absconding rate from open institutions is difficult to determine, although there are a few lines of investigation which may prove fruitful.

Their high rate could simply reflect the fact that they can drive and this may be seen as a necessary skill in any trainees trying to abscond from an institution located in the country. It would be possible to determine whether these trainees do in fact steal cars when attempting to abscond, although this was not done in relation to the present research. As mentioned in Chapter 1, during the last quarter of 1969, 25% of borstal absconders were later charged as a result of offences committed whilst at large, although statistics were not available on the nature of those charges. However, even if the offences were for theft of motor vehicles, it would not be possible to infer that this was directly related to their absconding. Both the tendency to steal cars and tendency to abscond may be related to some personal attribute and, having absconded, the offence that they are most likely to commit would be a motor vehicle offence, since it is that for which they have been convicted in the past. No causal relationship between absconding and ability to drive could be inferred or would be implied. It is not easy to test the hypothesis directly that motor vehicle offenders abscond *because*

they can drive—the demonstration of causal relationships of any sort is always difficult. Some kind of depth interviewing with the individuals could be tried, and in the case of those trainees absconding in a group, their confederates could also be interviewed to determine whether they persuaded the motor vehicle offender to go too because of his knowledge of how to both steal and drive vehicles. If they do abscond because they can drive then this is perhaps the least interesting reason in that there is little management can do about it—they cannot be 'untaught'. Explanations of the kind—motor vehicle offenders abscond because they miss having the chance to practice their rather exciting skill—would be more interesting in that the institutions might give them the opportunity to drive under supervision. Not only would this help to make them safer drivers, it could perhaps encourage them to stay in the institution.

An alternative explanation is that motor vehicle offenders are risk-takers. A test having a gambling component may prove fruitful in the study of this class of offender. The risk-taking explanation becomes less tenable when one considers that motor vehicle offenders do not have a noticeably high absconding rate from closed borstals, absconding from which must be considered a riskier act than absconding from open institutions. However, if one adopts the absconding model discussed later in this chapter, that there is a hard core of unpredictable abscondings and that it is these that make up the majority of closed borstal abscondings, then the risk-taking explanation again becomes possible. A similar explanation could be that motor vehicle offenders are excitement seekers; they find institutional life boring and seek a more stimulating environment. This situation would be congruent with the notion that they steal cars for the excitement of driving, however, it would also suggest that extraverts should have a higher absconding rate than introverts and it will be remembered that there were no such personality differences found (see Chapter 2). An investigation of the relationship between introversion/extraversion and motor vehicle offending may prove fruitful in that it may be the extravert motor vehicle offenders who abscond. Multiple variables were not considered in this research. It may also be worth investigating the possibility that motor vehicle offenders particularly miss their family. In Chapter 2 it was shown that trainees convicted of a motor vehicle offence tended, more so than burglars who abscond, to give 'family' type reasons as their motivation for absconding. It would be necessary, of course, to determine how many trainees in the whole institution, including non-absconders, particularly miss their families before attributing the high absconding rate of the motor vehicle offender to sensitivity in this area.

In conclusion, there can be little doubt that at the time of this research, for whatever reason, motor vehicle offenders did have a high absconding rate. This result was confirmed in a study involving an independent sample (Laycock, 1974) and it has also been shown (Misconduct at the Kennedy Youth Centre, 1970) that in a population in the Kennedy Youth Centre (West Virginia, USA) similar to that of our open borstals, those convicted of 'autotheft' were more likely to abscond than others. It was suggested by the writers that autothieves

were prone to retreatist or escapist behaviour, and this was given as the explanation for their absconding. This explanation seems somewhat tautologous and an adequate explanation of the result remains to be found.

The absconding model

The purpose of this section is to consider the concept of an absconding model, that is, the conceptual framework within which the problem of absconding from a variety of institutions has been considered in the past and might more appropriately be considered in the future. It had been hoped to consider evidence on the most appropriate model to adopt from four sources; probation hostels, approved schools, borstals and prisons; the work of Sinclair[1] (1970), Clarke and Martin (1971), Laycock (1974 and this report) and Banks *et al.* (1975) respectively. Unfortunately this has not been possible, in the sense in which it was originally intended, since the data from the various sources are not comparable.

Instead, a variety of models will be discussed, along with their merits and demerits in terms of those data which are available. The most appropriate model will have to remain a matter for future workers to decide by further intervention and experimentation with institutional regimes.

Five alternative, although not necessarily mutually exclusive, models of absconding will be outlined in this section with their implications for the administration in which they may be thought to operate.

The dichotomous model

The early approved school work assumed a simple absconding model which we may call the dichotomous model—that is, that there are certain trainees whom one should consider as potential absconders and that they will be so no matter where they are allocated; they are 'absconding types'. This model has also been implicitly assumed in the Prison Department's borstal allocation policy. The situation is simplified conceptually as two dichotomies—open /closed and absconder/non-absconder, and the Department's aim is to allocate trainees considered to be absconding types to closed borstals. Thus an absconding type placed in an open institution would probably abscond whereas left in a closed

[1] Sinclair related a variety of variables to probation hostel failure. He derived a composite measure of failure which included absconding and further offending whilst in the hostel. Although the majority of the failure was due to absconding it was not possible to disentangle the effects of absconding from offending. Sinclair's main interest was in the evaluation of probation hostels and not in absconding per *se*. He did carry out some work on absconding however, and his major conclusions were:

(i) absconding was more than twice as high in periods when warden or matron were sick or on leave.
(ii) it was more common on days on which boys received their pay.
(iii) absconders were particularly likely to be reconvicted.
(iv) re-absconding was almost certainly related to the warden's attitude to absconders.
(v) the distribution of absconders in months departed from the Poisson distribution. In other words, the days on which the boys absconded were not independent.

institution although remaining a potential absconder he would find escape more difficult.

This black or white approach to the problem is clearly an oversimplification. Although it remains convenient to talk of'absconders' or 'open' institutions the present evidence from a variety of sources suggests that it is merely a convenience and at best reflects only part of the reality of the situation.

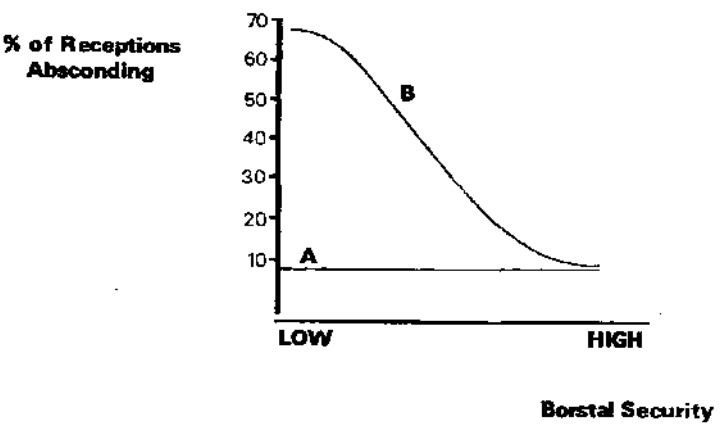
The dimensional model

The dimensional model is an expansion of the open/closed, absconder/non-absconder dichotomies. Absconding probability (and institutional security) may be conceptualised as a dimension rather than a dichotomy. The inmate population can be considered to include individuals having a continuous range of absconding probabilities from high to low. Thus inmate absconding probability and institutional security are seen as continuous variables, varying across individuals and institutions rather than varying with time for the same individual or institution. An advantage of this model is that it allows for a greater degree of interaction between the environment and individual which would be in accord with the evidence from research.

It would be helpful to specify the level of security in which a particular trainee were placed in discussing whether he were likely to actually abscond. For instance, if one considered a system in which there were absolutely no sanctions for absconding, then the absconding rate for all borstals could be 90-100%.

FIGURE 7

Hypothetical distribution of absconding rate against borstal security



This is of course an empirical question—although it is doubtful that it will ever be tested! In such a situation, one would be forced to the conclusion that 90-100% of the whole population were in some sense absconding risks. The argument is therefore that, as the regime of any borstal tends towards the

permissive, the proportion of trainees attempting to abscond will increase (assuming that trainees were randomly allocated).

If we consider the way in which absconding rate may vary with borstal security, we obtain the theoretical graph shown in Figure 7.

The line at A which assumes a minimal 10 % absconding rate, would be obtained if allocation were perfect, that is, if all trainees were allocated to institutions designed to cater for their particular level of abscond rate. This matching throughout the system would lead to a constant absconding index across all borstals. This absconding index could to some extent be pre-determined. If one were prepared to tolerate a 20% absconding index in all institutions, then security could be relaxed until the 20% level were reached. On the other hand, if only a 2 % level were acceptable, then security would have to be uniformly tightened up across all borstals. The level could not of course be determined at zero, since there will no doubt always be a finite number of unpredictable abscondings.

The shape of the line at B is difficult to determine, although it would presumably be a monotonically decreasing function and would be obtained if allocation were random in the system.

A prediction based on this dimensional model of absconding is that in a high security institution, let us say, a certain percentage of the population will try and perhaps succeed in absconding. As security is relaxed, these same trainees will abscond, plus a varying percentage of the remainder of the population—those with the next highest 'absconding risk' scores. The most appropriate method of ranking trainees in terms of their absconding risk would need to be empirically determined. There are a variety of theoretical bases for the possible ranking. For example, one may hypothesise that trainees will differ in the extent to which they will take risks and it may be possible to rank order trainees in these terms and relate this to absconding. Whatever the rationale behind the ranking, the assumption associated with the dimensional model is that one can rank order trainees in terms of the extent to which they are prepared to abscond and that, as security decreases, and absconding rate increases, the individuals absconding are predictable from the rank ordering.

The interaction model

The third alternative may be called the interaction model, which stresses more the effect of the environment on the individual, to the extent that as security decreases and the absconding rate increases, a *different* group of trainees would abscond. In other words there would be an interaction between the situation and the individual. This interaction need not be related to the security of the institution. For example, two institutions with randomly allocated trainees and the same absconding rates could have absconding populations with differing characteristics. The absconder would be determined by the interaction between the regime and the individual.

Again, as with the dimensional model the exact nature of the interaction is an empirical question. As an example, absconders may be predictable from personality test scores in one institution, but in a difTerent institution, or even the same institution at a different time, some other factor such as offending history, may be the more powerful predictor.

Alternatively it may be the case that the interaction arises not from differences in the residents but from differences in the institution's response to them. Institutions may respond differently to different classes of individuals, rewarding some, penalising others. With this form of interaction, one needs to consider variables which are significant for the particular institution—the way it perceives and labels individuals.

There is some evidence from the USA (Lubeck and Empey, 1969) that an interaction model of absconding may be appropriate. Clarke and Martin (1971) also make reference to this work and suggest an interaction model as an alternative method of conceptualising absconding.

The variable model

A fourth alternative, the variable model, emphasises the effect of the environment to an even greater extent. In this case, the absconding probability of an individual varies with time; wth security; with the characteristics of the penal system in which he is incarcerated; plus a variety of other environmental features external to the penal system such as the weather, family pressures, etc. To this extent it would not be meaningful to discuss whether or not an individual were an 'absconding type', there would simply be too many unknown variables operating at any one time to enable this to be said. It does become sensible in this context to discuss the relative absconding probability of certain populations of offenders in different situations. For example, it is clear from the data presented in Chapter 3 that the open borstal trainees are more likely to abscond at the beginning of their sentence than toward the end. As a population their absconding risk decreases with time. In the approved school system Clarke and Martin (1971) showed that due, perhaps to a learning effect, the probability of certain boys absconding increased throughout their sentence. There are, it seems from the data, clear changes in absconding potential throughout the sentence and it is possible to affect these probabilities by manipulation of the environment in administrative terms. The effect of the introduction of induction units in certain borstals may be an example of this (Chapter 3).

The sub-group model

The final notion to be considered here is that the absconding population is made up of a variety of potentially identifiable sub-groups and does not constitute a homogeneous group as has been assumed by many workers. Absconders are normally defined operationally; if they absconded then they are absconders. Although this approach has an undeniable face validity (!) it may well lead to the masking of important results. For instance, if we consider personality

factors (say introversion/extraversion) and assume the absconding population to be made up of a small core of unpredictable absconders, with a larger group of introvert offenders absconding because they are being bullied and do not mix, and yet another group of extraverts absconding out of sheer boredom; then the effect of comparing absconders with non-absconders would not lead to significant differences. The mean personality test scores would be similar to those of the non-absconder population. One possible way of detecting such a hypothetical effect would be a careful study of the variance of the scores. Clarke and Martin (1971) considered two sub-groups of absconders in their work; persistent and non-persistent absconders, and Laycock (1974 and here) considered lone absconders and two types of group absconder, all to some effect. There are a variety of alternative classifications which could be considered.

The most appropriate model?

As mentioned above the models described here are not mutually exclusive and a combination is probably the most appropriate to account, even partially, for the research results obtained from various sources so far. It is important to remember that we are concerned with the development of a model which will account for research results attempting to predict absconding probability from individual characteristics. In this sense, it is worth making a distinction between *who* absconds and *when* they abscond. A demonstration that environmental factors are closely related to absconding behaviour does not imply that individual characteristics are unimportant or irrelevant. The questions; who absconds? and when do they abscond? are normally independent. (An exception would perhaps be a complex interaction model, or the finding that if absconding is reduced in the early weeks of training by induction units etc., some of those, whose absconding is then prevented, may never abscond).

Predictability of absconding in terms of *when* the incidents occur appears most highly related to the security of the institution. In a highly insecure institution the time of abscondings is most predictable. This is true in approved schools, open borstals and open prisons. In closed borstals and prisons 'environmental' predictors are less evident. It could be argued that the extent to which abscondings are environmentally predictable provides a useful basis for institutional comparison. The suggestion, here, is that the more predictable the timing of absconding, the *less* secure the institution. This does not necessarily imply a high absconding rate, since the absconding rate is not independent of the population, whilst thephysical security *is* independent of the population characteristics. Thus an open type of institution may be considered 'insecure' in that absconding is easy and 'popular' times for going are evident, but it may have a low rate because the population is highly selected in terms of some relevant variable. It remains, nevertheless, an insecure institution.

For the rest of this section, reference to prediction is meant to relate to the prediction *of absconders, ie who* goes; not when they go. It is the prediction of absconders with which the model is concerned.

It appears from the data that there are at least two crucial variables affecting whether or not a researcher describes the absconders from the research population as predictable or not—namely, the extent to which the population is *selected* and the *effective sentence length.* Thus, with an essentially unselected sample having a semi-indeterminate sentence, there is a very high absconding rate and few variables of any predictive value (this is arguably the case in approved schools). On the other hand, the open prison population is highly selected and has a low absconding rate. Although Banks *et al.* (1975) argue that a variety of variables relate to absconding, they point out that they cannot predict absconding. In certain instances, it is doubtful whether the relationships they do suggest, between absconding and a variety of individually related variables, are valid. Their data involve comparison of 'absconding risks' of different classes of individuals. Absconding risk was calculated by taking the absconders in any category of prisoner as a proportion of the number of men received in that category in a given period. Thus the absconders may, or may not have been received during the period under consideration. This procedure, although making statistical analysis difficult, is probably valid with fairly large samples. However, as the researchers themselves point out *(ibid),* 'it would radically affect the rate among small sub-groups, certain of which, as this report suggests, tend to present the greater "risks"' (p. 16). So in open prisons it is doubtful that absconding is predictable to any marked extent.

The open borstal population is also selected, but not as highly as that in open prisons. A larger percentage of the borstal population is allocated to open conditions and the allocation procedure is less complex; there is not a comparable security classification procedure in the borstal system for example. Not surprisingly therefore, the open borstals' absconding rate is higher than that in open prisons but not as high as that in approved schools. Although absconders from closed borstals did not appear to be predictable there was considerable evidence that open borstal absconders tend to have been convicted of motor vehicle offences. In fact, those currently convicted of a motor vehicle offence with previous convictions for burglary *and* motor vehicle offences had an absconding rate of over 40% from open institutions (Laycock, 1974) compared with less than 20% for all the open borstals over that period. So for intermediate rates of absconding a substantial high risk group becomes evident.

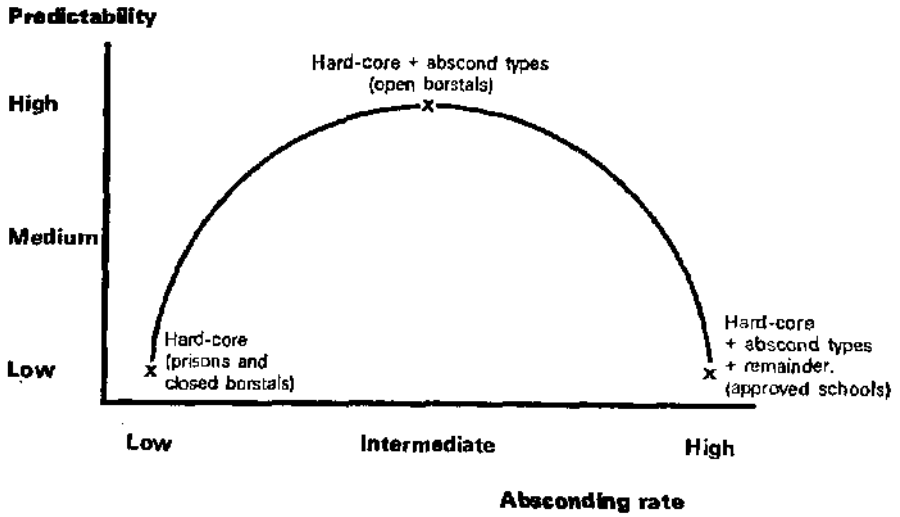
The evidence available so far would be compatible with the following interpretation. Let us suppose that from any institution there will be a small, hard-core of unpredictable abscondings: those trainees who simply feel they *have* to leave to sort out a personal problem or because of some apparently intolerable situation within the institution. Such abscondings would presumably occur on a random basis and the individuals would be unpredictable. In general, as security decreases additional trainees will abscond. Thus with intermediate absconding rates we will have the hard-core absconders plus the 'absconding types'. This would be the situation in open borstal institutions where there is some justification for calling motor vehicle offenders absconding types. It is true that they are

not absconding types, in that the majority of them do not abscond but they do nevertheless have a higher absconding rate than any other group. As security decreases still further and the absconding rate continues to increase, more and more inmates will abscond. Thus the heterogeneity of the group will increase so much that predictive ability will be lost. This is possibly the case in approved schools.

Physical security and the sanctions on absconders would both affect the absconding rate, as would the extent to which the population is selected. A further important effect, mentioned above, is sentence length. It appears to be the case that as the length of sentence remaining to be served decreases, so also does the probability of absconding for the majority of offenders. It would perhaps affect the hard-core absconders least, but in general, the shorter the period left to serve the lower the probability of absconding. This effect may not be so evident in approved schools where it is less clear to boys exactly how long they have to serve but it is certainly evident in open prisons and borstals. It appears therefore that some combination of the sub-group model and variable model would adequately describe the data. A simplified version of the suggested situation is shown in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8

'Predictability' of absconding in the population against absconding rate



For any individual within this system, the probability of his absconding decreases as his sentence progresses.

It is true that an interaction model would not be incompatible with much of the data. For example, although approved school absconders appear unpredictable as a class, it could be the case that at an institutional level absconders may be

predictable. Let us consider a personality variable, say aggression; overall there may be no relationship with absconding; however, from institution A aggressives may abscond whilst from institution B passives may abscond.[1] Looking at all absconders there would appear to be no significant relationship. Similarly, in closed borstals, prediction may be possible if considered on an institutional basis.

Administrative implications

It is worth mentioning briefly why the concept of an absconding model is important for the penal administrator. Let us consider the implications from the five possible models discussed here. The dichotomous and dimensional models may be considered together, one being a limiting case of the other. So, if the dimensional model were accepted, then this would imply that potential absconders could be identified and allocated accordingly. Apart from the necessity for research to identify these offenders, an allocation system would also be needed with the authority to allocate to a range of institutions having different levels of security.

Alternatively, if say the interaction model were considered most appropriate, then the need for a complex allocation centre would be less obvious. In this situation it should be possible to modify the institutional environment in such a way as to contain the potential absconder. The demonstration of the importance of environmental features in providing the opportunity for absconding, and the subsequent effect of this opportunity on the absconding rate, has implications for the institutional manager. The social and administrative organisation of the institution can affect the absconding rate as surely as physical security and allocation policy. The acceptance of this at the institution would place emphasis upon an empirical approach to behavioural control.

The variable model has implications for the organisation of borstal institutions in a different sense. For those trainees currently allocated to open institutions it suggests that a 'closed' induction unit may be appropriate for some if not all trainees at the beginning of their training while the probability of their absconding is relatively high. For those trainees allocated to closed institutions the model would suggest that many could be transferred to open conditions before the end of their sentence. The use of Finnamore Wood Camp as an open satellite of Feltham borstal (which is closed) provides an example of this. At the time of this research (1969/70) Finnamore Wood received trainees from two closed institutions and one semi-closed.[2] The absconding rate of Finnamore Wood was similar to that of other closed institutions despite the fact that it housed 'closed' trainees in open conditions. It is true that had those trainees who

[1] Clarke and Martin (1971) specifically tested for such interaction effects in relation to extraversion and neuroticism in 4 approved schools. They found no evidence of interaction.

[2] At present, Finnamore Wood Camp receives trainees directly from the allocation centre and its use as an open camp serving closed institutions has decreased although it remains administratively tied to Feltham borstal.

were transferred to Finnamore Wood and then absconded, remained in their original institution, they would probably not have absconded. However, the benefit for the majority of trainees of a period spent in open conditions plus the benefit of extra places in closed (and crowded) institutions to the administration is arguably worth this additional risk. The risk could be reduced perhaps, if research were instituted into the problem of *when* during training such a transfer could most profitably take place and which trainees would make the most suitable candidates.

Acceptance of the sub-group model leads to rather more complex implications for the administrator. First, it suggests that considerably more research needs to be carried out to determine appropriate absconder classifications in the different sections of the penal system (approved schools, borstals and prisons). It then implies that these trainees should be treated differently. Let us consider the approved school and borstal situations; in each of these one possible classification has been tried. Clarke successfully differentiated persistent approved school absconders from casual absconders. A consequence of this must surely be that boys identified as persistent absconders at an early stage in their training should be transferred to a special unit with rather more speed than has been common in the past.

The classification of borstal absconders into those absconding alone, in a group as leader, and in a group as non-leader, has rather more complex implications. Apart from further work to determine other possible correlates of this classification, an implication of the results reported here is that these trainees should perhaps be treated differently on recovery. For example those absconding alone or as group leader from open borstals claim that they do not talk to staff about their problems. This lack of support, or inability on their part to communicate, *may* be related to their decision to abscond and it could be argued that on recovery this problem should provide a focus for their subsequent treatment.

Finally, it is worth considering the implications of what was suggested above as the most appropriate conceptualisation of absconding given the current state of our knowledge. As a combination of some of the five models already considered, it naturally has the most complex implications for the administrator. First, it suggests that an allocation centre of some kind is desirable. This need not be of the traditional form from which the offenders are physically sent but could be more simply a central unit, whose task would be to allocate the 'absconding types', once identified, to closed institutions. This is, or could be, a clerical exercise and would not require the physical presence of the offender for the majority of cases. The adult prison system appears successful at doing this. Although there are allocation centres of the traditional type in the adult system it is arguable that they are not strictly necessary and that the security classification which is probably the essential feature of the system's success, could be determined without the physical presence of the offender.

The allocation of 'absconding types' to closed conditions would not however abrogate the responsibility of the institutions to attempt to control absconding.

As was the case with the interaction model considerable responsibility rests with the institutions to develop methods of controlling absconding behaviour by means other than increased physical security with its concomitant expense and constriction.

Recommendations and suggestions for further work

Within open borstals, motor vehicle offenders constitute a high risk group. As a group they are worthy of further investigation since they also appear to be involved in persuading other trainees to abscond. It may well be possible to isolate a group of trainees with a sufficiently high absconding rate to justify closed allocation (indeed current motor vehicle offenders with a history of motor vehicle offending and burglary may well constitute such a group). If any more trainees are to be allocated to closed borstals, however, the queues for these institutions will become even longer and consideration will have simultaneously to be given to the possibility of allocating more trainees to open conditions who are at present sent to closed borstals. Selected trainees convicted of offences against the person could be sequentially allocated to open borstals thus relieving some of the pressures on the closed institutions.

Additionally, methods of controlling absconding from open borstals, other than a blanket increase in physical security, could be tried. These may include secure induction units for a short period, as mentioned earlier, and/or reward systems aimed at discouraging absconding. Training in driving with the use of a skid pan under police supervision would be particularly relevant for motor vehicle offenders. A high proportion of borstal absconders, particularly from closed institutions, will remain unpredictable, the abscond being precipitated by environmental factors or (less likely) by personality factors or personal characteristics not yet identified. There is, therefore, a case for encouraging individual institutions to carry out research on their own populations where information is more readily available. It is for this reason that multivariate statistical techniques, popular in current social research are of little use in this context. The small sample sizes do not allow the use of, for example, multiple regression, which on the face of it seems a most appropriate technique. In the present research for instance, 1100 trainees were tested before allocation and of these only 40 absconded from closed borstals. In any case it is techniques for the control of absconding which are needed rather than prediction equations and these will only be developed on an institutional basis. An implication of the statement that control techniques are needed is that a more active approach to institutional research is also necessary. The suggestions mentioned in this report such as a skid pan for motor vehicle offenders, publicity of high recovery rates, open units in closed borstals etc, need actually to be tried out on an experimental basis. Until delinquent behaviour within the institution can be controlled more effectively there seems little hope of reducing reconviction in the free environment.

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Appendices

A. Absconding rates for prisons, borstals and approved schools.

B. The Smailey questionnaire; responses related to offending and absconding.

C. Instructions for administration plus modified Smailey questionnaire given after absconding.

D. Results of comparison between absconders and non-absconders on personality tests.

£. Results of comparison of sub-groups of absconders on personality tests.

Appendix A

Table X1

Absconding rates in prison, borstals and approved schools

Type of Establishment	*Total number of escapes*	*Average population*	*Rate*	*Range across institutions*
Open prisons*	70	3017	2%	0– 6%
Closed prisons*	118	26,008	0·5%	0– 4%
Open borstals*	515	1608	32%	8–73%
Closed borstals*	260	3477	7%	0–51%†
Junior approved schools‡	not available		11%	0–44%
Intermediate approved schools‡	not available		23%	8–50%
Senior approved schools‡	not available		30%	10–59%

* Data for 1974 from Report on the work of the Prison Department. HMSO. Cmnd. 6148.

† Any borstal which is not entirely open is categorised as closed. Thus, within the group of closed borstals there are considerable differences in the degree of perimeter security.

‡ Data from 1966 from Clarke and Martin. Absconding from approved schools. HMSO. 1971.

Appendix B

The Smalley questionnaire; responses related to offending and absconding

The Smalley questionnaire (Smalley, 1964) was developed in an attempt to provide a psychological classification of delinquents. The questionnaire divided the population into three groups labelled by Smalley as psychological types (P), psychosociological types (P/S) and sociological types (S). The psychological types are characterised by high approach drives to the goal, the sociological types by low avoidance drives as a result of ineffective social training and the psychosociological types by normal approach and avoidance drives but by social inadequacy.

In the present context the questionnaire was administered to the absconders before allocation in relation to their present offence and again on recovery in relation to the absconding incident. The data showing the relationship between the two sets of scores thus obtained is given below and indicates that the trainees perception of his original offence is similar to that of the absconding incident.

Table X2

Smalley responses related to offence and absconding incident

		Response related to offence		
		S and P/S types	*P types*	*Total*
Response related to absconding incident	S and P/S types	29	26	55
	P types	13	34	47
	Total	42	60	102

$\chi^2 = 5{\cdot}40$ p = 0·01

Appendix C

Instructions for administration and modified Smalley questionnaire given **after absconding**

Please make the following points clear to the trainee: 'The Psychology Department at Wormwood Scrubs are doing a survey on absconding and would like you to fill in this questionnaire. It is completely confidential and will not make any difference to your training, release date or anything else affecting you.

When it is completed we will seal it in this envelope and post it'. 'What you do is this:

> For each question there are two statements, read each statement and think back to how you were feeling at the time you absconded. Put a tick on top of whichever statement best describes how you were feeling at the time'.

N.B. In order to prevent the questionnaire getting into circulation beyond our control, please do not allow the trainee to remove it from your presence.

After he has completed the questionnaire please seal it in the attached envelope and post it.

Should he refuse to complete it please return the blank questionnaire to us.

Finally please do not ask him to complete it while he is still removed from the house.

Thank you.

NO:..... NAME .....

BORSTAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Remember to read both statements carefully before choosing one of them

1. I didn't think about it *at all* before doing it.	I thought about it quite a lot before deciding to do it.	1.
2. I was worried what other people would think of me.	I didn't care what other people would think.	2.
3. I had a good reason for doing it.	I was just proving to myself that I could do it.	3.
4. Nothing would have stopped me.	I could have pulled out if I had wanted to.	4.
5. It needed a lot of thought beforehand.	It wasn't planned, it just happened.	5.
6. As it got closer I felt less worried.	As it got closer I felt more worried.	6.
7. I did not have any second thoughts about doing it.	I really had to make myself do it.	7.
8. I had even decided not to do it at one stage.	I never thought of changing my mind.	8.
9. While I was actually doing the job I was worried.	I was not worried at all.	9.
10. The nearer it got, the more I knew it was wrong.	The nearer it got, the less I thought about it.	10.
11. I was all mixed up, I didn't know whether to do it or not.	I just got on with it.	11.
12. I nearly decided not to do it.	I didn't even give it a second thought.	12.
13. I felt satisfied afterwards.	It just left me cold.	13.
14. I wanted to show that I could do something for myself.	I did not really worry over why I was doing it.	14.

15. I was scared all the time.	I was scared beforehand but once it started I was all right.	15.
16. I was glad I'd done it immediately afterwards.	I was sorry I'd done it as soon as it was over.	16.
17. I was in two minds about whether to do it or not.	I didn't hesitate.	17.
18. I suppose I was really just showing off.	I just went along with the idea for what I could get out of it.	18.
19. At the time I was doing it I kept thinking that what I was doing was wrong.	Looking back on it now I suppose it was wrong.	19.
20. The fact that it was wrong never worried me.	As it got nearer I realised it was wrong.	20.
21. I had considered what could happen if I was caught.	I did not think about being punished if I was caught.	21.
22. I could not have cared less.	At the time I was very excited.	22.
23. I always had plenty to do at Borstal.	I got fed up and had nothing to do.	23.
24. I liked to keep my problems to myself at borstal.	I often talked to staff about my problems.	24.
25. I knew I would get caught but I didn't care.	I thought I would get away.	25.
26. I was always being picked on by other lads at borstal.	Nobody picked on me.	26.
27. I went on my own.	I went with others.	27.
28. It was my own idea.	Someone else suggested it.	28.
29. I asked other people to come with me.	I did not talk about it.	29.

I absconded because .....

Table X3

Results of comparison between absconders and non-absconders on personality tests

Personality Questionnaire		*Open Borstals*					*Closed Borstals*				
		Absconders (N = 95)		*Non-absconders* (N = 150)			*Absconders* (N = 40)		*Non-absconders* (N = 150)		
		$\bar{x}$	s.d.	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	t*	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	$\bar{x}$	s.d.	t*
MPI Extraversion		29·9	7·73	30·22	7·79	−0·34	27·16	9·93	29·77	8·47	−1·62
MPI Neuroticism		29·28	11·43	30·05	10·60	−0·54	32·38	11·12	31·04	11·24	0·65
MPI Lie scale		11·24	6·15	10·20	5·15	1·43	12·47	5·35	10·78	5·34	1·72
HDHQ General hostility		24·26	7·83	23·46	7·10	0·83	27·12	6·46	25·83	7·58	0·95
HDHQ Direction of hostility		−2·75	8·50	−1·69	6·56	−1·10	−1·27	7·47	−3·31	7·27	1·18
Smalley classification (frequencies)	P	47		78			17		61		
	P/S	26		46			10		55		
	S	17		20			8		29		
		χ^2 = 1·083 Not significant. 10 trainees were unable to complete the questionnaire.					χ^2 = 1·05 Not significant. 5 trainees were unable to complete the questionnaire.				

* None of the results were significant.

Appendix E

Results of the comparison of sub-groups of absconders on personality tests

The absconder group was divided into those absconding alone, in a group as leader and in a group as non-leader as described in Chapter 2. One-way analyses of variance were carried out on the data with planned comparisons where appropriate. Detailed results are given in Laycock (1974) and a summary of the significant results are presented here.

Table X4
Maudsley Personality Inventory
Introversion/extraversion

Open borstals		*Alone*	*Group leader*	*Group non-leader*
	Σx	774	821	804
	Σx^2	25,996	24,691	25,624
	N	26	29	24
	$\bar{x}$	29·77	28·31	33·50
Source	*d.f.*	*sum squares*	*Mean squ.*	*F*
Treatment	2	367·53	183·77	4·153
Error	76	3362·82	44·25	$p < 0·05$
Total	78	3730·35		

Contrasting the means using the method described by Dixon and Massey (1951) we have table X5.

Table X5
Population contrasts (MPI)

Means	$\bar{x}_1$ *Alone* 29·77	$\bar{x}_2$ *Group leader* 28·31	$\bar{x}_3$ *Group non-leader* 33·50	*Confidence limits using F.* (95%)	*Population contrasts*
	1	−1	0	1·46 ± 4·51	$\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2$
Contrasts	0	1	−1	−5·19 ± 4·61	$\bar{x}_2 - \bar{x}_3$
	1	0	−1	−3·73 ± 4·73	$\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_3$

It can be seen from the table that the only contrast whose confidence limit does not include zero is $\bar{x}_2 - \bar{x}_3$. The group leaders differ from the group non-leaders in that they are less extrovert.

Table X6
Hostility and direction of hostility questionnaire
General hostility

Closed borstals		*Alone*	*Group leader*	*Group non-leader*
	Σx	303	390	176
	Σx^2	7377	12,944	5336
	N	13	12	6
	$\bar{x}$	23·31	32·50	29·33
Source	*d.f.*	*Sum squares*	*Mean squ.*	*F*
Treatment	2	539·87	269·93	9·98
Error	28	757·10	27·04	$p < 0.0005$
Total	30	1296·97		

Table X6 shows a highly significant difference between the three groups. Again, contrasting means as before we have Table X7 which shows that trainees absconding alone from closed borstals differ significantly from those absconding as group leader in that they have lower general hostility scores.

Table X7
Population contrasts (HDHQ)

Means	$\bar{x}_1$ *Alone* 23·31	$\bar{x}_2$ *Group leader* 32·5	$\bar{x}_3$ *Group non-leader* 29·33	*Confidence limits using F (95%)*	*Population contrasts*
	1	−1	0	$-9{\cdot}19 \pm 5{\cdot}36$	$\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2$
Contrasts	0	1	−1	$3{\cdot}17 \pm 6{\cdot}70$	$\bar{x}_2 - \bar{x}_3$
	1	0	−1	$-6{\cdot}02 \pm 6{\cdot}61$	$\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_3$

Table X8
Hostility and direction of hostility questionnaire
Direction of hostility (the data were transformed to x + 50 thus ensuring positive values for all x)

Open borstals		*Alone*	*Group leader*	*Group non-leader*
	Σx	1174	1381	1256
	Σx^2	57,790	67,303	61,776
	N	26	29	24
	$\bar{x}$	45·15	47·62	52·33
Source	*d.f.*	*Sum squares*	*Mean squ.*	*F.*
Treatment	2	660·88	330·44	10·63
Error	76	2363·55	31·10	
Total	78	3024·43		$p < 0.0005$

Table X8 shows the result of the open borstal comparison of the direction of hostility scores. The planned comparisons shown in Table X9 indicate that trainees absconding in a group but not as leader differ from those absconding alone and those absconding as group leader in that they are more intropunitive.

Table X9

Population contrasts (HDHQ)

	$\bar{x}_1$ *Alone*	$\bar{x}_2$ *Group leader*	$\bar{x}_3$ *Group non-leader*	*Confidence limits using F(95%)*	*Population contrasts*
Means	45·15	47·62	52·33		
	1	−1	0	$-2{\cdot}74 \pm 3{\cdot}78$	$\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2$
Contrasts	0	1	−1	$-4{\cdot}71 \pm 3{\cdot}86$	$\bar{x}_2 - \bar{x}_3$
	1	0	−1	$-7{\cdot}18 \pm 3{\cdot}96$	$\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_3$

Finally, the SmaUey questionnaire showed significant differences between groups of trainees in open borstals. The results shown in Table X10 gave expected values which were too small for the calculation of $\wedge^a$. Combining two categories produced Table XII which indicated a significant difference at the 1 % level between the groups.

Table X10

Smalley questionnaire

Open borstals

		Alone	*Group leader*	*Group non-leader*	*Total*
Smalley	S	3	6	1	10
Classification	P/S	9	17	6	32
	P	12	8	17	37
Total		24	31	24	79

Table X11

Smalley questionnaire (with adjacent categories combined)

		Alone	*Group leader*	*Group non-leader*	*Total*
Smalley	S, P/S	12 (13)	23 (16)	7 (13)	42
Classification	P	12 (11)	8(15)	17 (11)	37
Total		24	31	24	79

$\chi^2 = 12{\cdot}53$ $p < 0{\cdot}01$

Publications

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1. Prediction Methods in relation to Borstal Training
by Hermann Mannheim and Leslie T. Wilkins. 1955. vi + 276 pp. (11 340051 9) £115

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